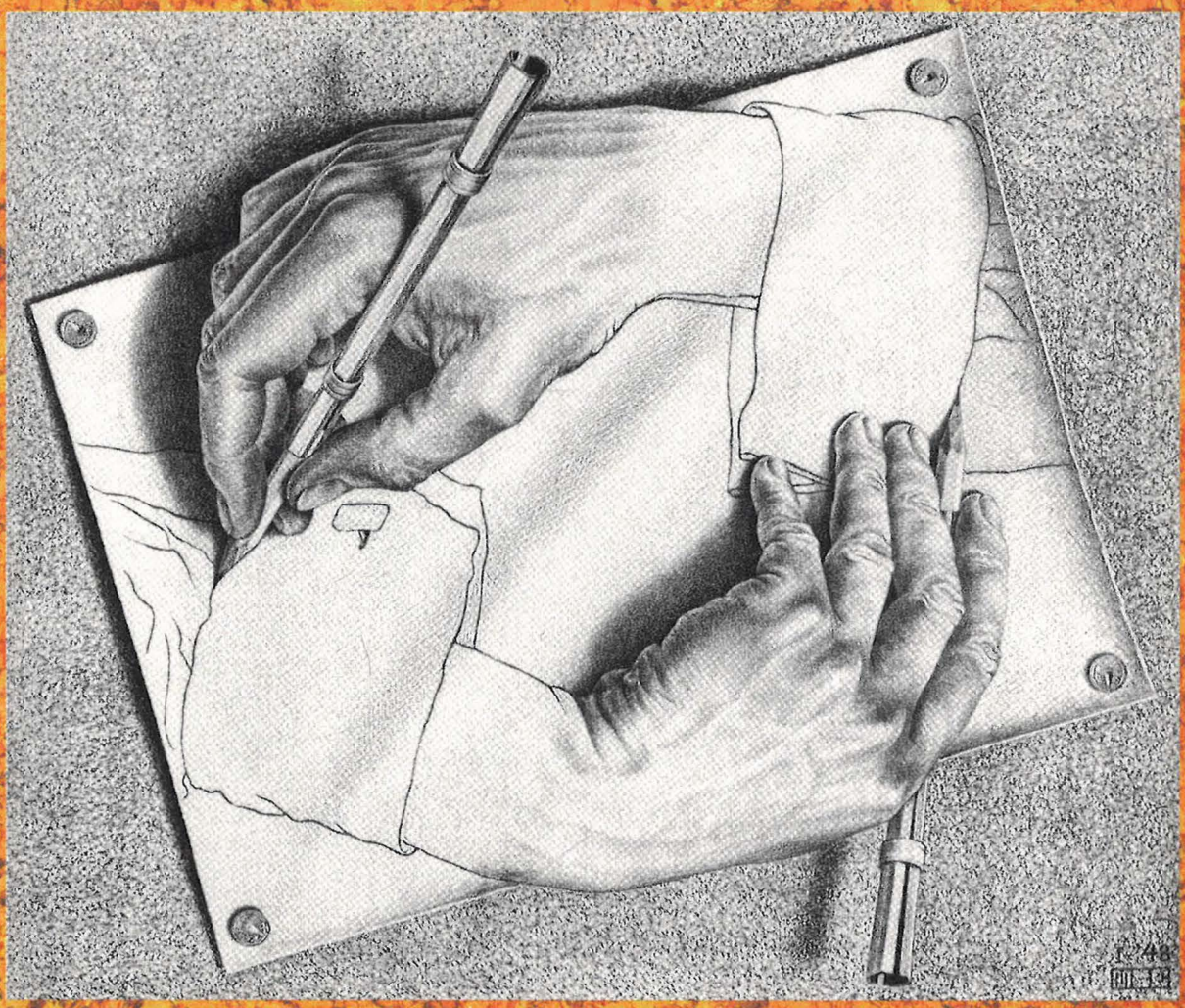
MIKKO KESKINEN

RESPONSE, RESISTANCE, DECONSTRUCTION



Reading and Writing in/of Three Novels by John Updike

JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN THE ARTS 62

Mikko Keskinen

Response, Resistance, Deconstruction

Reading and Writing in/of Three Novels by John Updike

Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston humanistisen tiedekunnan suostumuksella
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston Villa Ranan Blomstedt-salissa
maaliskuun 28. päivänä 1998 klo 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of
the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Jyväskylä,
in the Building Villa Rana, Blomstedt Hall, on March 28, 1998 at 12 o'clock noon.

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 1998

Response, Resistance, Deconstruction

Reading and Writing in/of Three Novels by John Updike

JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN THE ARTS 62

Mikko Keskinen

Response, Resistance, Deconstruction

Reading and Writing in/of Three Novels by John Updike

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 1998

Editors
Matti Vainio
Department Musicology, University of Jyväskylä
Kaarina Nieminen
Publishing Unit, Univesity Library of Jyväskylä

Cover
Minna Laukkanen
Picture
M.C. Escher's "Drawing Hands" © 1998
Cordon Art B.V. - Baarn - Holland. All rights reserved.

URN:ISBN:978-951-39-8126-6
ISBN 978-951-39-8126-6 (PDF)
ISSN 0075-4633

ISBN 951-39-0119-X
ISSN 0075-4633

Jyväskylä University Printing House, Jyväskylä
and ER-Paino Ky, Lievestuore

ABSTRACT

Keskinen, Mikko
Response, Resistance, Deconstruction: Reading and Writing in/of Three Novels by John Updike. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1998. 271 p.
(Jyväskylä Studies in the Arts,
ISSN 0075-4633; 62)
ISBN 951-39-0119-X
Finnish summary
Diss.

The study explores the ways in which prose fiction can be seen to respond to or read itself, how writing allegedly explicates or reflects itself, and how resistance is realized both in reading and writing. These factors are investigated in John Updike's novels Rabbit Redux (1971), A Month of Sundays (1975), and The Coup (1978).

The study is informed by narratology, reader-response, feminist and gender criticism, theories of self-reflexivity and resisting reading, and deconstruction. The communication between the narrator and narratee agents is conceived in terms of reading operations, especially commentary. The function of the interpreting character is thematized as that of the interpretant, the agent dramatizing and anticipating the actual reception of the work in which s/he appears. The prefiguration of interpretation is also analyzed with the help of such concepts as allegory of interpetation and transference. A deconstructive "methodology" is tentatively sketched on the basis of deconstructive critics' and theorists' readings. Features of self-reflexivity and metafictionality are presented and problematized with the help of narratology and deconstruction. Various instances of resistance, ranging from the ideological to the textual, are introduced and criticized. The term "resisting narratee" is tentatively introduced to account for both ideological criticism and narratology. To prepare the way from theory to application, such key presuppositions of narratology as communication, voice, and the narratee's gender and "race" are reread from the viewpoints of resistance and deconstruction.

The commentary in the three Updike novels is classified on a functional and enunciative basis. The novels' narrators are definitely biased in relation to the narratees, which makes it possible to construct resisting narratees reading against the narrators' intentions and preferences. Each novel features allegories of interpretation (disputes between characters in Rabbit Redux and The Coup; sermons in A Month of Sundays), dramatizing and anticipating actual reception. The novels include moments of self-reflection of various kinds. The opposition between speech and writing is found and deconstructed in the novels. Each novel also has other oppositions (e.g. life/writing, act/experience) which their logical articulation undermines.

The portrait of Updike's fiction sketched in the study differs considerably from the generally established, mainstream readings of his work. Updike appears to be closer to American postmodernists than is usually acknowledged.

Keywords: reader-response criticism, resisting reading, deconstruction, narratology, narrator, narratee, commentary, intertextuality, metafiction, gender, race; Updike, John; Rabbit Redux, A Month of Sundays, The Coup

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is one of the commonplaces of the rhetoric of the Acknowledgements to recount the thorny or at least winding path that led to the work at long last finished. A glance backwards supposedly reveals a hitherto hidden teleology in the scholar's digressive or procrastinating pursuits. Helpmates - mental, financial, or institutional - are paid homage to, and at the same time, as if by accident, the chance to drop a host of distinguished scholars' names is utilized. On the other hand, the narrative of the Acknowledgements ritually tends to plea for forgiveness for the author who continually preferred reading and writing to family life.

The conventions of the Acknowledgements thus acknowledged, I shall not, however, abstain from indulging in them myself. Quite the contrary, now that the rhetoric is bared, I hope that the thanks are all the more sincere.

Sirkka Heiskanen-Mäkelä, Sinikka Tuohimaa, and Pirjo Ahokas scrupulously read and commented on an earlier version of the present thesis. My supervisor at WCU, Carol Shloss, was a perceptive and encouraging reader of my meandering writing. At more recent stages of the project, Pekka Tammi, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Ross Chambers, Brian McHale, and Peter Brooks kindly took pains in commenting on my metacritical ruminations disguised as seminar papers. The active participants in various seminars and scholarly meetings are too many to mention here; *you* probably know who I have in mind.

My reviewers, Andrew Bennett and Pirjo Ahokas, responded to the final version of the typescript - and resisted its weaknesses - in an exemplary fashion. The blame is not theirs if I sometimes preferred resistance to obedience.

Tarmo Kunnas, Pekka Lilja, Teivas Oksala, and Raili Elovaara in the Department of Literature were liberal in supporting a project that was not exactly among their chief scholarly interests.

Financial help was generously provided by the ASLA-Fulbright Foundation and the Academy of Finland along the way.

Bruce Marsland managed to find time for conscientious proofreading of the typescript. Liisa Alarto would promptly babysit at the hectic times of final editing. Kaarina Nieminen, Minna Laukkanen, and Cordon Art B.V. helped in materializing the one megabyte of ascetic information into an attractive book.

Anna-Maija, Iida, and Aura would make the strange familiar and the familiar strange. *Comment ne pas parler?*

Jyväskylä, December, 1997 Mikko Keskinen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about response, resistance, and deconstruction, and it seeks to study these three factors under the headings *reading* and *writing* in three novels (*Rabbit Redux*, *A Month of Sundays*, and *The Coup*) by John Updike. This sentence is a tautological, minimally commenting reading of the title of my thesis, but also a repeated promise of the written contents of the work to follow. On the other hand, my reading of my own title and the reading of that reading condenses some central interests of the thesis. I am interested in the ways in which prose (fiction) can be seen to read itself, to perform operations that are usually allotted to actual readers. It is my contention that reading commences before actual reading starts, that a text responds to itself before it meets a physical respondent. That self-response, for its part, can be seen as a means of affecting (either by helping or hindering) actual reading.

By the same token, writing, the simultaneous object and means of reading before reading, comprises forces that unintentionally, by the very necessity of inscription, implicitly pose significatory questions that writing itself does not explicitly want to answer. Writing can also be seen to reflect, to duplicate its own structures, codes, and themes in a numbers of ways that have some bearing on the status and reception of the work that it constitutes. But the actual reader is not necessarily confined to a respondent position predetermined by writing and its own reading. The possibility of resistance can be realized in various ways, one of which is, perhaps, invisibly inscribed in writing itself.

To comment more extensively, to explicate in a more accessible academic manner, I shall give an overview of my thesis, its structure, theoretical and methodological underpinnings, and justification of the project in general.

The thesis is divided into two major parts. I shall start with a lengthy theoretical section and then move on to the applicatory part, which concentrates on three novels by John Updike. As for methodology, I shall combine several modern approaches to theorize and problematize my concerns: narratology, reader-response, feminist and gender criticism, theories of self-reflexivity and resisting reading, and deconstruction. The theories will be presented and applied under the general headings, reading and writing, in such a way that the former relates to narratology and reader-response criticism, and the latter to deconstruction and studies on self-reflexive or metafiction.

The two main headings will be treated together in connection with resistance, which will utilize feminist and gender criticism, post-narratology, and deconstruction. Before going into the Updike novels, strategies of resistance and deconstruction will be applied to the classic form of narratology that the thesis opens with.

In the narratological sections of my thesis, I shall concentrate on the roles of, and communication between, the narrator and narratee agents. The narrator's commentary will be conceived as a set of reading operations usually performed by the narratee(s), and readers, both implied and actual. The commentary will be analyzed with the help of Roland Barthes's five codes together with my own additions to them. My account of the narratee's roles and functions will mainly be based on books and articles by Gerald Prince, who has been a leading scholar on the subject. I shall, at that point, present narratology in a rather straightforward, uncritical way and problematize the discipline at the end of the theoretical section. Reader-response criticism will chiefly relate to the conception of characters as interpreters - or, in Naomi Schor's terms, interpretants - dramatizing and anticipating the actual reception of the work in which they appear. The phenomenon will also be analyzed with the help of such concepts as allegory of interpretation and transference; the former is my own coinage analogous with Paul de Man's allegory of reading but with crucial differences, and the latter stems from psychoanalysis and a number of (psycho-aesthetic, postnarratological, and deconstructive) literary critics applying the term.

Deconstruction will be treated in connection with Jacques Derrida's basic speech/writing opposition and with the concepts relating to it (eg., *différance*, supplement, trace, erasure, and iterability). A deconstructive "methodology" of criticism will be sketched on the basis of deconstructive critics' (Jonathan Culler, Barbara Johnson, Shoshana Felman) and theorists' (Culler, Rodolphe Gasché) readings. The last feature of writing proper - its self-referentiality in the form of metafiction - will be based on standard theories on the subject, and will also incorporate traces of narratology and deconstruction in the way it is presented. Lucien Dällenbach's taxonomy of the cases of *mise en abyme* will be utilized in classifying the moments of self-reflexion.

The instances of resistance, ranging from the ideological to the textual, will be charted on the basis of Judith Fetterley, gay and lesbian theorists, Ross Chambers, Shoshana Felman, Roland Barthes, Garrett Stewart, Jacques Derrida, and Yves Bonnefoy. The term *resisting narratee* will tentatively be introduced in this connection to account for both ideological criticism and narratology.

I shall then return to narratology and reread some of its key concepts from the viewpoints of resistance and deconstruction. This gesture prepares the way for the transition from theory to application, since the combination of structuralist narratology and deconstruction or poststructuralist theories is an uneasy one without some mediating metacritical moves.

It is not my intention to pursue a strict economy between the theory and application. Some phenomena dealt with in the first section will probably not be of use in my reading of the Updike novels, and that reading will, for its part, be likely to bring up features not anticipated in the theory. The theoretical section is designed to be general and applicable to other works besides the Updike novels, the reading of which is meant to account for their specificity.

I have chosen to study John Updike's three novels published in the 1970s - *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *A Month of Sundays* (1975), and *The Coup* (1978). Even a quick glance at studies on Updike shows that critics have tended to read his novels and short stories from archetypal-mythical, theologic, philosophical, intertextual, or sociological viewpoints. Recently, Updike's fiction has also been read from the point of view of gender, especially masculinity (cf. Sethuraman 1993; O'Connell 1996). Although these approaches are a justifiable and usually fruitful means of deciphering Updike's fiction, they have ignored some equally vital elements in him.[1] For instance, the function of history in Updike was systematically analyzed no earlier than 1988 (see Ristoff 1988). In a similar fashion, readings concentrating on the self-conscious, metafictional, and "postmodern" aspects of Updike's fiction have remained sporadic and marginal. This is all the more surprising, because by the end of the 1970s Updike had moved from "traditional" realistic-modernist novels to more experimental fiction (for example, in the short stories of *Bech: A Book* [1970], and in the three novels studied in the present thesis), which lends itself more obviously to structuralist, narratological, or deconstructive readings.

Apparently Updike has continually been regarded as the limited realistic depictor of middle-class American life, of minor personal crises in suburban settings, that he was early in his career. Updike is usually set apart from the postmodern American writers who emerged approximately at the same time as him. Kathleen Lathrop articulates a common conception of the author by stating that

> [w]hereas postmodernist writers such as John Hawkes, John Barth, and Thomas Pynchon attempt to evoke the chaos and anxiety of post-World War Two America through a fiction that is not only nonrealistic but antirealistic, Updike has remained for the most part fairly strictly within the confines of realism, increasingly incorporating topical events and historical personages into the framework of his novels.[2]

Updike, who was born in Shillington, Pennsylvania, in 1932, debuted as a short story writer and a poet in the mid-fifties, and his first published book was a collection of poetry, *The Carpentered Hen*, in 1958. The next year he published his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair*, and a collection of short stories. The novel was greeted with critical enthusiasm because of its unlikely subject matter (it is set in an old people's home) and stylistic virtuosity. The year 1961 saw the publication of another Updike novel, *Rabbit, Run*, which was to be followed by three sequels with the same protagonist, forming, in the next three decades, the so-called Rabbit tetralogy. *The Centaur* (1963) recast ancient mythology in a modern setting and won the National Book Award. *The Couples* (1968) aroused controversy because of its uninhibited depiction of sex, and consequently became a best-seller and made Updike a celebrity. In the sixties, Updike, an exceptionally versatile writer, also published short stories, adaptatations of classics for children, criticism, poetry, and essays. In the 1980s and '90s Updike finished his Rabbit tetralogy and *The Scarlet Letter* trilogy, continued his series of Bech stories, wrote independent novels and collections of short stories, and an autobiography as well as literary and art criticism.

---

1 For a useful survey of Updike scholarship up to the early 1980s, see the "Introduction" in Macnaughton 1982, 1-36.

2 Lathrop 1985, 249-50. Larry McCaffery uses the same argument - that Updike's basic impulse for writing is conventional realism - to justify the omission of the author from a guide to postmodern fiction (McCaffery 1986, xiii).

Many of Updike's latest works can be read as experiments in the sub-genres of the novel. *Roger's Version* (1986) is a combination of metaphysical science fiction and the detective novel, resulting in a kind of techno-theologic whodunit. *S.* (1988) revives the (female) epistolary novel. *Memories of the Ford Administration* (1992) is a purported memoir or a confessional novel, thus echoing *The Coup* and *A Month of Sundays* respectively. *Roger's Version* and *Memories of the Ford Administration* also represent the academic or college novel. Updike's three most recent novels utilize the commonplaces of popular fiction. *Brazil* (1994) is an exotic love and adventure story related to South American magic realism, whereas *In the Beauty of the Lilies* (1996) taps the conventions of the popular family saga and Hollywood novel. Updike's latest novel, *Toward the End of Time* (1997), is a futuristic novel set in the 2020s, and it mixes science fiction with Thoreau-esque meditation of nature.

In his novelistic output of the last two decades, Updike has experimented in other ways as well. *S.* and large parts of *In the Beauty of the Lilies* feature female narrators or focalizers of different ages; *Brazil* is set in South America and cast with Brazilian characters only, which resembles the foreign interests of *The Coup*.

Because of his choice of subject matters, style, and narrative techniques, and because of his (at least seemingly) conservative opinions - the promotion of Christianity and the Vietnam war - in the 1960s, Updike has been treated in a somewhat condescending way by postmodern writers; for instance, John Barth has called him "the Andrew Wyeth of our literature,"[3] referring to Updike's fellow Pennsylvanian painter, who was admittedly skilful but who is now irrevocably outdated. In addition to this, Updike's graphic depiction of sex, the condescending attitude towards women in his fiction, and the overt misogynism of his many male characters have labelled him a male chauvinist, especially among feminist critics.

My reading of the Updike novels may emphasize some aspects typically found in postmodern fiction, but it is not my intention to rehabilitate Updike as a postmodernist, nor do I imply that realism or modernism would be somehow less significant than postmodernism. Rather, my intention is to read Updike's novels from a more "textual" point of view than has usually been done. This approach also helps one to investigate and undo the textual workings of such ideological matters as sexism in Updike's fiction.

What the present thesis mainly intends to do is to study how the three Updike novels read themselves, present reading, or otherwise tie in with the problem of interpretation, and, on the other hand, how the texts treat (the act of) writing, manifest themselves as writing, and utilize the logic of inscription. My intention is not, then, to deal with the elementary school curriculum as presented by Updike's fiction, as an ill-intentioned reader might conceive my rather easily misleading subtitle. Nor will I be interested in Updike as a combination of an author and actual critic, and in how the latter perhaps helps one to understand the former.[4]

---

3 Gado 1973, 135-36.

4 Incidentally, the present thesis initially bore the title "Reading and Writing in John Updike," thus echoing Susanne Kappeler's intriguing study *Writing and Reading in Henry James* (1980), half of which is devoted to James as a critic. By abandoning the "original" title I wished to direct attention from exactly this aspect of (quite possibly sound) Updike scholarship to a more general treatment of the problematics and exemplify it with the help of the three novels in question.

Why these particular novels by Updike? As I mentioned above, the 1970s marked a change in Updike's fiction, calling for the kind of approach I am to use in this thesis. On the other hand, my selection of the novels could be objected to on several grounds. First of all, two of them are parts of larger wholes - *Rabbit Redux* the second part of the Rabbit tetralogy, and *A Month of Sundays* the first of the so-called *Scarlet Letter* trilogy - which makes the novels' individual status somewhat problematic. Furthermore, the novels do not even form a continuum on the basis of their publication dates, for *Marry Me* was published in the mid-period between *A Month of Sundays* and *The Coup*. To defend my choice against the critique I have anticipated, I give the following justifications. I have dealt with the Rabbit novels, albeit from quite a different viewpoint, in my Master's thesis, and shall in the present study make references to the tetralogy's other novels when necessary. As for *A Month of Sundays*, it being the first part of the suite gives it relative independence (obviously it will not hark back to the non-existent anterior parts of the series), and I shall probably return to the whole trilogy in some future study. That the novels were not exactly published in succession is not relevant to my interests, because my intention is not to study the mechanism of a change in Updike's fiction, but what that change has brought about in it.[5] What is relevant and potentially fruitful as regards the problem of writing is the fact that all the three novels studied here belong to different sub-genres: *Rabbit Redux* is a fairly conventional realistic-modernist novel, *A Month of Sundays* a diary novel, and *The Coup* a purported memoir or autobiography.

To return to the Updike scholarship, I have, for the most part, ignored the studies published in the sixties and early seventies which do not deal with the novels I do. Having read most of the scholarly books and articles written about Updike, I must admit that only a few of them were directly relevant to my project. In its sensitivity to metafiction, George Hunt's book (1980) turned out to be stimulating. Robert Detweiler's (1984) keen eye for Updike's stylistic characteristics was very beneficial. Judie Newman (1988) is every now and then very close to my concerns, but rarely proceeds further to the deconstructive direction that I am interested in. On the whole, some articles about the particular novels were more useful than book-length monographs, which rather forcedly tend to read Updike's oeuvre as a continuum - usually at the cost of the individual nature of a given work.[6] The Updike scholarship

---

5 To be exact, *Marry Me* in a way belongs to Updike's 1960s period, because it was started at the same time as *The Couples*, and only finished in the 1970s (cf. Hunt 1980, 118).

6 For articles reading against the grain of the standard Updike reception, see, for instance, Detweiler 1979 and Matthews 1983 on *A Month of Sundays*, or Markle 1982 and Schueller 1991 on *The Coup*).
Modern Fiction Studies has dedicated two special issues to Updike (20:1, 1974; 37:1, 1991), complete with selected checklists of Updike scholarship. Thorburn & Eiland 1979 and Macnaughton 1982 include some of the most valuable interpretations of Updike, some of them previously unpublished. One could use the latest *MFS* special issue to indicate which Updike novels are ranked as worth writing about: the Rabbit tetralogy, either as a whole or as individual parts, is given three articles out of the total eight, one essay is about the *Scarlet Letter* trilogy's *Roger's Version*, and the Bech short stories, *The Coup*, and rather surprisingly considering its bad critical reputation, *Marry Me* are given an article each. Obviously, as limited a corpus as this is not representative, but it can, however, point at areas of interest in recent Updike studies.
The latest edition of the *MLA Bibliography* (1981-2/1997) offers a somewhat different picture of the state of Updike studies. The Rabbit novels, the *Scarlet Letter* trilogy, and certain short stories still tend to be in the centre of critics' interest.

concerning the three novels studied here will however, be utilized indirectly, as a demonstration of the way the novels' allegories of interpretation transfer to actual reception.

Updike and deconstruction do not form an obvious pair. On the contrary, there are some denigrating remarks on Derrida and deconstruction in Updike's recent fiction which seem, however, to confuse deconstruction with destruction or annulment.[7] On the other hand, deconstruction has usually paid attention to canonized literature and philosophy as Derrida's readings show. Updike is, indeed, a canonized author in contemporary American literature, and he is repeatedly shortlisted for the Nobel Prize for literature.

The dualistic division inherent in the two key words of the study - reading and writing in my subtitle - does not, however, necessarily mean that they stay separate or that they are intended to remain that way. In fact, the two concepts and the critical approaches related to them overlap and enrich one another. What I hope to achieve in the course of the theoretical part of the thesis is a story of reading and writing starting from a schematic, strictly textual narratological model, and moving towards accounting for actual readers and contexts (gender, the extratextual conventions of reading, the presuppositions of Western metaphysics, intertexts, resistant practices). The movement of the theory thus mimes the extension of narratology or reader-oriented criticism - from the literary text as such to natural, scientific and other narratives as well as to bearing in mind contexts of various kinds - during the last two or three decades. A similar overlapping and mixing will take place in the three key words of the main title. Contrary to the established usage of the word, *response* will at first refer to reading within the boundaries of fiction, then to actual (scholarly) reception. *Resistance* is, of course, a form of response, as is *deconstruction*, which the former often utilizes in its oppositional endeavour. Nevertheless, I use my deficient or overlapping key words for strategic or heuristic reasons; they tentatively help me to thematize certain intertwined phenomena in separation and to avoid sweeping generalizations. The main title could also be read as a progressive narrative of my own critical interests - from narratology via ideological criticism to deconstruction. The preceding narrative elements are in way by-passed but at the same they are vital to the formation of the whole. For instance, in spite of its defects, narratology is an efficient means of reading complex texts, as the present thesis, I hope, will show.[8]

My story of reading consciously omits many other possible narrative lines and directions, which have emerged in the change in the paradigm of literary studies during the last three decades, resulting in a shift of focus from the work and the author to the text and the reader. As Tzvetan Todorov points out, in the study of literature the problem of reading has been approached from two opposite directions. First, actual readers have been studied from the point of view of their social, historical, collective, or individual variability. Second, readers within a text -

---

7 Cf. Updike 1993, 35, 50, 52, 81, 88, 103, 112, 156, 175, 201, 220, 282; and Updike 1988, 71, 177.

8 Ifri's study on Proust's narratees (Ifri 1983) is a good example of the laboriousness and, on the other hand, the profitability of minute narratological analysis. For equally satisfying narratological readings of the functions of the narratees in Nabokov's fiction, see Tammi 1985, 264-79.

characters, narratees - have been classified and their functions evaluated.[9] The former approach could be exemplified with the research that Norman Holland has been carrying out in his psychoaesthetically oriented works, or by German reception aesthetics (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser) in its emphasis on the historicity and hence the changing nature of reading. The latter direction, of course, relates to structuralism, semiotics of reading, and narratology (Roland Barthes, Wayne C. Booth, Todorov, Gerard Genette, Gerald Prince, Seymour Chatman, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan), which mainly form the road taken in the present thesis. I shall not, however, operate on the somewhat metaphysical level of the implied author and implied reader (cf. section 4.3. below), but shall concentrate on the more textually tangible and hence less equivocal narrator/narratee dyad.

The division proposed by Todorov does not, of course, describe all the possible or even actualized studies of reading. For example, many critics have attempted at sketching an interactive theory of reading, accounting for both the text and reader influencing and changing one another, the relation between the two being like that between a psychoanalyst and analysand participating in the dynamics of transference and countertransference (e.g., Meredith Anne Skura, Shoshana Felman, Peter Brooks). My approach accounts for the possibility of transference, but ignores reception aesthetics chiefly because my interest lies mainly in textuality, in reading performed within the text, and actualized reception will be dealt with only marginally, in the form of critics' interpretations of Updike's fiction. This is not an empirical study of reception; the only actual reader to be probed, besides the Updike scholars, will be myself. But, like all roads not taken, reception aesthetics is "present" in my thesis by its almost complete absence, by the difference from my actualized choices.

Hence, my approach is partly in keeping with *science de la littérature* defined by Roland Barthes: "[it] will not teach us what meaning must definitely be attributed to a work; it will not provide or even discover a meaning but will describe the logic according to which meanings are engendered."[10] It is interesting how Barthes's poetics can refer both to the actual reception of a work (actual readers' interpretations) and to the mechanisms producing, enabling, or controlling it (text's properties and/or extratextual circumstances). Accordingly, the basic concepts of this kind of poetics are connected with reading. For instance, Barthes's famous distinction between *lisible* (readerly) and *scriptible* (writerly) stems from the varying degree of resistance a text makes to the reader.[11] But my interest in resisting reading and deconstruction will problematize the (implicitly objective) *scientificity* of any poetics or form of criticism. Meanings will not only be engendered, but they will also be strategically produced, for instance, by gendering a text in reading.

---

9 Todorov 1980b, 67.

10 Quoted in Culler 1983, 32.

11 In his *S/Z*, Barthes defines *lisible* as a classic, somewhat transparent text, which we know how to read, because it accords with the codes, and *scriptible* as a modern, self-conscious text opposing the codes and thus resisting reading (Barthes 1970, 10-11). Consequently, the latter kind of text can only be (re)produced, (re)written by the reader.

1 LECTIO PRAECURSORIA: READING BEFORE READING

1.1 Narrator: Sender as Commentator

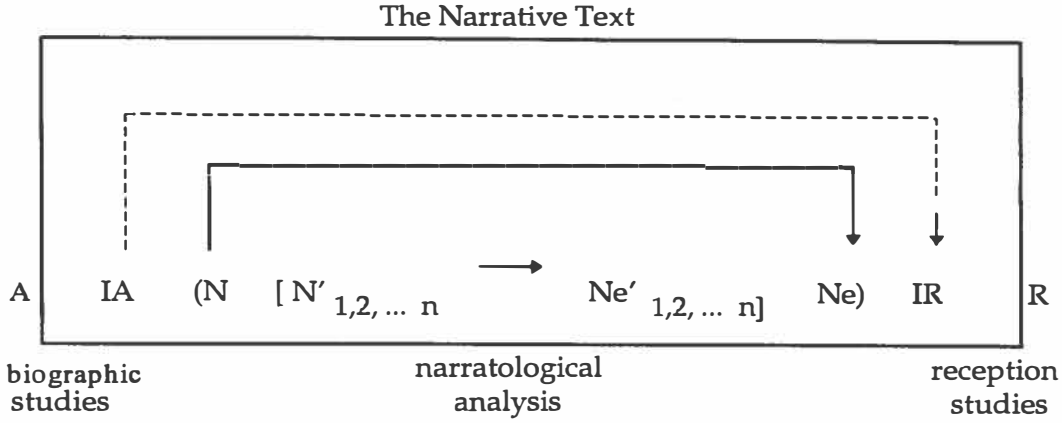
If there is one single presupposition in all the branches and developments of narratology, it might be the idea of communication. Anglo-Saxon narratologists, the Russian semioticians, the Tel Aviv poeticians, the French structuralists, contextualists, feminist and post-narratologists share at least two corollaries of that presupposition: Within the imaginary boundaries of the narrative text, narrative agents are assumed to communicate, i.e. send and receive messages. Analogously, narrative text as a whole can be conceived as communication with actual, ontologically and categorically different, readers outside it. Although several problems arise from this presupposition, for now I shall heuristically follow it in my presentation of the narrator's and narratee's characterestics. The questions concerning the concept of communication, the metaphorization and anthropomorphization of narrative agents, and the role and status of actual readers will be dealt with in chapters 3 and 4 below.

In the theorization of narrative fiction, the concept of communication is reduced to that of narrating and receiving, or almost synonymously, of writing and reading. What this state of affairs has amounted to is that the concepts of author and reader, banished from the realm of critical theory by New Criticism, were revived on the emergence of narratology, albeit supplemented with the excusing premodification "implied."[1] One of the first and best-known contributions to the question of narrative fiction from this viewpoint can be found in Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Unsatisfied with Booth's terminology, Seymour Chatman has tried to treat the matter more systematically in his *Story and Discourse* (1978) and, recently, in *Coming to Terms* (1990). Pekka Tammi has combined the two critics' original insights in the so-called "applied Booth-Chatman model," presented in the following diagram[2]:

---

1 Cf. Tammi 1985, 226.

2 Ibid., 227.
I shall not go into the heated theoretical discussion concerning the scope and sheer necessity of such narratological concepts as the implied author or the narrator. It will suffice



A = real (historical) author
IA = implied author
N = narrator
N′ = narrators within embedded narrative levels
R = real reader
IR = implied reader
Ne = narratee
Ne′ = narratees of embedded narratives
⟶ = direct narrative communication
⋯⟶ = indirect communication

FIGURE 1

The structure of the model is both hierarchical and symmetric: the agents can (supposedly) communicate with other agents on their own narrative level only. This holds true in the "unmarked" case of realist-modernist fiction, or at least in the idealization of that mode. In the actual practice of narratives, however, the pure categories tend to be broken, especially in parodic and self-conscious narratives.[3] In the present study, I shall concentrate on the "communication" between the narrator and narratee agents. I shall be, appropiately enough, silent about the implied author/implied reader relation here and return to the problem of mute communication in connection with deconstructive critique of narratology (section 4.3.). My choice of concentration has led me to use Gerald Prince, whose contribution to the study of the narrator-narratee relationship is outstanding, as my main narratological source in this part of the study.

---

to note that Booth himself has developed his model in his later writings (*A Rhetoric of Irony*, 1974, and the revised edition of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 1984) on account of other narratologists' criticism. For important objections to the concept of the implied author, see Genette 1988, 135-54; Rojola 1991; Vainikkala 1993, 242-59.

3 Cf. Tammi 1984, 124-28; Tammi 1985, 230. It is questionable whether a general model is able to describe the narrative structure of a specific narrative accurately. This is indeed one of the central issues in current narratological discussion; a given narrative, even a seemingly realistic one, often self-consciously anticipates and at the same time undermines the model created for its analysis (cf. Tammi 1991, 182-83). I shall return to this topic in section 1.3. below.

All narration presupposes at least one narrator, i.e., an agent who recounts the events.[4] Quite similarly, every narrative presupposes at least one narratee, i.e., an agent whom the narrator addresses.[5]

The narrator not only presents the narrative but also functions as a "reader," as a guide to the act of reading. Prince defines reading as

> an activity that presupposes a text (a set of visually presented linguistic symbols from which meaning can be extracted), a reader (an agent capable of extracting meaning from that text), and an interaction between the text and the reader such that the latter is able to answer correctly at least some questions about the meaning of the former.[6]

Prince's examples of "correct" answers that a text provides include such straightforward information given by the narrator as a character's name, age, or looks.[7] By definition, however, literature is more complex than that: a literary text usually allows for more than one possible answer to some of the (relevant) questions asked about it. Semantically, a single word or sentence can have a number of meanings. Thematically, on the level of *dianoia*, the variety of possible interpretations is similarly great. Polysemy also applies to such seemingly unambiguous elements of fiction as characters' names. For example, Bonelly in Beckett's *En attendant Godot* connotes both "bon et lie" and "bon Eli."[8] Both of these connotations can be justified as valid indexes of the character's traits.

Although a literary text is polysemous, the actual reader is not without help in his or her interpretive task. The text, besides being the common, albeit not unproblematically solid, ground for different readers, can itself, through the narrator, present (some of) its possible readings:

> [A narrative text] performs some of the reading operations that a given reader may perform. It specifically answers questions pertaining to the nature, the meaning, the role, the appropriateness of its constituent parts. It functions as a text reading itself by commenting explicitly and directly on these constituent parts takes as units in one of [Barthes's] codes.[9]

---

4 Prince 1983, 7. I agree with Prince in this. Chatman (1983, 150), however, claims that a narrative does not necessarily need a narrator. He introduces the term "non-narrated story" by which he means "direct presentation," "a kind of overhearing by the audience" (Chatman 1983, 146-47); events are shown, not told. This is a confusing statement, because, by definition, narrative always needs to be mediated from the implied author to the narratee (and to the implied reader). Since the implied author is "reconstructed by the reader" and has "no voice, no direct means of communicating" (Chatman 1983, 148), it is the narrator who is to recount the events. Chatman rejects the term "minimally narrated," although it would save him from awkward conceptual contradictoriness and describe the situation more accurately. "Minimally narrated" refers to a "neutral," covert narrator, who will not intrude in the events by connecting them, by making moral judgments, and so on (Chatman 1983, 147). A good example of this kind of narrator can be found in "The Killers" by Ernest Hemingway. In his later theorizing, Chatman has revised his early formulations to avoid the apparent contradiction in terms (cf. Chatman 1990a, 115-16).

5 Prince 1983, 7.

6 Prince 1980, 225.

7 Ibid., 225-26.

8 Ibid., 226-27. This kind of "transegmental drift" indeed dramatizes the many-faceted nature of graphic inscription. For an outstanding discussion of "phonemic reading" accounting for both the graphic and the auditive, see Stewart 1990; cf. also Keskinen 1992.

9 Ibid., 230.

In Prince's terminology, reading and commentary are almost synonymous functionally, as can be detected in his dictionary definition of the latter concept:

> A commentarial excursus by the narrator; an authorial intrusion; a narrational intervention going beyond the identification or description of existents and the recounting of events. In commentary, the narrator explains the meaning or significance of a narrative element, makes value judgements, refers to worlds transcending the characters' world, and/or comments on his or her own narration.[10]

In the present thesis, I shall follow Prince's terminological equation and utilize the possibility of interfacing narrative agents' performances with actual or possible reception.

1.1.1 Coded Commentary

The codes that Prince refers to above were introduced by Roland Barthes in his study *S/Z* (1970). Barthes breaks down a work's constituent parts and then reunites them. He scrutinizes Balzac's short story "Sarrasine" by dividing it into 561 segments and then applying his five codes to them. The codes are:

1. **the hermeneutic code** "according to which a narrative or part thereof can be structured as a path leading from a question or enigma to its (possible) answer or solution. A passage can signify in terms of the hermeneutic code if it suggests or asserts that there is a question to be asked or an enigma to be solved; if it formulates that question or enigma; if it announces or alludes to a (possible) answer or solution; or if it constitutes that answer or solution, represents a contribution to it, or acts as an obstacle to it."[11]
2. **the cultural code or referential code** is the most clearly cultural of all the culturally determined codes; in this code, "a narrative or part thereof refers to a given cultural background, to various stereotypic bodies of knowledge (physical, psychological, literary, artistic, philosophic, historic, mediacal, etc.) and cultural objects. An important function of the referential code is to activate models of what is *vraisamblable* (verisimilar, lifelike)."[12] For example, shaking one's head from left to right a number of times signifies, in Western culture, negation.[13]
3. **the semic code** makes it possible for a narrative or its part to allow for the construction of characters (and settings); a unit of this code is called the seme, a signified connoting a certain character or setting trait.[14] For example, certain patterns of behaviour and features of outer appearance are associated with stereotypical charactereristics of masculinity or feminity, and accordingly they function as semes of gender difference.[15]
4. **the proairetic code or the code of actions** enables one to structure a narrative or its part as "a series of action sequences which themselves can be combined into larger sequences, etc.; the code regulating the folding of actions into larger actions or their unfolding into smaller ones; the code governing the construction of plot".[16] The code makes it possible to summarize a narrative, because it signals which units are

---

10 Prince 1987, s.v. 'commentary.'

11 Ibid., 40. I shall utilize Prince in presenting the codes because of his concise and exact formulations. Cf. also Barthes 1970, 25-29.

12 Ibid., 17, 80.

13 Cf. Prince 1980, 227.

14 Prince 1987, 85.

15 Cf. Prince's (1987, 85) example of an effeminate male character.

16 Ibid., 77.

indispensable and how to combine them into larger wholes.[17]

5. **the symbolic code** allows for a symbolic dimension in a narrative or its part; the code also governs the production and reception of symbolic meaning.[18] "Given a series of antithetical terms in a text, they can - through associations and extrapolations regulated in the symbolic code - be taken to represent more abstract, fundamental, and general oppositions and meanings".[19] Thus, a constituent part of narrative can signify something greater, more general, or more fundamental besides what it seemingly means.[20]

It is questionable whether these five codes are enough or the right ones to describe a text sufficiently. At least Barthes's model ignores the code of (the act of) narration or of narrator. Therefore I shall propose **the code of narration or writing** to amend this apparent lack in Barthes's theory. Admittedly, Barthes created his model in order to analyze a specific story, not to form a universal theory, which inevitably makes the number of codes vary according to each application. In any case, Barthes's codes provide one, possibly heuristic, way of analyzing narrative.

As I stated above, a text can explicitly comment on its constituent parts conceived as units in some of Barthes's codes. Instead of making the reader ask and thus decode the meaning of a unit, a text can ask (and even answer) the questions itself.[21] A text may answer questions pertaining to the cultural, proairetic, hermeneutic, or symbolic meaning and function of the events described.[22] Such **paratextual** or more specifically **peritextual** features as chapter and section titles point out the position and importance of a given unit in terms of the proairetic code.[23] A narrative text can foreground the hermeneutic dimension of one of its constituent parts by deciding that it functions as an enigma.[24] Also, any constituent part may be

---

17 Prince 1980, 228.

18 Prince 1987, 95.

19 Ibid., 95.

20 Ibid., 229.

21 Ibid., 230n.

22 Ibid., 232.

23 Ibid., 232-33. For an outstanding discussion on the paratextual aspects of narrative, see Genette 1987. By paratext Genette means that by which a text becomes a book and offers itself to its readers and to the public. An avid categorizer, Genette divides the paratext into several subgroups. **Peritex**t is what immediately surrounds the text, e.g., author's name, title, preface, chapter titles, notes, and blurbs. **Epitext** refers to such more remote material as interviews, letters, journal entries, which, however, may in the long run become part of the book when it is reissued. Genette makes further distinctions by taking the temporal aspect into consideration; hence, anterior, original, ulterior, belated, or posthumous paratexts. (Genette 1987, 7-19 & passim.)
For the titles and epigraphs, and their relation to the "rules of configuration," see Rabinowitz 1987, 113-14, 187-89. It is a literary convention to treat the titles of "serious novels" from the 19th century on metaphorically or symbolically; at the same time they are taken as guidance of how the work in question is intended to be read (Rabinowitz 1987, 187). As Wayne C. Booth (1965, 198n) notes, modern works give much more importance to titles and epigraphs than prior literature, because they often remain the sole explicit commentary the reader is provided. Hence, the peritext also comments on other codes besides the proairetic one.
On the other hand, a text can comment on its paratext in a number of ways; for a clarifying account and a taxonomy of the possible cases of this feature, see Sabry 1987, 83-99.

24 Prince 1980, 233. The classical detective story typically stresses the metahermeneutic commentary - enigmas, mysteries, and possible solutions to them - but Prince (1980, 238) claims that "on one level at least, any text giving particular importance to decoding in terms of a hermeneutic code presents itself as a detective story."

given a symbolic reading by the text.[25] The units or passages in a narrative explicitly referring to the codes are **metanarrative** and constitute **metanarrative signs**.[26]

In a similar fashion, when "the communicative act is centered on the code (rather than on one of the other constitutive factors of communication), it (mainly) has a metalingual [or metalinguistic] function."[27] The narrator can provide **metalinguistic commentary** on the words and phrases used if the narratee (and/or the actual reader) is not likely to be acquainted with technical diction, slang, or other locution occupying a relatively narrow semantic field.[28] For example, Hemingway's narratives tend to translate the Spanish phrases characters use.[29] The comments on the code of narration or writing that I proposed above can be realized as **metacritical or evaluative commentary**.

To whom should the various sorts of commentary sketched above be attributed? When the commentary is provided in the main body of the text, in its discourse, it is usually easy to define its source. The situation is less simple with peritexts; the title, epigraph(s), chapter headings and so on are not necessarily by the same agent as the rest of the narrative. So, to talk about narrator's commentary without making distinctions between different narrators or other agents responsible for the given comments is misleading. One way of dodging the whole problem is to vaguely refer to the text reading or commenting on itself. However, to separate the peritextual commentator from the main narrator, I propose the term **editor-narrator**, by which I mean the agent who/which presents a given text to readers as a finished product, complete with the peritextual thresholds.[30]

---

25 Ibid., 234.

26 Prince 1987, 51.

27 Ibid., 50-51.

28 Prince 1980, 230.

29 This kind of commentary can become a mannerism, which is apt to parody; see McKelly 1989, 550-52 for examples of this.

30 The implied author controls this narrator as well, but since that agent is by definition mute, it or s/he cannot be said to articulate the peritexts. Admittedly, Chatman tends to maintain that the implied author is capable of breaking his/her/its silence; for example, an ironic title, like *The Great Gatsby*, is not to be automatically attributed to the narrator, but more conveniently to the implied author (Chatman 1990b, 319-20).
Genette hints at the editing narrator as the articulator of paratexts which are not identified by the (actual or fictional) author's name, but he only concentrates on the actual editing of work (format, notes on the printing, publisher's name, ISBN, etc.) (Genette 1987, 14, 20-37, 70-71). When dealing with the agent responsible for epigraphs, Genette proposes that they be attributed either to the (main) narrator or to the (actual) author, depending on the particular case; for instance, the Dante epigraphs in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* are by the narrator rather than by the author (Genette 1987, 143). On the other hand, Genette ignores the authorship of chapter headings, probably assuming that they belong to the realm of the narrator (Genette 1987, 271-92), but in some cases the concept of the editor-narrator is more appropriate.
Although my coinage has unhappy associations with stories found in the attic or in a chest of drawers, and then edited by a rummager to be published, I do not, of course, propose that there be such a frame-story, nor that the the editor-narrator be materialized as a character. My coinage is purely textual, referring to an agent of the same order as the main narrator or narratee(s) and leaving the actual editorial procedures at the publishing house aside; the editor-narrator is the agent to whom/which the reader can attribute the responsibility for the peritexts.
For an application of my model, see Keskinen 1993.

1.1.2 Corollaries of Commentary

Although a text reads itself in a certain manner, it does not necessarily mean that an actual, physical reader will accept it and interpret the text accordingly. Different readers tend to stress different codes, which amounts to different readings of the same text. Nevertheless, these "reading interludes," as Prince calls them, have a number of functions which influence the reading process: they serve, by slowing down the pace of narration, as a rhythmic device; they characterize the narrator; they help to define the narrator/narratee relationship[31]; they reveal the communicability of a given narrative; they emphasize certain aspects of the identity of a given text; and present at least a superficial view of the text in question.[32] Of course, a text only makes *some* of its symbolic dimensions explicit or defines the hermeneutic status of *some* situations.[33]

Furthermore, deliberate misreadings or contradictory interpretations of a unit by ill-intentioned or ill-informed narrators are not uncommon in literature. Hence, a narrative text can both help the actual reader and lead him or her astray; it can perform not only as a reader but also as a "counterreader."[34] In a similar fashion, the very act of providing commentary can be interpreted as an intervention into the realm of the reader, as an act of power aimed at the free will of the reading subject. Thus, the narrator's commentary can, in fact, cause effects contrary to the presupposed welcoming of help.

An experienced reader will not automatically accept the readings a text provides at face value, but read (i.e., doubt, judge, and evaluate) them as well. The reader is, then, in the position of a critic who, besides interpreting a given text, also deciphers other critics' anterior readings of it.

It is also to be remembered that to regard a narrator's acts as commentary and, even more so, to generalize that into a model for reading is itself a model for metaphorical reading. It could be argued that *all* of the narrator's discourse is commentary of a sort, since words and phrases selected - or more generally, "the identification or description of of existents and the recounting of events"[35] - at the same time leave others unselected, unidentified, undescribed, and unrecounted, and hence (supposedly) relegate them to a less significant position. In this respect, all discourse is implicit commentary and fiction starts to equal criticism. In a similar fashion, Prince's equation of commentary with reading that I alluded to towards the beginning of this chapter puts the actual reader in the *functional position* of a narrator and vice versa. In the former alternative, is not the actual reader not only possibly but,

---

31 The amount and nature of commentary the narrator provides reveals his or her attitude towards the narratee; for example, if the comments are numerous and deal with common knowledge, the narrator is likely to be condescending. The distribution of reading interludes within a text can suggest that the narrator's attitude changes in the course of narration; for instance, if the narrator's abundant metaliguistic commentary diminishes or ceases altogether, it may indicate that s/he has come to rely on the narratee's ability to understand. (Prince 1980, 236-37.)

32 Ibid., 236-37.

33 Ibid., 239. The impact of these explications works by extension: the symbolic reading of one segment may be an instruction to read the whole text in a similar manner.

34 Ibid., 239.

35 Prince 1987, s.v. 'commentary.'

by definition, necessarily an intrusive subject, performing interventions that go beyond identification, description, and recounting? These ideas come close to some post-structuralist thematizations, but as such the formulation is so all-encompassing that it is *practically* useless in conventional critical work. What that radical equation would mean is the *theoretical* abolition of the presumed difference between object language and metalanguage, and bring criticism into an identity crisis.

In any case, in order to function, the explicit commentary that I have introduced in this chapter also implies considerable metaphorization on the reader's part. Commentary is most likely found when commentary is sought for. It would be appropriate to call this kind of "comment-sensitive" reading a presupposition, a frame of reference logged into before reading. The frame is that of textualist narratology and, for different reasons, post-structuralism. The former stresses textual autonomy and encodedness of meanings, and the latter the textuality of both fiction and criticism. The latter emphasis on textuality also questions Prince's classification, according to which "commentary can be simply ornamental; it can fulfill a rhetorical purpose; and it can function as an essential part of the dramatic structure of the narrative."[36] From a deconstructive viewpoint, no comment, metaphor, analogue, or exemplifying aside is *simply ornamental* in a narrative or text, because everything in it has a *rhetorical function* and is at the same time an *essential part* of, if not the dramatic, then at least the argumentative, structure. This is the case in spite of the denial of these very characteristics in the rhetoric (or in the obedient reading) of a narrative or text.

In my reading of the narrator's commentary in the three Updike novels, I shall both - for heuristic reasons - apply Prince's insights and - for the sake of my post-structuralist interests - account for my own objections to them.

In the next section, I shall deal with the narrator's counterpart, the narratee, and the reading operations s/he/it can - supposedly - perform.

---

36 Prince 1987, s.v. 'commentary.'

1.2 Narratee: Receiver as Reader

According to the communication structure of the Booth-Chatman model, all narration presupposes not only a narrator, i.e., the one who or the instance that recounts the events, but also a narratee, the receptor or receiver whom the narrator addresses.[37] The narratee exists on the same level of communication as the narrator (see fig.1 above) and is not to be confused either with the implied reader or the actual reader, whose positions in the hierarchy of narration are quite different. The narratee can be a listener or a reader, but often the activity s/he performs remains ambiguous; in the present study, I shall, drawing on Prince's argumentation, assume that, unless otherwise stated, a written narration presupposes a reader, and an oral one a listener.[38]

Prince's initial definition of the agent stems from structuralist premises, which can be seen in his emphasis on Jakobsonian communication and hypostazitation of an unmarked case from which all the others can be derived as deviations. Both of these presuppositions can be questioned, and I shall, after presenting the standard structuralist characterization of the narratee, problematize them from deconstructive and gender-consciously resisting viewpoints in chapter 4 below.

1.2.1 Signals

The presence of the narratee in a narrative can be reconstructed on the basis of the varied information provided by the narrator. The most obvious signal directed to the narratee is when s/he is explicitly addressed, when there are "signs of the 'you'" in the text, for instance, "reader," "listener," "my dear," or other references to the narratee's persona, attitude, knowledge, or situation.[39] On the other hand, a narrative can

---

37 Prince 1983, 7. In French, the narratee is called *narrataire*. In the present thesis, I shall use the terms **narratee**, **addressee**, **receiver**, and **enunciatee** as practical synonyms to avoid repetition. Prince (1985, 302) does, however, make a difference between the four: "The narratee constitutes a special case of the enunciatee (to adapt Greimassian terminology): it is the enunciatee - the encoded or inscribed 'you' - in any narrative text and it may or may not coincide with the ostensible addressee of that text and/or with the receiver of it: thus I might explicitly address a narrative to X but (consciously or unconsciously) inscribe Y as a 'you' in it and (accidentally or not) Z may turn out to be its actual receiver."

38 Ibid., 19.

39 Ibid., 13; Prince 1982, 17, 20. Neither Prince nor Piwowarczyk (1976) discusses the possibility of the indefinite or general use of *you*. For example, in the sentence "You cannot have the cake and eat it too," *you* can refer to the person(s) addressed or to anyone, including you and me. It depends on the work in question how the scope of *you* should be defined. However, one could assume that no matter how metaphoric, general, or indefinite the use of *you*, the literal, singular, or definite meaning always lingers on. Chatman (1983, 171) briefly alludes to this possibility, but does not elaborate it, although, in my opinion, the general or impersonal use of *you* and *we* is as important as it is unmarked and idiomatically common in the construction of the narratee. In contrast, I shall pay close attention to these cases in my subsequent reading of the Updike novels.
The case is different with those narratives that are systematically written in the second person singular as Michel Butor's *La Modification* (1957) or Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984). In both novels, *you* clearly refers to the protagonist, who is distanced to the position of an overt narratee; at least in the McInerney novel this discursive decision thematically underlines the protagonist's alienation. I shall return to the problem of second-person narration in section 1.2.4. below.

contain implicit signals which do not differentiate the particular narratee from the unmarked one.[40] Narratees can also be divided into two basic groups: those belonging to the same fictional world (or frame-story) as the narrator (**intradiegetic narratee**) and those outside it (**extradiegetic narratee**).[41] The former one can be exemplified by the jury in Nabokov's *Lolita*, and the latter by any general "reading public" the narrator conjures up with the help of demands relating to reactions, beliefs, or ways of interpreting.[42]

The explicit signals are, of course, the most readily available for the reconstruction of the narratee's portrait. For example, in the opening passage of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, the narratee is addressed as "you who hold this book with a white hand," which indicates that the "you" is a bourgeois woman.[43] Some passages can imply and describe the narratee less obviously. The first person plural (*we*) can include the narratee just as an indefinite pronoun (*one*, *they*), or an impersonal expression may refer to him or her.[44] A narrative can partly consist of questions or pseudo-questions which are not always asked by a character or the narrator (who, however, always articulates them in the form of citing), but must be attributed to the narratee; what s/he wants to find out also characterizes him/her.[45] Similarly, negations can function as a response to the narratee's beliefs or anticipated questions; demonstrative pronouns can refer to another text known to or some extratextual experience shared by the narrator and the narratee; comparisons and analogies help to reconstruct what is familiar to the narratee.[46] The narratee's questions - real, pseudo, or anticipated ones - hence perform the actual reader's supposed reading operations by disclosing the inquiring tendency embedded in the codes.

When the narrator explains his/her characters with the help of metalanguage, metacommentary, or metanarration (cf. previous section), the narratee is provided with **over-justifications** (Fr. *surjustifications*); at the same time the narratee's personality is indirectly clarified: "in overcoming the narratee's defences, in prevailing over [his/her] prejudices, in allaying [his/her] apprehensions, [the over-justifications] reveal them."[47]

The signs of the narratee and their relation to the narratee's portrait can be summarized, as Mary Ann Piwowarczyk has done,[48] in the following chart:

---

40 Prince 1983, 12.

41 Chatman 1983, 254; Prince 1987, 29, 46.

42 Kettunen 1983, 109.

43 Schuerewegen 1987, 248.

44 Prince 1983, 13. For a good example of how productive the taking into account of the verb forms and pronouns can be in sketching the narratee's portrait, see Ifri 1983, 123-27, 169, 192, 197.

45 Prince 1983, 14.

46 Ibid., 14-15.

47 Ibid., 15.

48 Piwowarczyk 1976, 176. As the figure shows, Piwowarczyk offers some new signs of the "you," and streamlines Prince's formulations otherwise as well. In the application to follow, I shall take these revisions into account.

I. IDENTITY
A. Personality
1. Direct description
2. Grammatical forms
B. Knowledge
1. Demonstratives
2. Comparisons and analogies
3. Proper nouns
4. Marked common nouns
5. Other languages
6. Other texts
7. Absence of commentary
8. Intradiegetic references

II. SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL LOCATION
A. Direct geographic and temporal indications
B. Deictic coordinates: adverbials of time and place

III. STATUS
A. Personal pronouns: *tu* or *vous*
B. Inclusive and indefinite pronouns: *Nous* and *on*
C. Honorifics
D. Appellatives
E. Ilocutionary force indicating devices
1. Imperatives
2. Interrogatives
3. Illocutionary verbs/performatives

IV. ROLE
A. Personal pronouns: *tu* and *vous*
B. Speech
1. Direct speech
2. Indirect speech
a. Anticipations
b. Repetitions
c. Presuppositions

FIGURE 2

1.2.2. Types

The narratee's signals can be contradictory because of the narrator's wish to ridicule the narratee, because the world described radically differs from ours, or because different points of view are reproduced faithfully.[49] The contradictoriness of signals can also be due to the fact that the narratee, too, can change in the course of narration, or his/her personality may be so complex that it is able to embrace contradictory traits.[50]

The narrator can give as detailed descriptions of the narratee as s/he does of his or her characters, but there are also narratees about whom we know almost nothing (e.g., in "The Killers" by Hemingway).[51] Chatman calls the former **overt narratee** and

49 Prince 1983, 15.
50 Ibid., 16.
51 Prince 1982, 20.

the latter **covert narratee**.[52] Not only can a lot of information be given about the narratee, but s/he can also participate in the events - even by being a narrator - and thus be a narratee-character.[53] The importance of the narratee-character to the narrator may vary. Those particular narratees in *Heart of Darkness* are not necessary for Marlowe, whereas the caliph in *A Thousand and One Nights* is crucial to Scheherazade: without his continuing interest, she would be killed.[54] A narratee-character is more likely to be influenced and affected by the narrative than a plain narratee; this is also the case when, as in diary fiction, the narrator is his/her own narratee, (supposedly) the sole reader of the narrative.[55]

The hierarchy of narration implies distances between the elements participating in it. A dialogue, Prince claims, is formed between the narrator(s), the narratee(s), and the character(s).[56] It is clear that the narratee who takes part in the events recounted is closer to the characters than the one who does not. The degree of distance between the participants also applies to the moral, intellectual, emotional, physical etc. points of view taken. The rapports and distances amount to the ranking of values and events: the former ones can be praised or rejected, the latter ones emphasized or ignored.[57] The ranking again ties in with the codes: the emphasis on certain values and events has a symbolic and proairetic function respectively.

---

52 Chatman 1983, 254. It would be natural to assume that an overt narrator implies an overt narratee and vice versa. In fact, this is generally the case, but not without exceptions: in Camus's *L'Étranger*, an overt first person narrator addresses a covert narratee (Chatman 1983, 255). I have modified Chatman's terminology here by changing his "nonnarratee" into "covert narratee," because the former is as contradictory a concept as the "nonnarrated story."

53 Prince 1983, 18; Prince 1982, 20-21.

54 Prince 1983, 19. Tzvetan Todorov (1980a, 41-42) sees the opposition of life and death in this work on a more general level. According to Todorov, the story equals life, and its absence death, just as for Scheherazade to narrate means to live. Todorov (1980a, 42) points out one of her stories in which a king opens the pages of a book with his fingers, moistened in his mouth, only to find out that the pages are blank - except for the lethal poison he has thereby licked. The moral of the tale is that a book without a story kills, that the absence of a narrative means death.
Of course, it would be tempting to generalize the above and claim that all narratives only come into existence through the act of narrating. But this emphasizes the primacy of the story at the cost of the discourse, and creates a hierarchy which is not unproblematic; see section 4.1. below for the deconstructive possibilities of the story/discourse opposition.

55 Prince 1983, 18. Indeed, in diary fiction, the primary or only narratee is usually the narrator him/herself: if s/he does not aim the text at any audience, s/he will remain the sole reader of it (e.g., Roquentin in Sartre's *La Nausée*). Sometimes, however, the narrator has also other narratees in mind, like Salavin in George Duhamel's *Journal de Salavin*. (Ibid., 19.) Naturally, this amounts to a greater degree of consciousness as regards writing and explaining facts, self-evident to the narrator but unknown to the narratee(s). These explanations reveal, in fact, if the diary is intended to be read by someone else besides the narrator. The latter already knows his/her name, past, relatives, and other personal details, so recounting them would be pointless without another narratee in mind.
Why does a narrator, in diary fiction, function as his own narratee? Why tell oneself things one already knows? Prince (ibid., 19) points out quite rightly that in many works of this genre, like in *La Nausée*, the events s/he recounts make him or her undergo a gradual and profound change. Diary (fiction) is indeed usually conceived as textual healing, as a mayeutic or therapeutic means of finding or curing one's true self. For outstanding discussions of diary fiction and its conventions, see Abbott 1984 and Martens 1985.

56 Prince 1983, 19. To call the supposed communication between the hierarchal narrative agents a dialogue is highly questionable. I shall return to this problem towards the end of this chapter.

57 Prince 1983, 20.

The hierarchy of narrative agents also determines the tone and the nature of narration; for instance, many ironic effects are due to the difference between the two images of the narratee or between two actual (groups of) narratees.[58] For example, a narrative may have three kinds of narratee: one who understands a literary allusion (or an ironic comment), another who does not, and still another who understands that the second narratee does not.[59] In a similar fashion, in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, the narrator creates an **overt, direct** group narratee, who oppose him and whom he despises; but there is also a **covert, indirect** group narratee, who, he hopes, will eventually share his worldview.[60] As a general rule, the implicit or indirect narratee is conceived as the opposite of the explicit narratee and of his/her ways to react and interpret.[61] But those different narratees and their varied interpretations are still inscribed, prestructured in the text.

The distances between the narrator(s), narratee(s), and the character(s) are by no means always stable, which results in complexity of situations.[62] Consequently, meanings become ambiguous and interpretations multiple. Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* serves as a good example of this instability. The novel starts, as I noted above, with the narrator's explicit address to the reader-narratee - "you who hold this book with a white hand" - who is evidently a bourgeois woman. In the course of narration, however, her way of reading is shown to be possible but wrong, and finally the narrator cancels the **narrative contract**[63] with her; paradoxically, the female narratee is excluded from the narration by directing it to her, a masculine narratee being a more preferable one for the narrator.[64] It is sometimes indeed possible to construct, on the basis of the narratee's performance, a "deconstructive" narratee, implied in the text but subversive to its apparent addressee and way of reading.[65] The most obvious

---

58 Ibid., 20.

59 Tammi 1988, 210-12; Wilson 1981, 855.

60 Kettunen 1983, 111. I have modified Kettunen's terminology by changing his explicit and implicit narratee into the more established overt and covert respectively.
The same phenomenon can also be conceived from the viewpoint of rhetorical criticism, especially Peter J. Rabinowitz's distinction between the narrative audience (which equals Prince's narratee) and the ideal narrative audience "for which the narrator wishes he were writing" (Rabinowitz 1977, 127, 134). The problem is that the ideal narrative audience "accepts uncritically what [the narrator] has to say" (ibid., 134), whereas the existence of the covert, indirect narratee is exactly based on the agent's capacity to doubt, to refuse to believe the narrator's words at face value. For the criticism of the ideal narrative audience, see Booth 1983, 423-27; Rabinowitz 1987; Phelan 1989, 141. Recently Phelan (1994) has revived the concept in connection with the second-person narration. In the present thesis, I shall stick to the narratological conception of (textual) audiences for pragmatic reasons, although, in connection with resisting reading and opposing narratee, my formulations agree that "the actual reader gives traits to the narrative audience" (ibid., 355).

61 Kettunen 1983, 111.

62 Prince 1983, 19-20.

63 This term (Fr. *le récit-contrat*) was introduced by Barthes in his *S/Z*. It refers to the agreement between the narrator and the narratee, giving the basic reason for the existence of narrative and influencing its structural shape (Barthes 1970, 95-6). As Prince (1988, 61) concisely puts it, "an act of narration supplies something which is (tobe) exchanged for something else (I will tell you a story if you promise to be good; I will listen to you if you make it valuable; or, more literarily, a tale for a day of survival as in *Arabian Nights*, a story for a night of love as in 'Sarrasine,' a diary for redemption as in *Vipers' Tangle*)."

64 Schuerewegen 1987, 248-50.

65 Schuerewegen 1987, 249. Apparently Schuerewegen does not use the word "deconstructive" in Derrida's sense, but refers to a general tendency to read against the grain, to undo apparent structures and meanings. My own coinage *resisting narratee* comes close to

narratee is not, then, the only possible or the most insightful reader in narrative.

Sometimes there is also an **unreliable narratee**, an agent analogous to the **unreliable narrator**.[66] The narratee is unreliable when s/he has doubtful moral characteristics, wrong information or beliefs, or insufficient ability to interpret the story.[67] The narratee's reliability is seen clearly, when s/he engages in a concrete dialogue with the narrator; usually this implies that the narratee is materialized as a character and appears in an embedded narrative. The unreliable narratee understands the narrator's narration wrongly or inadequately, which may result in comic effects.[68] The situation is different when the narratee is not independent, i.e., when s/he is constructed and controlled by the narrator. In such a case, the narrator may deliberately give the narratee odd conceptions and modes of interpretation to create comic effects, as in Fielding's *Tom Jones*.[69] But it is the narrator who is joking and being ironic here; s/he does not want all the addressees to be unreliable, but expects another kind of narratee to understand the irony and rhetoric used.[70] This phenomenon is the same as the one dealt with above in regard to irony.

1.2.3 Functions

What are the functions of the narratee? This question has partly been answered above, but it deserves to be scrutinized in detail.

It will be clear from the above that the narratee functions as a **relay** between the narrator and the reader(s), or rather between the implied author and the implied reader(s). As Prince points out, the indirect mediation between the narrator and the narratee may pave way to irony so that the actual reader is not to take the statements of the former to the latter literally. Thus, the reader is not totally at the mercy of the narrator and the narratee; such devices as dialogues, metaphors, allusions seemingly increase the reader's freedom and at the same time decrease the narratee's importance. But it is still the narratee to whom everything is addressed; nothing will pass except via him/her/it - albeit, as in the cases above, unmodified, unclarified by the agent. As for the economy and effectiveness of expression, direct and explicit statements from the narrator to the narratee are superior.[71] This does not necessarily apply to the aesthetic evaluation of expression. For example, the modern novel from Flaubert on tended to rid itself of explicit commentary and pursue "objectivity" of narration with the help of a covert narrator.

The narratee's functions also include **characterization**. Distanced from everything and everybody, Mersault in Camus's *L'Étranger* is unable to engage in any true dialogue, which, accordingly, cannot be narrated; however, in showing his very inability, the narrator/narratee relation is vital in describing Mersault's character.[72]

Schuerewegen's concept except in that the former is in no way coded in the text; see subsection 3.2.4. below.

66 Cf. Booth 1965, 158-59.

67 Chatman 1983, 260-61; Kettunen 1983, 115.

68 Kettunen 1982, 115-16.

69 Prince 1983, 21; Chatman 1983, 260-61.

70 Kettunen 1983, 116.

71 Prince 1983, 21.

72 Ibid., 22.

Furthermore, the narrator-narratee relationship has a **thematic function**: a text can underline one theme, demonstrate another, or deny yet another.[73] Often the narrative situation is directly referred to by the theme, so that the narration itself is revealed to be the theme. Prince mentions *A Thousand and One Nights* as an example of this.[74] Of course, other kinds of themes can also be underlined by the relationship. In Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, the struggle between the characters is analogous to that between the narrator and the narratee.[75] But here, too, the **theme of narration** exists at least implicitly: narration can be conceived, at least on the level of narrator/narratee relation, as domination, persuasion, fight for power, seduction.

The existence of the narratee also has a **naturalizing function**: that the story is told to someone makes the whole act of narrating more natural and believable.[76] One could also assume that the narratee functions as a **model or metaphor** for the actual reader and his or her interpretive attempts.[77] I shall turn to this aspect of narration, but also treat it with regard to another agent, the (interpreting) character, the interpretant, in sections 1.3.-1.4. below. Before that, however, I shall dwell on the special case of the narratee in second-person narration.

1.2.4 De te fabula narratur: Narratee in Second-Person Narration

As the signs of the narratee usually remain marginal and difficult to discern, perhaps a case in which those signs are foregrounded might prove useful. Second-person narration provides such a foregrounded case. According to Prince's dictionary definition, in second-person narration the narratee stars as the hero or protagonist of the story s/he is told.[78] Or more accurately, second-person narrative designates its protagonist by the second person pronoun. S/he "will usually be the sole focalizer, and is generally the work's narratee as well. In most cases, the story is narrated in the present tense, and some forms also include frequent usage of conditional and future tenses."[79] Brian Richardson discusses three - standard, subjunctive, and autotelic - types of second-person narratives, which deserve to be paraphrased here.

The **standard** type is the most common variant of this anomalous form of narration: a story is told about one protagonist, with the "you" designating both the narrator and the narratee, although the designation will often vacillate.[80] Such well-known and much-studied novels as Michel Butor's *La Modification* (1957), George Perec's *Un Homme qui dort* (1967), and Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984)

---

73 Ibid., 22.

74 Ibid., 22. Diary fiction, too, is apt to have this kind of theme, although Prince does not make it explicit here. For readings of narrative as a theme in a broader, more metaphoric sense, see Prince 1992.

75 Prince 1983, 22.

76 Ibid., 22.

77 For example, in Pascal Alain Ifri's reading of Proust, the narrator teaches the narratee to interpret various phenomena in a certain manner, and, analogously, the actual reader of *Recherche* is put in a like position by the whole novel (Ifri 1983, 202-29).

78 Prince 1987, s.v. 'second-person narrative.'

79 Richardson 1991, 311. There is an interesting analogy between second-person narration in prose and the apostrophe in poetry, but I shall not go into this issue here. For recent post-structuralist accounts of the apostrophe, see Culler 1981, 135-54 and Johnson 1989, 184-99.

80 Richardson 1991, 311.

belong to the standard category. The referent of the "you" turns out to be problematic even in the standard form. Although the "you" ostensibly refers to the narratee-protagonist, at least some parts of the narrator's discourse (seem to) apply to the actual or implied reader as well. True, in second-person narration, the majority of the information provided by the narrator is usually too specific to apply to anyone else but the narratee. For example, the profession, marital status, age, and spatio-temporal parameters make the *vous* in Butor's *La Modification* difficult to identify with. But, as Richardson notes, even extremely detailed descriptions include passages which are more widely applicable: the actual reader may not be of the same age and have the same number of teeth in his/her mouth as the the narratee in the famous passage of Perec's *Un Homme qui dort*, but s/he probably has, like the protagonist, useless books and records.[81]

The other two forms of second-person narration in Richardson's classification are somewhat marginal cases. The **subjunctive** form of second-person narration relates to the works that imitate the style of the user's manual, self-help guide, or cook-book.[82] This type of narration is relatively rare, and Richardson only mentions one example of its systematic use, Lorrie Moore's collection of short stories, *Self-Help* (1986).[83] Unlike in the standard type, the imperative and the future tense are used, and the narrator and the narratee are clearly distinguished. The **autotelic** category features direct addresses to "you," whose scope consciously covers the actual reader and the protagonist; at the same time the former's story merges with the fictional characters'.[84] This kind of second-person narration obviously relates to self-conscious and metafictional works, which shatter the boundaries of fiction and reality.[85] The autotelic type is found, as such, in short texts or mixed with other persons in longer narratives. The most sustained application of the type is Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979). The novel's frame initially describes the actual reader's real-time reading, so that the "narrator's present tense is identical to the temporality of its reception."[86] As the story unfolds, the referent of the "you" begins to vacillate so that it also designates the implied reader or the narratee.[87]

At a general level, it has been noted by Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal alike that all acts of narration, no matter what grammatical person is used, can be supplemented with the first person tag "I narrate."[88] Basically, then, the narrator is always "I"; hence, one can justifiably rewrite the opening line of the McInerney novel as "(I narrate:) You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of morning."[89] But the very fact that narration *is* realized in the chosen person

---

81 Ibid., 312. Cf. "Tu as vingt-cinq ans et vingt-neuf dents, trois chemises et huit chaussettes, quelques livres que tu ne lis plus, quelque disques que tu n'écoutes plus" (Perec 1990, 24).

82 Richardson 1991, 319.

83 For a more recent reading of the collection, see Phelan 1994.

84 Richardson 1991, 320.

85 Admittedly, it could be claimed that all variants of second-person narration are self-conscious by virtue of their divergence from the "unmarked" first- and third person narration. The same holds true with the lyrical apostrophe (cf. Culler 1981, 146.) However, the autotelic form is clearly the most self-conscious one in Richardson's taxonomy.

86 Richardson 1991, 321.

87 Ibid., 321.

88 Bal 1992, 121-22; Genette 1988, 97, 133-34.

89 McInerney 1988, 1.

cannot be reasoned away. This is especially true with such an anomaly as the second-person narration, which not only deviates from the unmarked first and third persons but also engages and troubles the receiver.

One could slightly rewrite Horace and state that not only *de te fabula narratur* but also *de 'te' fabula narratur*; second-person narration tells about you, but also about use of the second person pronoun or about grammatical persons in general. It is common to read a standard second-person narrative, like McInerney, as a dramatized first-person one. However, not even the standard case is directly translatable into the first person only. Brian McHale suggests that sometimes "*you* stands in for the third-person pronoun of the fictional character, functioning in a kind of displaced free indirect discourse."[90] The shifting of the persons becomes especially clear when a reader recounts the story s/he has read some time ago: it is highly probable that s/he unwittingly domesticates the anomalous second into the first or third person.

The personal pronouns are problematic as such. The meaning of *I* or *you* is wholly dependent on the context: on the discourse in which the pronouns appear and on their utterer. Émile Benveniste claims that *I* always implies *you* in the sense that any utterance is invariably addressed to some addressee. Benveniste also emphasizes how those deictic pronouns constitute the subject in language.[91] But the pronouns also divide the subject. In the minimal case, the *you* that *I* implies is the utterer him/herself; it is the *différance* inherent in all signification that separates the two subject positions.

Jacques Derrida has written about the scope and meaning of personal pronouns on several occasions.[92] Although his insights have their bearing on narratological problems, Derrida's contribution is somewhat too general to fit in the detailed characteristics of the narratee. As an example of a (non-narratological) addressee-sensitive mode of reading, however, Derrida's account is worth keeping in mind.

The pronominal manipulation inherent in the use of second-person narration suggests serious splits in the narrator, narratee, and perhaps, by analogy, in the reader as well. The narratee is not a monolith but a heterogenous group united by the empty, situationally changing linguistic sign "you." This state of affairs, I think, legitimizes the reading of even the occasional and idiomatic use of the second-person pronouns as signs of the narratee. Also, the metaphoric leakage of the *you*'s referent into the layers of the implied and actual reader and the consequent friction between them call for a resisting reading. The ideal, encoded position of the implied or actual reader as a responding, resounding receiver clashes against the actuality of gender, ethnic background, age, class, ideological stance, and so forth. In the present thesis, I shall systematically utilize the seemingly occasional signs of the narratee and see how they contribute to a possibility of a resisting reading.

---

90 McHale 1993, 223.

91 Benveniste 1985, 258-266.

92 On *you* and *I* in Husserl, cf. Derrida 1973, 70-73; on *we/us* in Heidegger, cf. Derrida 1982, 123-36; on the deictic peculiarities of the epistolary addressee, cf. Derrida 1987a, 1-256; on the corresponding phenomena in Freud, cf. ibid., 257-410.

1.3 Interpretant: Character as Interpreter

There are also characters who read or interpret in a narrative without being narratees, but who may have similar functions with regard to the interpretive help provided by the text. Characters, like real people in the real world, tend to interpret the events around them, and this activity not only "reads," i.e., decodes the fictional text, but also bears some resemblance to actual readers' interpretive endeavours, "reads" their reading of itself.[93] This phenomenon is what Barbara Johnson calls "the transferential structure of all reading,"[94] and it is a recurrent interpretive concept in various approaches, ranging from psychoaesthetics to post-structuralist or deconstructive criticism.

I shall first deal with the interpreting characters, and then turn to the interpretive allegory and transferentiality to which they contribute.

Naomi Schor calls narratives reading themselves **fictions of interpretation**. To make a distinction between an interpreter within a text and outside it, she introduces a pair of concepts, the *interpreter* and the *interpretant*.[95] The former refers to the interpreting critic and the latter to the interpreting character. The interpretant, Schor hurries to point out, is a character of the same order as the first-person narrator or main protagonist of a narrative text; s/he is thus more "tangible" than the narratee[96], the fictionalized audience or the implied reader.[97]

Widespread in modern fiction, interpretants can be classified in a taxonomy. Schor uses two criteria in her diachronic classification: quantity and quality, i.e., the degree of interpretation given by the interpretant, and the results of it.[98] Far from being universal or even very common, Schor's cases of possible interpretants, however, exemplify the general tendency of characters reading (in) the story they appear in, and thus deserve to be paraphrased here.

Interpretants abound in Henry James' fiction, since his central characters are typically obsessed with interpretive activities. His characters are driven, as Schor puts it, by an "interpretive instinct."[99]

James' novella *In the Cage* (1898) presents an interpretant, a young woman working in a postal-telegraph office, who only interprets written signs. The texts she deciphers are the messages one of her clients sends to his mistress[100]. This incomplete

---

93 Tammi 1991, 171-72; Brooks 1984, 58-61.

94 Johnson 1982, 145.

95 Schor 1980, 168-69. Schor borrows these terms from C.S. Peirce, who used them in quite a different, philosophical context.

96 This is true if the narratee is not materialized as a character and s/he is not overtly referred to. The narratee does, however, have similar functions as the interpretant: s/he is one of the devices by which the implied author informs the actual reader of how to perform as an implied reader. (Chatman 1983, 150.)

97 Schor 1980, 169.

98 Ibid., 170.

99 Ibid., 170, 173.

100 This activity makes her, in fact, a narratee of her client, who, in turn, is for a while a narrator. In the hierarchy of narrators, the primary one introduces almost the entire narrative, the secondary one (i.e., the client) only the telegrams. As for the hierarchy of narratees, the main one, who is not a character, is able to read the whole text of the novella, including the telegrams; the second narratee is the young woman, and - supposedly - the third one the

information forces her to use her imagination, her creative rather than critical power: encoding and decoding give way to filling in the gaps, to combining fragments to create a meaningful whole.[101] Thus, interpretation is closely linked to the creation of a tale. But, because the data she receives is haphazard and incomplete, she is apt to overinterpret, to draw unfounded conclusions.[102] This, of course, may be a warning to the actual reader: although James' fiction requires an alert and active reader, excessive interpretation will lead him or her astray.

Schor illustrates the second category of her taxonomy by analyzing Marcel Proust's interpretants. They are, according to her, driven by an "interpretive constraint": they search for the truth, but they do it involuntarily. Swann, in *Un Amour de Swann*, at first suffers from the incapability of getting to the bottom of things.[103] All this changes when he is struck with jealousy: suddenly he becomes so attentive to his mistresses' behaviour that it resembles paranoia.[104] In any case, his "criticism" fails either because he refuses to interpret or because he overinterprets.[105]

The Proust novel also furnishes interpretation on a more specifically self-reflective level. The novel is divided into two equal parts so that *Swann II* can be largely seen as a reading of *Swann I*. Quite similarly, the Part II of Camus's *L'Étranger* provides *the* or *an* interpretation of the events in the Part I.[106]

Joseph K. in Kafka's *Der Prozess* represents the "failed interpretant." K. fails because he is trapped in the hermeneutic double bind of the Court: the necessity to interpret is linked with the total impossibility of validating interpretation. He sees signs as ambiguous, bearing two plausible but contradictory meanings.[107]

The penultimate chapter of *Der Prozess*, "Vor dem Gesetz," dramatizes the interpretant's useless reading efforts. K. faces enigmatic signs in the form of a foreign language as well as pictorial, gestural, and parabolic languages, which he cannot decipher indisputably.[108] The parable itself, "Vor dem Gesetz," shows that one definitive, correct interpretation is not possible. Not even the parable can be read as such, directly, without accounting for prior readings; "interpretation has always already begun."[109] However, read as an allegory, the parable, or for that matter the whole Kafka novel, does not seem to dismiss the act of interpretation as futile. The desperate attempts of Kafka's interpretants to understand have inspired, on the basis of the transferential structure of reading, his interpreters to similar endeavours - albeit often with similarly unhappy results. Still, as the ever accumulating exegesis of Kafka's work proves, the interpretant's failure has not intimidated actual interpreters.

---

mistress. The messages are primarily addressed to the mistress, but the young woman "intrudes" into the intended hierarchy and hence changes it. Of course, the client can be interpreted to be the first narratee of his own writing, but this will not contribute very much to the interpretation of the novella.

101 Schor 1980, 171.
102 Ibid., 171.
103 Ibid., 173.
104 Ibid., 174.
105 Ibid., 175.
106 Ibid., 175-176.
107 Ibid., 177.
108 Ibid., 178.
109 Ibid., 178-181.

Schor, drawing on Henry James' critical writings, presents a three-tiered interpretive process:

> the "teller of a story" deciphers the "page of life," he then "imputes" his deciphering to interpretants, who in turn become the object of interpreters.[110]

Of course, interpretation does not start from the first step. It is just one segment in an endless chain of interpretations framed and informed by the urge to make sense and the belief in intelligible wholes.

Schor mainly focuses on interpretants who can metaphorically be conceived as reading. There are also, of course, characters who are depicted reading and discussing actual books or other inscriptions.[111] These characters participate in the same activity as actual readers, although their texts are different. The problem of interpretants and reading characters revolves around the metaphorical and the literal. The former's activity is reading only metaphorically, but their object is the same as the real readers', whereas the latter literally read, but a different text from the one they appear in. The two extremes converge in diary fiction or pseudo-autobiography, in which the autodiegetic narrator literally reads his/her own writing based on lived life, which is also the actual readers' object. To a lesser degree, this is also true in (other) self-conscious and metafictional writing, in which narrative discloses itself as a written artifact.

1.4 Allegories of Interpretation

Interpretants or interpreting characters, as will be clear from the examples above, contribute to the actual reader's or interpreter's reception of the given work by assuming his or her role and thus foregrounding (at least some) interpretive strategies. An interpretant can function as a systematic reader, providing whole models for deciphering the text to such a degree that they seem to be followed in actual reception. The following examples serve as illustrations of this kind of transferentiality.

Stanley Fish's reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost* betrays the logic of transference, although the critic himself does not use the term. Summing up Milton's rhetorical strategy, Fish shows how the actual reader of the epic must take on the role of the first fallen man:

> Milton's method is to re-create in the mind of the reader (which is, finally, the poem's scene) the drama of the Fall, to make him fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, 'not deceived'.[112]

---

110 Ibid., 181.

111 These reading characters do not necessarily contribute to self-reflexivity, metafictionality or allegorization of interpretation, but may have other - thematic, characterizing, intertextual, aesthetic - functions. For a taxonomy of reading protagonists in the novel, see Sabry 1993.

112 Fish 1971, 1.

Thus, the reading of *Paradise Lost* is not *imitatio Christi*, imitation of Christ, but that of his type, Adam.

In her discussion of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Shoshana Felman shows how the novella provides the reader with the main possible interpretations of itself. The central question is how to relate to the existence of the ghost. The reader

> can choose either to *believe* the governess, and thus to behave precisely like Mrs. Grose, or *not to believe the governess*, and thus behave precisely *like the governess*. Since it is the governess who, within the text, plays the role of the suspicious reader, occupies the *place* of the interpreter, to *suspect* that place and that position is, thereby, *to take it*.[113]

Thus, the text anticipates critics' interpretations and dispute by dramatizing their very readings and dispute.

In a similar fashion, Barbara Johnson states that in Melville's *Billy Budd* the opposition between Billy and Claggart is also that between two models of reading, between two concepts of language.[114] The opposition between Billy and Claggart anticipates and dramatizes critics' conflicting interpretations of the novel. The two characters can be seen as founders of two main readings *Billy Budd* - "acceptance" and "irony" schools respectively - whereas Captain Vere holds a median position between these extremes, and reads historically.[115] Hence, each actual interpretive stand repeats positions already inscribed in the story.

How are actual readers to take the coexistence of equally tenable but mutually exclusive interpretive options? The attitude towards this state of affairs depends on the presuppositions of the critical stand that one is subscribing to. Deconstruction, which both Felman and Johnson represent, does not assume that different readings excluding each other are errors to be corrected nor partial truths to be complemented by contrary truths, but rather demonstrations of textual structures.[116]

To interpret narrative fiction in this manner is, of course, to read it allegorically.[117] The need to interpret and its conscious metacritical treatment inherent in allegory have especially interested post-structuralist or deconstructionist critics.

---

113 Felman 1985, 231; emphasis in original.
James scholarship abounds in critical schools of interpretation "founded" by his fictional characters; cf., for instance, the interpretive tradition of "Daisy Miller: A Study."
James, ambiguous and enigmatic as his fiction is, has often been used to exemplify interpretive endeavours. For example, Wolfgang Iser opens his book *The Act of Reading* with an analysis of "The Figure in the Carpet" by James instead of an introduction.

114 Johnson 1982, 84.

115 Ibid., 97, 100.

116 Culler 1983, 271.

117 As a mode of signification, allegory resists a natural, "naturalized," or motivated relation between signifier and signified. In a symbolic text, the relation is at least seemingly natural, as it were organically grown, which makes interpretation, too, natural. In contrast, allegory stresses the gap between signifier and signified, which also emphasizes the conventionality of all interpretation. "Either it presents an empirical story which does not itself seem a worthy object of attention and implies that we must, in order to produce types of significance that tradition leads us to desire, translate the story into another mode, or else it presents an enigmatic face while posing obstacles even to this kind of translation and forces us to read it as an allegory of the interpretive process." Modern allegories, like Flaubert's *Salammbô* or Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, belong to the latter group: the reader will not find a stable foundation for interpretation, which makes the factitiousness or difficulties of interpretation at least an implicit theme. (Culler 1975, 229-30; cf. also Vainikkala 1993, 160-73, and Keskinen 1991, 43-45)

Paul de Man coined the term **allegory of reading**, which refers to the interpretive discrepancies and aporias disclosed by rhetorical, figurative modes of reading. In his deconstructive readings, de Man has concentrated on those parts of texts that deal with their own functioning in the form of metalinguistic or metacritical statements. The metastatements are not necessarily explicit, but often need to be interpreted as being such. For example, the part in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* which prefers reading indoors to playing out in the sun can be read as a metafigural comment on the aesthetic superiority of metaphor over metonymy.[118] But a rhetorical reading of the passage discloses that the "figural praxis and the metafigural theory do not converge and that the assertion of the mastery of metaphor over metonymy owes its persuasive power to the use of metonymic structures."[119] A text not only shows the tropological aberration of its basic concepts, but it also allegorically prefigures its misreadings or the impossibility of reading (adequately).[120] A text may present at least two mutually exclusive interpretations, thus inviting a deconstruction of itself, which makes real understanding (in the meaning of totalizing interpretation) impossible.[121] But the allegories of reading also show how tempting it is to "make sign and meaning coincide, to reconcile the irreconcilable."[122]

In the present thesis, I shall use my own coinage **allegory of interpretation** as a counterpart of de Man's term. By preferring my own term I wish to emphasize the allegory as a systematic and modelling principle rather than as an aporetic force. This is why I shall read the actual critical reception of the three Updike novels as manifestations of - more or less - systematic following of the models provided by the texts themselves.

But why do readers follow or repeat textual structures in their readings in the first place?

1.5 Transference Transferred

To "explain" or at least to illustrate the kind of dynamic interaction between text and reader that my examples above represent, the concept of **transference** has been transferred, removed from the realm of psychoanalysis to that of literary criticism. In (Freudian) psychoanalytic vocabulary, transference (*Übertragung*) refers to a phenomenon found in therapy: the analysand (i.e., patient) tends to project his or her past object feelings (i.e., investments of desire and aversion) on to the analyst, and the interlocution between the two in the analytic situation must function as a stage of repetition and working through (*Durcharbeit*) of the past into an orderly, therapeutic, and curative relation with the present.[123] Paradoxically, transference is the

---

118 De Man 1979, 13-14, 59-67.
119 Ibid., 15.
120 Ibid., 77.
121 Cf. ibid., 72.
122 Culler 1988, 123.
123 Laplanche & Pontalis 1967, 492-99.

precondition of any successful analysis, and at the same time something that has to be got rid of in the course of the treatment, since it is, in Freud's view, an obstacle to its completion. As for meta-psychology in post-Freudian theory, Jacques Lacan's revision and critique of transference is worth mentioning here, because it also ties in with the problem of reading. Lacan defines transference as "the enactment of the reality of the unconscious."[124] Lacan stresses how the *structure* of the analysis (or any situation resembling it) produces the transference effect: "As soon as there is somewhere a subject supposed to know, there is transference."[125] Lacan also recognizes the contradictory nature of transference, but treats it in connection with interpretation: "We are constrained to wait for this transference effect so as to interpret, and at the same time, we know that it closes the subject off to our interpretation."[126] Lacan diverges from Freud here; Freud regarded transference as an inevitable obstacle to interpretation - which is the major analytic operation - whereas Lacan saw transference as the basis of analysis, and interpretation as a mere medium through which transference becomes manifest.[127]

The logic and structure of psychoanalytic transference is (at least seemingly) easily removable to the realm of literary criticism, or more generally, reception of art. As Meredith Anne Skura puts it, "the exchanges of the psychoanalytic process [are] taken as a model for the process of reading, which is seen now as an implied exchange between author and reader through the medium of the text."[128] Or more formalistically: the exchange takes place between text and reader. On the other hand, the text provides a pattern which the critic, if s/he is to continue reading, inevitably gets caught in, and which s/he has to repeat in critical practice. In other words, to analyze a given textual structure means its repetition or replaying in the very act of its analysis. However, this does not imply that all the re-enactments of textual structures or patterns would yield like results. A text can make the critic choose between alternatives, even between mutually exclusive ones, which results in different "schools" of interpretation - founded not by the first critics to articulate the interpretive possibilities but, as it were, by the text itself (cf. accounts of Felman 1985 and Johnson 1982 above).

Peter Brooks shows interest in transference within the boundaries of fiction, and not so much in how it is realized in actual reception. Brooks' reading of *Le Colonel Chabert* and "Facino Cane," both by Balzac, stresses the passing-on, exchange, or substitution of narratives that the texts, with the help of their frame-structure, demonstrate.[129] The passing of the embedded tale to the narratee in the frame dramatizes the same process between the whole text and actual reader. The actual readers (of any fiction) can be seen to participate in a like endeavour: to read and interpret a text means making it "accessible to our therapies."[130]

Interpreting William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, Brooks notices how the

---

124 Lacan 1986, 146, 149.
125 Lacan 1986, 124-26.
126 Lacan 1977, 253.
127 Gallop 1985, 28. For a more detailed account of transference, see Keskinen 1993a.
128 Skura 1981, 172.
129 Brooks 1984, 221-35.
130 Ibid., 234.

shifting positions of the narrators and narratees finally ends up in a situation in which the narratees become narrators, and, metaphorically, the actual "reader [is] freed to speak in the text," to create it, thus realizing Barthes' similar comment on Balzac's "Sarrasine."[131]

One could sketch, on the basis of critics' readings, a rhetoric of transference, the textual means or devices by which transference is realized. The mediating element in both psychoanalytic treatment and reading is language. Language is not, of course, a transparent, innocent vehicle transmitting meanings, but a rhetorical, value- and affect-ridden entity manipulating the addressee. Lacan has stressed the importance of language to the degree that he claims that it speaks the subject, that the speaker is subjected to language rather than being a master of it.[132] On the other hand, as Mikhail Bakhtin maintains, the very nature of language is dialogic, implying not only a sender but also a receiver. In this sense, the possibility of a transference on to the other is encoded in every utterance.

The narratological model I have been using and revising in the present thesis relates to communication between different agents. Thus, the narrator and the narratee hold prominent positions in the realization of transference. Peter Brooks extends the narrative contract both in depth - the exchange between the narrator and narratee is more active, dynamic, and transformatory than Barthes implies - and in scope, so that it also applies to actual readers beyond the (imaginary) boundaries of the narrative text.[133] Brooks' examples consist of narratives with a frame and an embedded story within it. This device metaphorically - on account of similarity - mimes the reader's situation: the framed tale metonymically - on account of contiguity - stands for the whole narrative, and the frame for the "real" in which the reader exists. The actual reader who reads the frame and the embedded story told by the narrator resembles the narratee listening to the narrator. The communication process is thus dramatized in the text. In other words, the actual reader's position - and probably disposition - are anticipated in the narrative structure of the text; when reading the text, the reader is made to assume the role pre-existing him/her (or his/her act of reading).[134]

But the communication between the narrator and the narratee pertinent to transference ought not to be restricted to narrative embeddings, as Brooks seems to be doing. In my view, the narrator-narratee relationship, presented with or without a frame, contributes to transference by its very similarity to that between text and reader.

Characters who are not necessarily narrators or narratees, in their pursuit of understanding and search for meaning within the text, can also be seen to prefigure actual readers' similar hermeneutic endeavours. Such interpretants' different solutions

---

131 Ibid., 304; Barthes 1970, 157-58. However, Brooks (1984, 356) emphasizes the metaphoricity of this shift, for he "cannot conceive what a literal realization could mean."

132 Gallop 1985, 43.

133 Brooks 1984, 220; Brooks 1994, 72.

134 The relationship between reader and text has been called metonymical, because the latter always anticipates the reading operations the former performs (cf. Perry 1979, 43; Tammi 1988, 216). If the narrative text is taken as a whole, this is probably the case, but on the level of communication between narrative agents (as related to the actual reader), the relationship depends on metaphor.

to problems yield, as the example by Felman and Johnson show, models for interpreting the whole work, and thus function as allegories of reading or interpretation.

As regards reception, the transferential structure of reading seems to direct attention from the mere text or reader to reading. Transference implies a dialectical encounter of reader and text: the reader not only reads the text, but the text, for its part, reads him or her as well. The model foregrounds intersubjectivity, "replacing the subject/object dualism with a more dialectical and temporal approach to the production of meaning."[135]

However, in the actual critical practice the dualism tends to persist. The text is commonly regarded as the (at least implicit) source of meaning, as the entity pre-existing reception and thus holding an originary position in it. This implication is not far from textual immanence, from the conception of the text as the predominant agent in reading, emitting all the meanings which the critic, according to his or her competence, receives. But if transference, according to Lacan, always comes into existence, when there is a "subject supposed to know," to which agent - text or reader - should this characteristic really be attributed? To treat psychoanalytic and literary transference as analogous phenomena, the analyst-critic would automatically occupy the position of the one who knows. Just like an analyst rearranges and puts right the analysand's discontinuous discourse, the critic clarifies the text by cracking its codes. But the analogy may not be as simple as that. Shoshana Felman suggests a reversed relationship: admittedly, the literary critic is in the position of the analyst in the "relation to interpretation," but s/he is in the place of the patient in the "relation of transference": "The text has for us authority [—] [like] the psychoanalyst in the structure of transference." The text is thus viewed "as the very place where meaning, and *knowledge* of meaning, reside."[136]

Hence, the intersubjectivity implicit in the dynamics of transference seems to be dodged by attributing the principal role either to the text or to the reader. In either case, the subject/object dualism persists and leaves very little room for intersubjectivity in the production of meaning.

The problems with transference can be traced back to the too easy transferral of the metaphor from psychoanalysis to criticism. The metaphoric construct still bears traces of human interaction, and hence text is inevitably anthropomorphized. In spite of this, reader in the transferential model is usually regarded as ahistorical, having no gender, ignorant of intertextuality and literary conventions, which are also grave defects as regards the study of meaning production. Anthropomorphization also implies naturalization. The concept of transference seems to make it legitimate to conceive purely textual communication (taking place between narrative agents) as concrete interaction (between actual author and reader; between personified text and reader). By the same token the subtleties of narrative fiction are curtailed. [137]

In the following chapter, I shall turn from reading to writing, from narratology and reader-response criticism to deconstruction and theories of self-conscious fiction.

---

135 Freund 1987, 129.

136 Felman 1977, 7; emphasis in original. Cf. also Felman 1985, 179.

137 For more problems involved in the transferential structure of reading, see Keskinen 1993, 108-10.

2 WRITING

2.1 Writing and Speech: An Exemplary Opposition

This section of my thesis is devoted to the theory and practice of deconstruction. My aim is to provide an introduction to deconstruction with the help of one concept or cluster of concepts relevant to my interests in the present thesis, namely writing. In his "Letter to a Japanese Friend," Derrida states that "[a]ll sentences of the type 'deconstruction is X' or 'deconstruction is not X' *a priori* miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false."[1] Sentences of that type are contrary to deconstruction in their totalizing and limiting presuppositions. But this does not mean that one could do without such false statements. In fact, a little earlier in his letter, Derrida himself "defines" deconstruction by stating that it is not an analysis, critique, method, act, or operation.[2] This performative paradox could point at the fact that necessarily false statements are needed as approximations, but they should not be believed in as arresting, all-encompassing truths.

To *begin* an account of, say, deconstruction is as necessary as it is arbitrary. As Derrida puts it, "it [is] impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely."[3] Therefore, for strategic reasons, I have chosen to begin with the notion of writing, for the dubious pretext that it appears as the second term in the subtitle of my thesis. Of course, my choice is not as innocent as it seems. The term *writing* (*l'écriture*) was the token of the theoretical "revolution" in France in 1967, and it has shaped the current literary studies in an important way ever since.[4] Writing thus exemplifies not only deconstruction as a theory and my thesis' second interest, but also what has been become known as post-structuralism.

The notion of writing is one of the main issues in Jacques Derrida's deconstructive handling of Western metaphysics. According to Derrida's readings,

---

1 Derrida 1991, 275.

2 Ibid., 273.

3 Derrida 1976, 162.

4 For a concise account of the treatment of writing in Barthes, Sollers, Lacan, and Derrida, see Johnson 1990, 39-49.

Western thought is and has been structured in terms of such dichotomies or polarities as presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, soul vs. body, speech vs. writing. The second term in each pair is regarded as the "negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it"; thus, for example, absence is the lack of presence, error is the lack of truth, and so on.[5] In this kind of hierarchy, the first term is given priority over the second one both temporally and qualitatively.

In the opposition between speech and writing, again, the first term is conceived as the prior and original one. Hence, in Western metaphysics from Plato to the present, the spoken word has been privileged over the written one. Speech, voice, spoken signifier are thought to be superior because both the speaker and listener are simultaneously present to what is uttered. The speaker, speech, and listener are both temporally and spatially undistanced, because the speaker hears him/herself speak at the same time as the listener does: "My words are 'alive' because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath, at a visible distance [—]."[6] To hear oneself speak is to understand the speech of oneself, as Derrida's expression *s'entendre parler* suggests.[7] This seems to imply that, when speaking, "we know what we mean, mean what we say, say what we mean, and know what we have said," as Barbara Johnson rather vertiginously crystallizes the logic of the situation.[8] By using transparent, or rather, invisible signifiers, speech also seems to express truth and thought directly, seemingly without the difference between signifier and signified.[9]

Writing, on the other hand, is considered, in Western metaphysics, to be only a representation of speech, a secondary substitute. The meaning in writing is not self-present, because the writer cannot control whether his or her text is really understood.[10] As Plato states in *Pheadrus*: "[Writing] always needs father to attend to it, being quite unable to defend itself or attend to its own needs."[11]

Derrida calls this privileging of speech **phonocentrism**. It revolves around the concept of presence:

> phonocentrism merges with the determination through history of the meaning of being in general as presence [—] (presence of the object to sight as *eidos*, presence as substance/essence/existence [*ousià*], temporal presence as the point [*stigmè*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other to the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth).[12]

Phonocentrism is linked with **logocentrism**, i.e., "the orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning - thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word - conceived as existing in itself, as foundation."[13]

Speech is hence seen as the original, natural, and direct form of communication,

---

5 Johnson 1981, viii.
6 Derrida 1973, 76.
7 Cf. Derrida 1976, 20.
8 Johnson 1981, viii.
9 Derrida 1976, 8, 20.
10 Derrida 1981a, 79.
11 Quoted in Derrida 1981a, 77.
12 Derrida 1976, 12.
13 Culler 1983, 92.

and writing as the reproduced, artificial, and obscure version of it. But writing is not only worse than speech, it is also, according to Western metaphysics, dangerous. In his reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Derrida shows how writing is regarded as a danger to direct and self-explanatory communication; writing is cut off from its author, who thus cannot explain what s/he meant or control readers' interpretations of it.[14] As a technique of notation, writing also seemingly helps memory but, in fact, deteriorates it by giving an illusion of knowledge - which is really just bookish information learned by heart - and thus corrupts natural memory and knowledge.[15] In a similar phonocentric fashion, Rousseau condemns writing in his *Confessions*, because languages are made to be spoken. Writing is thus against the natural state of affairs; it corrupts and alienates human beings from the original and the natural.[16]

Writing, in the various meanings and emphases it has been given, has been a recurring subject in Derrida's project since his first work, the long introductory essay to Edmund Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* (1962). In his deconstructive readings of major texts of Western metaphysics, Derrida has shown how the seemingly clear-cut dichotomy of speech and writing turns out to be highly problematic in the actual practice of philosophical discourse. Four instances in Derrida's treament of the notion of writing and its ramifications may suffice to introduce his main ideas about the problematics involved in the concept.[17]

In his introduction mentioned above, Derrida traces a recurrent tendency in Husserl's work on geometry, which is, in general, aimed at securing the absolute ideal objectivity of meaning, to draw on the possibility of writing as a proof of that security. This kind of reasoning radically diverges from the tradition of Western metaphysics (i.e., philosophy), which, according to Derrida's analyses, has regarded writing as the corrupt and negative version of speech, the keeper of the ideality of meaning. Husserl does not, however, use the concept of writing in its everyday, graphic meaning, but refers to the *possibility* of being written, i.e. to iterability ensuring that ideality will be understood without a subjective intentionality (physically) present. The possibility of writing also ties in with a transcendental subjectivity, which by definition is universal and thus makes understanding possible, even when a subjective intentionality is absent.

In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida provides a reading of de Saussure's use of metaphors, which serves as the second instance in Derrida's analysis of writing. De Saussure overtly condemns writing as a fall from original speech; his attitude towards writing is moralistic, even hostile: it has "dangers," it "force[s]," it "usurp[s] the main role," it is a "trap," and so forth.[18] However, when describing the nature of speech, de Saussure utilizes scriptural metaphors, defines speech with the help of its (traditional) diametrical opposite. Differentiality and relation to otherness thus seem to be inevitable in signifying acts.

Derrida's reading of Plato's *Phaidrus* in *Dissemination* (1972) presents the third

---

14 Derrida 1981a, 76-79

15 Ibid., 72-75.

16 Derrida 1976, 144.

17 I am indebted to Rodolphe Gasché (1986, 271-73) for the distinction of the four moments in Derrida's treatment of writing.

18 Quoted in Derrida 1976, 32-36.

instance of writing as an excluded and suppressed entity which, however, surfaces in the metaphors describing the virtues of speech. According to Plato's account, truth is *inscribed*, metaphorically written in the soul by the living discourse (speech). The discrepancy between Plato's overt intention and his metaphors becomes all the more crucial and at the same time revealing when he tries to state the special nature of speech as opposed to writing - and has to treat the former in terms of the latter.

The fourth instance of Derrida's analysis of writing emphasizes the paradox inherent in the fact that the advocates of speech tend to condemn writing in writing. This performative paradox or contradiction, in fact, informs the tradition of Western philosophy, which is essentially written discourse, not "living speech." Again, speech and writing seem to be secretly connected and even interdependent.

What connects the above notions on writing is the concept of the **supplement**, which characterizes philosophical discourse on originality in a paradoxical way. As the double meaning of the word suggests (the French *supplément* means both "an addition" and "a substitution"), there is a contradictory logic involved in the phenomenon. Supplementarity tries to enclose in one structure several statements and propositions concerning origin without hiding their contradictoriness but rather by openly taking it into account.[19] Derrida has traced, in *Of Grammatology*, the logic of supplementarity by deconstructing Rousseau's work, especially his *Confessions*, where nature is conceived as origin. This logic produces the following line of argument, conveniently paraphrased by Gasché:

> (1) origins, nature, animality, primitivism, childhood, and so on are pure; (2) compared to these pure and fully present origins, everything else (speech, society, reason) is an exterior addition which leaves their purity unbreached; (3) the necessity of these additions is not rationally explicable; (4) these additions themselves function as secondary origins; (5) these secondary origins are dangerous to the primal origins to the extent that they pervert and undermine them; and so on.[20]

Applied to the problem of speech and writing, the logic implies, in Rousseau's words, that "writing serves only as a supplement to speech."[21] The supplement is "an inessential extra, added to something complete in itself, but the supplement is added in order to complete, to compensate for a lack in what was supposed to be complete in itself."[22] In other words, the supplement acts as a plenitude adding to another, but at the same time substitutes an absence or deficiency of plenitude. As a supplement to speech, writing is a mere notational technique which does not belong to the nature of speech.[23] But the double meaning and double logic of the supplement deconstructs Rousseau's own argument, as Culler explicates: "Writing can be added to speech only if speech is not a self-sufficient, natural plenitude, only if there is already in speech a lack or absence that enables writing to supplement it."[24] Although Rousseau sees

---

19 Gasché 1986, 206.
20 Ibid., 206.
21 Quoted in Derrida 1976, 144.
22 Culler 1983, 103.
23 Cf. Derrida 1976, 144.
24 Culler 1983, 103.

writing "as a destruction of presence and disease of speech",[25] he, according to Derrida's analysis, "attempt[s] to restore through the absence of writing a presence that has been missing from speech."[26] The logic of the supplement, again, shows how speech and writing are constituted according to a similar principle of differentiality.

What is, then, the reason for this curious tendency of speech turning out to be very much like writing, of a "pure" concept being contaminated by its opposite, of philosophical discourse undermining its own argumentative logic? Derrida introduces two key terms to deal with the phenomenon: **arche-writing** and **différance**. As Gasché puts it, the former is needed because:

> To deconstruct the ethico-theoretical hierarchy of speech and writing - a deconstruction that includes an account of the factual return of the debased writing in the form of metaphors (for instance) in the very attempt to describe the purity and self-presence of the logos - is to construct the signifying structure or system of referral that accounts for both exclusion and contamination.[27]

Derrida defines the scope of arche-writing (*archi-écriture*) in a manner which radically re-evaluates the relationship between speech and writing:

> If "writing" means inscription and especially the durable institutioning of signs (and this is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), then writing in general covers the entire domain of linguistic signs [—]. The very idea of institution, hence of the arbitrariness of the sign, is unthinkable prior to or outside the horizon of writing.[28]

Arche-writing is hence an umbrella concept which includes, as subcategories, a vocal writing and a graphic writing.[29] But the concept is not limited to the restructuring of the relationship between speech and writing. As a general principle, arche-writing is

> the quasitranscendental synthesis that accounts for the necessary corruption of the idealities, or transcendentals of all sorts, by what they are defined against, and at the very moment of their constitution. [Arche-writing] is a construct aimed at resolving the philosophical problem of the very possibility [—] of the usurpation, parasitism, and contamination of an ideality, a generality, a universal by what is considered it other, its exterior, its incarnation, its appearance, and so on.[30]

Arche-writing, in other words, is the synthetic structure of referral which "accounts for the fact that in the play of differences [---] the pole allegedly present in and of itself, which allegedly refers to itself alone, must in fact constitute itself through the element that it debases."[31]

Derrida questions the traditional disparity between speech and writing by showing how difference and distance equally structure both of them. Thus, speech

---

25 Quoted in Derrida 1976, 142.

26 Culler 1983, 103.

27 Gasché 1986, 273.

28 Derrida 1976, 44. Derrida's term can be translated into English as "writing-in-general," "archi-writing," "arche-writing," or "protowriting" (cf. Culler 1983, 102; Gasché 1986, 273). In the present thesis, I shall use the "arche-writing" variant.

29 Derrida 1976, 44-45.

30 Gasché 1986, 274.

31 Gasché 1986, 275.

and writing cannot be opposed on the basis of presence vs. absence or immediacy vs. representation. A spoken sign is divided into a phonic signifier and a mental signified, and language, according to de Saussure, is "a system of differences rather than a collection of independently meaningful units."[32] This shows how "language as such is already constituted by the very distances and differences it seeks to overcome"; consequently, "to mean [—] is *not to be*."[33] Derrida's neologism, **différance**, which encloses "difference," "differing," and "deferral," refers to this lag in any signifying act or even in conscious and unconscious structures.[34] Prior structures make it possible for an event to take place, and the possibility to mean something is, analogously, inscribed in the structure of language. To look for the first, original event, or a form of language unsmeared by differance, is logically impossible, since the very concept of originary origin implies its own negation, a preceding structure or prior differentiation.

The difference or opposition of terms implies the existence of a structure which Derrida, drawing on Levinas, Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, calls **trace** (*la trace*) or **arche-trace**. The alterity between two terms is conceived as an asymmetrical opposition between the first (plenitude) and the second (a derivative from plenitude). What this state of affairs brings about is that the first term is, in fact, constituted by its very difference from its opposite. Although this contrasting feature is not usually regarded as an affecting principle in the privileged term, it is the difference and opposition - "present" only as traces, as suppressed falling-aways or negations - that give it (its one and only conceivable) form. By implication:

> The identity of the leading term, therefore, requires that the possiblity of its own duplication and its own reference to another be inscribed within itself. Otherwise it could not enter into opposition with another term, in comparison with which it is what it is. *Arche-trace* is the name for the universality of this *difference*, for the *necessary possibility* of inscription in general [—].[35]

Thus, both the identity and alterity of a concept derive from its difference from the Other, from the "lower self."[36] Hence, identity is constituted through relation to alterity.

A concept closely linked with the trace in Derrida's thinking is **erasure** (*rature*). It refers to the effacing characteristic of the trace. The trace "can only imprint itself by referring to the other, to another trace [—], by letting itself be upstaged and forgotten, its force of production stands in necessary relation to the energy of its erasure."[37]

---

32 Johnson 1981, ix.

33 Ibid., ix; emphasis in original.

34 Derrida 1976, 166. The heterogenous term *différance* defies a neat and all-encompassing definition; furthermore, Derrida has only rarely discussed its possible meanings at length. In his *Positions* (1972), Derrida gives his perhaps most extensive account of the term, dividing its meanings into five areas (temporalization, spatialization, polemical difference between conceptual poles, diacritical differentiality, and ontico-ontological difference) (Derrida 1981b, 8-10; cf. also Gasché 1986, 194-205; for Derrida's early essay on the *différance* see Derrida 1982, 1-27).

35 Gasché 1986, 188; emphasis in original.

36 Ibid., 188.

37 Derrida 1981a, 331.

Marking a trace equals effacing it by erasure.[38]

Iterability, i.e., the possibility of being iterated, repeated, represented ties in with the problematics of origin, supplementarity, differance, and trace - and consequently to the relationship between speech and writing.[39] That something can be iterated implies that it already exists before the act of iteration and that it can be recontextualized. In the case of (graphic) writing, iterability is an easily understood phenomenon; a notational system, writing has diverged from any hypothetical original moment of utterance and become a "ready-made" tool to be utilized in different contexts. As for speech, the situation is not, as can be inferred from Derrida's analyses above, different. Opposing the phonocentric assumptions of the speech act theory, Derrida argues that speech also belongs to the realm of differance and consequently that it is no more self-present or undistanced than writing.[40] All language pre-exists the speaker's intention and is distanced from origin by differance. Speech acts are, then, part of arche-writing, iterable and non-self-present.

Derrida also broadens, generalizes the concept of **text** by his famous statement "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*" ("There is nothing outside the text"; or: "There is no outside-text"). He does not solipsistically mean that the "real" world does not exist, but rather that everything in culture - not only linguistic signs, but also politics, arts, history, and life - is conceived as writing (or as attributes of writing, i.e., as arche-writing).[41] "[—] every referent and all reality cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretative experience."[42] The generalization of the text brings about a number of ramifications. The **general text** has no inside or outside and thus defies totalization. Although lacking a totalizing transcendental signified and questioning the naïve relationship between the signifier and the signified, the general text, however, does not mean the jettisoning of referentiality.[43] Reference and referentiality remain, but "nothing outside the text can, like a last reason, assume a *fulfilling function* [—] of the textual referrals."[44] On the other hand, nothing "inside" the text can do it either:

> for structural reasons the text has no identity or self with which to coincide. Though the text necessarily refers to itself, this movement never comes to completion. [—] all self-referral, as shown in "The Double Session," is grafted on a structurally endless referral to other determinate texts, thus making all textual self-reflexity *ultimately* impossible.[45]

---

38 In his deconstructive treatments of philosophical discourses, Derrida often graphically marks erasure by crossing out concepts; this is to remind that terms ought to be read "under erasure" (*sous rature*), without accepting them as such. Because concepts are both indispensable and inadequate, they must be both used and suspected (cf. Derrida 1976, 18-19).

39 For the five different functions of iterability, see Gasché 1986, 212-217.

40 Derrida 1982, 318.

41 Derrida 1976, 158-59.

42 Derrida 1990, 148.

43 Derrida 1981b, 66.

44 Gasché 1986, 281; emphasis in original.

45 Ibid., 281; emphasis in original.

In other words, the general text lacks an extratextual referent or anything outside the referential system which would saturate its referring function; this referentiality also includes the text's own self-reflexivity. What this implies is that, for structural reasons, no one meaning can be pinpointed as the text's final meaning.[46]

I have exemplified deconstruction with the speech/writing dichotomy without criticizing the validity or historical correctness of that very opposition. Derrida's idea of phonocentricity in Western thinking is by no means a widely acknowledged fact, but has been criticized on several grounds. Strictly historically, Derrida's view may well be too sweeping or totalizing. On the other hand, much of the criticism aimed at Derrida tends to be based on a deliberate misunderstanding of his thought or on a limited knowledge of the scope and nature of his project.[47]

No matter how accurate his view of Western metaphysical tradition as a whole, it will not diminish the value of Derrida's readings of particular texts. Nor will it affect my use of phonocentrism as a heuristic means of thematizing specific cases of rhetoric both in critical and Updike's fictional discourse.

In the next section, I shall turn to the "methodological" aspects of deconstruction and see how they have been treated in literary criticism.

2.2 Writing against Itself: Towards a "Methodology" of a Non-Method

2.2.1 Ex-centric Orbiting

What, then, do the ideas of deconstruction briefly sketched in the previous section contribute to literary criticism, to the practice of critical reading? The answer is many-faceted. Deconstruction calls critical concepts - including that of literature itself - into question; it provides themes for literary analyses; it offers exemplary strategies of reading; and it furnishes suggestions about the nature and ends of criticism in general.[48] In this section, I shall sketch some notions on Derrida's and critics' deconstructive practices, present deconstructive strategies of reading, and introduce possible themes or thematizations for criticism suggested by deconstruction. The most relevant features of deconstruction and deconstructive criticism to this section and my thesis in general belong to the applicatory side of the discipline. Hence, I shall pay less attention to the conceptual discussion of the nature and goals of literature and criticism.

Although most of his writings concern philosophical texts, Derrida has emphasized that his most constant interest has been literature, or rather, literary

---

46 Ibid., 282.

47 For instance, Raymond Tallis' provocative reading of Derrida simplifies deconstruction into a pathological state by literalizing or analogizing his highly abstract philosophical discourse (for the critique of the primacy of speech, see Tallis 1988, 164-202). For a more sophisticated and philosophically informed critique of Derrida's treatment of Husserl, see Evans 1991.

48 Culler 1983, 180-81.

writing.[49] What is known, then, as "deconstructive criticism" has been executed by critics - more or less knowledgeable of Derrida's philosophy, of its roots and ramifications. Indeed, the two terms ought to be kept separate: deconstruction of philosophical texts as executed by Derrida, and deconstructive readings of fiction by literary critics.[50] The latter may have little in common with the former; their common denominator is sometimes merely nominal. However, the actual practice of "deconstructive criticism" shows some recurrent critical gestures and moves, which make it justifiable to talk about a deconstructive "method" or model for reading, although it may never be theoretically articulated.[51]

The case is somewhat different with Derrida's work. He has repeatedly emphasized that "deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one. Especially if the technical and procedural significations of the words are stressed."[52] Derrida has stressed the singularity of every deconstructive event, and that deconstruction cannot be called an act or an operation: "Deconstruction takes place [---]. It deconstructs it-self. It can be deconstructed. [*Ça se déconstruit.*]"[53] This does not, however, do away with the fact that Derrida's massive work, singular as the individual readings may be, contain certain recurring gestures or moments of procedure.

In his ambitious reading of Derrida as a philosopher, *The Tain of the Mirror*

---

49 Gasché 1986, 255. In the late 1950s Derrida was, in fact, planning to write a thesis on the ideality of the literary object, which was to deal with a new literary theory utilizing Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. The thesis was never completed as planned, nor has Derrida ever formed a theory directly relating to literary criticism as it is usually conceived. But, as Gasché emphasizes, this is due to Derrida's notion that there is little literature independent of philosophy and of its mode of writing. (Gasché 1986, 255-56.) Both literature and philosophy have tended to curtail the signifier: "The entire history of texts, and within it the history of literary forms in the West [---] has almost always and almost everywhere [---] lent itself to this *transcendent* reading, in that search for the signified which we here put in question [---]" (Derrida 1976, 160; emphasis in original).

50 Literary critics commonly regarded as deconstructionists include Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, Paul de Man, Jonathan Culler, Barbara Johnson, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Shoshana Felman - all working in the United States; and Christopher Norris, Nicholas Royle, Andrew Bennett, André Bleikasten, Jean-Michel Rabaté, Bettine Menke, and Barbara Winken in Europe.
There are also philosophers who, at least in their early work, resembled Derrida without, however, paying tribute to him or calling themselves deconstructionists. Cf., for instance, Jean-François Lyotard's *Discours, figure* (1971) or Luce Irigaray's *Speculum* (1974)

51 Metacritical accounts of the commonplaces or peculiarities of deconstructive criticism have been published in the U.S. from the early 1980s on. They range from the advocates' expositions to other advocates' critiques of them for simplification or misunderstanding, or to the outsiders' criticism of both parties. The critics' ignorance of the philosophical background of Derrida's deconstruction has caused curious misunderstandings. For example, John M. Ellis conjures up some untenable features as the distinctive features of deconstructive criticism, projects them to Derrida, refutes both, and even "explains" some characteristics of (what he misnames as) deconstruction with the help of an incorrect account of the French intellectual context in the 1960s (Ellis 1988). In his vigorously argumented and philosophically sophisticated article, "Deconstruction as Criticism," (1979) Rodolphe Gasché demonstrated a number of mistakes in the critical applications of Derrida; the only critics that Gasché seems at least partly to approve of are J. Hillis Miller and Paul de Man (Gasché 1994, 53-57, 257n). That Ellis could write such a misinformed article almost a decade after Gasché shows that rigorous criticism is either too demanding to grasp or that it must be ignored for strategic reasons: what Ellis calls deconstruction is, in Gasché's and Derrida's terms, neither deconstruction nor deconstructive criticism.

52 Derrida 1991, 273.

53 Ibid., 273-74.

(1986), Rodolphe Gasché sums up what he boldly calls "deconstructive methodology."[54] Well aware of Derrida's warnings against all technical methodologizations of deconstruction, Gasché does not use the word *method* in its traditional sense. Instead of being 'a road leading to the truth,' deconstructive "method" could signify a following of the "lines of force and forces of rupture that are localizable in the discourse to be deconstructed."[55] Deconstructive methodology is not, then, external to what it investigates. Deconstruction refuses the status of a readily applicable technique insensitive to the particularities of the discourse to be deconstructed. This does not, however, mean that every text would deconstruct itself in the sense of an annulment or neutralization of bipolar oppositions within it.[56] Deconstructive methodology is hence neither external nor intrinsic but rather *exorbitant* in Derrida's sense of the word: "To *exceed* the metaphysical orb is an attempt to get out of the orbit (*orbita*), to think the entirety of the classical conceptual oppositions [---]."[57] Following the lines of dicoursive force forms a kind of gravitational pull and consequently a concentric orbit from which it is possible to break - not free but perhaps - farther, to another orbit. The metaphor of the orbit is both misleading and illuminating. The centre around which the deconstructive reader orbits seems to imply a significatory stronghold, an undividable hard core of meaning. The centre seems to hold and to remain the point of reference no matter how centrifugal the reader's itinerary. But the very concept of centre is off the centre:

> the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center.[58]

The exorbitant deconstructive methodology is, then, in several senses of the word, *ex-centric*.

Deconstructive reading hence consists of a double gesture. It must both follow the track (L. *orbitare*) and to part from it (L. *exorbitare*). This is needed in order both to articulate the relationship between the asserted and the asserting writing and to undo it. That explicit articulation ruptures the articulation of assertory writing and "deconstructs the totality of logocentrism which guaranteed it."[59] What is followed, traced, or orbited is, then, a significatory force that both "occupies the locus of the mediation and exceeds the system of mediation."[60]

The propaedeutics of deconstruction - the critical gestures preceding deconstruction - includes bringing into prominence conceptual aporias, discursive

---

54 Gasché 1986, 123.

55 Derrida 1981b, 82.

56 Self-reflection or self-deconstruction as a cancelling of oppositions is a misconception nurtured in (American) deconstructive literary criticism. The idea of dissolution of contradiction relates to Romantic thinking and is not far from New Critical celebration of ambiguity. The latter at least partly explains the seemingly easy adoption of a watered-down version of deconstruction in American criticism. Rodolphe Gasché has emphasized these points on several occasions (cf. Gasché 1986, 138-141; Gasché 1994, 22-27).

57 Derrida 1976, 161-162.

58 Derrida 1986, 279; emphasis in original.

59 Godzich 1994, 180.

60 Ibid., 181.

inequalities, and such discursive heterogeneity as lexicological inconsistency of "key words," different statements about themes, co-existence of irreducible types, or parts of texts.[61] In a given text, these can be seen, for example, in the incomparability of the rhetoric of an assertion with its explicit meaning, or in the general discrepancies between the argumentative and descriptive strata.[62]

Deconstruction consists of a bipartite operation. The first phase is to reverse the binary oppositions without neutralizing them and without re-establishing an inverse hierarchical order.[63] The second phase consists of a reinscription, displacement, or reconstruction:

> the hitherto repressed traits of concepts, or traits held in reserve, are restored to their generality, to their power of generalization, and to their generative force. With this liberation of the traits [—] new "concepts" erupt into the territory of philosophy. These concepts refer to something that could never be comprehended, that could never have been an "object" within the discourse of philosophy. These repressed traits, leading through their generalization to the formation of new "concepts," can be *grafted* onto the traditional concepts or names privileged in the first phase of reversal.[64]

Derrida utilizes the meanings of the words "graft" and "graph": etymologically, they stem from the same root, the Greek *graphion* ('writing implement, stylus'), but they also tie in with vegetal or animal grafting.[65] In Derrida's deconstructive textual practice, grafting can be seen as insertion of one discourse into another, or as intervention in the discourse he is reading. Thus, deconstructive reading is also writing, reinscription of texts.

Although Gasché's account concentrates on philosophical texts, his notions on the deconstructive "methodology" are applicable to literature as well. In fact, deconstruction does not make a radical difference between philosophical and literary texts but treats both as writing, which, by definition, is a battleground of heterogenous forces and violent hierarchies.

2.2.2 Necessarily Possible Strategies

As for the **strategies of reading**, both Derrida and deconstructive criticism seem to perform certain recurring gestures. As Derrida's deconstructive reading of Rousseau shows, writing tends to turn against the author's apparent intentions, forming another logic which undermines what the text explicitly claims. The discrepancy between the logics is by no means self-evident, but requires attentive reading. Deconstruction is then, in Barbara Johnson's words, "the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within a text."[66]

---

61 Gasché 1986, 133-35.

62 Johnson 1981, xvi; Gasché 1986, 130.

63 Gasché 1986, 171. Gasché claims that most of the literary criticism labelled as deconstructive aims at the neutralization or mutual annulment of textual or conceptual discrepancies, which he regards as "one of the dominant misconceptions about deconstruction" (ibid., 138).

64 Ibid., 172; emphasis in original.

65 Derrida 1981a, 202.

66 Johnson 1982, 5. In the following, I shall utilize Jonathan Culler's sketch of the strategies that a deconstructive critic may be perceived performing (Culler 1983, 213-16).

The warring forces a critic should tease out manifest themselves as **asymmetrical oppositions** or as **hierarchies with embedded value judgments**, which privilege one term while suppressing another. The very structuration of a conceptual dyad breaches its hierarchy: the second term, although regarded as negative, marginal, or supplementary, can be shown to be the precondition of the first. Thus, a text may contain two kinds of logic: one overt and explicit, another covert and implicit, but still working against the first; the latter can emerge "at some crucial moment or figure in the text."[67]

Sometimes a single term can **condense opposing trains of thought and value systems**. Derrida has deconstructed such "key words" as *pharmakon* in Plato, *parergon* in Kant, and *supplément* in Rousseau which both promote and topple a text's argument. Two contradictory arguments are present at the same time without, however, reconciling or cancelling the difference between them. This incompatibility or contradictoriness is taken, in deconstruction, as a systematic and significant characteristic of writing.[68]

A text can also turn against itself by **marginally countering the interpretation** promoted by itself or by the critical tradition; some images and arguments that a text provides are not in keeping with its apparent intention or with the readers' presuppositions.

Self-reference is another moment of writing which brings contradictoriness to the surface. Parergonality and self-reference can be found in a text applying to a given phenomenon "a description, image, or figure that can be read as self-description, as a representation of its own operations."[69] However, the intended clarifying effect is often undermined by the inner logic of the depiction. To treat some element or figure as a self-description often implies "reading against the grain," i.e., a critical intervention in the text's staging of its theses. For example, Derrida reads, in *The Truth in Painting* (1978), Immanuel Kant's framing technique in *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, which, of course, deals with the aesthetic properties of a work of art, as an artistic operation. The deconstructive treatment of self-description also pays attention to the recurrent tendency of self-reflective textual devices aimed at self-possession to paradoxically turn into the very obstacles of their realization. For instance, when language deals with language, man studies man, self deciphers itself, or when any other object tries to analyze itself with itself, telling aberrations will very likely occur.

A text can also **dramatize its own readings** and at the same time foretell its misunderstandings: it allegorically shows, at least for Paul de Man, how all interpretations, all readings, all critical moves are deficient. A text often dramatizes critical debate about itself in the form of other conflicts (for examples of this tendency, see section 1.4. above); a deconstructive interpretation of this kind of text will concentrate on its relation to the readings articulating it and on the presuppositions controlling different critical positions. The text, in these cases, is deconstructed only

---

67 Culler 1983, 213.

68 Johnson 1981, xvi.

69 Culler 1983, 214.

indirectly, as a structure transferred on to actual criticism.[70]

As a general principle, deconstruction tends to concentrate on the **marginal**, on the elements usually regarded as insignificant; by turning away from the essential, deconstruction subverts hierarchies embedded in a text and also a text's identity created by previous readings.

Another recurrent tendency in deconstructive criticism is the aptness to use the imagery, terminology, or rhetorical tropes - i.e., **object language** - of a given work as its **metalanguage**, i.e., use a text's "own" language to analyze itself. Barbara Johnson's deconstructive reading of Melville's *Billy Budd* serves as a good example of this.[71] Johnson's title, "Melville's Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd," condenses three concerns of the novella: the narrator's act of writing, Billy's denial performed in a pugilistic fashion, and Vere's mortal judgment.[72] The utilization of metalanguage varies considerably from one critic to another: Derrida is apt to exploit a given text's signifiers to describe and exemplify (its) textual logic, de Man tends to translate the terms offered by a text into rhetorical and philosophical metalanguage, and critics like Johnson and Peter Brooks hold a median position between the two extremes by punningly folding a text's signifiers on to itself in a restricted manner.[73] The strategic utilization of object language is, of course, part of the bipartite operation of deconstruction. The hitherto repressed term of the reversed binary opposition is reinscribed with a new generalized meaning. Thus, the deconstructed concept of *writing* remains the same as a signifier although it now signifies radically different arche-writing.

2.2.3 Themes and Variations

The **themes or thematizations** with which deconstruction provides a literary critic include practically all of Derrida's "key words" introduced in the previous chapters. Both "theme" and "key word" should be in quotation marks because, strictly speaking, neither converge with the aims of deconstruction as such. When a critic has read some of Derrida's elaborate deconstructive interpretations or his exegetes' accounts of them, ambiguous words and asymmetrical oppositions in a new text are likely to ring the proselyte's bell, and simultaenously, toll deconstruction's knell. In this sense, the unreflexive dissemination of superficially thematic deconstruction into the field of criticism means the death of the singular lines of force in a particular discourse. The automatic following in the wake of Derrida's "themes" easily turns into a wake of deconstruction proper; the deadly repetition of *bon mots* may become a death sentence

---

70 Both self-reference and dramatization of reading came to be equated with deconstruction in the early work by Paul de Man and, in his wake, by much of American deconstructive criticism. Deconstruction *qua* self-reflection has amounted to the anthropomorphization of text: cognitive functions possible for human beings only have been read into it. (Gasché 1994, 54-55.) All this simplifies deconstruction, which at least partly explains the popularity of the discipline in American criticism of the 1970s and 1980s. I shall return to the problematic of self-reflection and self-consciousness in section 2.3.

71 I have dealt with Johnson's essay in connection with allegories of interpretation in section 1.4. above.

72 Johnson 1982, 79; Culler 1983, 240. The pugilistic metaphor also allows for such puns as "the meaning of Melville's last work [is] so *striking*" (Johnson 1982, 109; emphasis in original).

73 Cf. Culler 1983, 240.

to the discipline. Derrida writes, "there cannot be any such thing as key words,"[74] which could mean that any central term has a multitude of usages and meanings within a given text. These meanings are not reducible to a nicely controlled signified but require sensitivity to significatory heterogeneity or multifunctionality. One could say that there *are* key words, but they open "wrong" doors of signification, without, of course, being master keys.

All those Derridean "concepts" presented above tie in with the theme of (arche-) writing. Thus, the theme of, say, supplementarity can be traced not only in writing but also in speech, both of which are joined in generalized writing. In a similar fashion, the workings of differance can be detected in a number of structures: linguistic, psychological, physical, and so forth. On a more general level, writing (especially as opposed and/or related to speech) can prove an insightful means of thematizing a literary text.[75] At the same time, however, the ubiquitous theme of writing ought not to be taken as a totalizing arche-theme suppressing all the other themes of a given text, but rather as a way of describing its particular logic at another level.[76] Deconstruction hence differs from traditional thematic criticism, which, in its search for the signified (original meaning, logos, unifying theme), bypasses the signifier as a transparent entity and is implicitly totalizing.[77] For instance, in his reading of Mallarmé's themes (and their treatment by critics), Derrida recognizes them, but then moves to the level of textual process or structure: the theme of blank (*blanc*) graphically appears (i.e., by being absent) in the form of white space, spacing, and blank paper.[78]

In the following section, I shall deal with a topic already alluded to in a number of occasions in my thesis: the problematic self-referential and self-conscious features of writing.

2.3 Writing about Itself: Self-Reflexivity, Metafictionality, Mise en Abyme

2.3.1 On Reflection

As will be clear on the basis of Chapter 2 so far, writing seems to have a capacity to deal with itself, with its own operations, or at least it yields to readings finding that capacity. Applied to literary writing, especially narratives, this insight has produced theorization on the metafictionality, self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, surfictionality,

---

74 Derrida 1981a, 256.

75 Cf. Ross 1989, who uses Derrida's insights but not very systematically, or Stewart 1990, who provides a fascinating non-phonocentric account of voice in (literary) language.

76 Culler 1983, 208.

77 Cf. Gasché 1986, 262; Derrida 1981a, 245. Thematic criticism, as Derrida conceives it, regards meaning as a pre-existent signified which literature exemplifies as signifiers; meaning (or theme) is thus anchored or assured by virtue of its ontological status. This, of course, ties in with logocentrism and with the metaphysics of presence.

78 Derrida 1981a, 251-53.

self-begetting quality - to name just a few of the terms for the phenomenon - of literature.[79] The study of self-reflexivity has inspired critics, especially those belonging to the so-called Geneva school, to make rather sweeping generalizations. For instance, according to Jean Ricardou, any narrative is eventually "a metaphor of its narration" or a "dramatization of its own working."[80] Tzvetan Todorov claims that narrative itself is always the fundamental theme of all narratives.[81] In his early work, Paul de Man follows the same train of thought, albeit stressing reception at the cost of production, by arguing that "any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading."[82] In the American version of so-called deconstructive criticism, heavily influenced by simplified interpretations of de Man, self-reflection became an unproblematized theme, as I stated above.

Lucien Dällenbach, the most systematic critic of self-reflexive fiction within the Geneva school, however, avoids such extremist views and radicalizations, which he regards as anachronistic and "massive."[83] Self-reflexivity appears, in his view, differently in different texts with regard to the means and extent; no matter how self-reflexive, a text also has its referential dimension, a connection to something outside it and different from it.[84]

What is the reason for narrative (or in general, language) to turn on itself, to reflect its own characteristics? To be sure, it is not a question of (at least mere) conscious use by the author, but is rather deeply embedded in the very structure of (literary) language. The poetic function as defined by Roman Jakobson stresses self-referentiality as the constitutive factor making language literary or poetic: the message turns on itself "for its own sake," drawing attention to its structure, rhetorical "devices," and general palpability of signs.[85]

If literary language is by definition self-reflexive, and if, as many critics maintain, the novel as a genre is always more or less metafictional,[86] is not reading the novel as self-conscious fiction, then, something of a truism? It may be the case, but it will not make the systematic tracing of the means and functions of metafiction a useless pursuit. In the paragraphs to follow, I shall sum up some of the basic features of self-conscious fiction as presented by the standard studies on the subject.[87] I shall

---

79 For a discussion of the different terms, see Waugh 1984, 13-19.

80 Quoted in Carrard 1984, 846.

81 Todorov 1980, 79.

82 de Man 1979, 76.

83 Carrard 1984, 846.

84 Dällenbach 1977, 67-69. As if to oppose de Man, Dällenbach warns against allegorizing a text, i.e., seeing its referential dimension as a mere disguise. He calls this kind of reading a sort of scriptural idealism of the Gnostics, in which the method anticipates the results, and provides a key supposedly fitting to all textual locks.
(Dällenbach 1977, 69.) Dällenbach is probably right in seeing the dangers of totalizing specular reading, but, on the other hand, his attack on allegory seems to be missing the point, since "all commentary," as Frye (1973, 89) points out, "is allegorical interpretation."

85 Jakobson 1968, 356.

86 Witness Patricia Waugh's statement that "the [metafictional] *practice* is as old (if not older) than the novel itself," and that "metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels" (Waugh 1984, 5; emphasis in original); cf. also Alter 1975, x-xii, and Harry Levin quoted in Alter 1975, [viii].

87 Besides the ones quoted in this section, the following studies will be useful in reading metafiction: Hutcheon 1980; Federman 1981; Christensen 1981.

also problematize literary self-consciousness with the help of a deconstructive critique of (self-)reflexivity.

Rober Alter's study *Partial Magic* (1975) traces the self-conscious features of the novel from Renaissance Spain to modern (or postmodern) France and America. Alter defines the self-conscious novel as the one that "systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming and reality."[88] The whole matter thus revolves around the problem of presentation and representation. As Waugh puts it, because representing the world is impossible, and only the discourses of that world can be represented in literary fiction, the circularity of the situation rises into prominence in self-conscious fiction (linguistic discourses are represented with linguistic discourses, language is described with metalanguage).[89] Expressed in semiotic parlance, "a metalanguage is a language that functions as a signifier to *another language*, and this other language thus becomes its signified."[90] In the actual practice of metafictional writing, this state of affairs means displaying the conventionality of language in general, or more specifically, the language of literature or of a given genre.[91]

What the basic feature of metafiction sketched above results in are such literary ramifications as,

1) a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations;
2) an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form and the act of writing fictions;
3) a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality;
4) a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naive style of writing.[92]

These ramifications can be realized in a number of ways:

1) fabulation indulges in inventing fictional worlds, in utilizing the power of the metaphor to the utmost degree (cf. Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*).[93]
2) language, literary conventions, and the act of writing can be laid bare by the use of excessively intrusive and explicitly inventing narrator (cf. John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*); the inclusion of the reader as a dramatized agent in narrative (Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*); experimental use of typography (B.S. Johnson's *Travelling People*); the use of narrative embeddings creating a Chinese-box effect (Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*); critical analysis of the story within itself (John Barth's *Sabbatical*); and the violation of certain literary conventions (John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*).[94]
3) the problematic and insecure relationship between fiction and reality is exemplified by the use of historical characters and events in (at least partly) fictional context without unambiguously stating which mode is being used (Robert Coover's *Public Burning*; E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*; Don DeLillo's *Libra*).

---

88 Alter 1975, x.

89 Waugh 1984, 3-4.

90 Ibid., 4; emphasis in original.

91 Ibid., 4.

92 Ibid., 2.

93 "Fabulation" is a term coined by Robert Scholes, and it refers to a state of fiction in which the empirical has lost its validity to philosophico-mythical "ethically controlled fantasy" (Scholes 1967, 11); Waugh 1984, 16-17.

94 Waugh 1984, 21-22.

4) the conventionality of style may be foregrounded by means of absurd lists (Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*); over-systematizing or explicitly arbitrary structuring (Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa*; George Perec's *La Disparition*); regress *ad infinitum* (Samuel Beckett's *Watt*); complete undoing of spatio-temporal organization of narrative (B.S. Johnson's "A Few Selected Sentences"); or annihilation of believable, sustained characterization by dehumanization, parodic *Doppelgängers*, and intrusive names.[95] As for parody, metafiction is by definition apt to it. A work parodying another one defamiliarizes it by not only destroying but also evaluating it with the help of an explicitly stated norm.[96] Parody hence requires consciousness of the intertext parodied, awareness of intertextual relations between two or more texts. Styles can be mixed with parodic intent (Brautigan's *A Confederate General from Big Sur*), as well as whole anterior texts (Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*).[97]

2.3.2 Generalized Reflection

Intertextuality can be seen as a vital element of metafiction, be it parodic or not. Other texts within a given text defy the notion of an author as an originator and controller of meaning; intertextuality rather displays writing or text as a product of other writing and texts.[98] *Intertextuality* is a problematic term since its semantic field ranges from the conventional study of influence to the tracing of conscious allusions and subtexts to the reader's *uchronical* textual freeplay. Although Julia Kristeva, who coined the term *intertextualité* in "Le Mot, le dialogue et le roman," is usually read as the originator of generalized intertextuality, her famous formulation lends itself to at least two readings:

> tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorbtion et transformation d'un autre texte. A la place de la notion d'intersubjectivité s'installe celle d'*intertextualité*, et le langage poétique se lit, au moins, comme *double*.[99]

Instead of clarifying and exemplifying the workings of textual practice, Kristeva's metaphors, in a classic deconstructive manner, shatter her argumentation. A mosaic of citations, absorption, and transformation are incommensurable. The first implies pre-existing unitary pieces which are combined in a certain fashion to form a meaningful picture, whereas the other two refer to indefinite, unpredictable, even chaotic phenomena. The opposing forces of signification in Kristeva's rhetoric can be read as a telltale of the tendencies inscribed in her theory: influence on one hand, and general intertextuality, on the other.[100] According to the latter reading, then, any text is an intersection of other texts, be they past or future. Texts consciously or

---

95 Ibid., 22. Over-systematization used to be a trademark of the French experimental literary movement OuLiPo, whose member Perec was.

96 Ibid., 63-65; for a sustained discussion of parody and metafiction, see Rose 1979.

97 Waugh 1984, 22.

98 Ibid., 145.

99 Kristeva 1984, 85; emphasis in original.

100 For a more detailed reading of the rhetoric of such theorists of intertextuality as Kristeva, Taranovsky, Genette, and Barthes, see Keskinen 1996. In that article I coined the term *uchrony* in order to account for the state of reading in the age of general intertextuality. I thought that the term was a neologism until I learned that Umberto Eco had already used it in his *Reflections on The Name of the Rose* (1983), albeit in a different sense. This coincidence, I think, beautifully demonstrates my point: it is not a matter of chronology or influence, but of uchrony and confluence.

unwittingly use other texts not as a parasite but as an organism feeding on them and, on the other hand, feeding them. The shared language and literary conventions make intertextuality somewhat irrevocable. Even if a writer consciously tried to be unique or "original," the very act of opposing the tradition of other texts would, paradoxically, by the way of antithesis, influence the "new" text and unite him/her to the tradition, most obviously to that of opposing traditions. Every literary act, like any signifier in language, bears the trace of what it negates, of what it, supposedly, is not.

General intertextuality also justifies the use of the oxymoronic term *unintentional parody*. If the reader thinks that s/he is aware of intertextual relations between two or more texts and that the relation is a parodic one, the author's intentions are as irrelevant as they are difficult to verify. If a reading that emphasizes parody yields a stronger interpretation than a non-parodic one, the former is preferable, and suffices to justify it.

As metafiction is aware of metaphoricity, especially when it is used as a self-reference to its own operations, it is not surprising to find such metaphors as "Chinese-box structure" in self-reflexive functions. Mirrors reflect both characters in fiction and, as textual mirrors, fiction itself, as is usual in Nabokov. Acrostics and mazes also serve the same function, but the metaphor of textile (weaving or undoing of a garment) is one of the most common images reflecting (the production of) text.[101] The metaphors of stage and play (in both the dramatic and jocular senses of the word) are also commonly used to reflect fiction[102]; for instance, Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc.* utilizes the rules of baseball, and Nabokov's *The Defence* those of chess in representing fiction. Analogously, the game metaphors tie metafiction to metaphysics: the force controlling the game (of fiction) is easily associated with that controlling life, God. Also, by describing characters who are writers or other artists or by including depictions of (artistic) production or reception in itself, a narrative foregrounds its own production and reception (André Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*; Bernard Malamud's *The Tenants*).[103]

Michael Boyd claims that the reflexive novel is a form of critical inquiry which examines language, the process of story-telling, and modes of representation, such as realism.[104] In Boyd's view, the reflexive novel is, then, both fiction and criticism dealing with (that kind of) fiction. Boyd's analyses of novels of this kind emphasize the consciousness of the authors' decisions to write in a particular manner and, consequently, the textual verifiability of reflexivity. However, in his conclusion, Boyd stresses the reader as a producer of the mode. Drawing on Barthes' distinction between the readerly and the writerly, Boyd concludes that

> S/Z simultaneously exposes the mimetic fallacy and presents us with the groundwork for any future *reflexive* reading of a realistic text. In effect, he rewrites Balzac's story as he rereads it, and shows us how we might recover the innocent fictions of the mimetic tradition by

---

101 Cf. Penelope's weaving in the *Odyssey*, or the various instances of making tapestry in later literature.
Text and textile are, of course, etymologically linked, as many critics have pointed out and utilized the thus "naturalized" metaphoricity.

102 Cf. Waugh 1984, 34-48 for a discussion of games.

103 Waugh 1984, 117. For an intriguing reading of the Malamud novel from this viewpoint, see Ahokas 1991, 273-304.

104 Boyd 1983, 7, 9.

> exposing their conventions, and thereby again becoming ourselves the producers of the text we read.[105]

This statement generalizes the theory of the reflexive novel to a degree that practically any work *becomes* reflexive in the act of reading it reflexively. Analogously, the immanent textual features of the genre become next to unnecessary: such characteristics are welcomed by readers but are all the same excessive.

2.3.3 Narratological Chinese-Box

Self-consciousness and metafictionality can also be analyzed with the help of the narratological model presented in the beginning of this thesis. The model implies a hierarchy and symmetry of narrative agents: communication can, it is assumed, only take place one way, and between agents occupying a position on the same narrative level.[106] In self-conscious fiction, these two "rules" are violated by turning the relations upside down or by otherwise changing the agents' order, which results in narrational paradoxes. On the level of the **narrated world**, the embedded narratives (characters' dreams, hallucinations, fantasies; or such fictional texts as manuscripts, stories, novels) may begin to rule or influence (eg. anticipate) the higher-order plane they are subordinated to. This is an anomaly both in the inner system of narration and in the everyday logic outside it. The phenomenon can be exemplified with Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The Circular Ruins" (the dream paradox), or with Gide's *Les Faux-Monneyeurs* (a novel within a novel anticipating the latter). The resulting infinite set of levels undermines the reader's assumption of the hierarchical regularity of narration, but also, analogously, threatens his/her position outside fiction: s/he might be part of another, even larger fictional level.

The communication between the narrator and narrated world can also prove paradoxical, when the supposed one-way communication by the former about the latter (unable to perceive or address the agent on the higher plane of narration) is manipulated. If the characters perceive or address the narrator, or if the narrator intrudes into the lower level, the relationship between the two results in an endless set of reflections oscillating between narrating and perceiving (cf. Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*).

The **narrator-text relation** becomes paradoxical if a fictional narrator becomes aware of the fact that s/he appears in a text written by someone else (cf. John Barth's "Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction").

Self-consciousness and paradoxality in the cases above are not necessarily so much of textual features as dependent on the narratological model itself. The model and the presuppositions of narratology are vulnerable to deconstructive or other reconsiderations, which at least partly undermine the prerequisites of paradoxality (cf. chapter 4 below).

---

105 Ibid., 176; emphasis in original.

106 The following remarks on the narrational paradoxes are based on Tammi 1984, 124-28; Tammi 1985, 42-51; and Waugh 1984, 141-43.

2.3.4 Mise en Abyme

If the critics dealt with above provide one with general observations on the actual techniques and functions of self-conscious fiction, Lucien Dällenbach, a true structuralist, furnishes a complicated, and, one is seduced to assume, complete taxonomy of self-referential textual mirrorings, i.e., *mises en abyme* in narrative fiction. The term itself stems from heraldics, in which it means placing a miniaturized copy of an escutcheon in the middle of a coat of arms, so that the smaller reflects the bigger of which it is a part.[107] André Gide was the first one to use the term analogously in connection with textual mirrorings, as realized in the play-within-a-play of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the puppet and feast scenes in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, or Roderick's reading in Poe's tale "The Fall of the House of Usher."[108] Dällenbach divides the cases of the *mise en abyme* on the basis of the way in which reflection takes place, and what is being reflected. The former division is subdivided into 1) simple, 2) infinite, and 3) aporistic duplications, which can be exemplified with the play embedded in *Hamlet*, the *Quaker Oats* advertisement in Huxley's *Point Counterpoint*, or the characters in the second part of *Don Quixote* who have read its first part respectively.[109]

Another way of classifying the *mise en abyme* is to concentrate on the content of the reflection. The *mise en abyme de l'énoncé* reflects the whole work's plot structure, theme, or thesis; the *mise en abyme de l'énonciation* the production and/or reception (presented as the writer or reader) of a given work and the context regulating both; and the *mise en abyme du code* the "code," i.e., the system of signs and convention used in transmitting information as well as the aesthetic programme, artistic manifesto, *credo*, or the work's status defined by the author or the work itself.[110] The reflected code functions as a "user's guide" for the reader: the work presents the model according to which it wants to be read.[111] Besides being a directly applicable model for reading, a specular segment can also provide the reader with an antimodel, significant and revelatory by virtue of its dissimilarity to what it reflects; the reader is to discriminate between the two.[112]

2.3.5 Reader's Reflexes

The functions of literary self-consciousness also include thematic concerns: it questions such oppositions as reality/fiction, presentation/representation, truth/untruth, writing/reading, and fiction/criticism. Philosophically speaking,

---

107 Dällenbach 1977, 15-16.

108 Ibid., 15.

109 Ibid., 50-52, 217-18.

110 Ibid., 61, 100, 128-30. Drawing on Emile Benviste, Ross Chambers (1984, 28, 33) translates *énoncé* as "statement" and *énonciation* as "utterance." Because the "specular" terminology based on Jakobson's categories is still relatively unestablished in English, I shall use Dällenbach's French terms in this thesis.

111 Dällenbach 1977, 130.

112 Chambers 1984, 29. In his later writings, Dällenbach has indeed proceeded from the problems of reflexivity to those of reading, combining ideas of the German reception aesthetics with specularity.

metafiction problematizes ontology and epistemology of both the world and art: the apprehension of reality may always take place by creating fictions, whose fictionality is then forgotten. The same tendency applies to the reception of fiction: reading turns out to be an act of rewriting, a remake rather than a faithful reflection of the "original."

This also applies to the reading of self-reflexive fiction. The textual reflection may be in the eye of the reader rather than a purely textual property of what is being read. Or a text abounds in possibly reflexive traits so that the reader is to concentrate on the most important, i.e. thematically relevant, among them. In his conclusion of *Le Récit spéculaire*, Dällenbach claims that the *mise en abyme* is a "structured fact" (*une realité structurée*) although the actual manifestations of it prove to be manifold and contingent.[113] This somewhat contradictory statement makes one wonder by whom the *mise en abyme* is structured. It is probable that the theory of the *mise en abyme* brings the phenomenon into existence, functioning as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.[114] As Terence Cave, writing about the recognition of recognition, puts it, "[t]here is an important sense in which the things we see in literature are not there until we see them" and "we need the label before the literary phenomenon can emerge as a topic to be talked about."[115] By directing readers' (and authors') attention to the phenomenon, the theory of reflection becomes part of accepted critical context, of conventions of reading (and writing). Perceiving reflexivity becomes a reflex.

Basically, it is not important where the reflection resides, whether the reader receives or projects the *mise en abyme*. In both cases, the reader thematizes some elements of fiction from a reflective viewpoint, bringing about an interpretation that emphasizes the cohesive and the autorepresentative. It is also possible that the theoretical contributions to textual reflection, with lists of such reflective commonplaces as mirrors, Chinese-boxes, or texts within texts, are used by novelists to produce specular effects.

What are the reasons for the appeal of self-consciousness in both fiction and criticism? The reasons are no doubt manifold and not necessarily similar in both. One of the standard explanations for self-conscious fiction is the antirealist tendency, which questions the epistemological and ontological naivety inherent in realism.[116] The rise of self-conscious or self-reflexive criticism stems from a different ground. One could use Rodolphe Gasché's critique of Paul de Man as an exemplary case in this respect. By equating self-reflexivity and deconstruction, de Man, in his early work, took a metaphysical and hence logocentric step. He (mis)understood literariness, textuality, and writing in terms of self-consciousness although especially the latter resists, in Derrida's sense, every imposition of a phenomenal meaning to it. This discrepancy opens up the ideological closure that is implicit in the notion of self-reflection.[117] The ideological closure relates to the immanence of meaning within a text, an idea that is not far from the ideals of New Criticism. The reflexive closure is

---

113 Dällenbach 1977, 210.

114 Dällenbach himself recognizes the dangers of allegorical readings of specularity. What Dällenbach offers as a remedy to this is the materiality of the text, the actual manifestations instead of idealizations. (Dällenbach 1977, 69.) But the actual is exactly what problematizes his taxonomy, because textual materiality is too varied and contingent to fit in it.

115 Cave 1988, 10.

116 Cf. Boyd 1983, 17-19.

117 Gasché 1994, 55.

a never-ending loop, a circular string of tautological sentences, a discursive ouroboros biting its own tail/tale. That de Man calls self-reflexivity self-deconstruction does not break the spell of immanence, but merely reinforces the abysmal definition of text, into which meanings, generated by the text itself, collapse. The reading subject is to follow the play of signifiers obediently and in a sense let the text reflect in him/her. The self-reflexive text is conceived as an immanent, self-sufficient whole, which does not need or event tolerate other interpretive moves "outside" it. Of course, it is questionable to write about the inside and outside of the text in a Derridean context. Thus,

> If there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself [—], but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing.[118]

Studies of self-reflexive fiction rarely take this into account. Rather, as Derrida notes in a metacritical aside on the use of *mise en abyme*, text is saved from falling into the bottomless abyss by endlessly talking about its unfathomability: the pit is bridged by discursively saturating its abysmal depth.[119]

When dealing with the moments of self-consciousness in the Updike novels, I shall bear in mind Derrida's insight into the problematics of self-reference: self-description or representation of a text's own operations is never "innocent" or transparent, but inevitably introduces its own logic into the rhetorical line of argument, thus soliciting what it is intended to promote, obscuring what is allegedly clarified (cf. section 2.2. above). I shall also account for the reader's constitutive part in the formation of (supposed) self-consciousness: much of textual reflexion resides in the eye of the reader. This objective does not, nevertheless, diminish the interpretive power or interest of self-reflexive reading as long as one is self-conscious of the positionedness of the gesture.

In the next chapter, I shall turn from reading and writing as somewhat separate phenomena to the conscious intermingling or manipulation of the two.

---

118 Derrida 1981a, 35-36.

119 Derrida 1987b, 100-101.

3 READING AND WRITING

3.1 Resisting Reading, Appropriating Writing

3.1.1 Instances of Resistance

"Does not reading involve one risk that, precisely, cannot be resisted: that of finding in the text something one does not expect? The danger with becoming a 'resisting reader' is that we end up, in effect, *resisting reading*."[1] Or end up with *a* resisting reading. Resistance, the instance of resisting acts, has, at least, two opposite meanings, two different forces. The resisting reader withstands, strives against, opposes the actions and effects of what s/he is reading; s/he also refrains or abstains from them, either with difficulty or reluctance.[2] On the other hand, what is being read offers opposition, hindrance, or antagonism, be it aesthetic or ideological, to the reader. What unites these instances of resistance is, of course, power: the reader's power to hold on to his/her ideology against the text's, the text's power to manipulate or complicate the act of reading.

The above distinction is too simple to account for the complex power relations within resistance. It is not a matter of clear-cut entities offering or enduring resistance, but the two are intertwined in various ways, even to the degree that they not only oppose but also imply or bring about one other. The idea of a force generating a counterforce is, of course, an important part of Michel Foucault's theory of power, and I shall utilize it below.

In this chapter, I shall present and review some instances of resisting reading. I shall start with early feminist and gender-conscious approaches, then move on to critics like Ross Chambers and Shoshana Felman who tend to find resistance in the text itself, and finally consider the multiple possibilities of resistance, including abstinence from reading and the resistant quality of (literary) language itself.

---

1 Felman 1993, 5-6.

2 The different meanings of the verb *resist* are from the *Webster's*.

3.1.2 Representative Men, Resisting Women

In her *The Resisting Reader* (1978), Judith Fetterley approaches canonized American literature from a feminist position. Fetterley stresses that all literature is political in the sense that it presents the subjective as the universal or representative, and covers this in the rhetoric of apoliticalness. This state of affairs can pass unnoticed in the eyes of a male reader, since "American literature is male,"[3] and is hence likely to converge with his own biases. But a woman reader, Fetterley claims, "is co-opted into participation in an experience from which she is explicitly excluded: she is asked to identify with a selfhood that defines itself in opposition to her; she is required to identify against herself."[4] The politics of (American) literature, hence, exercises power against the woman reader. This results in the "immasculation" of women: they are taught to think, perceive, and interpret like men.[5] This explains why male and female critics' readings of classics used to converge so much; the interpretive community effectively regulated the scope of accepted readings. But instead of yielding to power, the (woman) reader can also turn against it, and disclose the political and the subjective in the seemingly apolitical and universal, just like Fetterley is trying to do. Fetterley's resisting reader is an emancipatory one, since the disclosure also tries to "disrupt the process of immasculation by exposing it to consciousness."[6]

Fetterley's readings are exemplary, and her book had a wide-ranging effect on feminist theory of reading in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The resisting reader as defined by Fetterley is, however, problematic in several ways.

First, Fetterley equates resisting reading with feminism, and feminist with woman. Her own formulation "the first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader"[7] does not, nevertheless, exclude 'man' from the semantic field of the word *feminist*. Rather than a gender-bound capacity, (feminist) resisting reading can be conceived as a mode of reading sensitive to the inequal distribution of power or asymmetrical hierarchies within a text. A male critic may not share the primal experience of "attempting to communicate"[8] a female reading which is soon silenced by the hegemony of male criticism, but he can acknowledge the relevance of an opponent reading, practice it himself, and promote the causes of awareness and equality in general.

Second, Fetterley not only essentializes the reader but also the writer. She only deals with male authors, and finds, quite expectedly, male bias in them. What if Fetterley's idea of immasculation were applied to female authors as well? Could it be that the canonized women writers write fiction like men, identify with the male viewpoint, and accept a male system of values?

Both of my objections relate to the concept of identity. The resisting woman

---

3 Fetterley 1981, xii.

4 Ibid., xii. The structure of a woman's identification with male *qua* humankind is analogous with Freud's general theory of sexuality, which regards woman as a special case of man (cf. Irigaray 1989, 25-46).

5 Fetterley 1981, xx.

6 Scweickart 1986, 42.

7 Fetterley 1981, xxii.

8 Ibid., xxiii.

reader is capable of resistance by virtue of the underdog position she is put into by oppressive literature (and a whole misogynist culture in general); her female identity is thus formed by oppressive forces. On the other hand, resisting reading itself forms that identity by increasing the reader's self-awareness, emancipating her true nature, "exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us."[9] At least the latter part of identity formation is available to men as well. One could conclude that by tuning in the mode of resisting reading one becomes, despite the sex (or gender), a "woman." Man could also meet the first requirement of identity, if he is gay or in other way deviant from mainstream masculinity. Gender identity is thus constructed or formed rather than "found" with the help of a text.

Pamela Caughie has criticized Fetterley's and her followers' conception of a resisting reader for the inversion of the androcentric model of reading that it ostensibly tries to subvert.[10] In contrast, for such post-structuralist feminist critics as Mary Jacobus, Naomi Schor, and Barbara Johnson reading as a woman is "to challenge masculine appeals to legitimate (textual) meanings and legitimate (sexual) identities [---]. Not identity (sameness, symmetry) but difference (heterogeneity, ambiguity) is the goal of women's readings."[11] But, as I have tried to show above, Fetterley's text already contains these objectives, either as unwitting formulations or as performative paradoxes. If the logic of her argumentation is followed to the extreme, Fetterley's model of resisting reading makes everybody feminist women, thus shattering both textual and sexual identities. Feminist resisting reading brings about, to create an analogy of immasculation, *effeminization*. On the other hand, that the process of immasculation produces feminization is itself a heterogeneous and ambiguous feature. My reading of Fetterley is not, of course, in keeping with her apparent intention or with the reception of her work in general. But, by resisting the rhetoric of resistance and also that of post-feminist revision, I am trying to demonstrate some common weaknesses in both.

Both Fetterley and Caughie allot the ability to read as a woman, to practice feminist criticism, to women only. Both are essentialists in this respect. Both also contradict the essentialist premise; Fetterley indirectly, Caughie perhaps less so, but neither seems to be aware of the contradiction in their argumentation. Fetterley sees sex, not gender as the dominant of resisting (feminist) reading, but her formulations allow for a contrary interpretation. Caughie nominally stresses the constructivist view on sexual identity, but reduces women's reading to (biological) women only.

Fetterley, along with her followers and critics, deals with the actual reader. But, as my reading above tried to show, what is really at stake is a textual construction, a principle bought about by the reader's relation to a text. In this sense, the dynamics of immasculation and resisting reading can be conceptualized with an analogy between

---

9 Ibid., xxii. Julie Rivkin interprets the curious discrepancy in Fetterley's metaphors of immasculation and exorcism: "While the process of immasculating a woman reader is imagined as a grotesque inversion of castration (an implantation of a male part), the reversal of such intellectual surgery comes not from a similarly scientific act, but instead as an operation of the spirit, an exorcism. Although Fetterley's overt claim is that we need to recognize the political design behind a supposedly apolitical and universal art, this image of haunting and exorcism suggests that resistance is not a wholly rational, willed or conscious act." (Rivkin 1987, 12.)

10 Paraphrased in Bennett 1995, 7.

11 Quoted in Bennett 1995, 7.

the implied author and the implied reader. Chatman writes, "the implied author informs the real reader how to perform as implied reader, which *Weltanschauung* to adopt."[12] Thus, the implied author "establishes the norms of the narrative," but Chatman, unlike Wayne C. Booth, somewhat contradictorily insists that they are of aesthethic, not of ethical nature: "One's moral fibre cannot really be 'seduced' by wily implied authors."[13] The immasculating text, as a structural principle, tries to impose a misogynist worldview on the reader, who is not seduced but who, by the force of his/her moral fibre, resists these machinations. Implied author, implied reader, immasculation, and effeminization are all produced in the negotiation between the text and reader. In a similar fashion, the reader may recognize the textual features that suggest the adoption of a dominant (immasculating) reading, and, instead of either diametrically opposing or obediently yielding to them, s/he may use them differently, to appropriate them in various ways.[14]

I am not trying to imply that the concepts of feminist reader-response criticism should be saved to narratology but merely to show how the formulations concerning actual texts and readers are almost inevitably of abstract, textual order. These abstractions produce formulations which do not radically differ from those of narratology and are therefore conceivable, in all their anomalousness, in terms of that discipline. The undeniable force and subsequent influence of Fetterley's readings lie exactly in the postulation of a woman reader, not in the emphasis on woman's experiece.

It should, however, be remembered that feminist theories often have recourse to the unproblematized concepts of woman for strategic reasons, in order to conquer and maintain a critical ground.[15] The ready acknowledgement of gender as a constructed entity would - at least at first sight - water down the critical difference and the radical potential of change in feminist theory.

3.1.3 Gay Science of Reading

The theory of resisting reading as presented by Fetterley and her followers tends to totalize the readerhood of woman and man. The inner differences *within* the two genders are easily swept away in the name of the opposition *between* the two. As Jean Kennard has pointed out, such variables as 'race,' class, and sexual orientation complicate the seemingly universal gender division.[16] Fetterleyan criticism often conceives the woman reader as heterosexual as unproblematically as the reader is supposed to be male in androcentric texts. Is the homosexual reader's relation to a heterosexual text analogous with the woman/androcentric text dyad? To pose a question as this is to fall into the same trap of totalization that I have criticized above: another category is deprived of inner heterogeneity. For instance, homosexual readers

---

12 Chatman 1983, 150; emphasis in original.

13 Ibid., 149.

14 Cf. Mills 1994, 29. The scope of this middle possibility excluded from the Fetterleyan resisting reader's capacity will be mapped in detail below.

15 For instance, Sara Mills (1994, 33) opposes the destabilization of the concept *woman* brought about by deconstruction: "[t]his category needs to be maintained for the simple reason that women are still discriminated against *as* women."

16 Kennard 1988, 63.

are "naturally," on account of sex difference, divided into gays and lesbians, whose relation to a male or female text is presumably different. In what follows, I shall deal with two examples of non-heterosexual reading without, however, assuming that they are representative or even mutually comparable.

Jean E. Kennard proposes a model for lesbian reading, which does not resist a heterosexual text in Fetterley's fashion, but rather appropriates or utilizes it in order to reinforce the reader's lesbian sense of self. Drawing on gestalt therapy, Kennard stresses that the reader is a composite of polarities, of opposing traits, which are, in lesbian reading, allowed to coexist.[17] The lesbian reader deliberately participates in immasculation - with a difference; she "reads like a man, but with a new awareness."[18] This is why the lesbian reader can, in reading a 'heterotext,' concentrate on the heterosexual without adopting that orientation. Rather, she can indirectly affirm her own preference and identity. The force of a text's explicit orientation can be allowed to engender a counterforce, which is implicit or of the reader's making.

In contrast, Wayne Koestenbaum's theoretization on gay reading stresses not only self-construction but also resistance to the literary canon. Although he is aware of the implicit essentialism of the concept 'gay reader,' Koestenbaum uses such a term for heuristic reasons.[19] The two interests of gay reading - the constructive and resisting ones - are combined, according to Koestenbaum, in the fact that the male gay reader

> reads resistantly for inscriptions of his condition, for texts that will confirm a social and private identity founded on a desire for other men [—]. Reading becomes a hunt for histories that deliberately foreknow or unwittingly trace a desire felt not by author but by reader, who is most acute when searching for signs of himself.[20]

The act of reading, then, constructs a gay identity and a gay reader. This statement is, of course, circular, for such a construction presupposes a gay orientation towards text (and sex). To read an ostensibly heterosexual text non-resistantly would only produce a heterosexual (and most likely) androcentric or immasculated reader. For this reason, a heterosexual gay reading, that is, an application of that kind of "model" for reading by an orientation-wise non-eligible person, would necessarily be lacking. Not even all homosexuals are qualified. Koestenbaum acknowledges that a woman may occupy the gay interpretive position, but emphasizes that it most typically belongs to a man.[21] There is a similar paradox here as in the models for feminist resisting reading presented above. On one hand, the reader's identity is constructed, but it still is the essentialist core that makes a genuine (female / feminist / gay) reading possible. The situation is only superficially similar to Derrida's insistance on the non-methodologicality of deconstruction. But when Derrida stresses the singularity of each deconstruction, which cannot be reduced to a mechanical application, here the

---

17 Ibid., 66-69.

18 Ibid., 70.

19 Koestenbaum 1990, 176.

20 Ibid., 176-77.

21 Ibid., 176, 186. Kennard (1988, 66) makes a similar concession with an analogous restriction: her method of lesbian reading "can be used by any reader," but it is "particularly valuable to those readers whose experiences are not frequently reflected in literature."

reason for the non-adaptability lies in the selective universality of sex.

Koestenbaum consciously manipulates the concept of reader in order to avoid totalization and to make it gender- and orientation-specific. Of course, his theoretical sketch could be challenged with the usual litany of class, 'race,' and ethnicity, but all-encompassiveness is not Koestenbaum's aim in the first place. By strategically limiting the scope of his concept, Koestenbaum at least succeeds in the true touchstone of any theory of readers and reading: in providing an acute and innovative reading of an established text.

The acknowledgement of the reader's sexual orientation is not enough if we are content with the most common divisions presented above. Simple binarism will not cover the complexity of terms within the pairs. To do justice to as many as possible, we should account for the interests and needs of other orientations *à la* Barthes's typology of the polymorphous pleasures of reading.[22] Of course, no theory will cover every single imaginable variable in readers' preferences, and if it did, it would probably happen at the cost of other, more common variables. But to bear in mind the very impossibility of accounting for the heterogeneity of readers may function as a safeguard against the lures of totalization. This insight would also open up the possibility of a heterosexual gay reading, or rather an antihomophobic reading, which does not relate to the reader's sexual but textual orientation.

3.1.4 Text Made One's Own: Appropriating Writing and the Resisting Narratee

Not only is the reader totalized in many theories of reading; the text is also often reduced to one dominating characteristic, such as androcentric, female, lesbian, etc. The same precaution goes for texts as does for readers: texts, not only readers, are heterogenous, allowing for a host of different dominants and characterizations. This very feature makes it easier for readers to emphasize parts of texts according to their own needs, to customize or appropriate them. Indeed, one form of resisting reading is to *appropriate* a text. A text can, whatever its author's intention, be set apart for a specific purpose or use; it can be taken possession of, even seized or expropriated by the reader.[23] The reader re-authorizes a text authored by someone else; the reader makes it property of his/her own despite the proper name printed on the cover of the book.

In his *Room for Maneuver* (1991), Ross Chambers has developed a theory of oppositional reading. Chambers draws on Michel de Certeau's ideas of oppositionality and appropriation. Chambers applies the historian and ethnologist de Certeau's interdisciplinary work on the transformative and reappropriative tactics of consumers and factory workers to literary studies, to the analogous practices of the reader. In de Certeau's analysis, discourses of power can be opposed without endangering the whole system. This is possible because the disturbance takes place in a local and temporal manner, and, more importantly, because the opposition utilizes the dominant structures of the system - only for new purposes. Appropriation, thus, follows the rules of discourse to the letter, but radically changes the spirit of it. Appropriation is, in other words, "intrinsic" or immanent resistance. A similar idea

---

22 Barthes 1982, 99-100.

23 The meanings of the verb *appropriate* come from the *Webster's*.

lies in the core of Michel Foucault's theory of power: "Wherever there is power there is resistance, and ... yet, or rather for that very reason, resistance is never in a position of exteriority with respect to power."[24] Resistance or the possibility of it is hence already inscribed or embedded in the discourse of power.

Resistance is not exactly the right word for appropriative opposition, since the former, in Chambers' terminology, tries to challenge and overturn a power system, whereas the latter seeks to work within the structures of power.[25] But, as Chambers acknowledges, the distinction is not clear-cut, for resistance itself relies on the force that is dependant on the power system it challenges.[26] In addition, with regard to power relations, a reversed order of resistance and power is equally justifiable, since those relations exist by virtue of a "multiplicity of points of resistance" that are omnipresent in the network of power.[27] Furthermore, oppositionality, although it does not aim at a reversal of power relations, can gradually bring about such a change when the local and temporal pockets of opposition together modify the established hegemony.

In sketching his theory of oppositional or resisting reading, Chambers utilizes theorists who are not critics but social or political theorists. This does not, however, cause dramatic category mistakes, since, as Foucault repeatedly emphasized, power is articulated as discourse. And literature can be defined as "*the discourse of power made readable.*"[28] Literature thus foregrounds the mediated quality of all power in an accessible form.

The subtitle of Chambers' book reveals the vacillating nature of the phenomenon that he is dealing with: *Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative.* Unlike Fetterley's resisting reader, Chambers' theory furnishes a "reading that both produces that oppositionality and is responsive to it, and does so in ways that are themselves situationally mediated."[29] The idea of oppositional discourse is therefore only seemingly circular and solipsistic; oppositionality is the "product of a (mis-)reading of the discourse of power," and reading, for its part, is a "practice that activates the mediated quality of all discourse."[30] Reading both "produces oppositionality and realizes it as change."[31]

Chambers refuses to provide the reader with a method of resisting or oppositional reading (or writing), since the different manoeuvrings involved are potentially endless. Instead, he sketches general phases or gestures that characterize the dynamic of oppositionality. Chambers theorizes the basic model of reading on which oppositional narrative texts depend.[32] An oppositional text initially puts the reader in the position of the narratee, both of whom the narrator tries to seduce without their knowledge. If, however, the reader moves his/her position and begins

---

24 Foucault 1990, 95.
25 Chambers 1991, xv.
26 Ibid., xv.
27 Foucault 1990, 95-96.
28 Chambers 1991, 18; emphasis in original.
29 Ibid., 6.
30 Ibid., xvi.
31 Ibid., xvi.
32 Ibid., 33-34.

to collaborate with the text in its production of meaning, the narrator's seductive pursuits become visible and the oppositional act of the narrative manifests itself in the text. The dual reading situation (narrator - narratee/reader) changes into a triangular one in which the reader is both being seduced by the narrator and capable of observing the situation from without. This double position of the reader makes "reading oppositional narratives [---] synonymous with reading the oppositional in narrative texts, i.e., situating oneself in the reading position where the oppositional character of the narrative act becomes visible."[33]

I would propose a different model to account for the oppositionality in the narrator/narratee/reader triangle. Chambers implies, no doubt for the sake of simplicity, that there is only one narratee in narrative. Often, however, the opposite is true. I would even state that there are *always* at least two narratees in narrative, the preferred, included one and the dismissed, excluded one. I call the latter the *resisting narratee.*

The resisting narratee is never directly addressed, no textual sign betrays the existence of this maximally covert agent. S/he/it is not being seduced, not even recognized as the explicitly excluded one from the narrative contract. One could say that the resisting narratee does not exist textually; no signs of the 'you' betray this less than zero-degree agent. The resisting narratee is only implicitly included in narrative because of his/her/its total absence from it. The agent only comes into existence in the resisting or opposing act of reading, which can postulate such an agent exactly because it is lacking in the narrative. Or put in another way, if force engenders counterforce and power brings about its own resistance, then it is understandable that the dominant narratee - "the position of the greatest power,"[34] as Chambers calls it - should invite an opposing agent. For instance, the preferred male narratee and his way of reading open up a possibility of a resisting female narratee, as is the case in Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (cf. sections 4.4.1. and 4.4.2.). Analogously, any dominant feature (be it an ethnic background, sexual orientation, age, or class) in the main narratee immediately summons, as if a shadow, an agent with reversed qualities.

In a negative way, the resisting narratee is defined by the narrator, from whose depiction of the main narratee its shadowy presence is inferred. By the same token, the resisting narratee indirectly belongs to the scope of narratology, or rather paranarratology, and the concept is not of the reader's haphazard making. Narrative is, again, appropriated, not just manipulated.

The postulation of the resisting narratee complicates Chambers' narrative function/textual function dyad, in which the former term refers to the narrator's address to the narratee, and the latter to the address of the "originless origin" (an approximation of reading) to the reader. The reader can, as a split entity, shuttle between the two positions and perceive the discursive machinations of narrative.[35]

---

33 Ibid., 33.

34 Ibid., 33.

35 Ibid., 34.
In her account of the implied author and the possibility of resistance, Lea Rojola sketches the structural heterogeneity and opposite articulations of a text on the basis of theories of heterogenous subject (Rojola 1991, 14-18). Rojola's speculation on the adoption and resistance of the different subject positions that a text provides does not, however, lead to a postulation of a resisting narratee, or rather, to accord her narrative level, "resisting implied reader."

But my resisting narratee turns attention to what has been excluded by including, to the implicit that the explicit eclipses, to the negligence as the other side of the seductive pursuit.

The almost automatic coming into existence and easy definability of the resisting narratee are its conceptual weaknesses. One can get the impression that the resisting narratee is just the mechanically reversed main narratee, the diametrical opposite of the preferred one. This is partly true, and indeed it is the easiest way of producing dramatically resisting effects. But the spectrum of resistance or opposition is much wider than that, and the choice of the variant depends on the particular text in question. In my analyses of the Updike novels below, I shall try to utilize the concept of the resisting narratee without overlooking their particularities.

Besides the narratological model for oppositional narrative/reading, I disagree with Chambers in his discrepancy between theory and practice. In spite of his idea of reading as the productive and responsive agent in oppositionality, Chambers's own analyses in *Room for Maneuver* focus on texts that themselves employ tactics or strategies of oppositional discourse. The texts he reads are marginal and stand in explicit opposition to dominant power systems. Chambers' decision is as curious as it is telling. Political correctness lures practical criticism either to correctively resistant readings of ideologically "wrong" texts or to explicating interpretations of resisting texts. From the ethical point of view this is quite a tenable position, but with that decision much of the general applicability of the theory of resistant reading is curtailed. The good cause causes bad effects.

Resistant reading is indeed usually associated with political correctness: modes of resistance correct evil, one-sided, undemocratic, discriminating readings be they androcentric, heterocentric, Eurocentric, or otherwise biased. The new perspective brought about by a particular type of resistance tends to be one-sided itself, foregrounding what has been thus far neglected. Two ideologically antithetical modes of reading may thus share an identical power structure. The crucial difference between the two lies in critical self-consciousness; the dominant mode, unmarked and established as it is, does not usually have to justify itself, unlike the emergent one, whose very reason to exist rests on its divergence from the anterior. Hence, a Fetterleyan resisting (feminist) reading is quite justifiably vulnerable to an analogously resisting male reading; ditto gay, lesbian, ethnic, class-conscious readings vs. their opposites. True, some forms of resisting reading do not aim at overturning a critical hegemony by replacing one dominant with another, but regard different modes of reading as demonstrations of textual and ideological forces. All modes of resistance are not perhaps adoptable regardless of the reader's ideological or other stands, but the recognition of the possibility of different, even mutually excluding readings and thematizations is important.

For the sake of critical awareness, it would be edifying to read, say, feminist, anti-racist, or anti-sexist texts resistantly, to apply the tactics of resistance or opposition to texts that one agrees with. I am not suggesting a relativistic or value-neutral reading, which would not differentiate between the ethical and non-ethical. Quite the contrary. To practice resistance to texts that, by yielding to one's ideological preferences, resist that very gesture would dramatize the difficulty of turning against what indisputably seems to be right. For example, what is easily forgotten in theories

of feminist resistance is the fact that men resist (feminine) texts.[36] An androcentric mode of reading is probably so automatized that it passes as the unmarked way for many men (and immasculated women). Clearly, there is no need to teach men to read that way, since the curricula of schools and universities (used to) promote its ideals, without, of course, articulating them as 'male,' but as objectively correct. Exactly for this reason, in order to explore the dynamics of resistance, to lay bare what usually passes as the commonplace, a form of reading countering one's better judgement ought to be practiced every now and then.

3.1.5 Self-Resistance

Shoshana Felman, whom I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, resists the Fetterleyan definition of resistance, the idea of stepping outside of literature to a resisting position. Instead, Felman tries to "*tune into the forms of resistance present in the text*, those forms that make up the textual dynamic as a field of clashing and heterogeneous forces [—]."[37] One can easily notice how this programme resembles the practices of deconstruction. Felman indeed partly leans on Derrida, but her project is, unlike his, limited to tracing gender-specific forces, the "inadvertent *textual transgression of* [the text's] *male assumptions and prescriptions*."[38] Not unlike most feminists before and after her, Felman sees the *woman* reader as the necessary prerequisite of feminist resistant reading. Felman justifies this by emphasizing the processual and constructive characteristic of reading; a (female) reader becomes a woman, and a feminist is engendered in the process of reading.[39]

But if feminine and/or feminist "identities" are enacted rather than found, would not these qualities be available or indeed inevitably imposed on men who "read like a woman," or practice strategies of Felmanian resistant reading? This is a phenomenon that I dealt with in connection with Fetterley and Caughie above. Felman, who does not even consider the possibility of male feminism, necessiates the female gender (or rather sex) in resistance by connecting feminist resisting reading to the reader's autobiography:

> Feminism, I will thus suggest, is indeed for women, among other things, reading literature and theory with their own life [—]. [—] [women's autobiography] cannot be owned by our attempting a direct access to ourselves as women ("getting personal") or by our pretending to leave culture or to step outside the text (by becoming a "resisting reader"). Rather, I will here propose that we might be able to engender, or to access, our story indirectly - by conjugating literature, theory, and autobiography together through the act of reading and by reading, thus, into the texts of culture, at once our sexual difference and our autobiography as missing.[40]

---

36 Another critical blind spot or suppressed possibility is women readers' resistance to the reading positions provided by women's or feminist texts (cf. Mills 1994, 31), although this option hardly competes with the male one.

37 Felman 1993, 6; emphasis in original.

38 Ibid., 6; emphasis in original.

39 Ibid., 11-12.

40 Ibid., 13-14.

By this gesture, Felman rules out men from her mode of reading. The personal effects of reading autobiographically are no doubt different in men and women, but the *intra*generic differences are also great, even to a degree that they problematize strict *inter*generic segregation. The missing sexual difference that Felman urges women to read into texts never seems to have been lost in her own theoretical presuppositions. Felman's remarkable readings, in *What Does a Woman Want?*, do not - at least overtly - show any connections to her autobiography, but stand out as gender-conscious deconstructive analyses of canonized fiction. As such her readings are examplary, but they do not, in my view, necessarily relate to her gender, or even to her personal singularity. Interpretations of Felman's quality could have been written by any resourceful enough deconstructionist with gender interests.

The virtual essentialism of Felmanian self-resistance ties in with the debate over men in feminism and/or the relation between feminism and deconstruction. Jonathan Culler has argued for the anti-essentialist possibility of a man to read *like* a woman, to occupy her reading position, to adopt reading strategies that are allotted to women only.[41] To read *as* a woman implies that the reader not only occupies that position but *is* of that particular *gender*. The adoptability, the "like-ness" of female reading has made it possible for male critics to read women's or feminist texts in a non-stereotypical way. Sara Mills acknowledges the profits of this approach from the viewpoint of male critics, but criticizes Culler for concentrating on women rather than on feminists as readers. In Mills' view, the concept of woman reader may be an adoptable construct, whereas the feminist reader is not.[42]

In his critique of Culler, Robert Scholes emphasizes experience as the shaper of subjects, which means that men and women are inevitably constructed differently and read according to that difference.[43] But as Diane Fuss states, experience is shaky ground for the notion of women as a class; furthermore, Scholes slips in his terminology to such a degree that it is not clear whether he means *woman* in singular or plural, *female*, or *feminist*, and what is his own relation to the latter.[44] Male critics can be interpreted as patronizing when they usurp feminism and turn women into abstractions, experience-based patterns of action into applicable strategies of reading. To embrace or to circumscribe feminism (and simultaneously to generalize its applicability) can indeed be a phallogocentric act on the male theorists' part. But, as I mentioned above, the reading positions are always text-related, or rather are realized in the negotiation between the text and reader - no matter whether those positions are obediently adopted or resisted. In Mills' words, "not only may men masquerade as women/feminists when they read, but women/feminists may also be considered to perform a similar process of distancing from 'themselves' when they

---

41 Culler 1983, 63-64.

42 Mills 1994, 33. Mills probably means that *feminist* implies too many political facets to be taken up like a role or a mask, without ideological identification. Mills may also temporarily essentialize *feminist* for similar strategic reasons as Gayatri Spivak has done (cf. Fuss 1989, 31-32).
For the problematic relationship between feminism and deconstruction, see Elam 1994 and Holland 1997.

43 Scholes 1987, 218.

44 Fuss 1989, 25-26.

read."[45] Or to generalize the situation more boldly, actual readers do not read (except in the minimal sense of a mechanical skill), whereas virtual, semi-textual readers do. This is not to say that the reading position is stable, chosen to be occupied all through the text. Rather, "the text constructs a dominant reading which the reader deciphers according to discourses which she has already encountered, and this dominant reading will construct gendered subject positions for the reader."[46]

I take this as suggestive of the practical *inessentiality* of the reader's sex in Felman's theory, and simultaneously its strategic, adopted essentiality used for subversive, interventionary, that is, for political purposes. This also broadens the applicability of Felmanian resistance - for instance to my own project. In my readings of the three Updike novels below, I shall practice, along with narratological analysis, gender-conscious deconstruction in the meaning of textual self-resistance. My aim is not, thus, to pretend to read *as* neither *like* woman nor a feminist, but to be aware of the gender-codedness of both the Updike novels and the theories I am utilizing to read them. I shall not, however, make concessions to essentialism, but conceive gender and genderedness as something constructed and therefore as something to be deconstructed.

3.1.6 Deleting the Text: Resistance as Abstinence from Reading

The appropriation of text presented above, to use a mixed metaphor of word processing and religious doctrine, saves the text.[47] The form and the very textuality of the text remains intact no matter how radically it is used for purposes other than those originally intended. In the actual practice of reading, however, the immaculateness of text is more often than not smeared. An extreme version of appropriation would be a partial or whole deletion of the text. The holy wholeness can quite easily be made holey.

The deletion of text, the frivolous skipping or violent erasure, the interrupted, delayed, or ceased reception of fiction in reading, is almost too commonplace a practice to deserve critical attention. But exactly for this purpose any theory of reading should account for the practice of *not reading*. Conceptions of meaning production in, for instance, New Criticism, narratology, intertextuality, or genre theories all seem to assume that minute academic reading is the standard followed in actual reception as well.

In the possibility of not reading also lies the possibility of rereading. The physical stability of writing permits the reader to read selectively or to stop reading for a period of time, since the text patiently awaits a revisitation. Roland Barthes dealt with this phenomenon on a few occasions. He saw the rhythm of reading and not reading as the prerequisite for the pleasure of great narratives: instead of reading word for word we skip, and upon rereading we skip different passages.[48] Paradoxically, by making the text porous, holey, the reader helps it sustain greater

---

45 Mills 1994, 33.

46 Ibid., 34.

47 My subsection heading alludes to Geofrey H. Hartman's book *Saving the Text* (1981), which does not, however, utilize the computer metaphor.

48 Barthes 1982, 20-22.

pressures of use. Rereading runs, as Barthes notes, counter to the commercial and ideological trends of consumerist society. Instead of throwing away the story after having read it and then buying another one, the reader is urged to consume it again: only this act saves the text from repetition; not to reread means that one has to read the same story everywhere.[49]

Barthes openly admitted having practiced deletion, skipping, and skimming when reading, but these activities do not directly relate to resistance as a set of ideological gestures. When he did write about resistance, in "Sur la lecture," Barthes used the word in the psychoanalytic sense, and particularly in connection with *resistance to reading*. Barthes rather essayistically sketches two forms of resistance, both of which relate to the institutional aspects of reading. The obligation to read, or rather the law of having read, the canonized or fashionable musts of a particular culture evokes a countertendency. Another institutional part of reading that is apt to engender resistance is the library. It is a space between the private and the public, between the book as a commodity and as a good, between a fetish and debt.[50] Barthes's famous distiction between the readerly and the writerly is also based on the relation to cultural conventions of expression rather than on ideological substance. Barthes does not, then, resist a text or reading because they do not converge with his ideology but because they, for various reasons, fail to give him pleasure.

The deletion of text can also mean, in several senses of the expression, the saving of oneself. The rhetorical lure, the interpretive constraint of fiction can be resisted at the outset, before it even gets a chance to take effect. "There is only one way to save oneself the trouble of interpreting *The Trial*: not to read it."[51] The abstinent reader can also save him/herself from ideological contamination. Susan Schibanoff sees Chaucer's Wife of Bath as a example of deletion as a means to avoid immasculation. The wife destroys an anti-feminist book, but also appropriates texts in a more subtle manner when she selectively, for her own benefit, quotes the Bible.[52]

The possibility of deletion, of personal customization can also be anticipated in the text itself. Susan Schibanoff illustrates this with an example from the 15th century. An unexpurgated translation of a collection of ancient philosophical texts advised the reader who might be offended by the misogynist material included to physically delete it, to tear out the pages in question.[53] The physical permanence of texts can be even more unstable than that. There are novels which come in boxes full of unbound pages, which the reader is free to arrange to any order. Or there are electronically self-consuming artifacts, like William Gibson's self-annihilating poem "Agrippa," which defy the very permanence and rereadability of inscription by making writing a disposable good. In practice, however, the experiments on inscriptive instability are likely to be resisted. The particular, be it haphazard or intended by the author, order in which a loose-leaf novel first exists in the box easily gains the status of the original - from which the rearrangements are, analogously, secondary versions. The very

---

49 Barthes 1970, 22-23. I shall not go into the fascinating probematics of rereading and Barthes's contribution to it in detail here; for an outstanding account of rereading, see Calinescu 1993.

50 Barthes 1984, 40-42.

51 Heller 1974, 71.

52 Schibanoff 1988, 87-88.

53 Ibid., 85.

difficulty of the saving and retrieval of an electronic text also, paradoxically, urges the reader to fight against automatic deletion by looking for ways of making rereading possible.[54]

Saving a text that would otherwise be deleted means that it can be reread - and deleted, i.e., opposed or resisted on various grounds. In fact, resisting reading, be it feminist, gender-, class-, or 'race'-conscious, is often seen as rereading of established texts and their readings.[55] Rereading, hence, both consolidates a text (less and less unread or misunderstood holes puncture its holy wholeness) but also embrittles it (the workings of significatory counterforces, of opposing meanings begin to take effect).

3.1.7 The Friction of Fiction: Resistance to Reading

The verb resist stems from the Latin *resist(ere)* '(to) remain standing' and *re* + *sistere* 'to cause to stand.'[56] At the risk of logocentric etymologization, one could perhaps state that resistance is both enduring and instituting in reading as well. Resistance is literally long-standing. Not just because resistance is widely practiced, but more fundamentally, because literary texts seem to resist reading to a degree that the very literariness seems to depend on the resistance to reading. In this sense, it is incorrect to draw an analogy between resistant reading and resistance as a psychoanalytic term, as Julie Rivkin seems to do.[57] According to Freud's laconic maxim, "*whatever interrupts the progress of analytic work is a resistance.*"[58] Resistance to reading in the form of looking away or closing a book may seemingly interrupt the progress of literary analysis, but it does not necessarily stop the process of reception or response in the reader, nor does it question the status of literature.

As I stated above, there is a rupture between most theories and the actual practice of reading. The different uses of literature and the various conditions under which it is consumed bring contingency into reading. As Andrew Bennett puts it in an illuminating article about not reading, "In reading theory generally, what is understood to be contingent or aleatory is not reading: reading theory tends to be grounded in a *necessary* relationship between text and response."[59] That necessity is usually based on the presupposition that reading is a mental rather than a bodily activity. The immaterial, psychic nature of reading was taken to its extreme by such phenomenologists as Georges Poulet, who conceived it as a disembodied activity. In

---

54 The two cases are not, of course, exactly of the same order. A freely rearrangeable ream of loose leaves is an invitation for the reader to co-create the work, to make it anew, to recycle it, whereas the self-annihilating text relates to some kind of aesthetic conspicuous consumption, in which the art work, as it were, throws itself away.
The anticipation of deletion is also liable to produce logical double binds or performative paradoxes. If a text is titled "Do Not Read This Text," the correct form of resistance would, apparently, be to read it. But what if this is a rhetorical trap set in order to lure the reader to obey the text by seemingly resisting it?

55 For instance, all the critics presented in this chapter subscribe to rereading.

56 *Webster's*, s.v. 'resist.'

57 Rivkin 1987, 13-14.

58 Freud s.a., 555; emphasis in original. For a useful survey of the resistance in and to the psychoanalytic theory, see Derrida 1996.

59 Bennett 1993, 226.

the impersonal realm of cognition, in the pure state of mind from which the contingencies of the body or rather different *bodies* are bracketed, the relation between text and response can indeed seem to be necessary. The body transcended, the idealized text/response relation appears as a form of mental communication. This conception can also be seen in narratology, and it is vulnerable to the kind of deconstructive readings that Derrida performs on Husserl.[60]

In spite of the general emphasis on the immaterial and the mental, the materiality of text and the corporeality of reading/readers have been dealt with by some critics. For instance, de Certeau, whom I introduced in connection with Chambers, has studied the contingent and temporal nature of the reading body. For the interests of the present thesis, I shall, however, mainly concentrate on those accounts of resistance to reading that stem from deconstruction.

In his *Reading Voices*, Garrett Stewart has tried to free deconstructive criticism from "phonophobia" by dealing with the voice of reading. He calls that phenomenon "phonemic reading." Stewart does not conceive voice as that of the author-originator, nor that of writing. He claims that all reading is vocal in the sense that it "proceeds to give voice, or at least evoke silently such voicing: to evocalize."[61] The voice thus embodied, it is no longer the origin but the "destination of the text in the reading act," a "sounding board rather than a source."[62] This is due to the discrepancy between speech and writing, between sound and inscription: "the phonemic will not stay put within the morphemes apparently assigned by script. Differential rules thus interfere in the acoustic continuum, the lexical codes getting jammed in the message."[63] Although present in all writing, this phenomenon is, according to Stewart, especially varied in literary texts. The denser or more difficult a text is, the more evocalization it causes. By the same token, the literary, the 'essence' of literature, and literacy, the ability to read fluently, turn out to be opposite tendencies: "we can define literature itself as precisely that textual practice whose impedances to the flow of sheer script recover within reading some of the lapsed powers of illiteracy."[64]

Fiction thus causes friction, impedance, *resistance* to (the) reading (of) itself. This is a more "material" or primal kind of self-resistance than the eponymous Felmanian one, since the former (also) takes place before the clashing forces of signification become manifest, i.e. at least partly intelligible. The phonemic resistance does not, however, stop on the threshold of reception, but also contributes to Felmanian self-resistance and deconstructive teasing out of warring forces of signification. The instability of phonemes within morphemes or the transegmental drift contribute to the multiplicity of meaning of "key words." The argumention of text can hinge upon such words, but shakily, as deconstructive readings tend to witness.

I wrote above that *actual* readers do not read at all, except in the sense of a minimal, mechanical activity. To elaborate this rather provocative point, Derrida's notion of *transcendent reading* might be of assistance. By transcendent reading Derrida refers to the tendency of Western philosophy and literature to efface themselves "in

---

60 Cf. section 2.2. above, and sections 4.2. and 4.3. below.

61 Stewart 1990, 1. For a short account of Stewart, see Keskinen 1992.

62 Stewart 1990, 3.

63 Ibid., 4-5.

64 Ibid., 129.

the face of the signified content" which they supposedly transport or enclose.[65] Transcendent reading goes "beyond interest for the signifier, the form, the language [—] in the direction of the meaning or referent."[66] This kind of reading is what Derrida calls "'thetic' naivety."[67] In other words, readers of literature content themselves with uncovering the thetic (intended meaning, theme, ultimate referent) that language hides or withholds. But is not this conception of reading or criticism a strange travesty of what has been going on in literary studies for the past 80 years or so? Did not New Criticism, Russian formalism, and French structuralism concentrate on the problems of literary language, on the medium or signifier rather than on the mediated or signified? The contribution of these disciplines to criticism is outstanding, but Derrida's point is perhaps that, say, New Critical close reading is not close enough. For instance, the New Critical celebration of ambiguity, paradox, or irony was not taken as solicitation of the whole work, but, on the contrary, the holy wholeness was saved by thematizing those very features, by fortifying the work with what seemed to undermine any attempt to find thematic solidity.

The general tendency of criticism to be more theoretical or more philosophical than literature may have caused the discipline to become more metaphysical and consquently more thetic than what it studies.[68] In its rhetorico-philosophical heterogeneity, literature defies reduction to homogenous themes, meanings, or messages. And for the exactly opposite reasons, criticism tends to do it all the same.

Thus, literature itself resists (transcendent) reading.[69] This phenomenon becomes especially manifest in texts that overtly promote some canonical metaphysical theses, as I have stated on several occasions above. For instance, a work intended to advance phallocentrism is likely to produce, on the level of the logic of rhetoric, antiphallocentric effects.[70] Analogously, what likes to call itself deconstructive criticism is not resistant to the contamination of a counterforce to force, but can produce "the most conventional of readings."[71]

Some unconventional and innovative deconstructive critics have dealt with the problematics of resistance to reading in different ways. Paul de Man, whom I introduced in section 1.4., approached the phenomenon with such terms as misreading, unreadability, and the impossibility of reading. de Man has also theorized the resistance in reading as resistance to theory. de Man conceives reading as a "negative process in which the grammatical cognition is undone, at all times, by

---

65 Derrida 1976, 160.

66 Derrida 1992, 44.

67 Ibid., 45.

68 Ibid., 53.

69 I hasten to add that this resistance is not a property reserved to literature or the literary only; no text is literary as such, essentially, in itself, and no text is devoid of the possibility of being conceived as literary. As Derrida puts it in phenomenological terms, "[t]he literary character of the text is inscribed on the side of the intentional object, in its noematic structure [---] and not only on the subjective side of the noetic act" (ibid., 44). True, some types of texts offer more resistance than others, and we are accustomed to call the former ones by the name of literature. Since my thesis deals with literature, I am repeatedly using that term without, however, implying any essentiality or intricity of the literary in fiction.

70 Ibid., 50.

71 Ibid., 51.

its rhetorical displacement."[72] From this perspective theories of reading, such as phenomenological, reader-response, and speech-act oriented criticism, seem to have resisted "the rhetorical or tropological dimension of language."[73] This is tenable as long as we subscribe to de Man's definition of reading and to the assumption that criticism ought to be a study of language as language. Felman's feminist self-resistance, I think, shows that the tracing of the discrepancy between grammar and rhetoric can profit from the contextual. The texts that Felman reads could quite tenably be deconstructed without accounting for gender, but the introduction of that theme into analysis clearly enriches her interpretations. My own theorization of the resisting narratee parts even farther from the grammar/rhetoric dyad, but, I hope, with heuristic gain.

The theories of resistance to reading do not necessarily imply poststructuralist presuppositions, although they are more common within that critical context. For instance, the French critic and poet Yves Bonnefoy has theorized the constitutive role of interruption of reading in reading on explicitly non-textualist grounds. Bonnefoy claims that "*interruption* in the reading of a text can have an essential value in the relation of reader to literary work."[74] By interruption Bonnefoy does not mean resistance in the sense of deletion or appropriation but, paradoxically, the opposite. The (poetic) text or its writer wishes the reader to stop reading, to lift his/her eyes from the page, because the poet "hopes that the reader will discover in his own experience the things that he, for his part, has felt he could leave unsaid."[75] The reader's response of interrupted reading is, hence, responsibility, not resistance, to the text.

Bonnefoy emphasizes that the reader is not free to read in any way or anything into the text, but that s/he must know the text well before putting it aside. True and responsible reading is not, according to Bonnefoy, freeplay; "reading while knowing that it is our right to stop reading means wanting to recognize the nature of existence, which is tragic and certainly not playful."[76] *Lectio interruptus* is by no means *cogito interruptus*.

Interruption *qua* resistance to reading is often inscribed in the poetic text as "moments of rupture that makes its reading more richly poetic."[77] These prefigured moments urge resistance to reading, but, unlike in poststructuralism, they are intentional, not something intervening, hindering communication. As Bonnefoy's (seeming) paradox puts it, "In the heart of interruption, communication."[78] Bonnefoy's interruption is sincere, it is done in good faith (*bonne foi*) as his family name seems to indicate.

Bonnefoy's conception of not reading clearly stands in opposition to Barthes, who underlined that the writer cannot know in advance what parts of his/her text will be skipped and that the author cannot possibly want to write something which

---

72 de Man 1993, 17.
73 Ibid., 17.
74 Bonnefoy 1990, 799; emphasis in original.
75 Ibid., 800.
76 Ibid., 805.
77 Ibid., 801.
78 Ibid., 801.

will be left unread.[79] However, both Bonnefoy and Barthes agree on the constitutive role of not reading in literature. The major difference between the two conceptions lies in the roles of the reader, writer, and communication: Bonnefoy's interruption is encoded by the writer and thus part of intended literary communication, whereas Barthes's skipping is of the reader's making, and if there is any communication in deletion it is one-sided appropriation performed by the reader.

79 Barthes 1982, 21.

4 REREADING NARRATOLOGY

In this chapter, I shall return to narratology, which I introduced in a rather non-commenting way at the beginning of my thesis. I shall utilize deconstruction and various forms of resisting reading, presented in the previous chapters, in providing metacritical analyses of some theoretical and applicatory aspects of narratology. As the calling into question of critical concepts is one of the contributions of deconstruction to literary criticism (cf. subsection 2.2.1. above), I shall, in the following sections, concentrate on the terminology and presuppositions of narratology. I shall start from the story/discourse opposition, then move on to the concept of communication, and the phonocentrism that it seems to imply; finally I shall concentrate on the narratee's gender and 'race.'

These reservations are necessary for narratology to function in the present thesis, whose aim is to account for the possiblity of resistance in reception. Furthermore, the second main interest of my thesis, deconstruction, calls for an undoing of a number of narratology's characteristics.

4.1 Narratologist's Choice

Jonathan Culler has read one basic narratological opposition - story vs. discourse (or *fabula* vs. *sujet*, *récit* vs. *discours* in Russian and French respectively) - from a deconstructive viewpoint.[1] Story, as Culler conceives it in narratology, is "an

---

1 Culler's account is the first explicitly deconstructive reading of narratology, and not many other attemps of this kind have been made since then. For instance, the *MLA Bibliography* (1/1981-2/1997) includes no reference to articles or books with the key words 'deconstruction and narratology' or 'deconstructive narratology.' On the other hand, the seemingly matching key words are not always accurate content-wise. For instance, despite its title, Manfred Jahn's recent article on focalization is not exactly deconstructive but analytically reconstructive (cf. Jahn 1996).
Derrida himself has dealt with narratological problems on several occasions without, however, always using the established terminology of the discipline. For Derrida on, for instance, the roles and functions of the narrator and narratee, see Derrida 1973, 70-73;

invariant core, a constant against which the variables of narrative presentation can be measured," "something that exists independently of narrative presentation," the "original" and "true order," "a sequence [—] which the narrative presupposes," and "a non-textual substratum."[2] The story supposedly "contains" the real order of events, pre-existent to the discourse which more or less "distorts" it. However, in the actual practice of narratives, Culler claims, the hierarchy is often subverted: the events are not presented as "givens but as the products of discursive forces or requirements."[3] Culler sums up:

> every narrative operates according to this double logic, presenting its plot as a sequence of events which is prior to and independent of the given perspective on these events, and, at the same time, suggesting by its implicit claims to significance that these events are justified by their appropriateness to a thematic structure.[4]

The hierarchical opposition between story and discourse is hence reversed and problematized to such a degree that the whole dyad is deconstructed.

It is not Culler's intention to discard, turn upside down, or harmonize the story/discourse opposition, which is - for heuristic reasons - indispensable in the analysis of narrative. Instead, Culler wants to demonstrate how the narratologist always has to choose to which party - story or discourse - the status of the given and the product is to be given.[5] Yet either choice is as partial and unsatisfactory as Sophie's in William Styron's eponymous novel: something precious is necessarily sacrificed. Each alternative

> leads to a narratology that misses some of the curious complexity of narratives and fails to account for much of their impact. If one thinks of discourse as the presentation of the story, one will find it difficult to account for the [—] effects which depend upon the determination of story by discourse, a possibility of ten posed by the narrative itself. If, on the other hand, one were to adopt the view that what we call 'events' are nothing other than products of discourse, a series of predicates attached to agents in the text, then one would be even less able to account for the force of narrative. For even the most radical fictions depend for their effect on the assumption that their puzzling sequences of sentences are presentations of events [—], and that these events in principle have features not reported by the discourse, such that the selection operated by the discourse has meaning. Without that assumption, which makes the discourse a selection and even a suppression of possible information, texts would lack their intriguing and dislocatory power.[6]

The "self-deconstructive" force in both narrative and the narratological theory attempting to analyze it does not necessarily lead to rejection of narratology. Instead, Culler suggests the adoption of a shuttling movement between the two (insufficient if in separation) positions: a shifting between story and discourse.[7]

Culler's deconstruction seems insightful and logically tenable, but, as Seymour

---

Derrida 1982, 123-34; Derrida 1987a, 429-96.

2 Culler 1981, 170-72.

3 Ibid., 172. Culler provides a number of examples of this, ranging from the story of Oedipus to George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Sigmund Freud's account of the Wolfman, and William Labov's black vernacular tales (ibid., 172-86).

4 Ibid., 178.

5 Ibid., 186.

6 Ibid., 186-87.

7 Ibid., 187.

Chatman in his response demonstrates, Culler makes category mistakes (logic vs. psychology) and misuses narratological terms (*discoursive* vs. *discursive*; the attribution of theme to the discourse only), which undermine the argumentative force of his critique.[8] However, Chatman welcomes deconstructive critique of narratology, as long as it is logically secure, as a "practical contribution" to the discipline.[9] Chatman's detailed defense does not, nevertheless, do away with basic hierarchical story/discourse opposition, which Culler sought to problematize in the first place.

The story/discourse opposition has also been challenged from a non-deconstructive viewpoint, and with more constructive results. Erkki Vainikkala agrees with Culler in that the story/discourse distinction can be made for analytical and heuristic purposes.[10] The relations between the two levels, however, turn out to be so problematic that one has to reconsider their constitution. Vainikkala suggests - in contrast to Culler's metaphor of constant shifting - that after making the necessary distinction between the story and discourse, they should be - not reunited - but studied where they (theoretically) meet, at their seam or suture. This strategic decision makes it possible to conceive the structure of narrative as a dynamic, signifying whole. The story/discourse relation turns out to be constitutive and dialectic - in contrast to Chatman's static and rigid conception. The discourse produces or constitutes the story, and vice versa.

The dynamic suture suggested by Vainikkala also helps one to account for the features which standard narratology brackets beyond narrative. For one thing, referentiality connects narrative with a sociohistorical context, and the changes in it bring about changes in narrative structures. Medium and genre also affect the story/discourse relation "outside" narrative: the means of expression and generic conventions make certain kinds of narratives necessary.

After these problematizations of narratology's fundamental opposition, I shall, in the following section, turn to another constant of the discipline: the concept of communication.

4.2 The Contexts of Communication

4.2.1 Communication

To regard narration as communication is probably the most unshaken presupposition in theories of narratology. The presupposition no doubt goes back to Roman Jakobson's communication model which informs much of the structuralist theory in general. The theoretical debt to Jakobson's conception of communication is a widely acknowledged fact among narratologists.[11] The theory of narration as communication can, however, be criticized from two viewpoints. First, Jakobson's model and, as a

8 For further objections, see Chatman 1988, 11-15 and Chatman 1990b, 310-13.

9 Chatman 1988, 15-16.

10 The following discussion is based on Vainikkala 1993, 224-28.

11 Tammi 1985, 226n; Prince 1985, 299; Prince 1987, s.v. 'constitutive factors of communication.'

corollary, narratology's conception of communication has been criticized for being too mechanical and simplistic to account for the dynamics of actual communicative situations, and other, supposedly more accurate models have been introduced to mend the state of affairs. Second, the whole idea of narration as communication can be questioned on several grounds; my critique stems from deconstruction.

In his seminal article "Linguistics and Poetics" (1960), Jakobson introduces his model of communication and justifies the use of linguistics in poetics. Jakobson sees linguistics as a global science of verbal structures, of which poetics is an integral part.[12] Linguistics is hence a superscience or a conceptual umbrella which covers a number of disciplines with narrower scopes and more limited applicability. An analogous hierarchy governs the relationship between linguistic phenomena proper, as Jakobson's introductory discourse reveals: "Before dicussing the poetic function we must define its place among the other functions of language. An outline of these functions demands a concise survey of the constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication."[13] It is easy to see the phonocentric train of thought here that is common to linguists from Rousseau to de Saussure and Searle. Although Jakobson acknowledges that some poetic devices are not restricted to the verbal medium, he does not aim at a pansemiotic theory.[14]

Jakobson's presupposition is that poetic language is a special case of written language, which is a special case of spoken language. I shall not go into the well-known functions of Jakobson's model in detail, but only briefly allude to its main features. The minimal constitutive factors of any communication are 1) the addresser who/which sends 2) a message to 3) the addressee; the message requires 4) a context (in the meaning of 'referent'), and the two ends of communication must at least partially share a common 5) code; also 6) a contact, a physical channel or mental connection must exist between 1) and 2).[15] All these factors are, in Jakobson's diction, "inalienably involved in verbal communication,"[16] i.e., each of them is equally necessary. However, in poetic discourse, the functions attached to the constituents gain different importance. In fiction, the poetic function is supreme compared with the others. This, Jakobson, hurries to add, does not mean the obliteration of, say, the referential function, but that it merely becomes ambiguous. This is due to the fact that, in fiction, the addresser and the addressee become split into actual people and textual agents, and that the poetic message is a "quasi-quoted discourse."[17] In this process, the poetic message is thus reified, turned into a reiterable, enduring thing.

The reification and the consequent (re)iterability of the poetic message (and analogously the other factors of communication) point at two problems. First, it is problematic to treat a written text, with the actual addressor and addressee absent, in terms of communication. There is no contact between the addressor and addressee

---

12 Jakobson 1968, 351.

13 Ibid., 353.

14 Ibid., 350-51.

15 Ibid., 353.

16 Ibid., 353.

17 Ibid., 371. Jakobson's terminology dates from the pre-Boothian era, so his splitting of the constituents is not as complicated as in narratology after him. However, the logic is the same in both: poetic discourse is not as straightforward as actual communication but implies hierachal multiplication of factors.

except for the text itself. Even to call a text a contact requires considerable metaphorization, since the two agents are not actually in physical or psychological touch. Furthermore, the text *qua* contact does not enable both to "enter and stay in communication," as Jakobson formulates the features of this constituent.[18] The entering and staying is true to a degree only if communication is defined as simple transmission of information. Even in this definition, the metaphorization is as inevitable as it is insufficient, since the text as such, without an actually inscribed or conventionally presupposed frame stating, for instance, "The following is a message from me the author to you, reader," is not necessarily regarded as one. Second, the splitting of the factors does not unavoidably imply that the reduplicated agents within text actually communicate in the same way as real people. Again, metaphorization and anthropomorphization have to be brought into play in order to make the model function.

There is nothing wrong with the metaphoric or anthropomorphic conception of narrative agents as such. The problems do, however, begin to arise when this is done unwittingly or selectively. Jakobson does not problematize the poetic text *qua* communication, because for him all communication is governed by its original form, speech. Therefore, a written text, be it factual or fictional, is to be regarded as the mediation of the author's intentional signifieds to readers. That the basic structure of communication is split within the poetic text does not change Jakobson's view, since the mediation of information between the multiplied layers of narrative constituents is but a repetition of the original activity, a "mimesis of communication," to use Wallace Martin's expression.[19]

The status of the Jakobsonian model is different in its narratological adaptations. In his formulations, Wayne C. Booth was still close to Jakobson by stating that his "subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction, viewed as the art of communicating with readers - the rhetorical resources available to the writer [—-] as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader."[20] By his coinage *implied author* Booth means the actual author's second self, official scribe or official version that is used to affect the reader.[21] The Boothian implied author, hence, participates in the "act of communication, fundamental to the very existence of literature".[22] The implied author communicates by rhetorically urging the reader to adopt the agent's values and norms; the reader is only taken into consideration in order to "affect a public made up of similar [i.e., identical with the implied author /(implied) author-like] selves."[23] This means, in fact, that Booth conceives "communication" as one-way mediation. Here Booth diverges from Jakobson, who, at least nominally, stressed the sharing and reciprocal quality of communication: the roles of the addressor and the addressee alternate just as they do in empirical (speech) situations.

---

18 Ibid., 353.

19 Martin 1986, 154.

20 Booth 1965, ix.

21 Ibid., 71. Chatman has summarized the five - at least partly mutually exclusive - definitions of the implied author which Booth gives in five pages of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chatman 1990a, 80-83). For my present interests, these contradictories are not relevant, and I shall return to this problem in section 4.3.

22 Booth 1965, 89.

23 Ibid., 109.

In fact, the two conceptions of *communication* alluded to above can be traced back to the two extreme senses of the word. In the English language, communication, the noun of action derived from the Latin *communis* and *communicationem*, can mean both 1) transmission, one-way process and 2) sharing, common or mutual process.[24] The latter sees communication as a "negotiation and exchange of meaning, in which messages, people-in-culture and 'reality' interact so as to enable meaning to be produced or understanding to occur."[25]

The underlying Jakobsonian model of communication in early narratology was turned towards transmission by the revisors of Booth. The attempts to systematize Booth's, to use Tammi's expression, "rather impressionistic terminology"[26] have yielded a variety of models, which, however, share the tendency to thematize the communication within narrative fiction as a one-way process transmitting messages, not as sharing or making common. This can even be seen in the diagrammatic presentations of the models.[27] As Seija Ridell notes, the arrows indicating the direction of transmission that are so important in narratology are absent from Jakobson's model.[28] The technical side of communication is thus stressed at the cost of accounting for the construction of empirical communicative situation. Also the strict hierarchy of narrative levels with addressing and receiving agents of their own is a corollary of the one-way interpretation of communication. The curtailment of Jakobson's ideas can be seen on a more general level as well: what he presented as a general model of communication is, in narratology, turned into a metaphor for the inner structure of narrative.[29]

As the arrows in the diagrams of the hierarchical model of narratology tend to indicate, the (ideal form of) successful communication is one-way: from the implied author through the narrator via narratee(s) to the implied reader. Although the narratee can, in theory, take a more active part in narration, the vast majority of discourse will be articulated by the narrator. In a similar fashion, the text is conceived as the source of meaning; the actual reader is in a receiving position, and his or her quality as a reader depends on his or her competence as a "high fidelity" receptor or decoder of the information encoded.

In Didier Coste's analysis, the success and influence of Jakobson's article in the Western academic discourses of the 1960s and early 1970s was due to the fact that it articulated some deep formalistic needs. Jakobson built "a whole model of linguistic communication in order to enshrine in it a 'noncommunicative' or minimally communicative act of linguistic production, a text-centered oasis in a message-based theory."[30] Thus, according to the narratological conception of literature, there is a lot of communication *within* fiction, but not necessarily outside it, or rather the extratextual was often ruled out from the scope of the discipline.

---

24 Williams 1976, s.v. 'communication.'

25 O'Sullivan et al. 1994, s.v. 'communication.'

26 Tammi 1985, 226.

27 Booth did not schematize his model into a graph, but Chatman, in his synthetic revision of it, provided one (Chatman 1983, 151) as did Tammi in his combination of the two (Tammi 1985, 227). For a useful summary of some of the models, see Martin 1986, 154.

28 Ridell 1994, 41.

29 Ibid., 41.

30 Coste 1989, 76.

It could be stated that narratives do not communicate (transmit messages) but they fulfil the requirements of the communicative convention shared by, and common to a lot of people. The supposed transmission, then, happens by virtue of the fact that transmission is presumed to be possible or to take place. Didier Coste is close to my formulations, although his critical stand lies elsewhere:

> A message is not conveyed, properly speaking, since it is the "point" of an act of communication as seen by the observer of this act; the message is, in other words, the meaningfulness that is turned by the participants and the witnesses of the act of communication into evidence that this act has taken place. The narrative message, the tale told, is not therefore a "content"; it is not contained within a text.[31]

In actual practice, the difference is not relevant as long as readers are happily discerning messages which, they believe, the authors have encoded in stories. However, the difference is crucial to critical theory and to the state of being of an art object. Intentionality, the transmission and destined delivery of intended messages is dramatically problematized when literary communication is questioned.

What makes, according to Derrida, lingual communication possible in the first place is the iterability of signifiers. The intending subject has to rely on the ability of writing to be readable and thus to convey intended meanings in his/her absence, without his/her intending presence. But the very readability and preservation of intentions is founded on iterability which, as such, problematizes both communication and intentionality. Communication and intention become possible through a system of generalization, which means the impossibility to communicate or intend in a self-present manner. The possibility to iterate the intention and/or writing in the absence of the intending or writing subject is broached, opened up, on the condition that it is also, in the first place, breached, broken up.[32] As Coste formulates, albeit from a non-deconstructive viewpoint, "[l]iterary communication is contingent, transitive, transactive, and unfixed" and the literary message "open, fluctuating, undecidable, and outward-turned".[33] In his own model for artistic communication, Coste acknowledges that there is an intended message at the sender's end, but it, when actualized at the receiver's end, does not necessarily (or even probably) remain the same.[34]

4.2.2 Contexts

In the context of narratology, Jakobson's theory has been understood as a skeletal structure, in a condensed and simplified form. The omissions are clearly strategic for they serve the idea of a text as a closed system, with the actual writer and reader banished from its realm. What is also often ignored in Jakobson's theory is his anomalous terminology. One of the minimal constitutive factors of communication is

---

31 Ibid., 5.

32 Derrida uses the French verb *entamer* to account for the double logic of iterability (e.g., Derrida 1990, 61). The English verbs *to broach* and *to breach* approximately convey the dual meanings of the French original. The broach/breach dyad as a possible equivalent of *entamer* was introduced in Spivak's translation of *De la grammatologie*.

33 Coste 1989, 78.

34 Ibid., 78-80.

called *context* by Jakobson although the term refers to what is commonly known as 'referent.'[35] To interpret the Jakobsonian context with the standard meaning in mind would be a grave mistake. The meaning of the term context is thus itself context-ridden, which beautifully demonstrates that the fate of communication in narratology is also determined by context. But contexts are infinite and thus nonsaturable. It might prove useful to read Jakobson's *context* in the standard context of context, and by the same token add context (in its several senses) into the narratological model of communication.

To conceive Jakobsonian context in its non-Jakobsonian sense makes narratology from the very beginning contextualist. I do not intend to dismiss Jakobson's model as such by this deliberate misreading, but to investigate the interventions and itinerary of the context in the production of meaning in narratological theory. The context I have in mind is not to be taken empirically, as a set of graphically inscribed textual entities, but as what Derrida has called the general text. In fact, Simon Critchley equates the two by claiming that "the words 'context' and 'general text' say exactly the same."[36] Derrida stresses the infiniteness of context and the interpretative necessity within it:

> What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real,' 'economic,' 'historical,' socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. [—] every referent and all reality has the structure of a différential trace, and [—] one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretative experience."[37]

In this sense, Jakobson's apparently anomalous usage of context turns out to be - albeit without his consent - deconstructively correct. The message that the addresser sends to the addressee refers to referent *qua* context, and all these and other constituents of communication are "inalienably involved in verbal communication."[38] Although Jakobson means that verbal communication features all of these constituents, his formulation allows for another reading which stresses how the verbal, i.e. lingual, is necessarily part of the constituents. The constituents of communication are both mediated and constituted by language. In Briankle G. Chang's analysis,

> individuals are *constituted* as functioning communicators only insofar as they participate in communication, only insofar as they are *positioned* as sender or receiver differentially according to the *medium* and the *context* of a particular communicative event. Before the addresser can function as an addresser, it must have already been *addressed*; before the addresser is able to establish any "contextual contact" with its addressee, the addresser must have been and addressee itself.[39]

---

35 Cf. Jakobson 1968, 353.

36 Critchley 1993, 38. As Critchley notices, there is a suggestive and self-conscious analogy between Derrida's two famous formulations "There is nothing outside the text" (or: there is no outside-text; il n'y a pas de hors-texte) (Derrida 1976, 158), and "There is nothing outside context" (Derrida 1990, 136).

37 Derrida 1990, 148.

38 Jakobson 1968, 353.
In his otherwise excellent deconstructive discussion of communication, Briankle G. Chang ignores the idiomatic meaning of the *context* in Jakobson's theory (cf. Chang 1996, 58, 176-83).

39 Chang 1996, 181; emphasis in original.

Thus, what the message carries is not a referent *qua* objective meaning-content, but a whole differential and referential structure of language which makes a referent, among other phenomena, possible. This can also be thematized with the help of Jakobson's conception of communication.

First, lingual communication is "internally" reciprocal in the sense that no term is identical with itself, but necessarily presupposes another term from which it differs. Second, the sharing aspect of Jakobsonian communication implies actual people or textual agents participating in the *communion* of mutual exchange; but this feature of the model can also be read as an interaction of signs and context (read: general text), which "enable[s] meaning to be produced" but not, however, necessarily "understanding to occur."[40] Thanks to the receiver's urge to make sense, some kind of understanding of a sign usually occurs, but it does not necessarily coincide with the sender's intended meaning. The background noise distorting the teleo-theological transmission of meanings and thus causing *mis*understandings deserves to be scrutinized in detail. The distortion is caused by the mutable context in the *non-Jakobsonian* sense, and this analogously changes the mediation of context in *his* sense.

One is easily reminded of Derrida's "Signature Event Context" and "Limited Inc." as texts relevant to the sign/context/communication problematics. Every signifier must, in order to gain identity and singularity, be iterable, i.e., repeatable, imitable. This means that the signifier can be iterated regardless of the presence or absence of the intending subject who produced it. This also means that the iterable signifiers break - by a structural necessity - away from their "original" context.[41] No sign is able to saturate all the possible contexts in which it can appear, and thus no absolute centre holds or anchors intended meanings: there are "only" contexts . These chacteristics are usually connected with writing, but Derrida generalizes them not only to speech but to all experience as well.[42] Thus, "there is no experience of *pure* presence, but only chains of differential marks."[43].

It is easy to see an (unintended) analogy to Jakobson's model for communication here: there are no pure referents but only chains of differential contexts (*qua* referents). On the other hand, Jakobson's non-standard use of *context* can be conceived as a conscious gesture towards a more complex notion of the relationship between the message and the reality that it deals with. The term *referent* is often associated with the definition of an individual sign,[44] which provides too narrow a vision into the practice of communication. Jakobson's redefined *context* still retains and thus accounts for aspects of the systemic complexity of signs, of significatory interrelations that is implicit in the established meaning of the term. As such, Jakobson's decision to give a new meaning to an old term resembles Derrida's strategic tendency to radicalize established signifiers, for instance *writing*. And context *qua* referent is, indeed, always mediated by spoken or written language, i.e., writing in Derrida's sense. In verbal communication, there is no other way from reality to message than language.

---

40 O'Sullivan et al. 1994, s.v. 'communication.'

41 Derrida 1982, 317. By definition, signs always survive the intending subject that produces them.

42 Ibid., 318, 320-21.

43 Ibid., 318.

44 Vainikkala 1991, 126.

My analysis above deals with factual, non-fictional communication, with the referential function as the dominant. The case is more complicated, Jakobson stresses, in fictional texts in which the poetic function presides. The dominance of the poetic function does not obliterate the reference but rather divides and thus makes it ambiguous: "The double-sensed message finds correspondence in a split addresser, in a split addressee, and besides in a split reference [—]."[45] The splitting and ambiguity is due to the fact that the poetic function complicates the seeming unequivocality of non-fictional communication, or, more elementarily, the apparent transparency of the sign/object relation. However, the poetic function only dramatizes what is already at work in all communication and all signification, as my account of Derrida above has tried to show. To reiterate my point, I shall pick another thread in Jakobson's argumentation in regard to the poetic *vis-à-vis* the referential.

Jakobson writes, "Virtually any poetic message is a quasi-quoted discourse with all those peculiar, intricate problems which 'speech within speech' offers to the linguist."[46] But is quasi-quotedness a feature reserved to fiction only? Are not the intricate problems of 'speech within speech' also to be found in all language, whether written or spoken, whether poetic or referential? As the iterability of all linguistic signs implies, to use language is to 'quasi-quote' something that has already been (and will be) said or written. Hence, the splitting of the constitutive factors of communication already takes place in every act of signification. To mean or to conceive something as meaningful is not to be singular. The intending subject is subjected to a language full of past and (possible) future intentions. For the same reason the addressee is split into the supposedly actual receiver and into the position encoded in language. Language is as such citational; if it were not, it could not be cited or re-cited.

The primordial intertwinement or at least blurring of the poetic and the referential suggests that there is no substantial reason for narratology to concentrate on the former only. If communication dominated by the referential, such as the news, turns out to be poetic and hence its constituents split, then narratology would be an appropriate means to decipher it.

On the other hand, instead of widening the scope of narratology into non-fiction or communication in general, there has also emerged another tendency which questions the relevance of narratological (hair-)splitting altogether. While one group of narratologists welcomes all texts into the realm of classic narratology, another clique banishes each and every text from it, since the categories created and the terminology used are, they claim, useless. In their view, the narratological splitting of hairs does not meet the test provided by Occam's razor. For instance, such otherwise different critics as some contextualist narratologists and Gérard Genette are united by their insistence on the irrelevance or uselessness of the term implied author, albeit for dissimilar reasons.[47]

---

45 Jakobson 1968, 371.

46 Ibid., 371.

47 For contextualists' relation to the implied author, see Chatman 1990b, 319-320. Genette states that the implied author and the implied reader are agents beyond the narrative situation and therefore do not belong to the scope of narratological study. Genette is, however, ready to accept the implied author in the Boothian meaning of an "image of the author in the text," although that agent does not get the similar kind of critical attention as do those belonging

In the next section, I shall, instead of streamlining the terminology of the discipline, deal with the phonocentric implications of narratology as a mimesis of communication.

4.3 Mute Omnipotency, Loquacious Messengers, and Silent Listeners: Phonocentrism in Narratology

In this section, I shall read the rhetoric of speech or voice used in the definitions narratology's key concepts; for this purpose, Jacques Derrida's critique of the phonocentricity of Western metaphysics will do as a hearing aid. I shall concentrate on the implied author, narrator, and narratee as defined and conceived by Wayne C. Booth, Seymour Chatman and Gerald Prince. The aporias and logical culs-de-sac which will emerge from these definitions can, I hope, function as tell-tales of narratology's unexpressed presuppositions.

4.3.1 The Implied Author's Strange Vocal Defect

In what follows, I shall lend an ear to the metaphors and logic used in the definitions of the implied author, and at the same time to the way narratology harks back to the great Western tradition of phonocentricity.

The implied author is a narratological term originally coined by Wayne C. Booth in 1961, and after that redefined by such narratologists as Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, and Seymour Chatman. For the present purposes, I shall concentrate on Booth's and Chatman's definitions.

Booth states that every actual author creates an ideal, implied version of "himself," a second self, when writing fiction. This version is, in reception, deduced from the text. The implied author is not, then, to be confused with actual author who created it; it would, in fact, be logically impossible, since each work of a writer has an implied author of its own.[48] How is the implied author inferred from a given work? By the work as a whole naturalized as a message which the author sends to readers, who then, relying on that information, form a mental picture of the creator. Therefore a given text's implied author is taken to control its happenings and to be responsible for its values and norms.

Booth's terminology in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is, to put it as mildly as Pekka Tammi does, "somewhat impressionistic,"[49] which makes it difficult to give a detailed account of the implied author's characteristics. What is clear, however, is that readers grant the implied author omnipotency in its textual universe, although the very agent is "the *result* of the investigation of the meaning in the text, and not the *source* of that

---

to narratology proper. (Genette 1988, 137, 141.)

48 Booth 1983, 70-71.

49 Tammi 1985, 226.

meaning."[50] It does not seem to need messengers or heralds to forward its messages to readers, since the second self can have "an overt, speaking role in the story."[51] On the other hand, these divine interventions *qua* explicit commentary typically belong to the narrator's repertoire.[52] To put these apparent paradoxes and overlapping definitions right, Seymour Chatman tried to demarcate the territories of the two agents in a more clear-cut manner. However, as is commonplace in geo-political demarcation, Chatman's conceptual redefinitions solve a few problems at the cost of creating a host of new ones.

Booth gives five - at least partly mutually exclusive - definitions of the implied author on five pages of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.[53]

1) The neutral (or objective or ideal) person that the real author wants to be in order to create an objective account: a "second self," an "official scribe."
2) The different aspects of themselves that authors show in different works.
3) The creator as opposed to his creatures.
4) The choosing, evaluating person who produces the work.
5) The recorded invention of the text based on a core of norms and choices that inform it.

The fictional universe as heard by Booth is marked by the presence or absence of voice; the second section of *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is titled "The Author's Voice in Fiction" which can refer to both actual and implied authors. The author's voice ranges from the "reliable commentary" "directly on the work itself" to "authorial silence" which amounts to "secret communion between author and reader."[54]

In his *Story and Discourse* (1978), Seymour Chatman conceptually silences the implied author but retains its, to give a veritable oxymoron of a concept, limited omnipotency in the work's world:

> [The implied author] is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative [—]. Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen us to learn.[55]

By the same gesture the narrator is given the blessing of voice, albeit on the condition that s/he/it must function as an implied author's obedient mouthpiece, as a ventriloquist's dummy, or to give a more appropriate metaphor, as a prompt messenger.

Chatman's redistribution of the implied author's and narrator's functions does not solely relate to linguistic abilites, but also to thematic matters; the former

---

50 Bal 1992, 120; emphasis in original. The ambivalence of Booth's terminology can also be read as a strategic gesture which accounts for both the actual author and the textual entity, both the 'outside' and the 'inside' (cf. Vainikkala 1993, 244-46). This kind of positive or constructive approach is quite tenable, but in the present section I am being, again for strategic reasons, consciously ill-intentioned.

51 Booth 1983, 71.

52 Ibid., 73.

53 Ibid., 70-74. I base my presentation of the definitions on Chatman 1990a, 80-83.

54 Ibid., 169, 205, 271, 301 respectively.

55 Chatman 1983, 148; emphasis in original.

"establishes the norms of the narrative."[56]

Chatman's early version of the implied author thus bears clear traits of textual Logos-God, of Author-as-Authority. But the implied author of a given work is not necessarily singular; in fact, a work can be composed by a trinity of real authors, or even by a veritable legion of them, as is the case in a typical Hollywood film - or in *The Bible* itself.[57] No matter how many real authors are behind it, the implied author is, in Chatman's early reading, an intentional entity: it invents, it instructs, it chooses, it establishes. Chatman initially bases his definition of the implied author on Booth's notion that the agent is actually of the reader's making, of his/her tendency to naturalize the presence of one 'responsible' author in the work.[58] Soon, however, the agent's constructedness (in relation to the reader) gives way to its constructivity (in relation to the work). This means that there *is* a controlling principle in the text, not just our need for one that we project onto it.

Chatman's conception of the implied author paraphrased above is no doubt logocentric, but is it phonocentric? True, the implied author is omnipotent, but does it not lack the very token of phonocentrism, voice? The logic of phonocentrism is more complex than that. Western metaphysics does not maintain that speech is the truth, the Logos, etc., but that it is the the most faithful *articulation* of that truth. Logically, in the gradual falling away from the truth, "sign [is subjected] to truth, language to being, and writing to speech."[59] An inarticulated thought, an unuttered intention, a mute message is hence closest to the very core of Logos. This is why the implied author's silence, pregnant with logical contradictions, is not actually a defect, but the very precondition for its (possibility of) omnipotency and ubiquity.[60] Hence, the implied author's phonocentricity is not to be heard, nor overheard, nor eavesdropped, but to be perceived indirectly in the uneven and awkwardly contradictory distribution of the power of speech and significatory control between narratological agents.

Chatman returns to the problem of the implied author in *Coming to Terms* (1990). Now he tries to rid himself of the textual immanence of his earlier formulations and to account for the 'reader-made,' pragmatic, and strategic qualities of the concept. What he ends up with is a cachophony of mutually exclusive staments, coming to a contradiction in terms.

Chatman defends the implied author on pragmatic, not on ontological grounds: "the question is not whether the implied author *exists* but what we *get* from positing

---

56 Ibid., 149. Chatman dissociates himself from Booth's insistence on the moral quality of these norms and rather stresses their culturality.

57 Cf. ibid, 149 and Chatman 1990a, 90-92. It is not perhaps appropriate to stretch the biblical or theological analogy too far, but, on the other hand, it does thematize narratological hierarchy in a heuristic way. It also allows for some heretic insights. The man possessed by demons says in the *Bible*: "My name is Legion: for we are many" (Mark 5:9). Despite his singular appearance, the man's real 'substance' is demonically plural - not unlike some implied authors'?

58 Chatman 1983, 148.

59 Derrida 1973, 24.

60 Cf. Chatman's formulation elsewhere: "the implied author is not the 'voice': that is, the immediate source of the text's transmission"; "[t]he implied author [---] is a silent source of information" (Chatman 1990a, 76, 85). The agent is, the syllogism could be continued, *the immediate source of the text's information* to be transmitted.

such a concept."[61] One of the benefits of such a hypostatization is, according to Chatman, that we get a more complex picture of fiction than by reducing it to the real author's self-expression (as in biographism) or to another version of an "oral anecdote" (as in contextualist narratology).[62] In fact, Chatman suggests that "we stop thinking of the implied author as a human surrogate or image of the real author,"[63] and thus avoid misleading personification or rather anthropomorphization. Despite these quite reasonable reservations, Chatman's own formulations in the same and the following chapter show reliance on both contextualism, everyday speech-act theory, and anthropomorphism.

When he has a purely textual concept to define, Chatman draws on the practices of ordinary conversation.[64] When denigrating the tendency to read "the text as the speech act of the real author," he, on the next page, conceives fictional and critical writing as "saying" and "speaking."[65] When differentiating the roles of the implied author and the narrator, he falls victim to not only anthropomorphism but also to metaphysical speculation: the former "does not personally tell or show but puts into the narrator's mouth the language that tells or shows."[66] The implied author *inspires* the narrator, not only in the meaning of 'giving inspiration' but rather 'breathing into or upon.'[67] The narrator could state in the words of the psalmist, "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45). On the other hand, the implied author lacks personality, singular subjectivity, which differentiates it from many other godheads: "That inventor [i.e., the implied author] is no person, no substance, no object; it is, rather, the patterns in the text which the reader negotiates."[68] These descriptions put together, it could be concluded that impersonal, ethereal patterns invent and inspire the narrator's speech.

In the perfectly symmetrical realm of the Booth-Chatman model, the implied author has its equal counterpart, the implied reader. The source silently emanates meanings to the perfectly understanding entity that absorbs everything without affecting the purity of the original. All this happens in crystal silence, not unlike in the case of Husserl's phenomenological voice. Derrida calls it the "voice that keeps silence," for "all sense is not completely repeated in expression," whereas the idealized voice remains "independent of the here-and-now acts and events of the empirical subjectivity which intends it"; therefore "it can be repeated infinitely while remaining the same."[69] The mute communication between the implied author and the implied reader is thus as ideal as in religious communion - or in supraconductivity: nothing is added, nothing is lost, everything remains the same, because there are no interventions of worldly hiatuses or interferences.

The implied author is the controlling principle, ubiquitous but nowhere visible

---

61 Ibid., 74; emphasis in original.
62 Ibid., 75-76; for a critique of contextualist narratology, cf. also Chatman 1990b.
63 Chatman 1990a, 82.
64 Ibid., 75.
65 Ibid., 76-77.
66 Ibid., 85.
67 Cf. *Webster's*, s.v. 'inspire.'
68 Ibid., 87.
69 Derrida 1973, 75.

or audible like God, to whom all the other agents of the narrative are subordinated.[70] A somewhat metaphysical concept, the implied author resembles transcendent signified, or Logos, the unmovable mover of textual universe. The implied author is the *author*ity of a given text: the agent protecting the unity of meaning and the certainty of origin. The implied author does not disseminate meaning, but silently and teleologically inseminates it.

The situation is quite different in the next pair, whose very existence is soundly based on articulation.

4.3.2 Qui parle?

It was one of the commonplaces of French narratological parlance in the 1960s and 1970s to ask who was narrating a story, who was speaking. Just as the implied author was naturalized as the mutely omnipotent source of meaning of a given text, the narrator and the narratee were analogously cast in the roles of speaker and listener respectively. Although the English and French terms (*narrator, narratee; narrateur, narrataire*) can be used in connection with both written and oral communication, the actual usage in narratology tends to circumscribe their semantic fields to the latter alternative. This tendency is also articulated in everyday narratological idiom and in the study of poetry by the use of the term *speaker* as a synonym for the narrator.[71] That the agents should be extradiegetic, and thus not materialized as characters, does not tie these phonocentric gestures. In critical discourse, the implied author as a mutely omnipotent God seems to need loquacious messengers to trumpet its (or rather His) will.

Voices permeate Chatman's analysis of narrators. In covert narration, "we hear a voice speaking," although the speaker remains unseen; speech is, for Chatman, "external voice," whereas thought is "internal" or "mental voice"; the narrator can be "well-spoken," and so forth.[72] It could, of course, be argued that the metaphors of voice and speaking are just a means of communicating without any other significance. But narratologists tend to be so systematic in their preference of speech to writing that it seems to suggest an unquestioned, "natural" presupposition.

It is as if narratologists were unwittingly buying into Rousseau's phonocentric statement that languages were made to be spoken and heard. The fallacy is as crucial as the pre-New Critical tendency to unproblematically read a narrative that overtly presents itself as written by an autodiegetic narrator, as is the case in diary and epistolary fiction, as self-expression of its actual author. Both of these fallacies can be read as attempts at redeeming the presence that is inevitably lost in all signifying acts, but notably so in written language. The implied author as the keeper of meaning, as the ethereal and therefore solid guarantor of signification, as the unmovable mover

---

70 The narrational subordination is even more vividly presented in the vertical model of the same hierarchy (continuously used by Lucien Dällenbach), in which the actual and implicit authors are situated at the top of the diagram, thus making the transmission of narrative resemble handing it down (cf. Dällenbach 1977, 105).

71 Manfred Jahn (1996, 246-48) notes the problems involved in the generic use of *speaking* (meaning both speech and writing) in narratology, but he does not utilize the deconstructive possibilities of this rhetorical incongruity.

72 Chatman 1983, 197-200.

outside the play of language conceptually stands for Logos.[73] The naturalized narrator and narratee, for their part, stage the graphically inscribed as natural narrative, as oral communication.

Although his division of the domains of the implied author and the narrator seems unequi*vocal* enough, Chatman gets into logical culs-de-sac when applying the concepts. Chatman is notorious for his oxymoronic formulation "nonnarrated stories" (i.e., stories so purely mimetic that they are transmitted by the silent implied author) in *Story and Discourse*, and he has later on acknowledged that narrators and narratees are by no means optional in narratives.[74] But similar conceptual undecidability still lingers on in Chatman's model in the 'liminal' case of text/peritext relation. Which narratological agent articulates, say, an ironic title? Chatman plainly states that it is to be attributed to the implied author, which presumably also articulates them if the narrator is not intentionally or conceptually capable of doing it, as is the case in *The Great Gatsby*.[75] This, of course, contradicts Chatman's own definition of the implied author: the agent is forced to break its vow of silence.

4.3.3 Qui écoute?

The narratee can be a listener or a reader, but often the activity s/he/it performs remains ambiguous. I provided a detailed summary of the signs, types and functions of the narratee in section 1.2. above. In this subsection, I shall concentrate on one aspect of the narratee's definition. To create a reference case, Gerald Prince sketches the characteristics of a "zero-degree narratee." The zero-degree narratee knows the narrator's language but not the personal connotations attached to it; the agent is familiar with basic rules of narration; and it has a good memory.[76] On the other hand, a zero-degree narratee has no personality nor social characteristics; the characters and the events told by the narrator are previously unknown to the agent; and the agent does not master the conventions of any (fictional) world. These incapabilities mean that the zero-degree narratee is, without the narrator's help, unable to make judgements of value, morality, or verisimilitude.[77]

This kind of narratee is as curiously handicapped as the mute implied author. Both agents' defects are, however, structurally necessary for the model to function. The zero-degree narratee is the blank surface which mutely absorbs the narrator's words, thus realizing the one-way communication on which the whole model is

---

73 Lea Rojola (1991, 10-11) has suggested that the concept of the implied author neutralizes oppositions and differences by incorporating all the possible meanings in itself (and thereby controls interpretation).

74 Early formulation in Chatman 1983, 146-47; sustained critique in Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 88-89; acknowledgement in Chatman 1990a, 218n.

75 Chatman 1990b, 320; Chatman 1990a, 85-87, 219n. Chatman does not touch the problem of articulation directly, but his formulations leave the impression that the implied author is, for its part, capable of direct articulation.
I have tried to solve this problem in a classic narratological fashion: by coining still another concept to save the dysfunctional model. Hence, the *editor-narrator* "functions between the implied author and the main narratee," and is "the impression given by a finished work, attributed to, controlled by, but not articulated by the implied author" (Keskinen 1993b, 171, 181n); cf. also subsection 1.1.1. above.

76 Prince 1983, 10.

77 Ibid., 11. I shall give a gendered reading of the zero-degree narratee in the next section.

based. The situation could also be read as a fallen, displaced version of the ideal relation between the implied author and the implied reader. When the words come in, the ideal purity of communication is tarnished. The zero-degree narratee is also most likely to be conceived as a mute listener; the agent is dumb in both senses of the word.

A zero-degree narratee is not likely to be personified or anthropomorphized, whereas an overt narratee is, especially if the agent is explicitly addressed as a "dear reader" or "you who listen," not to mention the case in which the agent is materialized as a character.

In Chatman's theory and in narratology in general (including Jakobson's concept of communication), there is a tendency to naturalize narratives, to treat them as versions of "original" oral communication between two or more human beings. This tendency, as Chatman's case shows, surfaces even when the theorist's intentions are explicitly anti-contextualist.[78] Historically and contextually this is understandable: the literary corpus that classic narratology taps easily lends itself to such a naturalizing reading. The situation becomes more complex if we transgress the boundaries of canonized literature; for instance, science fiction can provide narrating instances that are practically impossible to naturalize.[79] On the other hand, the extension of narratology's scope into non-fictional texts (news items, anthropological accounts, legal or scientific discourse, etc.) is even more likely to yield naturalizing readings since they appear to be closer to "genuine" communication from one human being to another without the camouflage of fictionality.

Recent development in narratology shows little interest in the concepts dealt with here; for instance, the problematics involved in the implied author seems to have silently sunk into oblivion.

---

78 Chatman has criticized the metaphor of voice for implying that the narrator is necessarily human (and gendered) while neither is true (Chatman 1990a, 116, 118, 121). Chatman has also suggested the more neutral *presenter* to replace the sense-specific *narrator*, *teller*, and *shower* (ibid., 113). This criticism has not, as I have tried to show above, affected Chatman's own diction; true to his family name, he continues to write about chatting male narrators.

79 A computer can feed the narrator's consciousness pre-verbal information or rather stimuli, which he articulates or focalizes, as in Philip K. Dick's "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon" (1980). I am indebted to Raine Koskimaa for drawing my attention to this story (cf. Koskimaa 1994, 120-21). Is the computer a narrator or a metaphor for the mute implied author? Is the human narrator actually a narratee? Furthermore, it is not uncommon that a science fiction story is narrated by a computer or focalized by an alien, which forces naturalizing reading to treat the agents metaphorically.
Oral communication as the model can range from anecdotes and urban tales (Labov, Pratt) to the sophisticated realm of transference between a psychoanalyst and his/her patient (Brooks). For the latter, see Keskinen 1993a.

4.4 Book In White Hands: Narratee's Gender and 'Race'

Besides deconstruction, feminist criticism has provided serious objections to narratology and its presuppositions. Analogously, the rise of the problems of 'race' and ethnicity in critical theory can provide insights into narratological discourse. In this section, I shall briefly introduce feminist narratology with the help of Susan S. Lanser, and then move on to my own gender- and 'race'-sensitive reading of some narratological concepts and analyses.

To begin with, the alleged objectivity and universality of (early) narratological theory - including Propp, Greimas, Genette, Iser, and Todorov - was based on a corpus of texts by male writers or by women authors who were read as if they were men.[80] By suppressing the problem of gender in its theoretical foundation, narratology has also made it tempting to ignore it in critical applications. Also, as Lanser points out, narratology has traditionally emphasized the semiotic at the cost of the representational features of narrative, while feminist criticism has been apt to do the contrary. In a similar fashion, narratology has bracketed fiction from its production and reception, whereas feminists have emphasized both. What all this means to a feminist critic is that narratology, like any other critical construct, is "ideological, in an important sense fictional,"[81] which is a statement also acknowledged by some (male) post-narratologists. Far from dimissing the approach altogether, Lanser suggests a feminist revision of narratology, which would account for the objections she has made above. Hence, the theory would be re-formed by taking women's texts into account; it would combine the mimetic and the semiotic, the referential and the linguistic; some of the terminology would be simplified for the sake of accessibility; it would study the teleological features of narrative; and, finally, contribute to the study of such controversial concepts as "woman's writing" and female tradition.[82]

I am not sure if I readily subscribe to any of Lanser's objectives except the widening of the corpus and accounting for the referential features of narrative. The narratological terminology is not in need of simplification but self-conscious complication. Instead of the teleology of narrative, I am interested in the teleo-theology of narratology. The essentialistic problems involved in woman's writing and feminist reading were dealt with in connection with resisting reading (section 3.2. above), and I shall not go into them here. My version of male feminist narratology in this section will consist of tracing male bias in narratology's concept-formation and in actual narratological analyses.

---

80 My account of feminist narratology is based on Lanser 1986, 343-46. For other feminist critiques and revisions of narratology, see Diengott & Lanser 1988, Lanser 1988, Knutson 1989, Rojola 1991.

81 Lanser 1986, 345.

82 Lanser exemplifies the new narratology she is calling for by providing an intriguing reading of an anonymous letter, identifying its narratees and voices (ibid., 347-58).
For a well-argumented critique of "contextualist" narratology, to which Lanser can be seen to belong, from the point of view of structuralist narratology, see Chatman 1990b.

4.4.1 More Than Zero: Narratee's Gender

Gerald Prince initially defined the narratee by hypostatizing the so-called "zero-degree narratee," a virtually non-existent idealization with the minimum of positive traits (cf. subsection 4.3.3. above). This, as James Phelan notes, relates to Prince's structuralist presuppositions: his intention was to find the "underlying communality of diverse narratees."[83] Paradoxically, Prince's search for the common core of all the *possible* narratees made all the *actual* narratees deviations of a *nonoccurring* standard. The usefulness or rationale of this kind of definition was soon criticized by other narratologists,[84] and Prince later on revised his theory by omitting the zero-degree narratee from his formulations.[85] The objections made against the concept focus on the absurd limiting of the agent's capabilities (for instance, the understanding of denotations but not connotations) and on the uneconomic way of definition. The dispension of the definitive basis for the concept or the blaming of inappropriate anthropomorphization in conceiving the agent do not, however, save the narratee from the implicit workings of both. I agree with Prince that the zero-degree narratee can be a useful *garde-fou*, but not in the analysis of narratives, rather in the metacritical reading of narratology itself.

In spite of the zero-degree narratee's alleged lack of personality or social characteristics (and, therefore, sex or gender), Prince systematically refers to the agent with the masculine personal pronoun "he." Apparently Prince uses the pronoun in the unmarked sense, but it makes the usage all the more revealing: not only is the concept anthropomorphized but also "andromorphized," conceived as masculine *qua* human-in-general.

In her puristic revision of his analysis of the narratee, Mary Ann Piwowarzcyk follows Prince's contradictory reasoning. Analyzing certain grammatical forms (of the French language) which can specify the identity of the narratee, Piwowarczyk states that the feminine marker of the verb "must be counted as a deviation because sex of the zero degree narratee (like personality or profession) is undefined. Those grammatical features therefore [sic] which reveal gender or number must be counted as signs of the narratee."[86] Hence, the unmarked marker of the masculine gender is normal, whereas the marked feminine one is a "deviation." It is easy to see the phallocentric logic beneath this kind of reasoning, which regards gender division as an asymmetrical opposition, and female sexuality as a fall from the "normal" represented by that of male.[87]

A decade after his first introduction of the concept, Prince admitted that he was

---

83 Phelan 1994, 352.

84 Ray 1977, 21; Rabinowitz 1977, 128-29n; Chatman 1983, 253-54. In spite of her critical attitude towards the validity of Prince's formulations, Piwowarczyk (1976), however, does not question his conceptual starting point.

85 Prince 1982, 16-26.

86 Piwowarczyk 1976, 168.

87 For readings of Western phallo(go)centrism from Plato to Freud, see Irigaray 1989. Chatman's treatment of the narrator is analogous with Prince's masculinization of the narratee. In *Story and Discourse*, Chatman systematically refers to the narrator with the pronoun *he* when theorizing the agent or when the sex is not specified in the fictional text. In *Coming to Terms*, Chatman makes one concession to political correctness by referring to the narrator with the unmarked *her* (Chatman 1990a, 116).

indeed guilty of anthropomorphization in his early formulations, although he did not regard it as inherent in the construct.[88] But as long as the (equivalent of the zero-degree) narratee is conceived as a living participant of virtual communication and referred to with a personal pronoun (or *the* masculine pronoun) instead of *it*, the constructedness or non-humanity of the concept remains a mere slogan.

Although Prince dispensed the concept of the zero-degree narratee, it is probable that the initial definitive starting point still lingers on in the theoretical presuppositions of the narratee in general. All the actual narratees by definition remain deviations, just as the female gender is still conceptually a deviation from the male, no matter how politically correct the terminology used. It is highly questionable whether any theory is able to describe the reading process in general, regardless of such variables as gender, class, or 'race.'

4.4.2 Handle with Care: Narratee's 'Race'

Susan S. Lanser states that "a narratology that cannot adequately account for women's narratives is an inadequate narratology for men's texts as well."[89] I would suggest a possible gender- and 'race'-sensitive reading of a (white) male author's text eagerly analyzed by (white male) narratologists, Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*. As I stated, paraphrasing Schuerewegen, in section 1.2., the narrator in the Balzac novel cancels the narrative contract with the first female narratee, and prefers a male one instead. The narrator also tends to "masculinize" the narratee in the course of the narrative, as Genette has noted.[90] Schuerewegen suggests that the "deconstructive" narratee in the Balzac novel would be the preferred male one, who is, nevertheless, never explicitly addressed, but only implied as the opposite of the female narratee.[91] But would it be possible to sketch an even more "deconstructive" narratee in the novel? That narratee would not obey the narrator's intentions, but would question his very preferences (male for female; one way of reading for another), and thus be subversive to both the apparent narratee and the narrator. That narratee would, in fact, be what I have called a resisting narratee. Or to be more precise, the constructed agent in question would be one variant of the possible resisting narratees, a feminist resisting narratee.

Furthermore, accounting for the context of reception would yield interesting questions concerning the phrase "you who hold this book with a white hand." That phrase appears in the following section: "Le char de la civilisation [—] continue sa marche glorieuse. Ainsi ferez-vous qui tenez ce livre d'une main blanche, vous qui vous enfoncez dans un moelleux fauteuil en vous disant: 'Peut-être ceci va-t-il m'amuser.'"[92] Why is the white-handed (woman) reading instead of doing something else? Why are her hands white and not hardened by work? Was reading novels in the mid-nineteenth century a practice for bourgeois women? If so, was the literature they

---

88 Prince 1985, 300.

89 Lanser 1986, 346.

90 Quoted in Schuerewegen 1987, 248n.

91 Ibid., 249.

92 I have been using a literal translation of Balzac so far. A published translation renders the section like this: "As you hold this book in your white hand, lying back in a softly cushioned armchair, and saying to yourself, 'Perhaps this one is amusing.'" (Quoted in Genette 1988, 132).

read mere entertainment which made them incapable of receiving serious fiction (as the cancelling of the narrative contract in the Balzac novel seems to suggest)? Or, more fundamentally, is the "informed or concerned reading"[93] of the Balzac novel exactly the most productive interpretation? The preferred mode of reading exemplified by the expulsion of the female narratee and the invitation of the male one corresponds with the interests and needs of the male narrator, not the concerns of the whole reading public, not even a half of it.

The same apostrophic address - "you who hold this book with a white hand" - makes it possible to problematize the narratee even further. Instead of reading the white hand as an index of femininity and of the bourgeois class, the whiteness can be conceived more literally as a token of 'race.' This is not to imply that the woman narratee with white complexion would be substituted for a black male narratee by the narrator. On the contrary, the very possibility of another skin colour is excluded from the logic of the narrative (and narratology analyzing it). The opposite of a female white hand is, in the Balzac novel, a male white (albeit not presumably milk-white) hand. But can the racial significations of the word *white* be bracketed from the novel or from the critical discourse studying it?

Genette reads the Balzac passage as if it was addressed to him: "I have a right to object (mentally) that my hands are not so white or that my armchair is not no softly cushioned, which means that I legitimately take those remarks as directed at me."[94] But Genette's hands *are* white, or belong to the shades of white conceivable as whiteness, which makes him overlook the other meanings of the colour opposition and treat the whole passage as a mere example of an overt, extradiegetic narratee. Genette even masculinizes the female narratee by usurping the words directed at her. I do not claim that the colour white in Balzac mainly refers to 'race' instead of gender or class. But I do claim that in a homogenous cultural situation - be it that of the novel's writing or narratology's concept-formation - the indices of 'race' can easily pass unmarked. Accounting for the suppressed in the theory and practice of reading can prove useful in tracing ideological givens and blind spots in both.

4.4.3 Narrative Contract and Transgression

Not unlike the conception of the narratee, also the *narrative contract* aspect of narrator/narratee relation rests on anthropomorphization and asymmetry. The literal meaning of the word *contract* defies narratological application. In order to be binding a contract requires a number of qualifications, none of which are met in the narrator/narratee relation. On the one hand, the parties of the contract are not eligible to make any contracts. On the other hand, leaving aside the ontological fictionality of narrative agents, the parties in question are not equal: it is the narrator who decides about the terms of the contract, not its shadowy counterpart. The alleged exchange nature of the narrative contract[95] hence resembles more theft or colonial swindle than an agreement between equal parties. The case is at least nominally different in narratives which explicitly present the relationship between the narrator and narratee

---

93 Schuerewegen 1987, 249: "une lecture informée ou concernée."

94 Genette 1988, 132.

95 Cf. Prince 1988, s.v. 'narrative contract'; Chambers 1984, 8-9.

as that between characters freely agreeing upon such an exchange. But here, too, the relation of the parties is likely to be that of power, as is the case, for instance, in *Arabian Nights*, in which the initial situation making the contract motivated is based on the deprivation of freedom. The idea of a contract between narrative agents thus seems to be a metaphor which reinforces the well-intentioned narrational bond between them but which at the same time hides tensions of asymmetrical power relations.[96]

Arabian Nights is indeed one of the standard cases exemplifying narrative contract. Narratologists have usually been content with noting the interesting case of a contract in which Scheherezade has to exchange a story for a day of survival.[97] What the narratologists have not problematized is the fact that the (intradiegetic) narrator of *Arabian Nights* is a woman held captive by a male narratee. Scheherezade thus produces the whole work (except for the narrative frame), whereas the caliph-narratee silently listens. If Scheherezade did not articulate the narratives, both *Arabian Nights* and herself would cease to exist; without the caliph, she would go on living freely, deciding herself whether or not to narrate and to whom. This asymmetry has not resulted in a general recognition of Scheherezade's utmost importance in the narrative world of *Arabian Nights*. On the contrary, the generating female agent of the work has been substituted by the male characters of her stories. Tzvetan Todorov even goes as far as to calling *Arabian Nights* a story-telling machine (*une machine à raconter*), thus denying its personal origin; however, Todorov is not consistent in this de-personalization or denial of the subject, for he gives the work's characters the generic masculine epithet narrative-men (*hommes-récits*).[98] Todorov thus subscribes to the nominal impersonality or effacement of the narrative subject as long as it remains implicitly male.

The narrative contract has been conceived as metaphorical or actual seduction, the paradigmatic case being Barthes's reading of Balzac's "Sarrasine." The idea of narrative seduction has been developed by Ross Chambers. This conceptual construct also bears traces of male bias. In his *Story and Situation*, Chambers unproblematically conceived the seducer as male and the seducee as female; he also, to a large degree, ignored the violence and power aspects of seduction. In his *Room for Maneuver*, Chambers admits these blind spots, and attempts to account for gender and power when theorizing narrative.[99] Indeed, Chambers ideas of appropriation and resistance that I dealt with in subsection 3.2.4. above could perhaps be applied to Scheherezade's case. Could she, by yielding to the caliph's will and thereby prolonging her life, and

---

96 The situation is different when the contract is conceived as that between an actual reader and the text. As Chatman implies, in order to proceed reading we must apply benefit of the doubt (Chatman 1983, 150) or, to use Coleridge's term, the willing suspension of disbelief. Reading means the adoption of a role provided by the text: "When I enter the fictional contract I add another self: I become an implied reader" (ibid., 150). The requirements of a contract are met here. The reader agrees to take a role for the pleasure of reading; without the contract the text would remain unread and the reader unsatisfied. But this structure is an idealization and in fact part of another contract, which stresses the communication between narrative agents. Resisting reading would intrude in the text without licence and without predetermined kind of pleasure.

97 Todorov 1980a, 41-43; Chatman 1983, 258; Prince 1988, 61; Prince 1992, 25-26 Genette 1985, 233; Genette 1988, 93.

98 Todorov 1980a, 45, 37.

99 Chambers 1991, 16-17.

finally making him fall in love with her, be appropriating and resisting the asymmetrical diffusion of power? Does she seduce her master? Or is she forced into a position in which that is the only option? I shall not go into these questions in detail here, but in any case the problematized conception of the narrative contract *qua* seduction is likely to produce more varied readings of the stock examples of narratological analyses.

The conceptual discrepancy found in the narrative contract also applies to the analogous parties outside the narrative. For instance, Philippe Lejeune has called the relation between the actual author and actual reader of autobiography the autobiographical pact or contract (*le pact autobiographique*).[100] Lejeune's term can quite justifiably be criticized for its disregard of the basic requirements of a pact or agreement: the subjects of the autobiographical pact do not act freely but they are always already constituted in and through language.[101]

The concept of contract in the study of narrative resembles, in short, one of the meanings of that word as a verb: "to shorten (a word, phrase, etc.) by combining or omitting some of its elements."[102] What is omitted is the most important feature of the contract, its reciprocality. But the recognition of the obvious incorrectness in the term's usage does not suffice. The very asymmetry of the narrator/narratee relationship can be seen as pointing at the possibility of a resisting reading, a return of the repressed, an altering interpretation by the subaltern. In short, a transgression of the contracted contract is called for.

To sum up, it seems as if narratologists had subscribed to Charles Baudelaire's dictum "Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère." In narratological concept-formation and actual analyses, the narratee, even when hypocritical or resisting, easily resembles the narrator in regard to gender and 'race.' The brotherly male bonding of narratology produces hypocritical effects (in the sense of two-facedness: the narratee is conceived as the narrator's Other, but organically, in a Janus-like fashion, linked with it). Not surprisingly the same applies to the narratologists' gender and 'race' as well.

The hierarchical and symmetric structure of the Booth-Chatman model has yielded laws concerning the agents' roles and proper functions, although the very hierarchy is not necessarily a textual property (an objectively existing structure), but can be regarded as a critical construct, a hypothetical assumption. What is actually a heuristic model for describing certain texts has easily come to be treated as a universal, especially in early narratology which ignored differences in cultural or other (e.g. gender) contexts of reading.[103] The conventionality of narratological (or in general, structuralist) or for that matter all (critical) models and terminology is indeed one of the main issues in deconstructive critique of literary criticism. As Culler points out:

---

100 Lejeune 1982, 218-20 & *passim*. The autobiographical pact signifies the convention by which the reader conceives a work as an autobiography: one of the minimal requirements is that the writer's name printed on the cover and that of the protagonist are identical (Lejeune 1982, 206-207). This condition rules out most of the pseudo-autobiographies. An interesting exception is Luke Rhinehart's *The Dice Man* (1972), which features a fictional autobiography by a character who bears the actual author's name.

101 Cf. Rojola 1995, 103n. For an intriguing discussion of the male bias in Lejeune's autobiographical pact, see Kosonen 1995, 70-118.

102 *Webster's*, s.v. 'contract.'

103 Cf. Tammi 1991, 167-68.

> deconstruction raises theoretical issues that critics must pursue and prevents methodological concepts from being treated simply as tools to be employed. It encourages critics, rather, to see how these concepts are affected by the works they are being used to interpret: what the works have to say about the categories one uses in discussing them.[104]

A given text can, then, be interpreted, say, according to a "ready-made" narratological model, but the text ought to be used to modify or calibrate it: the model may turn out to be anticipated or undermined by the work. As Chambers puts it, "one of the powers of fiction is its power to theorize the act of storytelling *in and through the act of storytelling*."[105] The study of this characteristic would tie in with the pragmatic use of deconstructive critique of narratology welcomed by Chatman.

In my application of narratology, I shall try to be gender- and 'race'-conscious, and account for what feminist and ethnic critique has contributed to the discipline, while not pretending to be able to read the Updike novels *as* a feminist woman or a non-white person. Nor shall I attempt to read *like* them. Instead, I shall try to account for the possibility of such readings, and study the working of the logic of gender and 'race,' among other signifying systems, in the Updike novels.

My critique of narratology in the whole chapter 4 has tried to demonstrate that some of the fundamental ideas of the discipline are in a state of an inner conceptual conflict, and therefore exposed to a deconstructive reading. In the narratological analysis of the three Updike novels, I shall account for this critique. I shall also see if the novels can be used to criticize either the validity of narratological categories or deconstruction as a *method* of thematic reading.

---

104 Culler 1988, 20.

105 Chambers 1984, 23.

5 RABBIT REDUX

5.1 Reading

In this section, I shall deal with the moments of reading *in Rabbit Redux* and how they possibly contribute to the reading *of* it. I shall start by classifying the narrator's (and "editor-narrator's") commentary and the characterization of the narratees. After that I shall turn to the novel's metaphoric interplay between body and writing, and see how they are read. Finally, I shall tease out the novel's allegories of interpretation.

5.1.1 Narrator's Commentary

The narrator's or "editor-narrator's" metacommentary in *Rabbit Redux*[1] falls into five categories, into hermeneutic, linguistic, proairetic, semic, and critical ones.

To start with the **paratext**, or rather with the **peritext**, the novel's title, *Rabbit Redux*, follows the phonological "rule" of titling used in the whole tetralogy: each title

---

1 *Rabbit Redux* is the second volume of John Updike's *Rabbit* quadruplet. The tetralogy opened with *Rabbit, Run* (1960), which told about 26 year-old Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom's flight from the constraints of society and marriage as well as about his vague metaphysical aspirations. *Rabbit Redux* (1971) takes place ten years later, in the summer and autumn of 1969, *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981) still another decade later, and the quadruplet was finished with *Rabbit at Rest* (1990), which, at the end of the novel, leaves mortally ill Harry in a hospital bed, apparently to die.
In three decades Harry changes from a virile rebel to an affluent supporter of society.
In *Rabbit Redux*, the protagonist is 36 years old and has been working the whole decade in the same printing plant as his father. Janice, Rabbit's wife, works at her father's car lot.
When, in July, Rabbit finds out that Janice is having an affair with her colleague, Charlie Stavros, she moves to live with him. Rabbit is left alone with his son, 13-year-old Nelson. Soon, however, Rabbit is acquainted with Jill, an 18-year-old runaway girl, who then moves into his house. In September, Jill invites her black friend Skeeter, who is wanted by the police, to stay with them.
Harry's neighbours will not approve of this kind of a commune of mixed races and generations, and, in October, his house is set on fire, apparently by the neighbours. With Harry and Nelson absent, Skeeter saves himself from the flames, but Jill burns to death. Harry helps Skeeter to flee the police.
Because of technical innovations in the printing plant, Harry loses his job. Janice leaves her lover, whom Harry's sister has "seduced," and comes back to her husband.

consists of the word *Rabbit* and a short complement with a word beginning with the letter R.[2] The title indicates who is, again, in the focus of narrative attention, and, albeit in a somewhat roundabout way, that some recurring or returning is to be expected.

The next paratextual threshold of the novel is its peritext of the epigraph. The novel's first epigraph is a quotation from *Webster's New International Dictionary*, giving the etymology and definitions of the word *redux*. Literally, the word means 'led back'; in the medical usage, it indicates 'return to health after disease.' The narrator thus provides the narratee with the necessary **metalinguistic** information about the novel's title, which is likely to be unfamiliar but at the same time thematically important.[3] The epigraph is not only a metalinguistic comment but it also proairetically comments on the importance of the double perspective the word offers to the novel's material.

---

2 The principle of titling the Rabbit novels seems to have been clear to Updike early on. In an interview done in the same year as *Rabbit Redux* was published, Updike (s.a., 490) talks about writing a sequel called *Rural Rabbit*, a novel which eventually came out under the title *Rabbit Is Rich*.

Interestingly enough, the "rule" of titling seems to have affected reviews and criticism written about the novel or about Updike's works in general: the novels' object language has been eagerly used as their metalanguage. See, for example, Bernard Oldsey's "Rabbit Run to Earth" (1972), Shawn O'Connell's "Rabbits Remembered" (1974), David L. Vanderwerken's "Rabbit 'Re-Docks': Updike's Inner Space Odyssey" (1975), J.J. Waldmeir's "*Rabbit Redux* Reduced: Rededicated? Redeemed?" (1978), and Edward M. Jackson's "Rabbit Is Racist" (1985), all on *Rabbit Redux*; Eliot Fremont-Smith's "Rabbit Ruts" (1981) or Roger Sale's "Rabbit Returns" on *Rabbit Is Rich*; Stacey Olster's "Rabbit Rerun" (1991) and "Rabbit Is Redundant" (1992) on *Rabbit at Rest*; or David Lodge's "Rabbit Reviewer" (1984) on *Hugging the Shore*. The recurring form also inspired speculation on the forthcoming titles before the suite was finished; for instance, Kathryn Hume (1984, 46) predicted the final sequel to be titled as *Rabbit Retired*, and I remember half jokingly guessing that the last novel would make Harry, who would still be jogging, convert to the Jewish persuasion, and the book be titled *Rabbi Runs*.

In my subsequent reading of Updike's three novels, I shall only deal with the peritexts relevant to my interests; hence, I shall ignore the author's name, dedication(s), publishing information, and blurb, as they prove practically useless as indices of the narrator's commentary. My subsequent analysis of the Acknowledgments of *The Coup* will be a minor exception to my general policy.

3 For the informed receiver, the word *redux* might function as an allusion to prior literature. The title may allude to John Dryden's poem "Astrae Redux" (1660), which connects a returning planet with Charles II ascending the throne (cf. Vargo 1973, 150). *Rabbit Redux*, too, utilizes planetary imagery as an index of Harry's fate (for a detailed reading of the novel from this viewpoint, see Hunt 1980, 175). As for novels with *redux* in the title, one is reminded by *Phineas Redux* (1874), Anthony Trollope's sequel to his political novel *Phineas Finn* (1869). In the sequel, Finn gives up a promising career because of his conscience and opinions; Harry, too, opposes society with his unconventional decisions, although he otherwise hardly resembles Trollope's protagonist.

The dictionary entry in the beginning of the novel forms can, in fact, be interpreted as its first words. This foregrounds the novel's textual and literary nature as does *Moby Dick*'s paratextual frame; Tony Tanner suggests that the Melville novel's first words are not "Call me Ishmael" but "Etymology" (Tanner 1979, 21). I have opposed Tanner's reading elsewhere by showing that there are, in fact, several peritextual thresholds before "Etymology" (cf. Keskinen 1993b, 159-68).

In *Rabbit at Rest*, the narrator, with Harry as a focalizer, makes an intratextual metalinguistic comment on the word *redux*: "[Harry] had noticed a story about [a circus museum] in the Sarasota paper a week or so ago, headlined *Circus Redux*. He hates the word, you see it everywhere, and he doesn't know how to pronounce it. Like arbitrageur or perestroika." (Updike 1991, 40.) The novel also ties in with RRx on its peritextual threshold, its second epigraph being from the Frederick Douglass book Skeeter used in his seminar, and to *Rabbit Is Rich* by quoting an abridged sentence from it.

The clearest form the **proairetic** commentary in *Rabbit Redux* is executed with the help of the table of contents, chapter titles, and epigraphs related to each chapter. The novel consists of four chapters: "Pop / Mom / Moon," "Jill," "Skeeter," and "Mim." The titles, marked in Roman numerals, provide a reading of each chapter by drawing attention to certain characters, making them relatively more important than some others. The chapter titles are, then, in Genette's terms thematic, as opposed to plain rhematic ones which give no other information besides the chapter division.[4] The first chapter does revolve around Harry's parents and the moon expedition, but his wife and her lover, although importantly influencing Harry's life, are suppressed by the title. The title of the second chapter emphasizes Jill at the cost of Harry's son. Skeeter, a minor character in the second chapter even in comparison with the other blacks at the Jimbo's, is raised into prominence by naming the third chapter after him. The last chapter is named after Harry's sister, but again the title excludes his wife from the focus of attention. The invisibility of Janice in the chapter titles may function as an index of Harry's defence mechanisms when he faces the breakup of his marriage. The exclusion may also tie in with the narrator's general tendency to prefer masculine narratees or treat human beings **un**markedly as males (cf. next subsection).

As for peritexts serving the whole novel, the attentive receiver who notices the table of contents on the page immediately following the title page is likely to direct his or her attention and reading according to the proairetic hints it gives before s/he proceeds to the chapters themselves. The table of contents to a degree summarizes the novel's shifting interests character-wise, but it is too ascetic to reveal the plot unlike, for instance, the verbose chapter headings of *Moby Dick*.

Each chapter has an epigraph taken from astronaut communications during the Soyuz 5 and Apollo 11 space explorations. For example, George Hunt sees the space flight as the controlling metaphor of the novel, but also how the plot structure reflects the phases of the exploration and how the epigraph is "indicative of [each] chapter's thematic development and dramatic action."[5] The first epigraph[6] deals with the difficult and prolonged anchorage of Soyuz 5, which could be read as Janice's (sexual) linking with Stavros. The second chapter has an epigraph from Neil Armstrong's description of the moon the day before landing there: "*It's different but it's very pretty out here*" (RRx, 95; emphasis in original); in a similar fashion, Harry "step[s] onto a new planet (Jill)."[7] The third epigraph is a background voice abroad Soyuz 5: "*We've been raped, we've been raped*" (RRx, 183; emphasis in original), and the chapter introduces Skeeter, who both literally and metaphorically rapes the house and Jill. The final chapter deals with the return to the normal; the epigraph is about Armstrong's return from the moon to the spaceship orbiting it (RRx, 294). The epigraphs are likely to influence the attentive readers by guiding their expectations, underscoring the link between the mundane and the cosmological, and thus

---

4 Genette 1987, 276. Updike has used proper names as thematic chapter titles in his other novels as well, cf. *Rabbit at Rest* and *In the Beauty of the Lilies*.

5 Hunt 1980, 174-75.

6 The conversation takes place between lieutenant colonels Shatlov and Volynov:
I am heading straight for the socket.
Easy, not so rough.
It took me quite a while to find you, but now I've got you. (RRx, [12]; emphasis in original).

7 Hunt 1980, 175.

reinforcing the power of images.

I would suggest that the peritexts are to be attributed to the "editor-narrator" rather than to the main one. The narrator in the main body of the novel's text shows no knowledge of or interest in etymologies or the finesses of language usage, nor are there direct quotations from the Soviets' space exploration. This state of affairs, I believe, could be interpreted as an index of another narrator who has "edited" the narrative to be published. Both the authorship and the readership of the peritexts are, of course, highly speculative. Apparently a realist, third-person novel, *Rabbit Redux* obeys the conventions of the genre, and the peritexts do not problematize its narrative structure (unlike in the other two Updike novels to be discussed below). Also, to conjure up an "attentive receiver" is an excuse for myself to read attentively; in the actual (non-scholarly) practice of reading, much of the peritextual commentary will pass unnoticed for several reasons (they may be skipped, forgotten, left out of translation, etc.) For instance, the dictionary epigraph of *Rabbit Redux* appears in the Alfred A. Knopf hardback and the Fawcett Crest paperback editions, whereas it is excluded from the Penguin paperback reprint. The existence and possibly commenting capacity of some peritexts are hence unstable.

In the main body of the novel, the narrator foregrounds some items of the text as mysteries or enigmas by explicitly asking questions concerning their meaning, significance, or importance and at the same time offering possible answers. This kind of commentary is, then, **metahermeneutic**. Since the novel's narrator is an omniscient one with regard to the main characters and its narration is usually focalized[8] by Harry - even to the degree of free indirect speech - the hermeneutic commentary functions as an index of Harry's uncertainty and incomprehension. Harry can be interpreted to question himself and, implicitly, the narrator the narratee.[9] The narrator asks so-called wh-questions, which can be divided into fairly simple what- and who-questions, and into why-questions related to the inner meaning of phenomena and to the motivation of characters. Furthermore, the narrator asks a few yes-no questions.

Nelson's questions about a TV series[10] yield a host of narrator's questions about what Harry really knows:

> Indeed to come to think of it he understands nothing about Tonto. The Lone Ranger is a white man, so law and order on the range will work for his benefit, but what about Tonto? A Judas to his race, the more disinterested and lonely and heroic figure of virtue. And when did he get his pay-off? Why was he faithful to the masked stranger? (RRx, 30.)

Located in the beginning of the novel, these questions serve as Harry's characterization (uncertainty, sense of having lost the right answers) but also, by

---

8 The term **focalization** was introduced by Gérard Genette in 1972. The term refers to the difference between the one who sees and the one who tells, to the "perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented; the perceptual or conceptual position in terms of which they are rendered" (Prince 1987, 31). A narrative agent is not only capable of seeing and speaking, but also of telling what another narrative agent sees or has seen. The one who sees or experiences things is called **focalizer** and the one who narrates, of course, the narrator; the two can coincide as when an adult recounts his/her childhood experiences by using adult diction. (Genette 1985, 189-94; Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 71-85.)

9 It is not indisputable exactly whom the questions or pseudo-questions are asked in *Rabbit Redux*. What is clear, however, is that the narratee does not provide any answers.

10 See subsection 5.1.4.1. below for a discussion of Nelson's questions.

foreshadowing Harry's and Skeeter's relationship, ties in with the novel's problematic black/white thematic. On the other hand, the very similarity between Harry's situation and a fictional narrative, between the "real" and representation opens up the novel's self-reflexive features, which are more prominently present elsewhere in the novel (cf. the last three sections of this chapter).

Feeling uneasy and not knowing how to act at a black bar, Harry notices two stuffed heads on the wall; the narrator comments: "Gazelles, could they have been gazelles?" (RRx, 107). Shortly after having become acquainted with Jill, the rich hippie girl, Harry is uncertain about her true nature; the narrator comments: "She clutches her purse, but what is in it? Credit cards? Diagrams for the revolution?" (RRx, 127). Self-conscious about Jill's presence in his house, Harry cannot concentrate on her and Nelson's discussion but pays attention to other things: "A bird outside hoarsely weeps in sudden agitation. Cat? The refrigerator purrs." (RRx, 137) When Harry gets a telephone call at his job, he is described as guessing who the caller is:

> Who? Jill (last night her hair still damp from the boat ride tickled his belly as she managed to make him come) was in trouble. They had kidnapped her, the police, the blacks. Or Peggy Fosnacht was calling up to offer supper again. Or his mother had taken a turn to worse and with her last heartbeats had dialled this number. (RRx, 139.)

The assumptions reveal what is on the surface of his mind; the marital crisis yields guesses relating to the loss or death of a beloved one, and to the possibility of a new relationship. The caller turns out to be, less dramatically, his own wife.

The autobiographical poem Jill recites makes Harry speculate: "And Rabbit begins to wonder if she has done this before, that rhyme was so slick. What *has*n't this kid done before?" (RRx, 156; emphasis in original). All the questions above include the narratee as a possible provider of an answer. Only once does Harry ask himself a first person question, i.e., a question he should answer himself; he and Nelson talk about Skeeter:

> 'Don't you like Skeeter?'
> 'Not really. I know I should. I know you do.'
> *Do I?* Surprised, he promises Nelson [—]. (RRx, 255; emphasis in original)

The narrator also asks why-questions. Speculating the possibility of Jill and Nelson having sex, Harry's thoughts are articulated by the narrator: "Why not? The chief question facing these troubled times. Why not." (RRx, 146.) Immediately after promising to shelter Skeeter, Harry regrets it, and the narrator analyzes his motivation: "Why has he invited this danger? To get Janice to rescue him." (RRx, 189.) Towards the end of the novel, when the arson is being investigated, Harry has to face the same questions again: "Why did he permit Skeeter to move in on him? Well, the question was more, Why not?" (RRx, 284).

The yes-no questions include such cases as when Harry and Jill have made love, he hears Nelson move about in the house; the narrator comments: "Had he [Nelson] been listening? Could he ever be watching?" (RRx, 142.)

Besides asking questions, the narrator also provides plain answers or possible solutions to problems. Harry does not know how to interpret Jill's account of her visit to Valley Forge: "He hesitates among the many alternatives she seems to be presenting. Laughter, anger, battle, surrender" (RRx, 177). In a similar fashion, the

narrator is uncertain both about the interpretation of motivation and the literary device (simile) of describing reality: "Jealousy, perhaps, makes Rabbit impatient with this scene: his son in spite of his smallness bony and dominating and Jill alert, Jill in her sheet looking like one of those cartoon figures, Justice or Liberty or Mourning Peace" (RRx, 137-138). Towards the end of the novel, the narrator makes a generalization, a sort of misogynist aphorism, on the basis of Janice's behaviour: "Feminine logic: smother and outlast what won't be wished away" (RRx, 350). Immediately after it, an unsure concession is made: "Maybe the only way" (RRx, 350).

The questions and answers can even form a kind of dialogue. Harry meets Jill's mother after the arson. At first the questions are introduced as Harry's inner ones, while the origin of the answers remains unknown: "Rabbit wondered, Has she come from identifying the remains? What was left but blackened bones? Teeth. A bracelet. A flesh-colored swatch of hair." (RRx, 301.) A few lines later, the questions are by the narrator:

> Had he [mentioned explaining]? What had he wanted to explain? That it was not his fault. Yet Nelson thought it was. For taking her in? But she was unsheltered. For fucking her? But it is all life, sex, fire, breathing, all combination with oxygen, we shimmer at all moments on the verge of conflagration, as the madhouse windows tell us. (RRx, 301-302.)

This "dialogue" is a sort of anticipated cross-examination, in which Harry is white-washed even by appealing to the narratee's sense of justice.

Plain, unambiguous answers are also provided. The narrator tells that Jill "comes to the living room, sits on the tacky carpet, and plays the guitar"; a question immediately follows - "What does she play?" - complete with an answer: "'Farewell, Angelina, the sky is on fire,' and a few others she can get through a stanza of." (RRx, 153.) What is problematic here is, however, to whom the question should be attributed. That the narrator asks the question is not probable, because he knows the answer. Or then he asks a rhetorical question, which, by definition, however, would not need to be answered. Or, more likely, the narrator anticipates the narratee's interest in Jill's repertoire by articulating the question.

Although the narrator does not explain or translate foreign words, it does provide other kind of **metalinguistic commentary**. The narrator, with the help of Harry as a focalizer, reverses the meaning of Peggy Fosnacht's prior idiomatic warning to Harry against taking her for granted (RRx, 198): "[—] don't count your chickens. Meaning do count your chickens." (RRx, 223.) A similar kind of reversal takes place towards the end of the novel, when Janice asks if seeing her would make Harry mad: "'It might,' he says, meaning it might not" (RRx, 339). When his father implies that Harry should visit his old mother more often, Harry answers with a phatic statement: "'Yeah, well'"; the narrator explains its meaning: "He means it's not his fault, he didn't invent old age" (RRx, 266). A similarly radical redefinition of a short expression is provided in the final scene of the novel; "[Harry] protests, 'I'm a mess,' meaning he is sincere: which perhaps is not a meaningful adjustment over what she had said" (RRx, 350). Harry says about Stavros: "'Yeah. I guess we were sort of hard on him'" and the narrator specifies the referents of the pronoun: "The 'we' - him, her, Mim, Mom; ties of blood, of time and guilt, family ties." (RRx, 341.) Hence, the narrator manipulates the scope of the semantic field which a word occupies, or gives totally new meanings to established expressions.

Harry is bigoted and thus apt to draw stereotypical conclusions from people's outer appearance. This characteristic yields, when Harry is the focalizer, the narrator's **commentary on the semic code**. The facial features of Charlie Stavros, the unmarried car salesman, are automatically associated with the supposed characteristics of his marital status, profession, and Greek origin (RRx, 44). In a similar fashion, but even more prominently, the description of blacks (especially Skeeter) is commented upon from the semic viewpoint: the blacks have superior sexual prowess (RRx, 25), they are good at sports, closer to nature, but below whites intellectually:

> their eyes don't look like our eyes, bloodshot, brown, liquid in them about to quiver out. Read somewhere some anthropologist thinks Negroes instead of being more primitive are the latest thing to evolve, the newest men. In some ways tougher, in some ways more delicate. Certainly dumber but then being smart hasn't amounted to so much, the atom bomb and the one-piece aluminium beer can. And you can't say Bill Cosby's stupid. [---] They are a strange race. Not only their skins but the way they're put together, loose-jointed like lions, strange about the head, as if their thoughts are a different shape and come out twisted even when they mean no menace. (RRx, 21.)

The recurrent semes of Skeeter are his "big ball of hair," goatee, and silver circular glasses (RRx, 107, 183), all of which tie in with his militant black ideology. Another variation of the narrator's semic commentary is the tendency to read faces and environment as if they were graphically inscribed (RRx, 33, 38, 127, 165, 250, 285): bodies are textualized, and consequently deciphered like writing.

The depiction of Harry's work as a lino-typist yields **evaluative commentary** or **commentary on the act of writing**. The process of text-composing and the resulting type matter - with its typos and corrections - are repeatedly commented upon by the narrator (with Harry as the focalizer): "No. Widow. He tries to take it back but the line is too tight to close so he settles for the widow. [—] Oops. [—] Jump after twenty lines. Switch to single-column lines." (RRx, 34.) The narrator also comments on composition at a more general level, describing the scene of writing and the machine Harry is operating in emotional terms:

> The machine stands tall and warm above him, mothering, muttering, a temperamental thousand-parted survival from the golden age of machinery. The sorts tray is on his right hand; the Star Quadder and the mold disc and slug trayon his left; a green-shaded light bulb at the level of his eyes. Above this sun the machine shoulders into shadow like a thunderhead, its matrix return rod spiralling idly, all these rustling tons of intricately keyed mass waiting for the feather-touch of his intelligence. Behind the mold disc the molten lead waits; sometimes when there is a jam the lead squirts hot out: Harry has been burned. But the machine is a baby; its demands, though inflexible, are few, and once these demands are met obedience automatically follows. (RRx, 35.)

Occasionally the narrator also provides metacritical commentary in scenes which do not relate to type composition, as in the rumination on the simile: "In his weariness [Harry] hallucinates; as in the seconds before we sleep, similes seem living organisms" (RRx, 287). The commentary on the act of writing is, however, marginal when compared to other types of metacommentary in *Rabbit Redux*. Nevertheless, by drawing attention to the textuality of the novel, it contributes to a metafictional reading of *Rabbit Redux*.

The narratee and consequently the actual reader are thus provided with interpretive help or guidance in four main forms of commentary. The proairetic

commentary thematizes the long novel's material in a certain way, although it may not be the most insightful manner to do it. The metahermeneutic commentary draws attention to some of the novel's enigmas, both epistemological and representational, and function as an index of Harry's puzzled state of mind. The commentary on the semic code also reveals Harry's bigotry, and, on the other hand, contributes to the novel's concern with textuality. The metalinguistic commentary underscores the importance of language, and the commentary on the act of writing self-consciously foregrounds the theme of writing in the novel.

I shall now turn to the narratee(s) to analyze how the narrator's comments shape the picture of the addressee, what they reveal of the narrator, and what the receiving agents reconstructed and constructed could contribute to the reading of the novel.

5.1.2 Suppliants Included: Reconstructing the Narratees

The covert, extradiegetic narratees of *Rabbit Redux* are not materialized as characters, they are not given names nor definite traits of personality, and on the whole their existence must be reconstructed from the indirect information provided by the narrator.[11] As I stated in the previous subsection, the novel's narrator is omniscient with regard to the main characters, and the narration is mainly focalized by Harry, which makes the narrator's questions function both as Harry's inner ones and as those aimed at the narratee. That the narrator asks questions implies answers suggested by the narratee, at least until the narrator provides them. Most of the questions are left without a definite answer or are given multiple possible solutions, which could hint at the narratee's active role in the production of the novel's meaning. The majority of the questions deal with the hermeneutic code, i.e. the meaning of a particular phenomenon in the novel.

The narrator's metalinguistic commentary is almost solely limited to the manipulation of the semantic fields common, everyday expressions occupy. The case is different in the "editor-narrator's" first epigraph; the meanings of the word *redux* are hardly well-known, and thus they need to be explained.

As a whole, the narrator's questions, answers, and comments are benevolent and show no attitude of condescension or suspicion towards the narratees' knowledge. However, the narratees' race and gender are strictly limited to correspond to those of Harry, which opens up a possibility for constructing a resisting narratee.

Besides the questions and answers, the narrator shows other signs of the narratee as well. The narrator sometimes uses expressions which imply, at least when read literally, another person. Harry is looking at a film group working:

> When someone, a director or electrician, stands near her [an actress], he looks dim. And it makes Rabbit feel dim, dim and guilty, to see how the spotlights carve from the sunlight a yet brighter day, a lurid pastel island of heightened reality around which the rest of us -

---

11 I shall deal with the assumed gender of the narratee below. True, the participants of Skeeter's reading seminars can be regarded as intradiegetic and overt narratees, but they occupy that position only sporadically. For my allegorical reading of the seminars and their members as interpretants, see subsection 5.1.5. below.

> technicians, policemen, the straggling fascinated lake of spectators including himself - are penumbral ghosts, suppliants ignored. (RRx, 164.)

The sentence starts with an omniscient narrator's third-person discourse, but the narration changes into free indirect discourse with *us*: it is now Harry who is viewing the scene. But, embedded in the the novel's usual kind of discourse, the first person plural could easily be taken as the narrator's own words. Hence, *us* may include a larger number of persons than is listed in the extract above, and those new ones can also be extradiegetic ones, e.g. narratee(s). Harry and the narratees are all off-centre and united by a common feeling of rejection.[12] But, in spite of temporary rejection, the narratees are still included in the narrative contract and they can hence be reconstructed from the narrator's discourse. Those actually ignored are the excluded ones of the narrative contract; they are the resisting narratees, and they have to be constructed.

After allowing Skeeter to stay at his house, Harry is lying in bed with Jill; the narrator describes Harry's perception: "Knowing her love is coming, he sees very clearly, as we see in the etched hour before the snow" (RRx, 191).[13] By using the first person plural, the narrator incorporates the narratee in his realm of experience. The narratee's implied gender is seen more clearly in another erotic scene; after making love to Jill, Harry quickly falls asleep, but she gets up from the bed

> to go wash, check on Nelson, talk to God, take a pill, whatever else she needs to do to fill the wound where his seared cock was. How sad, how strange. We make companions out of air and hurt them, so they will defy us, completing creation. (RRx, 147.)

The narrator hence assumes that *we* are men and *them* women. In these scenes, the narratee is supposed to be, at least by implication, a male one: the woman is described through Harry's male eyes and the narratee is invited to share the experience as a brother in gender.

The narrator also addresses the narratee directly by using *you*. Again, as with the use of *we*, the expressions can be regarded as mere indefinite ones, as indirect ways of talking about the narrator's feelings by projecting them on to a more general level. However, there is no reason why the expressions should not be taken literally and seen as "signs of the you."

Harry is described as installing storm windows; suddenly the narrator switches from the third person singular to the second person: "The work soothes him. You slide up the aluminium screen, putting the summer behind you [—]. [—] at least four flawless transparencies permit outdoors to come indoors, other houses to enter yours. The mirror is two-way." (RRx, 267.) The scene is important as a self-reference: Harry's

---

12 A similar kind of scene takes place towards the end of the novel, when Harry is standing by the glow of his burning house; the narrator makes the proairetic connection explicit:

> There is a space around him. The spectators, the neighbors, in honor of his role, have backed off. Months ago Rabbit had seen the bright island of moviemakers and now he is at the center of this bright island and still feels peripheral, removed, nostalgic, numb. (RRx, 278.)

Harry is himself news now, but it does not seem to make any difference (cf. also subsection 5.2.2. below).

13 Cf. also: "In his weariness he [Harry] hallucinates; as in the seconds before we sleep, similes seem living organisms" (RRx, 287).

house gets attributes of a house of fiction, which is constructed in a hierarchical manner not unlike the communication process of narrative fiction.[14] By addressing the narratee, the narrator allows the walls of narration to become transparent, the narrative agents - seemingly - change places. The scene is prominent, and indeed dramatic events follow it: the same night the neighbours set the house on fire, killing Jill. The permission of other houses to enter Harry's finishes the reading seminar and destroys the house of fiction. The story continues in Harry's parents' home - with only a few references to the narratee in the form of *we* or *you*.

A few pages after the scene describing the installation of storm windows, the narrator again addresses the narratee by using expressions with *you*. Harry is spending the evening with Peggy Fosnacht at her place; her appearance makes the narrator ruminate in free indirect speech: "A blank check. A woman is blank until you fuck her. Everything is blank until you fuck it. Us and Vietnam, fucking and being fucked, blood is wisdom." (RRx, 270.) Later on, the narrator discloses that Harry does not know "how close the tip of your prick comes to their wombs" (RRx, 341). As in most of the cases with *us*, the narratee is also here conceived as a male one. The attributes of being male are expressed quite explicitly; man creates the value of a woman by phallically inscribing her, just as he gives meaning to everything in the same manner. Furthermore, the narratee is clearly supposed to be American, which forces one to adjust the opposition between us and them sketched above: *us* incorporates men, especially Americans, whereas *them* are women and Vietnamese (or non-Americans in general).

Within nationality, ethnicity or 'race' are differentiated further. *You* and *us* clearly function as signs of a white narratee in the following examples: "Negroes, you can't blame them, haven't had his [Harry's] advantages. Slave ships, cabins, sold down the river, Ku Klux Klan, James Earl Ray: Channel 44 keeps having these documentaries all about it." (RRx, 116.) "[black people's] eyes don't look like our eyes [---]" (RRx, 21).

Admittedly, there is one occasion when the narrator addresses a black woman, although Harry functions as the focalizer. To get excited in his parents' home after having lost Jill, Harry conjures up a "hefty coarse Negress, fat but not sloppy fat, muscular and masculine, with a trace of mustache and a chipped front tooth," whom the narrator explicitly addresses: "You nice big purple-lipped black cunt" (RRx, 328-29). This single apostrophic address is directed to a non-existent masculinized hybrid of racial stereotypes and as such reinforces rather than weakens the overall male domination of the narratees.

The narrator differentiates the narratees with whom he has a narrative contract from the ones who are disqualified by gender, nationality, or 'race.'

The basic distinction of narratees sketched above needs to be fine adjusted, because focalization affects the narratee's presupposed gender. The vast majority of the novel's discourse is focalized by Harry, but there are three occasions when Janice is the focalizer, and in two of them the narratee's gender changes accordingly.[15] In the

---

14 For a more detailed reading of this scene, see subsection 5.2.4. below.

15 In the first instance with Janice as the focalizer, the narratee is not explicitly addressed, nor is the agent's gender articulated, probably because the section only consists of a short paragraph (RRx, 39).

first one of such episodes, towards the beginning of the novel, Janice is lying beside her sleeping husband and thinking about woman's life:

> We're born and they try to feed us and change our diapers and love us and get breasts and menstruate and go boy-crazy and finally one or two come forward to touch us and we can't wait to get married and have some babies and then stop having them and go man-crazy this time without even knowing it until you're in too deep the flesh grows more serious as we age and then eventually that phase must be over and we ride around in cars in flowered hats for a while to Tuscon or seeing the leaves turn in New Hampshire and visit our grandchildren and then get into bed like poor Mrs. Angstrom [—] (RRx, 56).

Like Janice, the narratee is clearly a female one. The narratee's other characteristics are also analogous to those of the male one: she considerably resembles the white, lower middle-class, protestant focalizer. The second occasion when Janice is the focalizer of narration is located towards the end of the novel; now she is lying beside her lover, thinking about sex and giving birth: "they said push and it was embarrassing like forcing it when you haven't been regular [—]" (RRx, 331). Again, the narratee is unquestionably female.

On another occasion a woman focalizer summons a female narratee, albeit not unequivocally. Harry is in an intimate situation with Peggy Fosnacht. The section "her breath beats at the base of his throat. Her heartbeat is sticking to his palm" (RRx, 196) is focalized by Harry, but from the next sentence on Peggy starts to function as the focalizer:

> The skin of her brow is vexed and the piece of her body the bathrobe discloses is lumpy and strange, blind like the brow of an ox, but eased by liquor she has slid into that state where the body of the other is her own body, the body of secretive self-love that the mirror we fill and the bed we warm alone give us back; and he [Harry] is eclosed in this body of love of hers [—] (RRx, 197).

Harry resumes the focalizing position in "and against all thought and wish he thickens all over tenderly and the one-eyed rising beneath his waist begins" (RRx, 197). The shuttling between focalizers and the rumination on the self/other relationship could be read as a metanarratological statement. Peggy's body is "defamiliarized" to herself, just as the autonomous physical signs of his excitement take Harry by surprise. By the same token, the Other becomes familiarized or naturalized as an extension of self. This curious combination of monism and solipsism at least partly explains the gendering of the narratees to accord the focalizer. *You*, then, is but a projection of the experiencing *I*, either on account of exclusion or inclusion. This very principle at least partly opens up the actual reader's possibility of constructing narratees, of resisting the narrative dominance with its own logic, which I shall deal with in the next subsection.

The narratees do not change inwardly during the novel, but the narrator's attitude towards them becomes more intimate. The narratee is predominantly a male one and presumably resembles Harry as regards experiences and attitudes. It is interesting that most of the narrator's addresses to the narratee take place in erotic situations; intimacy between Harry and his partners seems to yield intimacy between the narrator and narratee. When Janice is the focalizer, she is in bed with a sleeping man, but the situation is not intimate. In the first case, the man is her husband, but she dreams about her lover; in the second, the man is her lover who has recently admitted

having betrayed her with Harry's sister. The Peggy Fosnacht scene above takes place in an intimate situation as well.

A few times Skeeter, too, functions as the focalizer, but this does not bring about an explicitly addressed black male narratee, as one would assume on the basis of other focalizers. Skeeter's drugged mind discloses traumatic reminiscences from Vietnam, but they are aimed at a narratee who is a GI of any colour, as opposed to the civilians listening to him: "the X's your laces wore into your boots over the days [—]. He knows he can never make it intelligible to the these three ofays that worlds do exist beyond these paper walls." (RRx, 227-28.) At other times, the narratee of the narrator's discourse focalized by Skeeter is not specified (cf. RRx, 230-232). In his otherwise non-narratological reading of the *Rabbit* novels, Dilvo I. Ristoff suggests an explanation for Skeeter's discoursive isolation: "[Skeeter] cannot use a 'we.' The first person plural pronoun would express an impossible identification with the white establishment, with which he feels no affinity whatsoever."[16]

That the gender and some other characteristics of the narratee are analogous with those of the focalizer are due to the double meaning - metaphorical and literal - of the narrator's addressing words. *You* and *we* can be conceived as indefinite pronouns, as metaphorical projections of the narrator, or rather of the focalizer, articulated by the narrator; or, as I have done, they can be regarded as literal "signs of the you."

In the course of the novel, the narrator's questions change from metalinguistic and hermeneutic ones into predominantly hermeneutic ones. It is as if the narratee (and the narrator) had learned enough about language and that the really important questions began to deal with the meaning of larger wholes, i.e., the hermeneutic code. The whole novel, however, shows that the characters' - interpretants' - disputes stem from their different attitudes towards language and especially towards its relation to reality. The novel starts with a dictionary definition and closes with an unanswered question "O.K.?" (RRx, 352); as an index of the narrator-narratee relationship this could mean that the narratee is gradually given more freedom from the narrator's part and, on the other hand, that the relationship changes from transmitting simple truths into posing problematic questions.

5.1.3 Suppliants Ignored: Constructing Resisting Narratees

That the narratee the narrator addresses is prominently a male American one indirectly brings about other narratees who are not. In the following, I shall construct these resisting narratees on the basis of gender, 'race,' and sexual preference.

The suppliants most obviously ignored do not belong to the male *us*, but rather to one of the female *them*. The latter are only marginally included in the narrative contract, and used, so to speak, as a diametrical opposite to define the scope of narrative male bonding. The other, ignored narratee is a blank check, a paper supposed to be quietly awaiting phallic inscription. Towards the end of the novel, however, the situation is quite the contrary on the level of the characters' male-female relations. The last chapter of the novel is called "Mim," and in it women play the

---

16 Ristoff 1988, 106-7. Ristoff has also consulted Updike's changes in the manuscript of *Rabbit Redux* and found out that Skeeter was intentionally marginalized (ibid., 107).

active part: Harry meets Jill's mother and passively receives her vilification; Harry's sister Mim comes from the west and seduces Stavros, thus bringing Harry and Janice together; Janice, not Harry, suggests that they try to continue their marriage. This state of affairs could also be a hint at the ignored narratee's more prominent role in the unravelling of the novel's meanings. That the narrator ignores women as narratees is presumably due to his ingorance; the following description of Harry could be applied to the narrator as well:

> He has never understood exactly about women, why they have to menstruate for instance, why they feel hot some times and not others, and how close the tip of your prick comes to their womb or whether the womb is a hollow place without a baby in it or what [—] (RRx, 341).

This ignorance does not, however, restrain Harry or the narrator from making generalizing declarative statements about women. The other, ignored narratee marks the suppressed position of a half of the novel's potential readership and an invitation to read the narrator's discourse from a subversive viewpoint, against the grain of the narrator's apparent intentions. A resisting feminist reading is likely to de-naturalize and singularize the naturalized and generalized male viewpoint that the homosocial narrator-narratee relationship promotes.

Another marginal group, blacks, are even less acknowledged in the narrative contract than women. Not even a black focalizer, Skeeter, is allowed to be complemented with a black narratee. What would the black resisting narratee be like? Certainly that narratee would oppose such directly racist comments offered as unquestionable truths as "[Negroes are] [c]ertainly dumber" (RRx, 21), or the somewhat stereotypical depiction of Skeeter. Perhaps more fundamentally, the whole idea of using black Skeeter as an opposite of white Harry in order to examine - in the traditional fashion of American literature - the latter's shadowy or suppressed sides would evoke resistance. In addition to this, the reading performed by a black resisting narratee (or by the reader occupying that position) could perhaps be something Other, not just corrective of and therefore dependent on the white preferences. Harry's rumination on the blacks could hint at what their interpretation could be like: "strange about the head, as if their thoughts are a different shape and come out twisted even when they mean no menace" (RRX, 21). I am not suggesting that the blacks or their readings would be essentialistically different, but that they only seem to be so in such a predominantly homogenous and intraracial context as *Rabbit Redux*.

The resistance to the novel's recurrent misconception of males standing for all human beings also problematizes the narrator's other generalizing statements. If men *qua* human beings is an untenable concept, is not one group of women *qua* all women a similarly reductive supposition? What about the term *blacks* if it mainly refers to black men?

The only time a black *woman* is addressed in the novel is when she is a grotesque product of Harry's imagination, a hybrid combining more male than female physical features (RRx, 328-29). This hybridization could perhaps be turned into a counter-force which would combat the suppression of both women and black men. What this would result in, I am not sure. Certainly it would be something more than or different from the simple summation of the two subalterns.

As for the actual reception of *Rabbit Redux*, the presupposition that the narratee is a male one may be one of the reasons, along with Harry's openly misogynist remarks, why women critics have found it difficult to tolerate the novel. For instance, Mary Allen gives a detailed reading of the novel, listing the occasions when women are denigrated in it.[17] Allen, albeit not a narratologist, pinpoints the same tendency of Updike's to masculinize the indefinite pronoun *we* that I traced in the my narratological reading of the novel. She quotes an extract from an Updike interwiew - "I *have* attempted a number of portraits of women, and we may have reached that point of civilization, or decadence, where we can look at women" - and then explicates it:

> The "we" for Updike, which can mean only the male point of view, betrays the impossibility of his being able to look at a broad spectrum of women or to deal in much detail with their feelings. But the fact that he so seldom attempts to show the woman's point of view does not necessarily negate his portraits of those women who have allowed themselves to be formed by the concepts of men.[18]

Allen's own supposedly "broad spectrum of women" is not, however, broad enough to cover black women, of whom she only mentions - in passing - the Douglass depiction of a slave girl. Allen's study dates from the "images of women" period of feminist criticism of the 1970s, and, in accordance with the commonplaces of that phase, corrects "false" portrayals of women but at the same time universalizes white women as the unmarked representative of that gender. The postulation of a black resisting woman narratee would problematize exactly this totalization (which is itself of the same order as the unmarked masculinization of human beings), and see differences within gender.

On the other hand, the novel's black/white division only applies in America. The Vietnamese soldiers are both non-white and non-black; for them, the American soldiers, regardless of race, represent a monolithic enemy (RRx, 228-29). This state of affairs could point at a possibility to construct a narratee that would contend the novel's rather simple conception of race and ethnicity. This kind of resisting narratee could pay attention to the rather marginal - in comparison with the handling of black/white relations - instances of ethnicity: Stavros' Greek origin, Mim's Italian gangster friends, the Amish and Mennonites, etc. The novel's black-and-white picture could, perhaps, be rendered multicoloured.

The resisting narratees that I have constructed so far all share clear-cut gender division and heterosexual orientation. Both could quite justifiably be questioned, and a resisting gay narratee postulated. Such a reading would emphasize the marginal but still existing features of Harry that seem to deviate from the heterosexual. Harry feels strangely feminine when a black man is present (RRx, 97); he is sexually aroused by Skeeter (RRx, 243); under Skeeter's influence, his mind becomes 'feminine' (RRx, 243); his mistress, Jill, looks boyish (RRx, 129-30); he fantasizes of a masculine-like black woman (RRx, 328-29); he feels close to Stavros through Janice's body (RRx, 141, 160). Not only does this homoerotic tendency problematize the novel's presumed misogyny, but it also links it to a similar tradition of American literature. According

---

17 Allen 1976, 121-32.

18 Ibid., 132; emphasis in original.

to Leslie A. Fiedler, homoerotic "marriages" between white and black men recur in 19th century American literature as alternatives to castrating and committing women (cf. Huck Finn and Jim; Ishmael and Queequeg).[19] Another variation of this is a boy's "turning to a colored foster-father in revulsion from a real father, felt as brutal, or ineffectual or effete."[20] Father-like, Skeeter introduces Nelson into sports. Analogously, Jill and the black woman singer Babe form a similar foster-pair; the latter states, "'Jilly is my baby-love and I'm her momma-love'" (RRx, 118).

The gay narratee - whether black or white - is perhaps not as much resisting as appropriating the text. The marginal deviant features could be emphasized and the tension between the orientations and their articulation could be read as a story of self-construction, albeit not a happy one.[21] The situation would be different with a lesbian narratee. The depictions of women's bodies, apparently aimed at a heterosexual male narratee, could be appropriated by a differently oriented female narratee. Also, the female bonding between women characters could be appropriated into a token of lesbian continuum. The bonding would cease to function as the mere sign of a castrating female alliance that it probably does for the preferred male narratee.

To sum up, all the narratees in the novel are extradiegetic ones, and they, although overtly alluded to with questions and pronouns, remain unspecified except for gender and 'race.' The narrator's attitude towards the narratees within the narrative contract is benevolent, whereas those excluded from it are simply ignored. These resisting narratees can solicit the novel and its presuppositions in a number ways, some of which I sketched above.

In the following two subsections, I shall proceed from the narrator-narratee relation to the characters' reading operations.

5.1.4 The Word and the Flesh: Reading Bodily Writing

The verb *read* appears frequently in *Rabbit Redux*. Not only is it due to the fact that Harry's profession as a lino-typist implies reading, but the verb is also used in a metaphorical sense, without reference to actual written texts. It is noteworthy that in *Rabbit, Run* Harry's jobs required oral skills (selling) or physical strength (gardening). Similarly, his other activities were physical rather than intellectual (flight, running, sex).[22] But a decade later, in *Rabbit Redux*, Harry has become physically passive; he has, as it were, sat down to read and write, to observe instead of acting.

The narrator describes Harry as reading his fellowmen, as deciphering the semic code as if it were inscribed in the body. In the opening scene of the novel, Harry's father tells him about Janice's supposed affair; Harry is in a hurry to get back home "[i]n case it's burned down. In case a madman has moved in. These things

---

19 Fiedler 1982, 276-82; 351-60.

20 Ibid.. 352.

21 The ambivalence of Updike's sexual depictions as regards orientation is not a widely acknowledged theme in criticism. One of the first critics to make such claims was Elizabeth Tallent, who, in her otherwise sketchy book *Married Men and Magic Tricks* (1982), notices how the opening scene of *Rabbit, Run* (and hence of the whole tetralogy) relates to presumed homosexuality (Tallent 1982, 6). For a more recent reading of *Rabbit Redux* from a viewpoint of homosociality and male bonding, see O'Connell 1996, 153-63.

22 Although Harry does not read written texts in *Rabbit, Run*, he perceives the world around him, the book of nature, as something which needs interpretation.

happen all the time in the papers." (RRx, 18.) Reading and typesetting the newspapers have taught him this, and he continues - now metaphorically - the activity in the next sentence: "He can read in his father's face [—] the old man's suspicions confirmed" (RRx, 18). Later on, looking at Nelson's expression, "Harry reads his son's taut face to mean, *She* [Jill] *can hear. She's all alone. We must be nice to her, we must be nice to the poor, the weak, the black. Love is here to stay.*" (RRx, 138; emphasis in original).

Every time Harry meets a new person he intensively studies his or her face and appearance, trying to read, to interpret their meanings. This can be seen very clearly in the episode in which the two neighbours are telling Harry to get rid of Skeeter. Harry reads their faces, noticing every detail and guessing what their professions could be. One man is bookish, looking like an accountant or a schoolteacher, and he even presents a card, a symbolic label or title page. The other man is described in terms of television, "his head looks flattened on the top, like the heads on Rabbit's television set" (RRx, 250). But he, too, has something "literary" about him: he bears an L-shaped red scar on his face. Later on Harry looks at it more closely and notices that it resembles an ampersand (RRx, 254). After Harry's house has been destroyed in the arson, a policeman asks him if there had been any threats; only the synecdochic "&" (RRx, 285) flashes in Harry's mind, but he witholds the information. Two days before meeting his two neighbours, Harry had a similar incident in the countryside, where he and his group had been driving in Jill's car; the engine seizes up, and a mechanic with a horseshoe-shaped scar tows the car away, warning Harry of the "jigaboos" who will "'knife you in the back every time'" (RRx, 238). A horseshoe resembles the letter U, another graphic sign inscribed in the face of a racist. It is as if a facial stigma were related to a character's traits.

Not only the flesh, the body, is regarded as a word or rather as a material capable of being inscribed; the spirit, in the sense of voice (breath, *ruah, pneuma*) is also read by Harry (cf. eg. RRx, 28, 83, 107, 296).

Just like Harry's perception and language have changed because of writing, so has he also undergone a metaphorical metamorphosis, he has, as it were, become a printed matter. His pale skin[23] and habit of wearing a white shirt are associated with paper on which ink is pressed (cf. RRx, 14). Jill says to Harry:

> 'You smell of ink,' she tells him. 'You're all ink, so clean, just like a newspaper. Every day, a new newspaper comes to the door.' (RRx, 225.)

Harry also sees other people as if they were written or printed. As Skeeter puts it: "'You've set so much type the world is lead, right?'" (RRx, 219). In a TV show, words are painted in white on a dancer's skin; "since he [Harry] took up the printer's trade he can read like a flash, upside down, mirror-wise too" (RRx, 25). Harry also remembers how stockings had printed marks on Janice's skin (RRx, 81). One of Harry's co-workers used to have whiskers "that looked tattooed into the skin" and his "jaw was lead" (RRx, 33). Buchanan wears "the smallest possible mustache, smaller than a type brush" (RRx, 95-96); when he smiles, his "fine little mustache spread[s] an

---

23 The narrator often reminds the narratee of the printers' ghost-likeness and their lifelessness: they are paper-men (cf. RRx, 13, 35, 51).

em" (RRx, 165). The hair of Harry's father has the colour of cardboard (RRx, 19). Once his facial expressions are described in terms of printing: "Pop's pupils widen a hairline; his eyebrows lift a pica's width" (RRx, 38). Jokingly, Mim even calls her father the "Prince of Pica" (RRx, 316).

Thus, work has changed the workers' bodies to fit them into itself. Harry has a "thick waist and cautious stoop bred into him by a decade of the linotyper's trade" (RRx, 14). Harry's foreman seems to carry a brand of his trade: his "bristling eyebrows increase the look of pressure about his head, as if his forehead is being pressed over his eyes, forming long horizontal folds" (RRx, 167). The workers have, then, become products of their trade - printed matters - but also, in a manner theorized by Michel Foucault, parts of the manufacturing, parts of the machine they operate.

As for the other characters, Harry sees their "bookish" sides as well. Looking at his sister's, Mim's, face, Harry "imagines a coded tape is being fed into her head and producing, rapid as electronic images, this alphabet of expressions" (RRx, 306). While in the army, Harry received his mother's letters in which "Mim [was] shrunk to a word" (RRx, 309). Kissing Mim's dry cheek, Harry thinks: "Perfumed stationery" (RRx, 314); he is also reminded of the genetic alphabet of chromosomes y and x: "She is himself, with the combination jiggled" (RRx, 314). The man with the L-shaped (or ampersand) scar (RRx, 254) also belongs to this category of "walking printed matters."

Most of the time Jill wears a white dress, which is associated with her general lifelessness, her flat, papery existence. The dress is so prominently blank that the mechanic who repairs Jill's car twice tells her not to grease the garment (RRx, 237), a warning which does not lack sexual overtones. Her teeth are "spaced with hairline gaps" (RRx, 127) and, when having an argument with Harry, her "eyes widen a fraction, a hairline of alarm he can only see because he is putting it there" (RRx, 152).

The scribal metaphors in connection with the body occur elsewhere in the novel as well. In an extract from Frederick Douglass' autobiography that Skeeter uses as one of his set texts in his seminar, there is a depiction of a master whipping his slave: the skin is marked with blood, bruises, and scars (RRx, 244), white oppression is inscribed in the black body. After the arson Harry is extremely tense; the narrator describes it, among other metaphors, as "iridescent drummers pounding a tattoo on the taut hollow of Harry's stomach" (RRx, 299). The same image - skin as material in which something is written - appears later on in: "grief rises in him out of a parched stomach" (RRx, 330).[24] Confusion seems to overwhelm Harry; reuniting, Harry and Janice are lying in a motel bed: "He feels they are still adjusting in space, slowly

---

24 Of course, the combination of the book and the body, of the word and the flesh is nothing extraordinary in American literature. In the frame story of Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man* (1951) appears a man who, like Melville's Queequeg, is tattooed all over and on whose skin the short stories are seen. Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1950) depicts a world where printed text is forbidden, so readers learn their favourite books by heart and eventually "become" them. The protagonist of Philip Roth's *The Breast* (1972) makes himself a work of art; unable to depict metamorphoses like Swift, Gogol, or Kafka did, he lives those fictional events, changes word into his own flesh.
The image of bodily writing also recurs in Updike's poetry. Cf. "South of Alps": "She was clean copy, / her future a back issue" (Updike 1977, 38); "Pussy": "dregs at the V of the torso's white wineglass, / concentrate, essence, summary, footnote, / addendum that cancels, in Gothic black letter, / Platonic misreadings of the belly's bland text" (Updike 1977, 80). For a more detailed analysis of woman as fiction and inscription in Updike's poetry, see Keskinen 1989.

twirling in some gorgeous ink that filters through his lids as red" (RRx, 350). The metaphor of being submerged in ink reminds one of the Greek restaurant scene early on in the novel; Nelson wanted to order a dish called *kalamaria* until Stavros explained that it was "little, like, octopuses cooked in their own ink" (RRx, 44).

How do the inscribed faces and bodies relate to Harry's worldview or way of reading? One possible answer could be found in the presuppositions of Puritanism and the works of the American Renaissance. Interpreting signs - as manifestations of God's will - was one of the characteristics of the Puritan ideology. The objects and phenomena of the outside world had a hidden meaning to be deciphered. John T. Irwin notes that the reading of character is the principal activity in all Nathaniel Hawthorne's works; it is based on the assumption that human character is pictographically inscribed.[25] Physical appearance, especially face, is regarded as a hieroglyphic, an emblem with a natural, unconventional connection between the sign and its referent.[26] This tendency is not perhaps as prominent in Updike as in Hawthorne, but one easily associates the second neighbour's red scar with the scarlet letter in Hawthorne's novel of the same name. In accordance with his belief in the transparency of signs, in the unproblematic relation between the signifier and signified, Harry reads the world and people around him as signs with a direct bearing on their referents. In doing so, in privileging signified over signifier, Harry represents what Jacques Derrida calls **transcendent reading**, a tendency of Western philosophy and literature to efface themselves "in the face of the signified content" which they transport.[27]

But if Harry (and the narrator) read the world as a natural, unconventional form of writing, then why does it repeatedly get attributes of man-made, conventional writing, i.e., printing? There are two apparent reasons for it. The fact that the natural is expressed with the unnatural - the metaphors come from the world of printing and the observations are published in book form - seems to solicit the whole dichotomy between the two antithetical terms. On the other hand, the mixed realms of writing function as moments of self-reference or self-reflection; the world and people are inscribed just as they are given to readers: as the setting and characters, as fictionalized entities, presented in writing.

In the next subsection, I shall deal with the main characters' - interpretants' - reading operations in detail, and see how they can function as allegories of interpreting the whole novel.

---

25 Irwin 1981, 244.

26 The "hieroglyphical" method of interpreting physical shapes included signature analysis, physiognomy, and phrenology, which analysed, respectively, handwriting, body, and the configuration of the skull and face (Irwin 1981, 52).
Harry also perceives the external world as if it was a written text. Geometrical shapes are seen as letters: a balustrade is shaped as X-pattern (RRx, 125), the collar of Jill's dress forms a V (RRx, 245), and the half-burned wall reveals an N of 2 by 4s in Harry's kitchen (RRx, 286). This reminds one of the tendency to see nature as a hieroglyph in the works of the American Renaissance. Nature was like a signature, or a continuous act of writing, forming the hieroglyphic book of nature, which required interpretation. (Irwin 1981, 24-25.)

27 Derrida 1976, 160.

5.1.5 House of Reading: Four Allegories of Interpretation

5.1.5.1 Interpretants' Commentary

The characters of *Rabbit Redux* eagerly discuss the different meanings of words, symbols, and phenomena. Casual as the discussions (or sometimes arguments) seem, they, however, draw attention to interpretive operations and to the multiplicity of (equally tenable) readings of the same text. The characters' interpretive discourse can be divided into subcategories on the basis of the character or, in this case, interpretant relationships. The 13-year-old Nelson is typically a character who needs interpretive help from his father and Skeeter as regards allusions and unknown words or expressions. On the other hand, Harry is treated in the same manner by Stavros, Jill, and Skeeter, who consider him as old-fashioned and bigoted.

Watching a Lone Ranger parody on TV, Harry has to explain Nelson the allusions in order to help him enjoy the comedy:

> "[---] 'Heigh-ho, Silver.'" The unseen audience laughs, Rabbit laughs. Nelson doesn't see what's so funny. Rabbit tells him, "That's how they always used to introduce the program." (RRx, 29.)

But Harry is not a very knowledgeable aid; asked a linguistic question, he has to admit his ignorance of both the linguistic and hermeneutic code:

> Nelson asks, "Dad, what's *que más sabe*?"
> Rabbit is surprised to have to say, "I don't know. Something like 'good friend' or 'boss,' I suppose." Indeed come to think of it he understands nothing about Tonto. The Lone Stranger is a white man, so law and order on the range will work to his benefit, but what about Tonto? A Judas to his race, the more disinterested and lonely and heroic figure of virtue. When did he get his pay-off? Why was he faithful to the masked stranger? In the days of the war one never asked. Tonto was simply "on the side of right." [—] Where has "the side of right" gone? (RRx, 30.)

The show's pun on the expression "Indian affair" makes Nelson ask: "'What is an affair exactly?'" (RRx, 30). As an ex-adulterer and present cuckold, Harry knows how to answer the question: "'Oh, it's two people going out together when they're married to somebody else'" (RRx, 30).

At a Greek restaurant, both Harry and Nelson need advice in interpreting the menu written in a language they do not master. At first Janice provides translations of some dishes, until Stavros, the native speaker of Greek, shows up and takes over (RRx, 42-46). That Janice knows some of the Greek words betrays that she has been at the restaurant before with Stavros, as Harry detects (RRx, 43). The menu deciphered and dishes ordered, the characters' discourse moves from the fairly straightforward translations of foreign words to the ambiguous realm of interpreting symbols. Harry rather heatedly defends his right to have an American flag decal stuck on his car: "'What's wrong with it?' he asks them both [Stavros and Janice]. 'It's our flag isn't it?'" (RRx, 46.) Stavros replies that it is "somebody's flag" thus denying its totalizing and unifying force. Harry accuses Stavros, the foreigner, of being ungrateful and of dishonouring the American flag "like it's some piece of toilet paper" (RRx, 46). Indeed, Stavros does not acknowledge any transcendent meaning in the flag, but stresses the arbitrary, conventional, and material nature of it as a sign: "'A flag is a flag. It's just a

piece of cloth.'" (RRx, 46.) For Harry, the flag stands for such American values as freedom of speech and thought (RRx, 47).

Later on in the novel, however, Harry has to admit the arbitrariness of flags as signs. He is watching a televised funeral ceremony: "but the sound is turned off and Rabbit cannot tell if it is Everett Dirksen's lying-in-state in Washington or Ho Chi Minh's ceremonies in Hanoi. Dignitaries look alike, always dressed in mourning." (RRx, 209.) Only the flag makes the difference: "the flag on the coffin has stars and stripes, so it must be Dirksen's" (RRx, 209).[28] The next news flash turns out to be as ambiguous as the previous one: cannons, planes, and soldiers are shown but "he cannot tell if they are Israeli or Egyptian" (RRx, 209).

Harry and Nelson are exposed to another phase of interpretive commentary, this time a more systematic one, when Skeeter comes to stay at Harry's house. Tired of the two men's quarrelling, Jill decides to arrange organized discussions. According to Jill, they "might be helpful and educational," because Harry's "life has no reflective content; it's all instinct [—]" (RRx, 203). Besides arguing about larger textual and ideological wholes, the characters suggest different interpretations of individual words. Nelson asks the meaning of the word *immolating*; Jill suggests - quite rightly - "sacrificing," whereas Harry says: "'I thought it meant burn'" (RRx, 216). No consensus of senses is reached; Nelson is left with two different definitions of the word.[29]

Similarly, words turn out to mean different things in different contexts. Skeeter repeatedly uses the word *Charlie*; Harry thinks it refers to himself, Nelson suggests the Viet Cong, but Skeeter extends the meaning: "'You are, they are, so was I, everybody is. [---] The thing about Charlie is,' he says, 'he's everywhere. In Nam, it's all Charlies, right? [---] Nam must be the only place in Uncle Sam's world where black-white opposition doesn't matter.'" (RRx, 228.) In Vietnam, the black-white opposition ceases to exist. The situation can be schematized in a semiotic square:

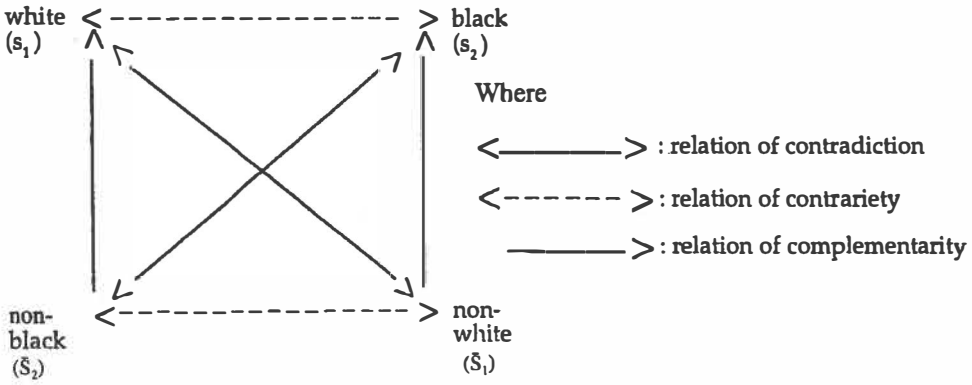


FIGURE 3

---

28 A flag has - ironically - a similar function when a double cheeseburger is renamed "Lunar Special" by simply sticking a tiny flag into the bun (RRx, 105). The number of stars on the American flag also relates to Harry's lost youth: "The eight-team leagues of his boyhood have vanished with the forty-eight-star flag" (RRx, 80). As the stars increase, Harry's remaining years decrease, as if to echo, albeit in a reversed form, the Apollo countdown.

29 The definitions are thematically related to the novel's fire symbolism, and anticipate Jill's death in the arson; the American Union - the Angstroms' marriage - is maintained by sacrificing Jill.

In America, the basic racial opposition, according to Skeeter, exists between blacks and whites; in Vietnam, both blacks and whites represent America, the enemy, and they are together opposed to the Vietnamese who are both non-white and non-black. The logical articulation of these elementary semantic relations is in keeping with Skeeter's analysis of Vietnam as the place where the world is being destroyed and born anew, where the opposites meet. On the other hand, the semiotic articulation of the us/them opposition, which is so important in the novel's narrator/narratee relationships, bares the necessary possibility of a non-American resisting narratee (cf. subsection 5.1.3.).

5.1.5.2 Harry: Carnal Literality

Besides metalinguistic commentary and analyses of concepts, Skeeter's stay at Harry's house also yields more systematic models for reading. The nature of history proves central in this respect. How the characters - mainly Skeeter and Harry - regard history dramatizes the main models for interpreting the whole novel.

To historicize the events which threaten Harry because "they have jumped into the newspapers out of nowhere," (RRx, 202) Skeeter presents his own interpretation of history. Skeeter's perspective is dual: on the one hand, he stresses the economic basis of world history; on the other, he finds the underlying motivation of historical phenomena metaphysico-religious. In the first seminar Skeeter and Jill organize, Skeeter presents his vision of Afro-American history from the Civil War on. He emphasizes the economic rather than humanitarian reasons for the conflict between the Union and the Confederacy:

> '[—] Lincoln got this war, right, and fought it for a bunch of wrong reasons - what's so sacret about a *Union*, just a power trust, right? - and for another wrong reason freed the slaves, and it was done.' (RRx, 204.)

The slaves were nominally freed but, according to Skeeter, the whites of both the South and the North plotted against the blacks in the name of democracy so that "the South got slavery back at half price" and "the North got the cotton money it needed for capital" (RRx, 207). The corruption got out of control:

> 'It wasn't just us, you sold yourselves out, right? You really had it there, you had it all, and you took that greedy mucky road, man, you made yourself the asshole of the planet. Right? To keep that capitalistic thing rolling you let those asshole crackers have their way and now you's all asshole crackers [—]' (RRx, 207.)

Harry accuses Skeeter of overinterpretation, of overemphasizing the blacks' discrimination: "'We all got here on a bad boat. You talk as if the whole purpose of this country since the start has been to frustrate Negroes. Hell, you're just ten percent.'" (RRx, 208.) Skeeter, suddenly preferring quality to quantity, nature to civilization, defends his interpretation:

> 'We are technology's nightmare. We are all the good satisfied nature you put down in yourselves when you took that mucky greedy turn. We are what has been left *out* of the industrial revolution, so we are the *next* revolution, and don't you know it?' (RRx, 208; emphasis in original)

In the following session, Skeeter elaborates his analysis of slavery and begins to introduce religious elements into it. Skeeter still stresses that, in the South, a slave was property without any rights, although the King of Spain and the church nominally acknowledged his/her profane rights and soul's immortality (RRx, 213). Religion insisted that the slaves were to be baptized and taught right from wrong, but, out of the fear of their own repressed traits the blacks represented, the whites deprived them of their humanity and treated them as reified objects: "'Some white man see a black man he don't see a man he sees a *symbol*, right?'" (RRx, 214; emphasis in original). Not even the exemplum of Jesus could affect the whites, because "the Jesus they brought over on the boats was the meanest most de-balled Jesus the good Lord ever let run around scaring people" (RRx, 214); the white Jesus was thus castrated, powerless.

To prove his analysis Skeeter makes Jill read an extract from an abolitionist speech by Theodore Parker; the author rewrites the biblical intertext of Cain and Abel as the conflict between the whites, blacks, and God: "God shall hear the voice of your brother's blood, long crying from the ground; [—] 'America, where is thy brother?' This is the answer which America must give: 'Lo, he is there in the rice-swamps of the South [—]'" (RRx, 214.) Parker continues with another biblical allusion; he echoes the sentence structure in Jesus's parable of a shepherd dividing his sheep from goats: "He was weak and I seized him; naked and a bound him; ignorant, poor and savage, and I over-mastered him" (RRx, 214).[30] Skeeter is, however, critical about Parker's and the whole abolitionist movement's motives, which he reduces to unsatisfactory sex life and jealousy: "'[—] one respectable fuck would have stopped the abolition movement cold. But they weren't getting it back home in the barn so they sure gave hell to those crackers getting it out in the slave shed.'" (RRx, 215.)

Skeeter's second extract is by William Lloyd Garrison, who also uses biblical rhetoric and images[31]; Nelson reads aloud:

> '*If the Republic must be blotted out from the roll of nations, by proclaiming liberty to the captives, then let the Republic sink beneath the waves of oblivion, and a shout of joy, louder than the voice of many waters, fill the universe at its extinction.* I don't understand what any of this stuff means.' (RRx, 216; emphasis in original)

Both Skeeter and Harry hurry to his interpretive rescue; the former crystallizes: "'It means, More Power to the People, Death to the Fascist Pigs,'" whereas the latter suggests: "'To me it means, Throw the baby out with the bath'" (RRx, 216). Skeeter's interpretation, articulated in the customary locution of the 1960s, leans more heavily on the metaphor and allegory than Harry's rendition, which is more "literal" in the sense that it lifts water and drowning from the text and unites them into a single negative proverb. Harry continues his resisting interpretive stand when it is his turn to read aloud an extract about blacks learning how to vote; he shows no sympathy: "'This is all bleeding-heart stuff. It'd be like me bellyaching that the Swedes were

---

30 Interestingly enough, Parker does not use the negations of the second part of the parable, but rather reverses the meaning of the first, cf. Matt. 25:35-36: "For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

31 Lloyd Garrison seems to refer mainly to the Apocalypse; the whole extract abounds in images of absoluteness and plague. "The roll of nations" seems to extend the meaning of the book of the elect from the individual to the national (cf. Rev. 20: 12, 15).

Harry to read as if to underline that the seminar's main intention is to educate Harry, to teach him Skeeter's mode of interpretation; the project, as Harry's reaction betrays, will not succeed yet.

In the seminars to follow, Skeeter tells about his experiences in the Vietnam war. Skeeter's interpretation of the war as an escatological sign again makes Harry defend his own realistic, non-allegorical mode of reading: "'Shit. It's just a dirty little war that has to be fought. You can't make something religious out of it just because you happened to be there.'" (RRx, 231.) Skeeter, in contrast, criticizes Harry's common sense worldview which is blind to inner meanings:

> 'Trouble with you,' he sees, 'you still cluttered up with common sense. Common sense is bullshit, man. It gets you through the days all right, but it keeps you from *knowing*. You just don't *know*, Chuck. (RRx, 231; emphasis in original)[32]

Hence, Harry clings to literal realism, to a kind of metonymical common sense approach to the world. He will not acknowledge the existence of another, metaphorical realm incontinuous with everyday life. Nor does he approve of an interpretation postulating such a realm.

Harry's way of reading anticipates those interpretations of *Rabbit Redux* which emphasize its lifelikeness, verisimilitude, and metonymical relation to reality.[33]

5.1.5.3 Skeeter: Spiritual Allegory and Rugged Cross-Reading

Skeeter's interpretation of history and the world opposes Harry's views. Skeeter stresses the metaphoric and allegorical meaning of events; things also mean, for him, something more than what meets the eye.

Skeeter's mode of reading can be seen in his analysis of the Civil War, but especially in his interpretation of contemporary history. Though initially economic, Skeeter's analysis of history also bears traces of the religious. As if to continue the abolitionists' tendency to lean back on the rhetoric and types of the Bible, Skeeter

---

32 The narrator seems to be on Skeeter's side here; Skeeter not only *says* his opinion about Harry but also *sees* it, i.e. perceives it as an objective fact. In a similar fashion, the narrator stresses Skeeter's ability to penetrate into the fundamentals of things: "Encouraged, Skeeter sees the truth: 'Nam,' he says, 'Nam the spot where our heavenly essence is pustulatin'." (RRx, 232.)

33 Robert Alter (1979, 49) praises the novel's clearsightedness as a socio-historical enactment of the time it describes: "it says something that sounds right about where we are now. After all that has passed in political and literary history, it is reassuring that some novels still perform that prosaic but necessary task." Bernard Oldsey (1972, 55) regards Skeeter as "perhaps the best fictional representation of a black by a white novelist, particularly in respect to speech patterns and his burning drive."
Joyce B. Markle (1975, 147) interprets the novel's characters as "mirrors of the whole society"; together the characters form a microcosm of America. Even the cataloguing of brand names is praised; Donald Greiner (1984, 71) sees it as a masterful depiction of "America's sordid plenty." Dilvo I. Ristoff gives a systematic reading of the presence of contemporary history in the first three Rabbit novels and finds equivalents to *Rabbit Redux*' main characters and to their conflicts in the American political situation of the 1960s. Ristoff (1988, 81-112) thus reads the novel as a kind of miniaturized genre-painting of American reality.
Critics who have used Harry's way of reading have also been disappointed with the novel's verisimilitude. Eugene Lyons (1972, 57-58), George Hunt (1980, 172), and Frederick R. Karl (1983, 349-50) complain of Skeeter's unrealistic and unbelievable portrayal. Mary Allen (1976, 121-32) condemns the novel's depiction of women as insensitive and false.

provides a typological and allegorical interpretation of history.[34] Skeeter's view of history is eschatological; he reads reality in an anagogical manner, looking for signs of the times. On the other hand, he uses typology to support the role he claims to have in history: that of a new Messiah, a black Jesus. For Skeeter, Jesus is just a type, whose story of life but foreshadows the appearence of an antitype, a new Jesus, Skeeter himself.

Religion is prominently present when Harry meets Skeeter for the first time. Skeeter talks about "devils," "big white God," "black angels," "Jesus," "Pilate," and "Christ" (RRx, 108, 110, 112). The narrator observes: "There seems to be not only a history but a theology behind his anger" (RRx, 112).

After reappearing in Harry's life later on in the novel, Skeeter gets a chance to present his historico-theological interpretation more extensively.

Skeeter's words and acts allude to biblical characters, events, and logic. Trying to get a refuge at Harry's house, Skeeter will not try to please Harry but rather insults him. Harry takes the sexual vilifications aimed at his parents calmly, but the blasphemous references are too much for him:

> 'Jill says you believe in God. I got news for you. Your God's a pansy. Your white God's queerer than the Queen of Spades. He sucks off the Holy Ghost and makes his son watch. Hey. Chuck. Another thing. Ain't no Jesus. He was a faggot crook, right? [--]' (RRx, 187.)

Harry's anger breaks into violence when Skeeter displays - both metaphorically and (almost) literally - the real Jesus, himself:

> 'Hey. I'm the real Jesus. I am *the* black Jesus, right? There is none other, no. [—] Kneel down, Chuck. Worship me. I am Jesus. [—] Kiss my balls, they are the sun and the moon, right, and my pecker's a comet whose head is the white-hot heart of the glory that never does fail!'

---

34 M.H. Abrams gives a concise account of typological interpretation: "[it] was inaugurated by St. Paul and developed by the early Church Fathers as a way of reconciling the Jewish history and laws of the Old Testament with the Christian revelation of the New Testament. [---] In typological theory the key persons, actions, and events narrated in the Old Testament are viewed as 'figurae' (Latin for 'figures') which are historically real themselves, but also 'prefigure' those later persons, actions, and events in the New Testament that are similar to them; alternatively, the Old Testament figures are called *types* and their New Testament correlatives are called *antitypes*. The Old Testament figure or type is held to be a prophesy or promise of the higher truth that is 'fulfilled' in the New Testament, according to a plan which is eternally and completely present in the mind of God but manifests itself to human beings only in scriptural revelations over a span of time. [---] By some interpreters, elements of New Testament history were represented as in their turn prefiguring the events that will be fulfilled in 'the last days' of Christ's Second Coming and Last Judgment." (Abrams 1988, s.v. 'Interpretation: Typological and Allegorical.')
Allegorical interpretation of the Bible is linked with typology. "Typological interpretation is sometimes said to be horizontal, in that it relates items in two texts (the Old and New Testaments) separated in time; allegorical interpretation is said to be vertical, in that it uncovers multiple meanings expressed by a single textual item. The fundamental distinction in allegorical interpretation is between the 'literal' (or 'historical,' or 'carnal') meaning of the text - the historical truth that it expressly signifies - and the 'spiritual' or 'mystical' or 'allegoric' meaning that it signifies by analogy." (Ibid.)
The meanings of a text can be subdivided into four categories: "(1) the literal or historical meaning, which simply narrates what in fact happened[---]; (2) the allegorical meaning proper, which is the New Testament truth, or else the prophetic reference to the Christian Church, that is signified by a passage in the Old Testament; (3) the tropological meaning, which is the moral truth or doctrine signified by the same passage; (4) the anagogic meaning, or reference of the passage to Christian eschatology, that is, the events to come in the last days of Christ's judgment and the life after death of individual souls." (Ibid.)

> and my pecker's a comet whose head is the white-hot heart of the glory that never does fail!' [—] Skeeter unzips his fly and prepares to display this wonder. (RRx, 187-188; emphasis in original)

Harry hits Skeeter down, but a moment later lets him stay in the house.

Skeeter gives a believable - religious - interpretation of Harry's sudden change of mood: "'Feeling guilty, huh Chuck? A little tokenism to wash your sins away, right?'" (RRx, 189). Skeeter's behaviour is paradoxical: to get a shelter he insults its provider. But it should be remembered that Jesus' teachings were paradoxical as well. Northrop Frye has noted how many of the doctrines of traditional Christianity can only be expressed as metaphors. Many of them seem paradoxes as well (eg., Christ is both God and man; in the Trinity three persons are one, etc.)[35]

Later on, Jill explains Skeeter's behaviour: "'He talks tough but he really has nothing, he really does want to become the black Jesus'" (RRx, 190). It is noteworthy that Skeeter's friend Jill does not think he *is* Jesus but that he is planning to *become* one. Skeeter, as it were, acts the role of Jesus according to his own reading or exegesis of the mythical text. On the other hand, he reads reality according to his own role. Thus, we have a two-way process: Skeeter's acts are something he can influence, they are his creation or "writing" in the broad sense of the word; history and reality only support his role when read or "expounded" in a certain manner. In fact, this is not unlike what Jesus did. Through his acts he fulfilled the prophesies of the Old Testament, and tried to prove he was the real Messiah. Matthew tells this quite explicitly.[36] For Skeeter, *imitatio Christi* does not mean the following of Jesus in one's religious life, but the imitation, miming of Christ's words and acts. Skeeter's life story as he prefers to present it could be called cruci-fiction, a fictional narrative cast in the mould of Christ's earthly life which climaxed on the cross.[37] Or analogously, his mode of reading is rugged or even crooked cross-reading.

Skeeter's allusions to the Bible and Christ do not follow any order, i.e., the pattern of Jesus's life as told by the Evangelists. Hence, Skeeter does not systematically and indisputably correspond to Jesus. When Harry learns that Robert Williams, a black leader, has returned to the USA, he asks: "'Another black Jesus. How many of you are there?'" (RRx, 199), Skeeter replies: "'By many false prophets [—] you shall know my coming, right? That's the Good Book, right?'" (RRx, 200.) Skeeter alludes to Mark (13:6): "'For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many'", and (13:22): "'For false Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.'"[38] Skeeter tells Harry that the black Jesus is going to "fry [his] ass" (RRx, 200). He used the same expression about Williams (RRx, 199), so it remains ambiguous whether Skeeter or Willams is the black Jesus or a false prophet.

In the same discussion, Skeeter talks about Nixon: "'He is Herod, man, and all

---

35 Frye 1983, 55.

36 Eg. "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by E-sa-ias the prophet, [---]" (4:14). "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the laws, till all be fulfilled" (5:18).

37 I borrow the pun on crucifiction from Barbara Johnson, who, in her reading of Melville's *Billy Budd*, has also used it as an emblem of a rhetorical figure, chiasmus (Johnson 1982, 83).

38 Later on in the novel, Skeeter returns to the question with Biblical diction: "'False prophets: by their proliferation you know the time is nigh'" (RRx, 242).

us black babies better believe it'" (RRx, 200). This, of course, refers to king Herod, who reigned at the time of Jesus's birth and who killed all male children younger than two years at Bethlehem (Matt. 2:7-16).

Referring to Skeeter's prolonged stay at Harry's house, Harry says, "'I thought three days ago you said you were getting out in three days'" (RRx, 200). In the biblical context, the reader easily associates this with Jesus's prophesy of his three days in Hell (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 27:63), and the disciples' disbelief in his resurrection.

Other characters can only understand Skeeter's behaviour by adopting his allegorical way of reading. Jill seems to believe in Skeeter's divinity from the very beginning; she persuades Harry to give the black man shelter for a few days or else the police will "crucify" him (RRx, 185).[39]

Slowly Harry, too, begins to see Skeeter's Christ-like features. It is interesting how Harry addresses Skeeter: "'[---] Jesus I'm sick of the word black'"; "'Lord I'd love to forget [---]'" (RRx, 200.) Harry not only swears, but, interpreted in a religious manner, uses the vocative, i.e., refers to Skeeter as if he were divine. In *Rabbit, Run*, Harry had religious aspirations, and he still occasionally prays, so he is not merely joking when he says to Jill, "'Well,' and he smiles unseen, 'if he is the next Jesus, we got to keep on His good side'" (RRx, 191).

Half jokingly, Harry utters, "'From A.D. to A.S. After Skeeter. I should live so long. All Praise Be Skeeter's Name.'" (RRx, 217.) Skeeter ignores the remark because he is, as the narrator puts it, "concentrating on the other two disciples [i.e., Jill and Nelson]" (RRx, 217).

Harry also gets "ocular proof" for his wavering belief; when Skeeter once strips off his shirt, the narrator remarks that Harry "has never seen such a chest except on a crucifix" (RRx, 245).

In the course of the seminars, Harry, albeit drugged on marijuana, finally jettisons his skepticism and confesses his belief:

> Rabbit drags on his own joint, and feels his world expand to admit new truths as a woman spreads her legs, as a flower unfolds, as the stars flee one another. 'I do believe.' (RRx, 242.)[40]

Harry can be even interpreted to keep relics. He wipes Skeeter's sperm from Jill's chin and mouth with a handkerchief "and, for weeks afterward, when all is lost, will take out this handkerchief and bury his nose in it, in its imperceptible spicy smell" (RR, 261).[41]

A little later Harry connects Skeeter to Moses, when he urges him saying, "'Why doncha go up the top of Mt. Judge and have 'em [divine laws] handed to you on a tablet?'" (RRx, 217). This, of course refers to the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2-;

---

39 Skeeter immediately takes the cue; he "softly croons the start of 'That Old Rugged Cross'" (RRx, 185).

40 The "conversion" is expressed in other words later on, when Harry says, "'You're a *baad* nigger.' / Skeeter smiles in the sunshine with angelic rows of teeth; his spectacles toss halos higher than the TV aerials. 'Now you're singing my song,' he says." (RRx, 265; emphasis in original). The religious diction (*angelic, halos*) and the inspired adoption of Skeeter's black English are noteworthy tokens of Harry's belief.

41 This is the only time in the novel that the omniscient narrator makes an interpretive future tense comment on the story (cf. Chatman 1983, 238-239). Thus, the "prophetic" omniscience also serves the religious function of the story at the level of discourse.

Deut. 5:6-), and shows how Skeeter's *imitatio Christi* is not quite systematic in the eyes of his disciples.

Under the influence of marijuana, Skeeter seems to be receiving charismata: "Skeeter's eyes roll red toward the ceiling. Things are pouring for him through the ceiling." (RRx, 223.) The scene is narrated in free indirect discourse, through Harry's drugged mind, which makes it possible to depict the event as a fact, not as a metaphor.

During one seminar Skeeter asks Nelson to bless him with his hand (RRx, 231). Laying on of hands appears several times in the New Testament, but a child is never said to do it; on the contrary, Jesus lays his hands on children in blessing (Matt. 19:13; Mark 10:16).

Like Jesus, Skeeter does not read aloud nor write anything; even his "beatitudes" are written down by Jill (RRx, 232). This characteristic of Jesus recurs in *A Month of Sundays* (cf. subsection 6.1.3.1.).

Referring to Mark (11:15), Skeeter compares himself to Jesus with symmetrical sentences:

> 'Jesus liberated the money-changers from the temple. The new Jesus will liberate the new money-changers. The old Jesus brought a sword, right? The new Jesus will also bring a sword.' (RRx, 241.)

Finally, the fictional world itself seems to abound in signs of Skeeter as the *second* Jesus. After the arson, a policeman spells out Skeeter's name on the radiophone: "'[---] Sally, Katherine, double Easter -'" (RRx, 286). Harry helps Skeeter to escape the police by driving him to a place called Galilee; a signpost at the intersection says Galilee 2 (RRx, 292), which means not only the distance to that place in miles but, at least for Skeeter, "second Galilee." There Harry gives Skeeter thirty dollars so that he would disappear for ever. The black man promises to return - but "only in glory" (RRx, 292; cf. "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and glory" Luke 21:27). The dollars are easily associated with the thirty pieces of silver, and Harry even wonders if he should give Skeeter a Judas kiss as a farewell (RRx, 292).[42] Instead, they shake hands after which Skeeter studies Harry's hand and "contemplates, and solemnly spits into the center" (RRx, 292). Harry "chooses to take the gesture as a blessing" (RRx, 292). Spit may at first seem blasphemous in such a function, but it should be remembered that Jesus healed a deaf (Mark 7:33) and a blind (Mark 8:22) man with his saliva.

Although Skeeter's life bears some resemblance to that of Jesus, or at least he constantly interprets it so, his teachings differ remarkably from his predecessor or type. The difference is due to Skeeter's role as the *black* Jesus. If white Jesus was powerless, castrated, and against the blacks, Skeeter (or whoever black Jesus may be) is powerful, potent, and against the whites (RRx, 206, 214).[43]

---

42 *Rabbit Is Rich* tells Skeeter's later destiny. He had not been crucified but shot by the police in a shoot-out. Harry sees slogans "SKEETER LIVES" painted on the walls (Updike 1983, 343, 400), which, of course, reminds one of the maxim "Jesus lives".

43 Skeeter's role as the *black* Jesus is easily associated with the Antichrist, one of the Devil's manifestations. He demonically parodies holy things, regards war as beautiful, and changes linguistic registers like masks (cf. May 1972, 61, 155). Skeeter is like Satan set loose, one of the contributory factors of the Christian apocalypse.

Skeeter stresses the apocalyptic signs in world history. According to him, Vietnam

> 'is where the world is redoing itself. It is the tail of ourselves we are eating[44]. [—] It is the end. It is the beginning. [—] It is where God is pushing through. [—] Chaos is His holy face.' (Rrx, 230.)

Skeeter provides the actual readers of the novel with an example, or rather an exemplum of how to interpret *Rabbit Redux*. Like Skeeter, the reader can give the events and phenomena metaphorical or allegorical meanings, which will not halt at the literal level and assume that the narration is metonymically related to reality. Many readings of the novel - as is usual in Updike criticism - indeed bear witness to a heavy theologico-archetypal lean. Skeeter's messianism proves a touchstone in these interpretations; either Skeeter has converted the critic or s/he has remained a doubting Harry.[45]

On the other hand, Skeeter's eclectic mode of reading exemplifies both the appropriation and deletion of text. By dramatizing narration, Skeeter reinforces narrative seduction and at the same time makes it possible to observe it from without.

Although Skeeter undeniably has some demonic characteristics, his possible messianism should not, however, be discarded offhand. In an interview, Updike himself has pitied that reviewers and critics have not taken Skeeter's claims seriously (Updike s.a., 510). For example, George Hunt only sees the demonic and despicable traits in Skeeter's character ("irresponsibility, cruelty, moral weakness, schizophrenia, and cowardice"), although he recognizes the black man's *symbolic* identity with Christ (Hunt 1980, 149).
Skeeter does have his positive side. He reactivates - albeit hard-handedly - sexually and otherwise passive Harry and forces him to learn. Similarly, Skeeter initiates Nelson to sports which the boy used to detest. Hence, Skeeter belongs to those characters in Updike's fiction whom Joyce B. Markle (1975, 157) calls life-givers. Also young Harry was a life-giver, and he, too, had his demonic side. Both him and Skeeter incorporate characteristics of Jesus and Satan. These kinds of deities combining two opposite tendencies can be found in many religions (Russell 1979, 55-62). Because of his miracles, even Jesus was regarded as being possessed by evil spirits or the Devil (John 10:20; Mark 3:22).
On the other hand, the emphasis on the Messiah's colour ties in with black American theology of liberation inspired by the Civil Rights movement; Jesus is "black" because he took upon himself the role of a servant or slave and passed through suffering at the hands of those in power (cf. Witvliet 1987).

44 This metaphor refers to the primeval snake or serpent, the ouroboros, who pursues itself in an endless circle. It symbolizes the coincidence of opposites, fecundity and death, new order and chaos, immortality brought about by continual rebirths. (Cf. Russell 1979, 68.) Skeeter supports disorder elsewhere as well: "'Chaos is God's body. Order is the Devil's chains'" (RRx, 241.)

45 Richard Locke (1979, 37-38) defines Skeeter as the Antichrist, who is not, nevertheless, an "allegorical cut-out." Although George Hunt does not believe in Skeeter, he uses the black man's allegorical way of reading to interpret the moonflight and its relation to the novel's events and imagery (Hunt 1980, 192-73; 175-76). Similarly, Hunt (ibid., 177-78) reads Skeeter and Jill as representatives of certain versions of enthusiasm found in Christian movements.
Robert Detweiler (1984, 127-31) deals more systematically with the novel's allegorical use of history, with "the orchestration of tropes" into a whole. Joyce B. Markle (1973, 197) regards Skeeter as an exaggerated Christ figure, but, on the other hand, gives quite a malevolent interpretation of his acts. For example, Markle (ibid., 157) reads Skeeter's spitting in Harry's hand as an ironic blessing or baptism; what Markle forgets is that Jesus himself healed - without irony - people with his saliva (cf. Mark 7:33; 8:22).
The typological mode of interpretation practised by Skeeter may inspire the actual reader to look for intratextual links between the tetralogy's parts. For example, young Harry and Skeeter resemble each other as well as *Rabbit Is Rich*'s Nelson his father in *Rabbit, Run*. As for Updike's other fiction, Skeeter to a degree parallels the self-appointed religious leader Jesse in *In the Beauty of the Lilies*.

The whipping of the slave woman cast as a psychodrama is exemplary of this (cf. RRx, 243-48). But the participants of Skeeter's seminars do not read whole texts but, following his red crayon marks, skip from one segment to another. Skeeter also intervenes to pinpoint an especially important detail. Skeeter thus resists texts by deleting and customizing them for his purposes, a practice that he performs on the biblical text of Jesus' life as well.

That Skeeter manipulates all the texts read in the seminar makes him, perhaps unwittingly, oppose the ones to which he subscribes ideologically. This tendency is in keeping with Skeeter's demonic ambiguity, but also a demonstration of the double bind of oppositionality: a counter-force almost automatically produces another counter-force. Or, on a more general level, a resisting rereading solicits a text by bringing opposing significations to the surface, but also consolidates it by calling attention to previously ignored meanings and, by analogy, calling for another kind of opposing reading. In a way, this shuttling from one emphasis to another has transferred to the whole critical dispute over the novel. That this dispute has been relatively calm over the past years does not necessarily mean an interpretive consensus but rather a lack of interest in the novel (or in Updike in general).

5.1.5.4 Jill: Neutralizing Differences

Jill brings about a change in Harry's and Nelson's household and way of living. Inspired by the hippie movement, Jill emphasizes spiritual values; she substitutes junk food for healthy nutrition, and watching TV for discussions about God, beauty, and meaning (RRx, 142). Jill gives a long account of the hidden structure of the universe. She compares the universe God has created to an artist's work, which bears the creator's feelings like fingerprints or handwriting. Man is, in Jill's view, "a mechanism for turning things into spirit and turning spirit into things" (RRx, 143). The universe is full and harmonious, but man, made blind and deaf by his own ego, cannot see or hear it. "Without our egos the universe would be absolutely clean" and everything in it would be "doing their thing, unself-consciously" (RRx, 143). Jill also presents her vision in the form of a parable:

> 'Think of it, Nelson, like this: matter is the mirror of spirit. But it's three-dimensional, like an enormous room, a ballroom. And inside it are those tiny *other* mirrors tilted this way and that and throwing the light back the wrong way. Because to the big face looking in, these mirrors are just dark spots, when He can't see Himself.' (RRx, 143.)

Jill's parable deals with the relationship between matter and spirit, but also that between reality and fiction.

After Skeeter joins the household, Jill turns from reconciling matter and spirit to mediating the two men's interpretive disputes. In accordance with her worldview,[46] Jill aims at equilibrium and harmony, even at the expense of fusing irreconcilable differences into a sameness.

---

46 George Hunt interprets Jill's "theology" as reminiscent of Manicheanism. It manifests a sharp dualistic division between matter and spirit, but, on the other hand, it also "ecstatically" approaches a kind of Pantheism or panpsychism. (Hunt 1980, 178.) The latter feature of Jill's thinking cancels, at least seemingly, the former contradiction.

The interpretive dispute over Lloyd Garrison's speech makes Jill try neutralization:

> 'He's [Harry] saying what Skeeter says. If the System, even even if it works for most people, has to oppress some of the people, then the whole System should be destroyed.'
> [Skeeter] 'Do I say that? No.' (RRx, 216.)

At the level of content, Jill overinterprets, but as for the rhetoric, she is right. Both interpretations - Skeeter's "More Power to the People, Death to the Fascist Pigs" and Harry's "Throw the baby out with the bath" - are expressed in slogan or proverb form, in conventionalized and automaticized language. The interpretations are opposite as regards the content - militant black radicalism vs. conservative rationalism - but formally close to each other. In a similar fashion, one can find common ground for Harry's way of reading nature and human beings as a hieroglyphic writing and for Skeeter's tendency to interpret history anagogically. Both stem from the Puritan ideology, which, to a degree like all subsequent American ideology, was based on a rhetoric combining the profane with the sacred, the historic with the prophetic.[47] Every event was interpreted as a (divine) sign, and American history as a whole seemed to fulfill biblical types.[48]

Jill's way of reading can be applied to Harry's disputes with other characters as well. Harry argues with Charlie Stavros about America and the Vietnam war. Stavros emphasizes the arbitrary and conventional nature of signs by calling the American flag just a flag and by reducing it to its material basis, to "a piece of cloth" (RRx, 46). For Harry, in contrast, a flag means basic American rights. Stavros thus represents literal, metonymical realism in its vulgar form, whereas Harry chooses metaphorical and metaphysical interpretation. When quarrelling with Skeeter, Harry is of quite a different opinion. Harry calls the Vietnam war just a war as tautologically as does Stavros flag a flag (RRx, 231); analogously, Skeeter interprets as metaphorically as Harry earlier.

Jill's mode of reading allegorizes how a "self-deconstructive" text can be allowed to cancel and neutralize its opposites and contradictory concepts by showing one way of reading as incorporated in its opposite, and vice versa. To identify deconstruction with the neutralization or mutual annulment of contradicting concepts or textual strata is, according to Rodophe Gasché, one of the prevailing misconceptions about deconstructive criticism.[49] This state of affairs is due to a superficial understanding of Jacques Derrida's "method". Derrida himself emphasizes the strategic dissymmetry of deconstruction in order to control and "counterbalance the neutralizing moments of any deconstruction."[50]

Jill foreshows (pre)deconstructive interpretations of the novel, but they have not been widely actualized yet.[51]

---

47 Bercovitch 1978, 9, 15.

48 Feidelson 1953, 89; Irwin 1980, 24-25, 36.

49 Gasché 1986, 138.

50 Derrida 1981a, 207n.

51 Judie Newman approaches deconstruction in her McLuhanesque analysis of the oppositions between speech and writing, original and representation, and whole and fragmented. Newman notices how speech is incorporated in writing, but, instead of interpreting it with the help of Derrida's arche-writing, she utilizes McLuhan's basically phonocentric media

5.1.5.5 Nelson: Disseminated Rhetoric

The 13-year-old Nelson is linguistically the most innocent and ignorant member of Skeeter's reading seminar. As was seen in the beginning of this chapter, Nelson needs interpretive help both in the linguistic and cultural codes. But when it is his turn to read aloud an extract in the seminar, he turns out to be the most radical reader of the four.

Trying to read a rhetorically difficult text, Nelson stammers, stops on the surface of language; he gets stuck to the prefix of the word *dissensions*: "'[—] *dis-*, dis–'" and mispronounces the word *sect* (RRx, 215). Nelson continues his laborious reading effort:

> '[—] *slavery must be buried in the grave of infantry* -'
> 'Infamy,' Jill corrects.
> '- *infamy, beyond the possibility of a rez, a razor* -'
> 'A resurrection.' (RRx, 216.)

Because Nelson does not understand what he is reading, what kind of syntagm forms an acceptable discourse, he can paradigmatically just as well accept *infantry* for *infamy*, or *razor* for *resurrection*. Nelson's way of reading can be interpreted as radical dissemination: he picks up a phonetically similar but semantically different word from the paradigm and adds it in the syntagm, which radically changes the discourse.[52] In so doing, Nelson foregrounds the conventional nature of the bond between signifier and signified, and deconstructs the text's rhetorical strategies: the persuasive pathos turns into the absurdly comic.[53]

---

theory. (Newman 1988, 43-50.) That deconstruction fails when the novel is read in Jill's fashion does not come as a surprise, for she aims at neutralization, a goal alien to the deconstructive project.
Jill's account of the universe as a (ball)room anticipates the metafictional readings of the novel. Newman accounts for the different typefaces in the novel's texture, the printing metaphors, and Skeeter's reading seminar as a means of dispersing the novel's realistic linearity and sequentiality, but she does not clearly interpret these features from a self-reflexive viewpoint (ibid., 54-56). Surprisingly enough, not even Robert Alter (1979), usually a sensitive detector of self-reflection, makes any reference to the novel's metafictionality, although he compares it with Bernard Malamud's *The Tenants*, itself a self-conscious work as Pirjo Ahokas (1991, 273-304) has shown.

52 Dissemination means, in Jacques Derrida's usage, the scattering of seeds, semes, and semen. At the same time the term refers to a practice in deconstructive criticism, i.e. the exploitation of contingent morphological or etymological links between words. The puns based on anagrams or homonymies connect signifiers in a new way, and at the same time undo a text's logic and the belief in one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified (cf. Derrida 1981a, 170; Derrida 1981b, 86-89.)

53 Interestingly enough, Harry, too, disseminates when he typesets news. The type composed by Harry is printed in the novel as such - including typos, orphans, widows, Harry's comments and corrections -, which emphasizes the conventional and rhetorical nature of even the seemingly neutral language in news. Upset, Harry changes a factual piece of news prose via iteration of phonemes into an aleatory sound poem:

> **with horsedrawn trolly tracks promi-**
> **with horse-drown trolley traks prami-**
> **with horsed-rawn trolleyyyfff etaoin**
> **etaoinnshrdlu etaoinshrdlucmfwpvbgkqjet**
> (RRx, 169).

Harry's belief in the referentiality of language will not, however, waver; he has a manuscript in front of him, and it will give him the "right" reflection of the world.

Nelson's way of reading draws attention to homonymies and other words with multiple meanings. The Updike novel includes words of this kind, for instance the epistemological-medical *redux* in the title and epigraph, and the cosmic-typographic *space*. That the same signifier refers to two or more signifieds shatters the naive belief in the transparency and referentiality of language.

On a more general level, Nelson's practice opposes the other three readings presented in the seminar. All the other readings aim at a totality, at an all-encompassing explanation, at an interpretive closure. Harry totalizes by reducing language to metonymy, Skeeter by emphasizing metaphor, and Jill by neutralizing the difference between the two. Nelson, in contrast, solicits the logic of discourse and interpretation alike by stammering and thus shaking the very (phonic-graphic) foundation of both. The extract Nelson stutters through can be seen as his own interpretive manifesto: as long as a totalized interpretation (slavery) can be avoided, the interpretive community (nation) may be "torn by dissensions, every sect dashed into fragments, the national compound dissolved [—]" (RRx, 215). In Garrett Stewart's terms, Nelson could be seen to provide a **phonemic reading**.[54] By sticking to the phonic level - the stuff that makes the production of meaning possible - of written text, Nelson foregrounds its basic semiotic operations, lets the material pulse of language - the principle of other phonemes making a given phoneme distinct and different from them - be heard. Nelson hence dramatizes the problematic relationship between speech and writing in the novel. It stages the friction of fiction, the resistance to reading.

To my knowledge, the only sustained deconstructive interpretation of *Rabbit Redux* anticipated by Jill and Nelson is my own.[55]

To sum up, in spite of their interpretive disagreements, all the four characters share a common pursuit, the will to interpret. Although the different modes of interpretation could be regarded as a de Manian allegory of the impossibility of reading, the characters do not stop trying nor yield to anyone else's totalizing, massive model. Furthermore, the characters do not always systematically practise their own models, but, for argumentative purposes, shift interpretive positions. This is especially true in Harry's and Skeeter's cases. On the other hand, the novel's ending could be conceived as an allegory of interpretive strength: Jill dies, Skeeter flees, the shocked Nelson ceases to speak - only Harry remains a reader, this time of the writing on the wall of his half-burned house. It is unclear whether he has learned anything in Skeeter's seminar. The novels ends, both literally and metaphorically, with a question mark.

In the section to follow, I shall deconstruct some of the most prominent oppositions of *Rabbit Redux*, and trace its self-conscious features.

---

54 Stewart 1990, 25-27 & *passim*. For Stewart's theory, see subsection 3.1.7. above and Keskinen 1992, 79-77. Skeeter's portmanteaux represent a similar tendency by providing examples of the so-called transegmental drift (cf. Stewart 1990, 293-94). Also, Harry's mother, due to her Parkinson's disease, foregrounds the ambiguous borderline between the phonic and the graphic (see subsection 5.2.1. below).

55 Cf. Keskinen 1991 and the present thesis.

5.2 Writing

5.2.1 Speech and Writing: The Natural and the Unnatural

Writing and speech form a similar opposition in *Rabbit Redux* as, according to Derrida, in Rousseau's *Confessions*, or, for that matter, in the largest part of Western philosophy.

Harry's present condition differs radically from that in *Rabbit, Run*. The young Harry was sexually active, he would escape from distressing situations, keep his thoughts inside, talk little and write nothing. Now Harry neglects his wife sexually, because he tends to associate sex with death (RRx, 41). He will not move, but shuts himself away in his house. He articulates his thoughts better than he used to do, and he writes, produces printed text.

The "metaphysics of presence" assumes that it is in speech that the truth is conveyed most purely and genuinely, because the speaker can control the relation between his or her intention and utterance; s/he can hear and understand her/himself speak, as Derrida puts it (*s'entendre-parler*). If we logically follow this train of thought, an inarticulated thought would be closest to truth. The young Harry, who was physically active, constantly thinking, rarely speaking, and who never wrote, was in a "natural" state - quite unlike a decade later with his "supplements."

The novel makes the connection between speech and "normal" sexual intercourse clear: "'I'd love to talk, Harry.' From her [Janice's] voice she assumes 'talk' means fuck, when he did mean talk." (RRx, 28.) Jill and Nelson tell that they "talk" about Harry during their car trips, but he gathers from Nelson's reactions that some sort of sexual activity is involved (RRx, 146). Nelson reveals that Jill got a guitar - which she uses for "hustling" (RRx, 150) - at a reduced price after "talking" to the owner of the music shop in the back room; Harry ironically remarks: "'I wonder what they talked about'" (RRx, 151). Janice has been betraying Harry with Stavros and says that the Greek man has recommended a restaurant: "'Charlie Stavros was talking about it the other day.'" Suspicious Harry continues: "'Yeah. Speaking of the other day -'" (RRx, 38.) Later on, when Harry's sister Mim had "seduced" Stavros, Harry asks her: "'What'd you and Chas talk about?'" (RRx, 317).

Harry's black co-worker, Buchanan, warns him of the dangers of living without a wife, and volunteers to provide him with a new partner. Buchanan does introduce Jill to Harry, but for a long time their relationship remains "masturbatory" and avoids "normal" intercourse.[56] It is as if Harry had lost his connection with the natural because of his "dangerous supplements."

Skeeter expresses his view of the relation between the natural (original) and its substitutes, between the object and its representation:'If you can't fuck, dirty pictures won't do it for you, right? And then if you can, they don't do it either.' (RRx, 224.) According to Derrida, it is the image, picture (*l'image*) that Rousseau connects with the dangers of writing and masturbation; the former corrupts living speech, the latter

---

56 This could be due to his castration anxiety; Harry conceives vagina as "a tiger's mouth" (RRx, 33), as burning (RRx, 97), swallowing (RRx, 122), and containing razor blades (RRx, 141).

seduces imagination.[57]

Later on, Skeeter can be interpreted to associate quiet, private reading with masturbation and reading aloud with sexual intercourse: "'It's not the same, right? Doin' it to yourself.'" (RRx, 247.) By the same token, Skeeter wishes to enjoy Harry's reading physically, with his body, as if he were about to make love: "'I'm gonna take off all my clothes, I want to hear it with my pores'" (RRx, 247).[58] Skeeter, as it were, turns writing into speech, the graphic into the auditive or even the tactile.

What Skeeter forces Harry to read is a description of a tyrant slave master cruelly punishing his woman slave and of how her lover avenges it. In Skeeter's drugged mind, the text serves the function of pornography and inspires him to make up a "psychodrama," in which Jill plays the role of the black woman and himself that of the white master. Sexually aroused by Harry's reading, Skeeter masturbates later on. This shows that the difference between supplementary writing and original speech, and, on the other hand, between masturbation and normal intercourse is not perhaps as clear-cut as the novel's characters tend to maintain.

Harry sees Skeeter and Jill make love - which, in Rousseau's (and Skeeter's) terms, would be "original" and "natural." However, Harry associates them with the printing process which, of course, produces writing, supposedly as supplementary and unnatural as masturbation:

> What he sees reminds him in the first flash the printing process, an inked plate contiguous at some few points to white paper (RRx, 260).

Instead of writing Skeeter speaks,[59] but his sexuality includes not only usual intercourse but also its variants and supplements - even with other people present (RRx, 248).

Skeeter's appropriative way of using a historical text, an autobiographic slave narrative, as pornography shows how writing frees itself from the writer's intentions and is exposed to uncontrollable construction of meaning. The same tendency can, as I stated earlier, be seen in Skeeter's appropriation of the Bible. Hence, Plato's warnings against the dangers of writing seem to be realized: without the guiding presence and attendance of the father-utterer, the son-*logos* can be led astray, abused, turned against its conceiver, which changes speech into writing.[60] But the ideal form of

---

57 Derrida 1976, 151.

58 In a like fashion, Skeeter seemed to receive "charismata" through the ceiling (RRx, 228, 230; cf. subsection 5.1.4.3 above).

59 Quite similarly, Jesus, whose black counterpart Skeeter believes to be, only taught orally. The Gospels mention just one occasion when Jesus ever wrote anything (John 8:6: "But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground [--]"); what he actully wrote remains a secret. This particular incident is also discussed in *A Month of Sundays*; see also subsection 6.1.3.1. below.
On the other hand, Jesus' origin is very "literary": he is word become flesh (John 1:1, 4). Jesus', like Skeeter's, teachings are marked down by others: Jill writes down Skeeter's "Beatitudes" (RRx, 231-233): "Power is bullshit. / Love is bullshit. / Common sense is bullshit. / Confusion is God's very face. / Nothing is interesting save eternal sameness. / There is no salvation, 'cepting through Me." The first five "beatitudes" oppose those in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, but the last one is shared by both teachers. Unlike Jesus, Skeeter requires his disciple (Jill) to write down his words: "'Technology,' Skeeter explains with exquisite patience, the tip of his joint glowing red as he drags, 'is horseshit. Take that down, Jilly,'" (RRx, 242.)

60 Cf. Derrida 1981, 76-78.

communication, living speech with the speaker and listener present to avoid all misunderstandings, will not be realized in the novel's discussions. Speech turns out to be as ambiguous and apt to misinterpretations as writing. In Skeeter's seminar, or for that matter in other oral communication, no consensus of senses is reached.

The pole around which the speech/writing and intercourse/masturbation oppositions rotate, or alternately, what pierces them is the phallus. The phallic nature of writing becomes apparent when Jill fellates Harry:

> Small curdled puddles of his semen then appear in her skin, and though easily wiped away leave in his imagination a mark like an acid-burn on her shoulders, her throat, the small of her back; he has the vision of her entire slender fair flexible body being covered with these invisible burns, like a napalmed child in the newspapers (RRx, 141-42).

To regard writing as a phallic activity is nothing new in Western thinking. For example, Derrida has traced Freud's metaphors for writing and found out that one of them, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, is phallic: "[Writing], which entails making a liquid flow out of a tube onto a piece of white paper, assumes the significance of copulation [---]."[61]

Phallic penetration is explicitly articulated when Skeeter says to Harry, who admires his naked guests: "'O.K., strip and get into it, she's full of holes, right?'" (RRx, 260). But Harry is afraid of joining them, of becoming part of their "printing machine," because it can be dangerous, castrating: "they seem not only beautiful but in the same vision an interlocked machine that might pull him apart" (RRx, 260).[62] Later on, when Harry and Jill, the white ones, are lying in bed, he unwittingly associates the present and the recent combination with different methods of printing: "Offset versus letterpress, offset never has the bite of the other, the wave of the future" (RRx, 263). Skeeter's and Jill's "print quality" was better, sharper in its contrasts. That the metaphor for love-making is a printing machine, that the scene of love is staged as that of mechanic reproduction hints at an interesting chain of substitutions and metaphoric aberrations.[63] Referring to Freud's technical metaphors for the functioning of memory, Derrida writes:

---

61 Quoted in Derrida 1986, 229.

62 Towards the end of the novel, after the arson and Jill's death, Harry fantasizes that he did join them: "to be a father and a lover to them, and they fly apart like ink and paper whirling to touch for an instant" (RRx, 330).
Phallic writing is not restricted to pen or pencil; as Freud writes in his *Traumdeutung*: "It is highly probable that all complicated machinery and apparatuses occurring in dreams stand for the genitals (and as a rule male ones) [---]" (quoted in Derrida 1986, 229).

63 Early on in the novel, woman and printing machine are intertwined in Harry's mind. Holding his wife in bed before falling asleep, Harry associates her with his work: "His fingers search lower, touch tendrils, go lower, discover a moistness already there. He thinks of feathering the linotype keys, of work tomorrow, and is already there." (RRx, 33.) "Already there" connects and finally blurs woman's body and the machine. The next day, the description of the printing machine gets tender, feminine attributes: "The machine stands tall and warm above him, mothering, muttering, a temperamental thousand-parted survival from the golden age of machinery" (RRx, 35). On the other hand, Harry is in Jill's position, when the machine occasionally jams: "sometimes when there is a jam the lead squirts hot out: Harry has been burned" (RRx, 35). Here the machine is metaphorically conceived in male terms, as the mechanic ejaculation suggests. The printing machine is a reproductive device, and when it is anthropomorphized, the chain of signification also yields the end-result of the male/female encounter, a child: "But the machine is a baby; its demands, though inflexible, are few, and once these demands are met obedience automatically follows. There is no problem of fidelity." (RRx, 35.) (With real women, Janice, Jill, and Peggy Fosnacht, Harry does have problems of fidelity.)

> Metaphor as a rhetorical or didactic device is possible here only through the solid metaphor, the "unnatural," historical production of a *supplementary machine, added to* the psychical organization in order to supplement its finitude. The very idea of finitude is derived from the movement of this supplementarity.[64]

The natural and original is rhetorically substituted for the unnatural and supplementary. On the other hand, the lovemaking scene as such bears other traces of supplementarity: Skeeter and Jill literally *act* it (out), re-enact a written account of an actual event, thus giving a representation of the third order, a simulacrum. Furthermore, Jill fellates Skeeter, which changes "teleological" insemination into uncontrolled, "writerly" and semi-masturbatory dissemination.

In a strange way, private masturbation and public intercourse are both "unnatural" in relation to a heterosexual couple making love: the first because there are too few people present, the latter because there are too many.

As the examples above show, the characters and the novel's discourse in general find it difficult to keep antithetical concepts from overlapping, from sharing characteristics of each other. Harry composes imaginary headlines, thinks in the form of writing (cf. next subsection). Thought should be, according to the logic of logocentrism, the closest to the intention and logos of the thinker, but in Harry it is shown to be contaminated by its very supplement. In a similar manner, Harry's perceptions of the world around him and the metaphors describing it witness a "literary," graphic relation to them. In a Greek restaurant, Harry looks at his wife and Stavros from a typographical point of view, regards them as letters in composition: "they are sitting, to his printer's sense, too close, leaving awkward space on either side. To poke them into adjustment, he says, [—]" (RRx, 50). Later on, Harry gazes at Stavros' name and number in the phone book "as if to see his wife, smaller than a pencil dot, crawling between the letters" (RRx, 82). Even natural phenomena, like reflection or shadow, are associated with printing in Harry's mind: "In his own bedroom, the streetlamp prints negative spatters of the maple leaves on the wallpaper" (RRx, 262).

Harry also uses phrases which refer to speech but utilize scriptural metaphors. Arguing with his wife, Harry says: "'O.K., O.K. Spare me the fine print.'" (RRx, 71.) When Harry tries to make Jill return to her home, she uses a metaphor even more directly drawn from newspapers: "'Let's not have any editorials'" (RRx, 124).

Skeeter, too, relies on writing, although he seemingly stresses speech and even tries to convert the latter into the former by making the participants of his seminar read printed texts aloud. Skeeter's rhetoric is premeditated, allusive, and conscious of both mythical and literary intertexts. He speaks, but he sounds like writing; his use of language is creative, highly rhetorical, stylistically varied, often close to rap, and punctuated by such ironic neologisms and puns as "the Benighted States of Ammurrika" (RRx, 205; pro the United States of America), "bony-fidey" (RRx, 206; pro *bona fide*), "Yoo Hess Hay" (RRx, 213; pro U.S.A.), or "dollar-cracy" (RRx, 206; pro democracy). He reads, or rather rewrites by speaking, his life and American history through the escatological writings of the Bible.[65]

---

64 Derrida 1986, 228; emphasis in original.

65 In his manipulative way of treating his own life as material for a well-wrought narrative and his paradoxical attitude towards speech and writing, Skeeter resembles one of the authors he uses as set-texts: Frederick Douglass. Douglass (1818-1895), an escaped slave,

Jill also bears literary or textual traces in her speech. When she explains her worldview in an elaborate manner, "[h]er voice, laconic and dry normally, moves through her sentences as through a memorized recitation [---]" (RRx, 143). Jill sings a song about her life, seemingly rhyming it *ex tempore*; at first Harry and Nelson enjoy the simple and obvious rhymes, but then "Rabbit begins to wonder if she has done this before, that rhyme was so slick" (RRx, 156). Spoken word thus turns out to be as mutable and iterable as writing.

All in all, voice (or speech) is often described in terms of writing in the novel. Over and over again, speech gets such attributes of writing as mutability, citationality, and iterability. When people speak they seem to repeat, as traces, others' past signifiers, what has already been said.

Talking to his wife over the telephone, Harry "hears another voice in hers" (RRx, 27); some ten pages later the observation recurs: "Not her voice, another voice, another voice in hers" (RRx, 38); and iterability becomes clear to Harry: "There is a funny echo Rabbit's ears pick up. Things said between Janice and Stavros sound dead, duplicated." (RRx, 45.) The source of the traces, it soon turns out, is Stavros, Janice's lover.[66] Even Harry lets - sometimes ironically, sometimes unwittingly - other people speak through him. Arguing with Janice, Harry quotes both Jill and Skeeter: "[The law] serves the ruling elite. More power to the people." (RRx, 193; cf. Jill's statement: "The laws are written to protect a tiny elite" [RRx, 185] and Skeeter's interpretation of a Garrison segment: "More Power to the People, [—]" [RRx, 216]). On the other hand, Harry uses Mr. Springer's phrases against Skeeter (RRx, 203).

Skeeter embodies a number of styles of speaking: "He has many voices, Rabbit remembers, and none of them exactly his" (RRx, 184).[67] Harry's sister, Mim, has worked at Disneyland, and, to amuse her family, gives a robot-like performance of what she did there: "Her voice as if on rustling tape within her throat emerges: 'Fower scow-er and seven yaars ago -'" (RRx, 314). Repeated to a degree of saturation, the signifiers lose their "speakerly" quality and start to resemble iterated writing.[68]

---

orator, abolitionist, politician, and government official, wrote three autobiographies, each giving a slightly different picture of the author. Skeeter uses the last autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881). Although a skilled writer, Douglass emphasized the importance of a (speaking) voice; although an outstanding orator, he regarded literacy as power and a way to freedom. The latter notion became the central trope of slave narratives and "a mythical matrix out of which subsequent black narrative forms developed" (Gates 1989, 108). Bernard W. Bell (1987, 28) sees the Douglass text holding an intermediate position in the development of the black novel: "the slave narratives [---] provided a natural bridge between the oral and literary traditions. [---] In one way or another, [the writers] were familiar with the techniques of the lecture platform and the process for translating this oral performance into literary narratives."

66 Cf. also: "He [Stavros] has given her [Janice] not only her body but her voice" (RRx, 54).

67 Skeeter's many names, voices, and personae are also connected with his possible demonic nature: they are signs of the Devil. Similar figures in American literature, symbolizing Satan set loose, are, for example, the protagonist in Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1857) or Rinehart in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952) (cf. May 1972, 61, 155).

68 These examples could also illustrate what might be called "phonic palimpsests." A palimpsest originally referred to a writing material (e.g. parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased. In his *Palimpsestes* (1982), Gérard Genette has revived the term in modern semiotic criticism by using it as a metaphor for intertextuality (for a deconstructive reading of this key term of Genette's theory, see Keskinen 1996, 34-36, 40-43). Genette's use of the term is strictly textual, relating to writing. However, in the Updike novel, speech or voice do get attributes of text, of palimpsest-like multilayeredness. This principle also applies to other fields of experience. His parents' house

Interestingly enough, Harry's mother, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, sounds not unlike her daughter's act; the disease randomly chops her speech into awkward segments, making it sound unnatural, machine-like: "'I'm sixty-five,' she says, groping for phrases, so that her sentences end in the middle. 'When I was twenty. I told my boy friend I wanted to be shot. When I was thirty.'" (RRx, 87.) Her discontinuous speech also resembles Nelson's stuttering reading of an extract in Skeeter's seminar (cf. subsection 5.1.4.5 above).

Thought and speech, the original and closest to *logos*, are also metaphorically treated as writing, as their supplement. The idiomatic expression "in my book" recurs as a metaphor for psychic evaluation or memory-trace of phenomena (RRx, 241, 297). Consciousness appears to be a text, or rather, a surface on which traces are inscribed and from which they can be (at the same time) erased. Trying to forget his doubts about Janice having an affair, Harry "brushes a word from his mind" (RRx, 36). Later on, Harry thinks scoring in basketball as "a mark that can't be rubbed out" (RRx, 201), which could be applied to the functioning of memory as well.[69] Janice, for her part, after having in a sense saved Stavros' life, cancels her previous stigma as a baby-killer: "The mark upon her as a giver of death has been erased" (RRx, 336). The paradoxical double gesture of writing - erasure by inscription, annihilation by creation - can be traced in speech as well: "[Harry] takes [Jill's] talk as the exaggerating that children do, to erase their fears by spelling them out" (RRx, 208).

The same tendency even applies to (verbal) inarticulation, which is, supposedly, according to Western metaphysics, the closest to thought and logos. Silence, the absence of sign or sign of absence, becomes a sign in Harry's inscriptive mind:

> But there is nothing, nothing but the fluctuating warmth of Skeeter's breathing on the back of his neck. Into this reticence of steel Rabbit reads not poverty of means but positive love. (RRx, 291.)

Towards the end of the novel, after the arson has reunited Harry and Janice, he momentarily gestures instead of speaking: "He makes a peace sign, then transfers it to his head, as horns. She is too dumb to get it. He tells her [---]" (RRx, 341). The

---

"smells to Rabbit of preservative: of odors filming other odors, of layers of time, of wax and aerosol and death; of safety" (RRx, 87). Cf. also: "Days, pale slices between nights, they blend, not exactly alike, transparencies so lightly tinted that only stacked all together do they darken to a fatal shade" (RRx, 95).

69 In Updike's short story "Harv Is Plowing Now" (collected in *The Music School*), the operation of memory is compared to an archeologist's work. Consciousness is stratified in such a manner that at the top there is the trivia of the everyday and at the bottom the hidden space of secret memories and ancient traces, seemingly forgotten but reactivated by psychic excavation. In *Rabbit Is Rich*, this stratum is penetrated by jogging; Harry finds out that he has not forgotten past experiences or impressions; they just slumber, awaiting an "archeologist." Similarly, in *Rabbit at Rest*, the present repeatedly evokes the past, incidents find traces of other ones, gone and buried in the palimpsest text of the psyche.
In *Rabbit Redux*, as if to underscore the stratification and persistence of the past, Harry sets a news item relating to archeology, titled "Local Excavations Unearth Antiquities." The findings include written objects, old sign-boards: "Preserved underground, most are still easily legible and date from the nineteeth century" (RRx, 164).
For Derrida's account of Freud's interpretation of consciousness and memory as metaphoric writing, see Derrida 1986, 196-231.
Mary Allen (1976, 133) summarizes her feminist reading of the Updike novel by utilizing the ideological presuppositions of the writing/erasure metaphor: "Only the woman as a comfortable blank is to be desired and accepted by individual men and by society. Women who do not fit this standard are not really human and must be rubbed out of the world."

communicative system of his gestures is clearly related to written or spoken language: the altered position of the hand changes the meaning of the sign - from peace to cuckoldry - but the very possibility of meaning depends on the difference from other positions, on the traces of their absent presences.[70]

It is interesting how the words *poison*, *drug*, and *dope* - in their various meanings - recur in the novel (cf. RRx, 31, 40, 43, 61, 131, 162, 331). The treatment of those terms reminds one of Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus* by Plato. Plato refers to writing as a *pharmakon*, which in Greek can mean both "remedy" and "poison." Writing is supposed to make people wiser and improve their memories, but in fact it drugs their inner, "natural" wisdom and ability to remember.[71] As a "key term," the word thus both reinforces and undermines the text's argument. The metaphoricity or quasimetaphoricity works against the text's explicit intentions, deconstructing its argumentative logic by simultaneously or alternately allowing for a beneficient or maleficient reading of its pivotal term.

A similar kind of dichotomy can be traced in *Rabbit Redux*. Harry uses written language, which gives him an illusion of manipulating - thanks to its iterability and mutability - reality, but which at the same time seems to estrange him from it, to manipulate him instead. Similarly, marijuana seemingly liberates Harry, heals his extreme individualism, but it finally results in toxic symptoms (RRx, 223).[72] Jill had seen God with the help of LSD, but she eventually dies in hellish flames because of drugs. Harry's mother's new medicine, L-dopa (cf. *dope*), improves her state but at the same time has "unnatural" side effects: it makes her feel "lovey-dovey" at the age of sixty-five (RRx, 147-48). Stavros describes Harry's interpretation of the American intervention in Vietnam as a "'big mama trying to make this unruly kid take some medicine that'll be good for him'" (RRx, 48). Harry extends the metaphor: "'And most of 'em *want* to take the medicine, they're dying for it [—]'" (RRx, 48), which can be read in two opposite ways; metaphorically it means that they have a great wish for it, and literally that they die because of it. The medicine/poison dichotomy inherent in the word *drug* can be traced back to the novel's natural/unnatural opposition.[73]

---

70 The two consecutive signs also form a discourse based on synechdoche: peace (expressly promoted by Janice and Stavros) makes Harry a cuckold (the horns standing for it, as he well knows; cf. the imaginary headline about them, RRx, 96).

71 Derrida 1981a, 70-75.

72 Thanks to a linguistic coincidence, the English word drug bears a conceptual dichotomy not unlike that of *pharmakon* in the Greek language; the former can refer both to "remedy" and "narcotic."
Seeing how drugs affect Jill, Harry calls them and Skeeter, the pusher, "poison" (RRx, 186, 189, 224). Although he keenly views it, Harry also despises television by calling it poison (RRx, 113).

73 Also *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* utilizes the same poison/medicine dialectics:
Food for the indolent is poison, not sustenance. Lurking beneath the rich and tempting viands were invisible spirits of the evil, which filled the self-deluded gormandizer with aches and pains, passions uncontrollable, fierce tempers, dyslepsia, rheumatism, lumbago, and gout, [---]. (RRx, 246.)
The first sentence of the quotation above is one of the epigraphs of *Rabbit at Rest*, which extensively uses food, poison, and drug metaphors: Harry is overweight with a craving for unhealthy food, he has heart problems, and must take nitroglycerin pills on a regular basis, whereas his son, Nelson, has developed a serious cocaine addiction.
In *Rabbit Redux*, medicine also appears in marginal instances: Jill recounts her trip to Valley Forge and what struck her was the fact that George Washington had slept in one of its rooms with the help of sleeping pills still on display beside his bed (RRx, 177). The sign-

If both speech and writing are part of arche-writing, could a television picture give a more direct and truthful representation of reality or means of communication? Television is indeed prominently present in *Rabbit Redux*, appearing as, so to speak, an additional, ubiquitous character in the events. With the help of television, the characters participate in the historical moon flight, and the walk on the moon seems to realize McLuhan's thought of the "global village" inhabitated by viewers: on the July 21, 1969, approximately 700 million people all over the world saw Neil Armstrong take the first steps on the earth's satellite. Television connects the novel's characters to other historical events as well: the black riots, Vietnam war, and peace marches enter Harry's living room. But the programmes turn out to be as ambiguous as any other text. That television shows something instead of describing it in graphic writing does not make it more truthful. It is not at all clear if a TV programme is "real" as the picture from the moon proves:

> At last it happens. The real event. Or is it? A television camera on the leg of the module comes on: an abstraction appears on the sceen. (RRx, 92.)

The announcer has to comment on the picture before the viewers can understand it. On the other hand, the picture could just as well be a simulation; the viewers cannot tell the difference.

Hence, television will not bring back the presence and truth of living speech which McLuhan, among other representatives of the metaphysics of presence, thought was original and then corrupted by writing. The information flow of television is fragmented by commercials, and does not transmit any more direct, undistanced information than any form of communication. Television programmes turn out to belong to general writing: meanings get deferred and independently liberate themselves from their maker's intentions. Reading a picture does not differ from reading graphic writing as regards interpretive possibilities. On a purely formal level, both a printed text and the picture on Harry's TV sceen are black-and-white.

The solicitation of the seemingly sound logic of reasoning calls some basic assumptions found in the novel into question. As I have tried to show above, the novel's metaphors deconstruct the dichotomy between speech and writing; both can be seen as instances of an archewriting. In a similar fashion, the opposition of (sexual) normality/abnormality proves to be founded on what its both members exclude, and thus the whole dichotomy and hierarchy of values is radically shaken. The so-called normal sexual intercourse can quite justifiably called a special case of arche-masturbation.[74]

---

boards excavated in the news item advertized, among other goods, "drugs and medicines" (RRx, 164).

Interestingly enough, even the title of *Rabbit Redux* has medical overtones. The Latin verb form *redux*, explained with a metalinguistic peritext, an epigraph of dictionary definition, means not only "led back" but also "indicating return to health after disease". It remains ambiguous whether this refers to Harry's state at the beginning or at the end of the novel; in either case the meaning is ironic: Harry chooses passivity and conformity contrary to life - and health. On the other hand, the health/disease or activity/passivity oppositions are not unlike the natural/unnatural one and hence apt to a deconstruction of the whole dichotomy.

74 Cf. Derrida 1976, 154-55.

In the following subsections, I shall deal with the acts of writing presented in the novel, see what oppositions they surface, as well as study how they function as moments of self-reflection.

5.2.2 Writing and Life: News and Reality

Harry has been working as a typesetter at a printing plant for ten years. In his private life, Harry has become passive and has recourse to supplements as regards intercourse, liberation from the constraints of society, or changing the conditions of his living conditions. Few critics have paid special attention to Harry's profession or if it has any connection with his altered attitude towards life, or with the construction of the whole novel.[75] Perhaps such a connection can be made.

Printing appears in three forms in *Rabbit Redux*. The oldest method, close to that of Gutenberg, was used to print a German-language journal at the printing plant; the method still included wooden ornamental letters and hand-setting (RRx, 33). Harry operates a Linotype machine which melts metal and casts it into letters. It, too, is becoming old-fashioned, and, towards the end of the novel, the press is made an offset plant, which in turn makes Harry unemployed.

Rabbit Redux includes several news items set by Harry. Structurally, they are spread evenly throughout the novel so that each of the four chapters contains them. The extracts from news items are set in newspaper-like type so they clearly differ from the rest of the novel's texture. They show the process of text-composing rather than the final result of it: the type matter contains typos, widows, orphans, attempts to correct them as well as Harry's and the narrator's comments on the work in progress:

> **When Brewerites this Sunday gaze up at the moon,**
> **it may look a little bit different to them.**
> **Why?**
> **Because there's going to be a little bit of Brewer on**

No. Widow. He tries to take it back but the line is too tight to close so he settles for the widow.

> **it.**
> **Zigzag Electronic Products Inc., of Seventh and Locust Streets, City,**

---

75 Robert Detweiler (1984, 136-37) briefly alludes to Harry as a Gutenberg man, and Judie Newman (1988, 40-61) gives a more sustained reading of the novel in the light of Marshal McLucan's media theory. But both critics ignore Jacques Derrida's ideas, which prove useful in this case.

Oops.

> **Locust Streets, city, revealed to VAT reporters this week that a crucial electronic switching sequence in the on-board guidance and nabifiation computer was the on-board guidance and navigation computer was manufactured by them here, in the plain brick building, once the cite if Gossamer Ho irey Co, that thouing, once the site of Gossamer Hosiery Co., that thousands of Brewer citizens walk unknowingly by each day.**
>
> **If the printed circuits of their switches—half the size of a postage stamp and weighing less than a sunflower seed—fail to function, astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin and Collin will drift past the moon and perish in the infinite vacuum of so-called ''deep space.''**
>
> **But there is no danger of that, Zigzag Electronics general manager Leroy ''Spin'' Lengel assured the**

Jump after twenty lines. Switch to single-column lines.

> **VAT reporter in his highly modern, light-green office.**
>
> **''It was just another job to us,'' he said. ''We do a hundred like it every week.**
>
> **''Naturally all of us at Zigzag are proud as punch,'' Lengel added. ''We're sailinggeatoin added. ''We're sailing on a new sea.''**

(Rrx, 34-35.)

The type matter also reflects Harry's state of mind. After arguing with his wife, Harry makes a lot of mistakes and finally loses his temper:

> **the days before the Bessemer furnace.**
>
> **Old faded photographs of Weiser Street show a prosperous-appearing avenue of tasteful, low brick buildings with horsedrawn trolly tracks promi-**
>
> **with horse-drown trolley traks prami-**
>
> **with horsed-rawn trolleyyyfff etaoin etaoinshrdlu etaoinshrdlucmfwpvbgkqjet**

(Rrx, 169.)

As well as being an index of Harry's confusion, the extract can also be read as a moment of radical dissemination. The factual and (at least seemingly) neutral prose of the news is changed, with the help of phonemic iteration, into an aleatory sound poem disregarding graphic word division, thus foregrounding the phonic-graphic raw material from which intelligible language is formed. This incident does not, however, shatter Harry's belief in the referentiality of language. He still has a point of reference, the manuscript that, he believes, correctly reflects reality, in front of him.

That the act of writing is shown as a process rather than as an end-result emphasizes the arbitrary and conventional nature of the production of meaning, thus shattering Harry's naive belief in the simple referentiality of language. Language, even the seemingly objective and transparent language of the news, turns out to be apt to subjective distortion or manipulation, to rhetorical opacity. Harry only pays attention to the formal features of composition and takes the correctness of the content for granted; only towards the end of the novel is he to learn the subjective, interpretive nature of the news.

The content of the news items is not thematically indifferent, or at least they can be easily read as metonymical parts of larger thematic wholes. The first item of news connects Brewer to the historical moon flight (RRx, 34-35), which also relates to the novel's tendency to metonymically represent general history. The second one introduces black threat and anticipates the appearance of Skeeter (RRx, 138-139). In contrast to modern space explorations, the third one deals with local excavations unearthing antiquities (RRx, 164, 166-167), which relates to the stratified, multilayered nature of history, personal experiences, and palimpsestic writing. The fourth one reveals one of Skeeter's names (RRx, 192); he has a tendency to appear under a number of false names. The fifth and the final one is about Harry, Jill, Skeeter, and the arson of the house (RRx, 295-296). Hence, the news items Harry sets gradually approach himself and his life story. For the first time since his adolescent basketball career, Harry is mentioned in the headlines. When young, he appeared as a hero in the news; now his name seems to get smeared with crime (drugs, arson, manslaughter) and with unsocial behaviour (mixing with a fugitive black man and a teenage girl).

Besides real news items, Harry also composes imaginary headlines in his mind. It is as if his profession had changed his way of perceiving and thinking; he turns his private matters into "public" headlines, masochistically "revealing" what he would prefer to remain hidden.[76]

When he finds out about Janice's affair with Stavros, Harry thinks: "The world knows. It'll be in the *Vat* next week. **LINOTYPER'S WIFE LAYS LOCAL SALESMAN.** *Greek takes Strong Anti-Viet Stand.*" (RRx, 72.) Later on, Harry makes up a similar headline: "**VERITY EMPLOYEE NAMED CUCKOLD OF THE WEEK.** *Angstrom Accepts Official Horns from Mayor.*" (RRx, 96.)

Another theme in Harry's imaginary headlines is violence. Forced to smoke marijuana in a black bar, Harry fears poisoning: "**AUTOPSY ORDERED IN FRIENDLY LOUNGE DEATH.** *Coroner Notes Strange Color of Skin.*" (RRx, 111.)

---

76 In *Rabbit, Run*, Harry would silently complete, supplement other characters' sentences, or imagine what happened when he was not present (cf., eg. Updike 1975, 101, 158, 167). A salesman, Harry was used to predominantly oral language.

Walking home with Jill at night, Harry thinks that two black men are planning to attack them, and already sees a headline: "**LOCAL MAN STABBED DEFENDING UNKNOWN GIRL.**" (RRx, 125.) After knocking Skeeter down Harry imagines the black man's revenge: "**FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE HOLDS FAMILY AT GUNPOINT.** *Mayor Vows, No Deals.*" (RRx, 189.)[77]

For Harry, the news items are not pure fiction, but the borderline between fiction and reality is not totally clear-cut, either. Because the news items - along with the characters - belong to the elements of the novel, they, like the "reality" of fiction, are fictional to the reader. *Rabbit Redux* does not clearly violate the conventional hierarchy of narrative communication, but in a way Harry is associated with a homo- or even autodiegetic narrator who writes about his own life, especially when the news continuously draw closer to himself, his life story.

The borderline between the imaginative (made up by Harry) and "real" (written by reporters) headlines begins to vacillate, when Harry sets a news item about a raid on Jimbo's and the consequent trial; people known to Harry are mentioned, including Skeeter, who forfeits bail (RRx, 192). Towards the end of the novel the borderline vanishes completely, when Harry really must set the last news item, which concerns himself. That Harry personally knows about the incident which the news item describes makes him notice the inaccuracy and even falsity of it. Rhetorically and formally the item is believable, in accordance with the general style of news, but content-wise it is inapt. In a similar fashion, Harry's imaginative headlines obey the laws of formal acceptability, but diverge from the real course of events.

The dichotomy of reality and news, of life and writing, of original and representation, can be conceived in two ways in the light of Harry's life and its relation to journalistic reporting. On one hand, writing turns out to be a rhetorical, subjective means of portraying actuality, and a representation does not only repeat an original but also recreates it, becomes an independent version of it. On the other hand, and one might say even more crucially, the treatment of the opposition points at a radical re-evaluation of the whole dichotomy. There may not be such entities as reality, life, and original, conceived as uncontaminated by and independent of their opposites. Harry's reality is not unlike the news, his life is writing - along with the other characters, he has been written into existence - and the original he thinks he knows is already a representation. If Harry is to make an incident meaningful, he must move from the "original" or the actual on to another plane; along with this removal comes a lag inherent in any signifying act: the presence is lost in difference, and to mean means to represent, not to be. Hence, the clear-cut dichotomy between life and writing, reality and news is deconstructed by Harry's writing of his own life, of turning (his) reality into news.

Printing and typography appear in the way the characters, especially Harry, perceive the world around them, and in the language they use. Actual, graphic writing appears in other forms besides printing in the novel as well. Harry pays attention to handwriting; he compares notes by Jill and Mim. The latter one's message is written underneath her promotion picture:

---

77 As these examples show, the over-dramatic headlines are basically comic. In his *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984), Jay McInerney uses the same device to create similar effects, as does E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (1993). Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) utilizes imaginary headlines as well, but with a serious intent.

writing appears in other forms besides printing in the novel as well. Harry pays attention to handwriting; he compares notes by Jill and Mim. The latter one's message is written underneath her promotion picture:

> *Miss you all Hope to come East soon Love Mim*. A slanting cramped hand that hadn't gone past high school. Jill's message had been written in splashy upright private-school semi-printing, confident as a poster. (RRx, 173; emphasis in original)

Interestingly enough, Jill's message - *Out all day. Will drop Nelson at the lot* - is signed with a kind of hieroglyphics, consisting of a peace sign, a heart, a cross, and a capital J: " ☮ ♡ ✗ ℘ " (RRx, 171). Again, Harry pays attention to the formal, graphic features of the two notes, ignoring their stylistic similarities. In a way, the messages are, in their elliptically dense informativeness, like headlines aimed at the mini audience of family. Nelson adopts Jill's hieroglyphics; he supplements his newspaper clippings of the arson with a kind of ornamental "writing":

> Around the clippings the boy had drawn with various colors of ballpoint flowers, peace signs, Tao crosses, musical notes, psychedelic rainbows, those open-ended swirling doodles associated with insanity before they became commercial (RRx, 305).[78]

5.2.3 Writing under Erasure: Graffiti

Other kinds of written messages demonstrate textual operations as well. The wall of Harry's half-burnt house is soon covered with graffiti and slogans. The first one consists of two syntactically unrelated words, "NIGGER" accompanied by "KILL" (RRx, 342). The narrator describes them: "The two words don't go together, so it is hard to tell which side the spray can had been on. Maybe there had been two spray cans. Demanding equal time." (RRx, 342.) The narrator assumes that two words by a single writer should form an unambiguous statement, or that the indefiniteness of the extract is due to the conflicting intentions of two writers. The basic meanings of the pair of words could be: "nigger must be killed" and "nigger kills." However, in each alternative, there is an "extra" meaning of interpretive undecidability, of the possible contrary signification. The diametrical opposite of one meaning is denied but still vital in its definition: only the possibility of a supplement makes it complete in itself, a plenitude. This is, of course, what Derrida calls the structure of the trace.

The next pair of graffiti contains a similar conflict or ambiguity as the first one. Someone has written a slogan "*Pig Power is Clean Power*" (RRx, 342) on the wall. The statement is ambiguous as such; when read literally, the sentence seems to play with the opposition between "pig" and "clean," between dirtiness and cleanliness. *Pig*, of course does not only refer to an animal, but to the police, and *clean* means 'effective,' 'skilful,' or 'pure' rather than 'not dirty.' Thus, the slogan could be paraphrased as "Police power is effective power." The slogan reads as a praise of effective and pure power, or, on the other hand, as an ironic comment on totalitarian power or on a police state. The multiplicity of meanings is still increased by the fact that other people have edited and added to the slogan so that it reads "*Black Power is Cong Power*." The

---

78 Typical of the '60s, psychedelic paraphernalia also appear on the helmets soldiers wore in Vietnam, as Skeeter's stories reveal (cf. RRx, 227).

bility, the capacity of language to paradigmatically replace elements in syntagm adds another dimension in the variety of meanings. That the meaning changes without affecting the syntax hints at the possible (semantic) interchangability of paradigmatic elements, at the secret similarity of seemingly contrary concepts.

The same conflict of meanings can be seen elsewhere on the wall; the same writer can express two opposite meanings at the same time: "Also there is a peace sign and a swastika, apparently from the same can" (RRx, 342).[79]

The multiplicity of meanings will not make the narrator exalt interpretive freedom, but rather compare the scene of writing to banal commencials: "It all adds up no better than the cluster of commercials TV stations squeeze into the chinks between programs" (RRx, 342). Warring meanings will not be saved by television, which, according to McLuhan, was supposed to restore the "original" communion of oral language.

The edited, rewritten graffiti can be conceived as palimpsests. In the Updike novel, the cancelled meaning of the slogan is still visible, attributing to the new meaning, and thus staging the original meaning of the palimpsest, i.e., a writing material used one or more times after earlier inscription has been, more or less completely, erased. On the other hand, in accordance with Gérard Genette's semiotic usage of the term, the palimpsestic graffiti can function as metaphors for the intertextual construction of the whole novel,[80] and especially for Skeeter's appropriating, "rewriterly" way of reading his own life through history and mythology.

The editing of the slogan can also be read as a dramatization of the workings of the trace, a central term in Derrida's conception of language: "[a] text is [---] produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There is only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces."[81] Derrida's trace is, of course, of a different, far more abstract, even quasitranscendental, order than the novel's graffiti. At the risk of banalization and for heuristic reasons only, I thematize the graffiti in a Derridean manner. The meanings of the slogans, though contrary to each other, can be read in one sentence; the erased or cancelled meaning is included in the new one as a visible trace. To read the two meanings simultaneuously is to read them as being under erasure (*sous rature*): because signs are both necessary and ambiguous, they must be both used and suspected.[82] The edited slogan foregrounds what is usually invisible but nevertheless constantly at work in language: a term is constituted by its very

---

79 Skeeter tells a similar story about a lighthouse in Vietnam: "white walls all over, everybody been there one time or another and done their drawings" (RRx, 257). What struck him were the disrespectful drawings depicting Ho Chi Minh in obscene acts by the Vietnamese themselves.

80 The intertexts looming behind *Rabbit Redux* (and *Rabbit, Run*) include the Br'er Rabbit stories of American blacks, Peter Rabbit story, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Heavenly Footman*, Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy and Karl Barth's theology.

81 Derrida 1981b, 26.

82 Derrida 1976, 18-19.
Even the etymology of the word *graffiti* is connected with erasure. The Greek word *graphein* means 'to write'; the Latin *grafio* refers to 'stylus' or 'writing implement.' On the other hand, *graffiare* means 'to scratch, to erase.' Hence, graffiti already contains its own change or cancellation; to erase or scrach a text adds something to it, and adding erases something from it.

difference from its opposite, and its reference to the other is inscribed within itself.

The last word on the wall asks the ritual question of Halloween: "TRICK OR TREAT" (RRx, 342). The question seems to express the binary logic pertinent to the novel's world view and interpretive presuppositions: phenomena and meanings can be divided into two only, the law of the excluded middle is still in force, there is nothing between (taking) a trick and (giving) treat. The graffiti above, however, undo this kind of strictly binary thinking. Writing is unpredictable and capable of meaning two mutually exclusive things at the same time. Without the writer present, the graffiti are liable to uncontrollable interpretations. Writing, unattended by its father and wandering like an orphan without parental guidance, seems to realize Plato's warning of the dangers and treacherousness of written speech.[83] Elsewhere in the novel, however, conversations and the archewriterly quality of speech show that speech is as unpredictable and as ambiguous as the writing on the wall here.

The rewritten graffiti could also be read as a metaphor for the act of interpretation: by thematizing and deciding on points of importance, every reading, in a sense, edits and adds something to a text, rewrites it by partly erasing it and by effacing some other possible readings. A resisting, opposing reading, which more or less appropriates a given text, invites its own counter-force with different emphases and points of erasure.

The acts and effects of writing, as well as the general textuality presented in *Rabbit Redux* contribute to a self-referential or metafictional reading of the novel. In the following subsection, I shall turn to this aspect of writing.

5.2.4 Reflections: Writing (as) Metafiction

As is apparent from my reading of the novel so far, *Rabbit Redux*, although usually regarded as realistic-modernistic, has some features which point at its self-conscious and metafictional qualities, even to the degree that it resembles, albeit sporadically, the works of American postmodernists of the early 1970s. It is not my intention to rehabilitate Updike by claiming that he was not as remote from the experimentalists as has been commonly maintained, but rather to read *Rabbit Redux* from a viewpoint which (in my opinion) clearly invites one to do so.

The very profession of Harry and the minute descriptions of text composition and printing process, of course, draw attention to the novel's textuality. The impression is further reinforced by the expansion of the realm of writing and printing, in the form of metaphors, to that of human perception and interaction. In Dällenbach's terms, the descriptions of the scene of printing are *mises en abyme de l'énonciation*: they reflect the production of the novel quite graphically or literally by showing the process by which it, like any printed matter, is actually made. *Rabbit Redux*, in other words, reproduces its production and produces its reproduction.

---

83 Cf. Derrida 1981a, 75-81.
Graffiti appear elsewhere in Updike's fiction as well. In *The Centaur*, somebody had changed the graffiti "FUCK" into "BOOK" (Updike 1978, 223). For the character who notices the change it is a surprise that a swearword can become a book, that writing bears an erotic trace in it. *The Coup* features a graffiti scene not unlike that in *Rabbit Redux* (cf. subsection 7.2.2.1.)

The composition, reproduced in the novel as a work-in-progress constantly interrupted by telephone calls, other disturbances, and Harry's comments, thus opens up the novel's self-conscious or metafictional qualities. Typesetting Harry can be interpreted to represent a homodiegetic narrator who not only sets the type matter, but also writes the rest of the narrative (in which he appears as a fictional character).[84] Or at least he draws attention to the act of writing, to the operations of narrative discourse and, consequently, to the fictional nature of the whole novel. As a narrator, Harry would be an intrusive, explicitly commenting one. Although the narrator of *Rabbit Redux* does not seemingly intrude on the happenings or comment on the story or the discourse, he does provide the narratee(s) with help in his/her/their reading effort, as I tried to show in subsection 5.1.1. above: the narrator's commentary is subtle, and not foregrounded as is often the case in explicitly self-conscious fiction. Hence, Harry can be conceived as a metaphorical narrator, as part of the novel's self-reference, reflecting its own way of construction.

The composition of a newspaper or the description of a printing plant as an instance of self-reference is, of course, nothing unique in literature, for the topos can be traced back to the early stages of the Western novel. As Alter notes, towards the end of his adventures - which started in a library - Don Quixote comes across a printing shop, where he witnesses the whole printing process resulting in a self-conscious effect on the reader:

> At such a moment we can hardly forget that Don Quixote himself is no more than the product of the very processes he observes, a congeries of words set up in type, run off as proof, corrected and rerun, bound in pages, and sold at so many reales a copy.[85]

Alter also scrutinizes another novel extensively dealing with printing, Balzac's *Les Illusions perdues* (1837-43), but rather hurriedly dismisses its self-consciousness on the basis that it fails to present a paradox inherent in the description of book production within a novel which that very production brought into existence.[86] Although the Balzac novel may not explicitly question the status of fiction and reality, or the conventions of narrative, the minute depictions of printing, including its history and technological innovations, as well as the commercial distribution of books, all function as *mises en abyme de l'énonciation*: they reflect both the production and reception of literature, including the Balzac novel itself.

As for the composition of a newspaper, one is reminded of the so-called "Aeolus" episode, filled with typographical errors and seemingly random headlines, in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).[87] The episode, like the corresponding parts of *Rabbit Redux*, deals with the art or act of writing, with literary creation; the rhetorical

---

84 In an interview, Updike (s.a., 490) confessed that he saw similarities between Harry's work and that of an author: both spend their days bent over a type-writer, both work with words.

85 Alter 1977, 4-5.

86 Ibid., 106.

87 David Thurburn makes an interesting comparison between *Rabbit Redux* and Joyce's *Ulysses*. Bereaved of one child and cuckolded, Harry is not unlike Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*. They also share ordinariness, unheroic and unromantic experiences. *Rabbit Redux* even ends with a paragraph echoing that of the Joyce novel. (Thorburn 1979, 5.) Strangely enough, Thorburn ignores the most obvious similarity between the two protagonists: both men's profession is connected with newspapers.
For Derrida's rhapsodic notes on the "Aeolus" episode, see Derrida 1988, 37-40.

language of newspapers turns out to "falsify" "reality."

If the Updike novel is at least partly self-reflective, what does it have to say about reflection in general? Polysemous, the word *reflection* refers to physical, anatomical, optical, and mental acts of reflecting and bending back. The different semantic contents are not, of course, independent, but stem from the common root signifying "bending." Before going into the novel's textual and empirical mirrorings, a preparative note might be in order. Fiction, claims Paul de Man,[88] asserts its separation from empirical reality by a self-reflective mirror-effect; therefore fiction must never be confused with the reality it has left for good. This reminds one of Updike's poem "Mirror" (1958):

When you look	kool uoy nehW
into a mirror	rorrim a otni
it is not	ton si ti
yourself you see,	,ees uoy flesruoy
but a kind	dnik a tub
of apish error	rorre hsipa fo
posed in fearful	lufraef ni desop
symmetry.	.yrtemmys

(Updike 1968, 88).

The poem can be interpreted as a comment on the mimetic in art: neither the author nor the world can be found "as such," as a faithful copy in a work of art, but as a new, independent reality.[89]

In *Rabbit Redux*, reflection appears in Jill's mystic explanation of the universe, which deserves to be quoted at length:

> 'Think of it Nelson, like this: matter is the mirror of spirit. But it's three-dimensional, like an enormous room, a ballroom. And inside it are these tiny *other* mirrors tilted this way and that and throwing the light back the wrong way. Because to the big face looking in, these little mirrors are just dark spots, where He can't see Himself.' (RRx, 143; emphasis in original)

Jill claims, with Emersonian overtones, that without people's egos the universe would be clean[90]; God being the only consciousness, all the rest would be "doing their thing unself-consciously" (RRx, 143). All this can be read as an allegory of (the nature of) fiction, as a *mise en abyme du code*: God is an author who will not find his image in his own "text," universe; the characters of his fiction - human beings - are conscious of themselves and of their fictional nature. The novel's often recurring word *space* connects the cosmic with the graphic: it refers not only to "what is outside the earth's air; where other heavenly bodies move" (the moon flight and the Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*) but also to "an area or distance left between written or printed

---

88 de Man 1971, 17.

89 "Fearful symmetry," of course, refers to William Blake's poem "The Tyger" (1794) which depicts God as the creator of both the demonic and the apocalyptic sides of the world. Besides God, only an artist can create such a world, but it radically differs from empirical reality.

90 This follows the same train of thought as "Mirror": in a reflection, man is an erasable spot, an "apish error".

words, likes, etc" (in Harry's type matter).[91]

Mirror-effect reappears when Harry instals storm windows:

> repeat the process; and go inside and repeat the process, twice: so that at least for flawless transparencies permit outdoors to come indoors, other houses to enter yours. The mirror is two-way. (RRx, 267.)

Put opposite each other, mirrors form an endlessly repeating set of reflections.[92] This phenomenon is dramatized, when Harry watches Skeeter and Jill make love. The light turned on, the window pane is not transparent from the inside, but reflects like a mirror; hence, a neighbour can view the happenings out of doors without being seen. The reader observes them all. Thus: the reader observes how the neighbour observes how Harry observes Jill and Skeeter form a reflection, a black-and-white printing process. (RRx, 260-261.) When the light is turned off, the window becomes transparent again, and the peeping Tom is revealed. But the reader as a peeping Tom will not be discovered; s/he is safe outside the frame of the mirror, the hierarchical categories of narration again presented, as in Jill's allegory, as a *mise en abyme du code*. The reader's duty is to reflect - in both senses of the word - this hierarchy, to interpret this "house of fiction." The novel momentarily stages its narrative situation, with the reader as a spectator. Although the reader is not discovered, s/he may be contaminated by the very spectacle, be seduced as the narratee is seduced.[93]

Indeed, Harry's house functions as a stage for fiction-making. As Skeeter notes, Harry's house has "paper walls," which can refer to both thinness and fictitiousness (RRx, 228). At least two instances of *mise en abyme de l'énonciation* can be detected in the scenes set in the house: Jill turns her story of life into an autobiographical song (RRx, 154-56), and Skeeter recasts not only American history but also his own role in it into an eschatological allegory based on biblical motives. Both characters' representations are more or less manipulated versions of the supposed original "real" or "actuality," which makes Harry, the one who does not consciously fictionalize, doubt the validity of the accounts. The (scene of) writing he is accustomed to at his work seems, in contrast, transparent, unmediated, as the following extract suggests:

> And Harry loves the light here. It is cream to his eyes, this even bluish light that nowhere casts a shadow, light so calm and fine you can read glinting letters backwards at a glance. It contrasts to the light in his home, where standing at the kitchen he casts a shadow that looks like dirt over the dishes, and sitting in the living room he must squint against the bridge lamp Janice uses to read magazines by, and bulbs keep burning out on the stair landing, and the kid complains except when it's totally dark about the reflections on the television screen. In the big room of Verity Press, ceilinged with fluorescent tubes, men move around as spirits, without shadows. (RRx, 35.)

However, he, too, finally finds out that the seemingly neutral and objective prose of the news he is setting is as apt to diverge from the "truth" (both formally and content-wise) as his two guests' renditions of personal or general history. There, inevitably,

---

91 *Longman*, s.v. 'space.'

92 Already in the beginning of the novel, Harry's neighbourhood is described as a "fragmented mirror, of houses like this, telephone wires and television aerials showing where the glass cracked" (RRx, 23; cf. also RRx, 68, 199).

93 For the connection between narrative situation and narrative seduction in general, see Chambers 1984.

falls a "shadow," *différance*, between being and meaning, between event and description.

The graffiti scene could be read as a *mise en abyme du code*, reflecting the general operations of writing - traces, supplementarity, palimpsests, erasure - also at work in *Rabbit Redux* (cf. subsection 5.2.3. above).

The *mises en abyme de l'énoncé* are few in the novel. The most prominent one are the Soyuz 5 and Apollo 11 space explorations, which form controlling metaphors for the novel and at the same time reflect its plot structure (cf. subsection 3.1.1. above). Another incident conceivable as a condensation of the novel's happenings is Harry's agitated thought, when he is hurrying from work to home "[i]n case it's burned down. In case a madman has moved in. These things happen all the time in the papers." (RRx, 18.) Both fears are realized later on, but in a reverse order: the house burns down after the "madman" (Skeeter) has moved in. As for thematic concerns, Janice's thoughts in the beginning of the novel crystallize the problematic life/writing and reality/news oppositions in a *mise en abyme de l'énoncé*: "And all the time there are wars and riots and history happening but it's not as important as the newspapers say unless you get caught in it" (RRx, 56).

On the other hand, as I stated in subsection 5.1.5. above, Harry's house is also a house of interpretation. Hence, within the walls of the house, "fiction" is both made and unmade, created and deciphered. Finally a realistic novel, *Rabbit Redux*, however, does not engage in narrational paradoxes, but merely reflects, in a number of ways, itself.

6 A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

6.1 Reading

6.1.1 The Reading Diary: Narrator as Commentator

The Reverend Thomas Marshfield is the overt narrator of his diary, which forms the text of *A Month of Sundays*.[1]

Marshfield's narration is not only writing but also a reading of his own writing. Marshfield's narrative is not polished or edited in order to give an illusion of a smooth, finished work. On the contrary, the narration is constantly interrupted by his commentary either in the main body of the text or, more dramatically, in footnotes.[2] This implies that Marshfield is reading while he is writing.

The commentary falls into all the categories sketched by Barthes complete with the metacritical one. The metalinguistic commentary - itself divided into explanatory, psychopathological, and disseminative subcategories - as well as commentary on the hermeneutic and cultural codes predominate both quantitatively and qualitatively.

To start with the paratext, or more specifically **peritext**, of the novel, the title, *A Month of Sundays*, brings certain aspects of the work into prominence and intertextually utilizes the cultural code. Taken literally, the title proairetically

---

1 The Reverend Thomas Marshfield, a Protestant minister from New England, is ordered to spend a month in a Southwestern sanatorium because of his adulterous indiscretions amidst his congregation. He is married to Jane Chillingworth but has had affairs with his church organist, Alicia Crick, and Frankie Harlow, a parishioner, among other women. As a curative method of the sanatorium, Marshfield is to keep a diary every day. In addition to this, at his own will, he also prepares four sermons, one on each Sunday. In his diary entries, Marshfield tells about his past, theological problems and sexual adventures. Soon Marshfield begins to suspect that somebody, probably Ms. Prynne, the manageress of the institution, secretly reads his diary. This turns out to be the case, and Marshfield, with a seductive intent, begins to address the narrative to her. On the last page of the diary (and the novel) Ms. Prynne comes to Marshfield and they make love.

2 As for other graphic devices to foreground commentary, Marshfield also extensively uses brackets and even square brackets to frame his explanations and asides within the text (MS, 11, 53).

emphasizes the importance of Marshfield's four sermons; the month he spends in the sanatorium, the title seems to suggest, qualitatively consists of the Sundays he writes the sermons. The title is, of course, also a proverb with a metaphoric meaning. It equals "an indefinite time" or "never."[3] As a comment on the symbolic code, the title hints at the fictional, made-up nature of the diary; it suggests something which is idiomatic, inseparable of language but not reducible to its constituent parts. The novel, the Reverend's life as a written account, is something which does not exist as such, but "only" in fiction.[4]

The next paratextual threshold before the text proper consists of the peritext of two epigraphs. The first one is from the Bible, Psalm 45: "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer," which ties in with the novel's central concern of speech and writing as well as to the authorial control manifest in Marshfield's urge to dominate his narratees.[5] Also the second epigraph, by Paul Tillich, is religious: "This principle of soul, universally and individually, is the principle of ambiguity." As a comment on the text, the epigraph emphasizes at least three issues: soul (as opposed to body); the relation of universality and individuality; and ambiguity. The first point is explicitly dealt with and the other two executed as instances of narration in the text.[6]

The novel's chapters are titled by mere arabic numerals from one to thirty-one, which seemingly ties in with the classic tradition of rhematic titling, giving no thematic information.[7] However, the chapter division, miming the astronomical and thus "natural" full circle of a month, of course, stems from Marshfield's obligation to write every day of his stay at the sanatorium and thus the titles are somewhat

---

3 Cf. Hunt 1980, 227.

4 In his penultimate diary entry, Marshfield comments on the possible metaphoricity of his stay (and of the narrative he has produced during it): "The day after tomorrow, my month may seem a metaphor, a pause briefer than rest of Alicia's I so reprehensibly interrupted" (MS, 226).
Robert Detweiler (1979, 617) makes an interesting point by noting how the first letters of the words in the novel's title form the anagram AMOS. Amos is the name of a biblical character but also of Marshfield's fellow minister, the only one in the group without a sexual misconduct. The name Amos appears prominently in chapters 23 and 24 when Marshfield recounts the golf games he plays with the other ministers and his own private "word golf." By usually changing one letter at a time, Marshfield brings about radical changes in words: "Golf, gold, good, gods, nods, *nous*, gnus, anus, Amos" (MS, 185). The manipulative permutations that this iterative use of language produces can be read as a metaphor for the whole novel's construction: the diary is a linguistic game of fiction, an exercise in medium, which ends up as the novel *A M(onth) o(f) S(undays)*.
The reference to the novel's paratext, its title, in the form of an anagram is an acrostic; not only does the paratext comment on the text but the latter also cites the former; reading the text means, then, simultenously reading its paratext (cf. Sabry 1987, 91-9).

5 George Hunt provides a somewhat different interpretation of the epigraph's functions; by accounting for the lines preceding the quotation ("My heart overflows with a goodly theme as I sing my ode to the King"), Hunt (1980, 182) expounds: "Psalm 45 was originally a secular song celebrating the wedding of an Israelite king, but the Jewish and Christian traditions have appropriated it as celebrating the marriage of the Messianic king with Israel (prefiguring the Church). The Psalm's fusion of secular/sacral, marriage/fidelity, redeemer/community comprises the novel's central motifs." Hunt (ibid., 182-83) also notices the sexual connotations of the "tongue" and, lastly, its relation to the theme of writing and reading.

6 Hunt (1980, 186-87), too, emphasizes the ambiguity mentioned in the second epigraph as the principle animating the tensions between the novel's various themes and the shifting narrative voice.

7 Cf. Genette 1987, 276.

thematic as well.[8] The shape of the structure also has proairetic, symbolic, and thematic underpinnings, as George Hunt observes:

> The omega mirrors the circuitous movement of the diary's development, its temporal duration following the the four phases of the lunar cycle, and the shifting sensibilities of the diarist from the enclosed O to the more open omega.[9]

All the peritexts can easily be attributed to the main narrator, Marshfield himself, instead of an editor-narrator: he delights in such puns as the title provides, he extensively deals with the thematics suggested by the epigraphs, and he consciously writes one diary entry a day.[10]

The very first page of the main body of the diary contains **metalinguistic** rumination of the minutest kind. Marshfield halts at the word "recuperation," which could describe his stay in the sanatorium, and thinks of it as a "retraction" and his own condition as a "distraction" (MS, 3). The change in meaning brought about by a suffix makes him ponder: "Perhaps the opposite of 'dis' is not 're' but the absence of any prefix [—]," which inspires him to think himself as a broken-boned athete in "traction" (MS, 4). On the first page, Marshfield also provides a literal translation of a foreign idiom and a comment on its source: "[—] where my parish, as the French so nicely put it, locates itself" (MS, 3-4). Other explanatory readings by Marshfield serve the same function as the translation: to explicitly articulate in which sense and on what basis a word is used. The expressions metalinguistically commented upon include such common words as *well*, so worn off in phatic usage that it has become practically meaningless and is thus in need of definition: "(an itchy word signalling my increasing vivid anticipations of a shower, a Whiskey Sour, a lulling view of tinted wasteland, and the blameless friction of male chaffing)" (MS, 40). Sometimes Marshfield provides a possible reason for a word he uses; an extended oral or tactile metaphor is explained in a footnote: "Our softness, the doughness of the soul that keeps* us sticking together [—]" (MS, 119); "*The Marshfields mallow?" (MS, 119n). Conscious of language and its history, Marshfield also offers etymological help when he thinks it makes his point clearer. Narrating his impressions of Jane, whom he was dating as a student, Marshfield writes: "I saw her as my 'wife'* and went blind with pride"; "*The Word, by the way, is just the Anglo-Saxon *wīf*, for 'woman.' My wife, ma *femme*, this cunt indentured to me. Sad to say, lib-lubbers." (MS, 54n.)

Moving onto a psycholinguistic or psychopathological level of metalinguistic commentary, the narrator analyzes a number of Freudian slips or portmanteaux he accidentally writes.[11] "All middle-aged men, we sit each at our table clearing dry

---

8 The titling of the novel's chapters diverges from the conventions of diary fiction in that the dates are not specified, perhaps suggesting the made-up, unmimetic quality of the novel.

9 Hunt 1980, 187. My reading of the novel below opposes Hunt's last remark, which seems to converge with the narrator's picture of himself and with the conventions of diary fiction.

10 True, there is another peritext, a dedication "for Judith Jones," before the epigraphs, which is to be attributed to Updike himself. As I mentioned in subsection 5.1.1. above, I shall only deal with those peritexts that are conceivable as commentary by the narrator or the "editor-narrator."

11 In his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), Sigmund Freud (1960, 116-33) shows how verbal slips - puns, anagrams, portmanteaux -are connected to the workings of the unconscious; repressed thoughts and anticipations make their appearance in a form which can bypass the psychic control. It is interesting how, against common assumption, slips of the pen are made more readily than those of the tongue (Freud 1960, 131). This holds true with Marshfield: his all slips but one are those of the pen; the exception is a misreading of

throughts* [—]" (MS, 5); "*Meant to write 'throats,' was thinking of 'thoughts,' a happy Freudian, let it stand" (MS, 5n). Most of the slips are, as the example above suggests, psychologically motivated and thus explicable on the basis of (Freudian) psychopathology. Trying to see Alicia and Ned making love behind closed storm windows, Marshfield suddenly catches a glimpse of a naked body: "a white triangle, quick as a Nikon's shutter, flesh* above the edge of a sofa [—]" (MS, 14); "*I of course meant to type 'flash'" (MS, 14n). The erotic tension of the situation manifests itself as a revealing "bodily" slip, which utilizes the phonetic closeness of the two words.[12] Once Marshfield writes about his "unpraised* phallus" (*pro* "upraised"; MS, 34n); it is easy to connect this slip with his insatiable sexual egotism and phallic world view in general, both of which he would like to keep hidden. "Funeral semon*" (*pro* "sermon"; MS, 142n) crystallizes two Freudian drives, Eros and Thanatos - semen and funeral - in one single portmanteau; Marshfield hints at this kind of reading by commenting: "How's that for womb/tomb, life-in-death, etc.?" (MS, 142n).

Sometimes the narrator cannot pinpoint one single explanation but offers alternative readings; for example, he vacillates with the meaning of the portmanteau *favered*: "*Well, what can this mean? I want to be favored, though fevered? Or my fever has the vanilla flavor of the bedside clock just described at such unexpectedly lovesick length?" (MS, 75n). In a similar fashion, Marshfield admits the difficulty of explaining *aven*, which could refer to *again*, *haven*, and *heaven* (MS, 201n). As an "instruction" to the narratee(s) or the actual reader, these examples seem to suggest that the novel is not reducible to one single meaning but allows for multiple, even mutually exclusive readings.[13] To assume that every slip (or, for that matter, motif, symbol, image) is explicable implies that there is a controlling principle, perhaps an intentional Author-God, in the text. But Marshfield notes: "Or perhaps Freud's stumblebum God does not impart His dark fingerprint to every slip of the tips" (MS, 117n).

"OFFICE" for "ORIFICE" (MS, 151), when Marshfield is preparing for an adulterous tryst at a motel.
Freud insists throughout his study that all slips, whether verbal or not, are explicable, reducible to final causes. This rather positivistic and reductive principle turns out to be somewhat questionable in Marshfield's case.
For a reading of Marshfield's slips according to the Lacanian school of psychoanalysis, see Detweiler 1979, 612-22.

12 The reader may develop the pun: Thomas Marshfield is, in this scene, a Peeping Tom. Jealously looking through the blinds, he also combines the two meanings of the French word *jalousie* - 'jealousy' and 'shutter' - like Robbe-Grillet's *nouveau roman La Jalousie* (1957). Later on, Marshfield suggests that "to replace storm panes with screens" can also be read as "[p]ains with screams" (MS, 115), which again associates windows with anxiety. Cf. also Marshfield's violent depiction of the motel restaurant: the wall "wears heavy vanilla curtains out of whose gaps knives of light fall [---] with an almost audible splintering of brightness" (MS, 5). On a few occasions, Marshfield is indeed a voyeuristic narrator: he omnisciently describes happenings in which he has not been physically present; he peeps into the scenes, as it were, through slits and holes (cf. Marshfield's own confession of this practice MS, 188-89).
Robbe-Grillet is mentioned in the novel in connection with reification and manifestations of God's existence (MS, 25). For a discussion of reification in Updike (and in Robbe-Grillet), see Doody 1979, 204-20.

13 Early in the novel, in its third footnote, Marshfield seems to suggest that the diary's ambiguity can partly be a conscious, premeditated application of the Freudian rule of slip formation by admitting that the portmanteau *criddence* is an intentional combination of *riddance* and *credence* (MS, 5).

As a reading of Marshfield's character, the slips reveal - trivially - that he is not a very good typist, that his mind is at first confused (the slips abound in the first two weeks, stop for a week and return when the Reverend thinks of returning to the world and of Ms. Prynne). Not surprisingly, when recounting his sexual adventures or declaring his love for Ms. Prynne, Marshfield's slips tie in with the realm of sex. As portmanteaux, the slips undermine the assumption of a one-to-one relationship between the signifier and the signified: that two or more signifieds are embedded in one signifier deconstructs the concept of the sign in which the signified is given priority over the signifier, the imperfect and derivative representation of meaning.[14]

Marshfield explicates some of the intertextual aspects of his narrative, thus providing commentary on the **cultural or referential code**. He uses some words with a particular intertext in mind, but the allusions are so personal or otherwise vague that he wants to make them unambiguous to the narratee(s) with the help of "subtext-baring devices."[15] As with metalinguistic commentary, Marshfield either foregrounds the explanations of intertexts by putting them in parentheses or footnotes, or by giving them unmarked in the main body of the text. The word *particulars* turns out to be an allusion to a canto by Allen Ginsberg and used in its specific sense (MS, 4n). The phrase "shouting star" (MS, 15) seems an apparent slip of the pen (*pro* "shooting star"), but Marshfield reveals that he has used it as a conscious reference to William Blake (MS, 15n). A remark on his sons' "fine-grained pliancy and gleeful dependence" when they were babies is revealed to be a reference to an unidentified part of Genesis (MS, 39n). A slip of the pen - *ompotent* - is given a possible explanation with the help of the medieval German mystic, Meister Eckhardt (MS, 202n). Another philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, is quoted in connection with an erotic situation, Marshfield acting as a Peeping Tom and trying to avoid thorns: "('With the help of the thorn in my foot," Kierkegaard wrote, "I spring higher than anyone with sound feet')" (MS, 13). Marshfield also explicitly alludes to Shakespeare: "Old Tom Marshfield, he has his spies, to paraphrase Lear" (MS, 224). On the novel's second page, Marshfield points out his (rather obvious) intertextual link to the biblical doubting Thomas: "I doubt (verily, my name *is* Thomas) [---]" (MS, 4).[16] Sometimes Marshfield is consciously allusive, but cannot be sure of his accuracy:

> Her laugh filled the church like golden mud - or do I misquote?" (MS, 32).
>
> Get me out of this, as Dutch Schultz (or was it Molly Bloom, or Psalm 22?) said (MS, 64).

Commentary is also provided for exactly the opposite reason; something seems an obvious allusion, which is not, according to the narrator, the case: "I spilled out the details and near-misses on the other side of the looking glass* [—]" (MS, 97); "* FYI: I swear, Alicia's name is real, not contrived to fit Wonderland" (MS, 97n). Marshfield may act here as a counter-reader or an ill-intentioned narrator; he wants to direct the interpretation of Alicia's character by suppressing her intertextual link to the Lewis

---

14 Cf. Attridge 1988, 140-55 on Joyce's portmanteaux.

15 I borrow the term from Pekka Tammi 1985, 258.

16 Character names belong to the realm of the semic code (cf. Barthes 1970, 74), but I have decided to deal with them in connection with the cultural code, because the commentary the narrator provides on them ties more in with intertextuality than with character traits proper.

Carrol novel. However, there is no reason why the actual reader should not bear her literary predecessor in mind; in fact, the very comment on the name's origins shows how texts live in a world of other texts, inevitably resonating with prior meanings.[17]

Marshfield comments in a more subtle way as well: the portmanteau *gorgan* (> organ + Gorgon) is "explained" indirectly by referring to the mythical snake-haired figure Gorgon, whose appearance supposedly petrifies the beholder: "* Thus. My glimpse might turn me to stone?" (MS, 112). Ned Bork's Jungian interests are also expressed by archetypal key words, without mentioning the discipline's progenitor (MS, 142n). The allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "Perfidy, thy name might as well be Bork" (MS, 13; cf. "Frailty, thy name is woman") is left unexplained but, marked by the archaic pronoun and placed in a scene of infidelity, the allusion draws attention to itself and to the novel's discussion of jealousy and adultery.

Throughout his narration, Marshfield alludes to the Bible by using its phrases and metaphors but without always disclosing their source.[18] The general effect of the biblical allusions, in combining the sacred with the profane, is comic or even blasphemous:

> [Marshfield] goes to bed without the pajama bottoms for at least a trinity of reasons [—] (MS, 11).
>
> [—] our ex-athletic cleric and voyeur swung his ungirdled loins [—] (MS, 13).
>
> [Ned Bork's] tactile intrusion into, and escape from, the deep vault of my passion gave him a for me Lazarene fascination - he moved in my vision with the unhealthy phosphorescence of a raised corpse (MS, 86).

However, the stylistic mixture also serves thematic concerns; it ties in with the double theme of sex and religion, as George Hunt has pointed out.[19] For example, such biblical phrases as "going down to the dust" (MS, 20; cf. Psalm 22:19) and "even, so come" (MS, 112, 226; cf. Rev. 22:20) punningly combine both themes.

As a whole, the allusions only partially bared by the narrator imply the existence of a narratee sharing his literary and cultural competence and thus capable of understanding the intertexts and their functions without further assistance.

To move on to another code, the narrator also provides **proairetic** commentary. Self-conscious of his writing, Marshfield every now and then reviews what he has written thus far and comments on the order of his narrative's segments. In his third diary entry, Marshfield discloses the contingent nature of his narration:

> These sentences have come in no special order. Each of them has hurt. Each might have been different, with the same net effect. All facts are equivalently dismal. Any set of circumstances can give rise to a variety of psychological conditions. We acknowledge this when we skip the flashbacks in novels. (MS, 19-20.)

---

17 Mirrors, both actual and textual, are indeed prominently present in the novel (cf. MS, 7-8, 33, 111, 152, 153, 228), and accounting for *Alice in Wonderland* when reading their meaning would probably prove useful.

18 In Marshfield's sermons, however, the allusions to the Bible are well-documented and expounded, functioning as models for interpretation (cf. 6.1.3. below). The two uses of the Bible are, nevertheless, close to each other: the sermons, too, mix the sacred and the profane, albeit in a less obviously facetious way than the examples here.

19 Hunt 1980, 183.

In the same entry, he also notices an unforeseen relation between two narrative segments:

> "Bending my face close in" reminds me (if you care, supposed reader, about this kind of connection) of that redhead some pages and more years ago, "her pubic hair as nicely packed around its treasure as excelsior around an ancestral locket." An attic closeness. (MS, 25.)[20]

The same analeptic tendency pervades Marshfield's narration throughout: he assists the narratee by explicitly referring to an earlier segment of which a musical metaphor reminds him (MS, 34); the narratee is asked to find for herself the precedent segments about the physical similarity between Marshfield and his wife (MS, 119) and the etymology of the word *wife* (MS, 170); the narrator also sums up in detail the three occasions when he has risen over his characters and narrated happenings from above (MS, 188-89).

Another form of commentary pervasive to Marshfield's narration is what could be called **metacritical** or **evaluative** or **commentary on the act of writing**. Reading his own writing, Marshfield repeatedly evaluates it, reads it as a critic might do. The scope of this kind of commentary ranges from remarks on the physical act of writing to critical statements of the style, tense, and person used. At first Marshfield's comments betray a genuine pleasure of manipulating words and, through them, people he is depicting: "This is fun! First you whittle the puppets, then you move them around." (MS, 12.) But soon the very act of writing turns troublesome, producing unintentional slips and stylistic unevenness in the narrative:

> My father's house house house hou
> Fingers droop above the keys [—] (MS, 17.)

> I see that, meaning to write about my father, I have written about my mother instead (MS, 20).

> Why can't I keep this in the present tense? (MS, 28).

> I notice I have slipped into the first person; a Higher Wisdom, it may be, directs my style (MS, 78).

> She lifted her face; her face was behind glass.
> What do I mean, writing that? (MS, 30)

> My characters recede (MS, 140).

Marshfield also narcissistically admires his own text:

> those toes, so well described yesterday (MS, 21).

> Oh I know, I know, dear unknown reader, that just thinking of this woman tricks my prose into a new ease of fancy and airiness of cadence; I am home (MS, 49).

> Short, bright paragraphs today (MS, 115).
> But to prolong this paragraph might compromise its shortness and brightness (MS, 118).

---

20 The last statement punningly condenses a proairetic and a metacritical comment in one word: attic can refer not only a garret but also to Marshfield's (supposed) Attic prose style marked by simplicity, purity, and refinement.

On the other hand, he openly admits his stylistic flaws:

> (there must be a better term, Ms. Prynne, but I'm word-weary [—]) (MS, 64).
>
> I hate this day's pages. The depression grows fangs, this second week. (MS, 64.)
>
> My defiantly tricksome style of earlier has fallen from me; I limp, lame and fuzzy-brained, from the dim thought to the next (MS, 202).

Marshfield also provides commentary on the **symbolic code**. Rereading his account of his mother in church, Marshfield explains the personal symbolic meanings he attaches to voice (MS, 20); describing his father's carpentry and his own childhood fancies, Marshfield discloses the special signification that objects and their completion have in his mind (MS, 21-23, 117). Because the symbols are personal, Marshfield finds it necessary to decipher them for the narratee(s). At the same time, the very commentary hints at the importance of these symbolic meanings in interpreting Marshfield's whole narrative.[21]

Marshfield's reading of his own narration also pays attention to the **hermeneutic code**. This kind of commentary is executed in two main ways in the novel: Marshfield explicitly asks questions concerning the meaning of various phenomena and sometimes provides the answers for them himself; on the other hand, he sets an arche-hermeneutic enigma by reading reality and the Bible as detective fiction. The questions Marshfield asks are varied. They can be aimed at a narratee - specified or unspecified, individual, or collective - or at the narrator himself.[22] Formally, the questions can be categorized as 1) wh-, 2) yes-no, and 3) negative-interrogative ones:

1) What can I tell you? (MS, 6)
   Who am I? (MS, 6)
   How did I do this? How did I manage to gather such a monstrous impression? (MS, 21)

2) (is that an elbow protruding from one window? is that a fissure or a river off the left?) (MS, 17.)
   Did I make an attempt to [curl up on her warm floor like a cat]? (MS, 150)
   Do I detect an extra whiteness, as of erasure, in the blank space beneath the conclusion of yesterday's sermon? (MS, 167)
   Homewards thoughts within me burning already? (MS, 180)
   Suddenly, the church burns down. Faulty wiring? Panther-Muslim vandals from the ghetto one neighborhood away? A loose Jovebolt? (MS, 183.)

3) For are not children exactly that which does not have an ending, which outlast us [—]? (MS, 118)
   What is all this reduction I have described [—] but a form of exaltation [—]? Even my defeat of Woody: is not the heart of its joy nothingness, the nothingness that the annihilator experiences on behalf of the annihilated? (MS, 189)

The interrogations in the third category contain the answer within them, but only a minority of the questions is answered directly (MS, 56, 112, 134, 137, 184, 192, 213-15, 225). In accordance with the basic function of the hermeneutic code, the novel's

---

21 Indeed, voice, as opposed to writing, is of utmost importance in the novel's thematic, as I shall suggest in detail below (6.2.1.). For an interpretation of the novel's physical objects in general and the way they tie in with the mind/body opposition, see Doody 1979.

22 The narrator, for his part, functions as his own narratee; I shall deal with this and the questions aimed at or attributed to the narratee(s) in detail in subsection 6.1.2. below.

beginning (explicitly) sets a number of problems which are sustained and kept in tension up to the end when they are finally resolved.[23] The last three diary entries are practically filled with Marshfield's final questions and answers.

As for the novel's relation to the detective genre, becoming a private detective used to be Marshfield's boyhood ambition (MS, 65); spying on Alicia and Ned, he wears a hat of a "stage detective" (MS, 77); and the only books the ministers are allowed to read in the sanatorium are detective and humorous novels (MS, 24). Marshfield also jokingly rewrites Jesus's last days *à la roman policier* with a dash of conspiracy theories:

> The Case of the Empty Tomb, solved by an eccentric fat detective, fat, gruff, uncanny, cleanliness-obsessed Ponto Pilato. Who, really, *were* those two "angels"? *Why* did Mary mistake Him for a gardener? Was there a "second Osworld"? Et cet. (MS, 64.)

Imprisoned and forced to write, Marshfield himself tries to solve, in writing, "the mystery of the locked room" (explicitly alluded to [MS, 64])[24]: he deals with his personal and religious riddles in such a hermeneutic manner that the novel could be called a psychopathological-theologic whodunnit.

Turning from the commentary relating to the reading of graphic writing to that of metaphoric writing, we notice that Marshfield also pays attention to the **semic code**. Not unlike Harry Angstrom, Marshfield reads human beings and the environment as if they were inscribed, written. Certain character or setting traits are readily associated, in Marshfield's mind, with some quite stereotypical characteristics. The reading of Ms. Prynne's outer appearance - her uniform and posture - stresses her sexlessness and rigidity, metaphoric association with a slow and hard animal, tortoise:

> a large lady, undeformed but unattractrive, no doubt chosen for that very quality in this sensitive post. [—] Face of a large, white, inexplicably self-congratulating turtle. White neck extended as if to preen or ease a chafing. (MS, 6.)

Seeing two of his fellow ministers for the first time, Marshfield immediately reads the semes: "a third initiate, a slurring shy Tennessean, little hunched man with the hopeful quick smile of a backslider, probably some derelict revivalist who doubled as a duping insurance agent" (MS, 6). The same automatic stereotypal categorizing of people on the basis of first impressions continues when Marshfield narrates his past: a divorcee, Alicia must have a "touch of sorrow" and lovers (MS, 29); because Ned Bork and the Southern minister drawl and their manners are effeminate, they must be homosexuals (MS, 58-9, 143, 187). Analogously, the desert setting is unproblematically seen in terms of demonic lifelessness (MS, 4-5). Admittedly, Marshfield's readings of character and setting traits become more varied in the course of his narration (he at least allegedly acknowledges Ms. Prynne's and some of his fellow minister's many-

---

23 Cf. Barthes 1970, 26.

24 Cf. also "A little fray in the typewriter ribbon moves back and forth like a sentry" (MS, 57); "shadow, like the shadow of a passing sentry (they guard me on all sides) [---]" (MS, 58). Marshfield's other boyhood fantasy was to become a prison warden (MS, 65), and Alicia asks him to stop being his own prisoner (MS, 67). Hence, writing has, in the novel, a double function of being a means of imprisonment and of liberation.
The real essence of Ms. Prynne is also a mystery, as her very title seems to suggest: "my ms.terious Ms" (MS, 186).

sidedness towards the end of the diary; he finds the desert surprisingly animated in his third sermon). Nevertheless, the initial commentary stressing the transparency of semes will probably leave, because of its prominent position, a lasting impression on the narratee as a model for reading the novel.[25]

To sum up the functions of the various types of commentary Marshfield provides, the metalinguistic commentary - translations, etymological and psychopathological explanations - which Marshfield provides serves characterization (his education, tendency to dominate the narratee(s), self-centeredness disguised as benevolent assistance), but it also has thematic underpinnings. The prominent positions that language and the act of narrating occupy in the novel foreground the theme of narration. The untranslated theological terms by mystics (Eckhardt, Pascal) and by dogmatics (Karl Barth) seem to suggest the dramatic disparity between different schools of interpretation, biblical or literary; by the same token, the unexplained allusions to these writers distinguish Marshfield's preferred narratee(s), the fellow-ministers, from lay-persons (pun intended), especially Ms. Prynne. Furthermore, the portmanteaux deconstruct any attempt - even by the author himself, as his commentary proves - to reach a totalizing interpretation. The metasymbolic commentary also hints at the symbolic meaning of elements left unexplained, just as the metaproairetic commentary urges the reader to make connections with seemingly disconnected parts of narrative. The commentary on the semic code seems to emphasize the textuality of characters and environment, their "readerly" nature. The metahermeneutic commentary urges the narratee or the reader to ask questions pertaining to the novel's meanings, and the metacritical one draws attention not only to evaluation but also to the novel's self-reflexive characteristics.

Marshfield's commentary on the cultural or referential code - the laying bare and even interpretation of his own text's allusions - seems to instruct the actual reader to act in a similar manner. On the other hand, Marshfield's suppression of certain tenable intertexts seems to to point at his general unreliability as a narrator. By paying attention to its intertextual dimension, the reader is likely to notice the novel's most important literary intertext - alluded to in the novel's structure, thematics, and character names - Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*,[26] without restraining other relevant works.

---

25 Interestingly enough, in one of the harshest reviews Updike has ever received, Gilbert Sorrentino pays attention to the predictable and stereotypical treatment of semes and sees it as such a major flaw that it excludes the novel from "serious fiction": "add layer upon layer of description touching upon modes of dress, manners, speech, habitations, possessions, mores, etc., and presto! we know who the character is and how he will act in a given circumstance, we know, that is, his reality. [---] The author partakes, in other words, of the tried and true novelistic signals in ordering his characters' activities and lives." (Sorrentino 1982, 78-9). In resisting the narrator's semic reading - which he mistakes for that of Updike's - Sorrentino, in fact, shows that he has adopted Marshfield's initial, unproblematic model and has failed to grasp the novel narrational ironies.

26 Updike has also used *The Scarlet Letter* in two other novels, *Roger's Version* (1986) and *S.* (1988), so that critics have called the three novels "The Scarlet Letter trilogy" (cf. Iannone 1989, 55). I shall deal with *A Month of Sundays*' relation to the Hawthorne intertext in subsection 6.2.2. below.

6.1.2 Reading the Diary, Receiving the Sermons: Narratees

There are four kinds of overt narratees in the novel: fictional parishioners, other ministers as parishioners, Ms. Prynne, and Marshfield himself.[27] I shall first deal with the narratees in embedded narratives or in parts of text interpretable as such, and then move to the narratees of the main (frame) narrative.

6.1.2.1 Congregational Contracts

In his four sermons, Marshfield's collective overt narratee consists of imaginary parishioners. The narrative contract in the sermons is seemingly congregational: the homilies are nominally just given away, not exchanged for anything; I shall, however, problematize this idealization below. The sermons are never delivered in speech, but they remain in written form. They are, however, written to be preached, to be read aloud, which implies that the narratees are not supposed to be readers but listeners. Since the sermons differ from the rest of the narrative in regard to (imaginary) setting, form, "story," and narratee(s), they can be called embedded narratives.

The collective narratee in the first sermon is unidentified as regards gender, presumably because it consists of a congregation with both sexes present.[28] In accordance with the conventional rhetoric of preaching, the congregation is addressed with the second person plural: "you will remember" (MS, 41), "I beg you" (MS, 46), "I ask you" (MS, 47). The first person plural is also used: "let us pray" (MS, 41), "we stammer" (MS, 47), "[w]e *are* an adulterous generation: let us rejoice" (MS, 47). The narrator also asks questions, but they can mainly be attributed to himself rather than to the narratee. Some of the questions are, however, aimed at the group narratee *qua* congregation in order to get their (silent) support for Marshfield's reasoning[29]:

> Each home a temple: what has our Protestant revolution promulgated but this, this truth spelled plain in the houses and days of the Gospel narrative? How crucial, then, to our

---

27 Another explicit narratee is mentioned in passing: the vestrymen who might read the diary with Ms. Prynne (MS, 53). The existence of such a collective narratee is, however, only a possibility, and the vestrymen are not referred to or accounted for after this short remark. To my knowledge, no narratological analyses have been made of *A Month of Sundays*. However, some critics have lightly touched upon the problem of the readers within the novel, albeit without using narratological terminology. For example, Terrence A. Doody (1979, 210-11) notes that "Marshfield's appeal to the reader is not simply generic. Sometimes the 'reader' is Marshfield himself, the censor of the manuscript; but the 'dear' reader he has in mind from the beginning is Ms. Prynne [---]."

28 On the basis of the quotations from the Bible and religious writings dating from the same period, one could detect a male bias in the sermon, but this might be due to the patriarchal nature of the texts as well as to Marshfield's interests. The biblical rules and regulations concerning adultery often assume that it is the man who commits it; cf. "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt.5:28); "That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornification, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt.5:32). On the other hand, Marshfield lists some half a dozen (actual, metaphoric, or presumed) adulteresses mentioned in the Bible, which evens the score (MS, 42-44). Apparently Marshfield does not want to exclude women from the narrative contract in the sermon by concentrating on men only.

29 Marshfield once explicitly refers to the congregation's silence and to the unbalanced relation between the narrator and the group narratee: "you whose faces stare mutely up at me as I writhe within this imaginary pulpit" (MS, 46).

> present happiness are Christ's pronouncements upon those flanking menaces to the fortress of the household - adultery and divorce. (MS, 43.)

> But who that has eyes to see cannot so lust? Was not the First Divine Commandment received by human ears, "Be fruitful and multiply"? Adultery is not a choice to be avoided; it is a circumstance to be embraced. (MS, 45.)

> For what is the body but a swamp in which the spirit drowns? And what is marriage, that supposedly seamless circle, but a deep well up out of which the man and woman stare at the impossible sun, the distant bright disc, of freedom? (MS, 46.)

Also, by answering his own questions, Marshfield, as it were, creates a dialogue with himself:

> What does Jesus say to such precepts [of the Pharisaical law]? That they have been composed in "hardness of heart." That what "God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." That "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her." (MS, 45.)

Marshfield also answers in a less biblical and verbose manner to the question wherein an American man recovers his sense of worth and an American woman recovers her dignity; the answer to both questions is: "In adultery" (MS, 46). The narrator's rhetorical strategy is to convince the audience of the correctness and logical coherence of his analysis. Marshfield even appeals to the adulterous members of the congregation to get their experience-based support for his reasoning (MS, 46); collectively, the parishioners are asked not to spurn his interpretation (MS, 46-47).

The narratee of the second sermon is different from that of the first. The vocative "brethren" in the beginning of the second sentence, and the subsequent references to the sanatorium activities of the past week indicate that the group narratee consists of Marshfield's fellow ministers. Even the the use of *we* primarily referring to Americans suits to the congregation of wayward ministers well: "we pray with our stomachs, while our hands do mischief, and our heads indict the universe" (MS, 102); "Well, are we not such a faithless and perverse generation. A generation of falling men, of starving men [—]?" (MS, 106.) Also the nine consecutive accusing questions about the selectivity of Jesus' healing miracles could well stem from the ministers' murmuring minds (MS, 103-104). Marshfield rhetorically anticipates the answers to the questions by using the negative-interrogative form: "are we not angry?", "are we not moved?", "do we not cry?", "does He not answer [—]?" (MS, 104). But the answer Marshfield gives differs from the anticipated affirmative one, rearranging the whole problem.[30] Although acknowledging the radical difference of Jesus' acts and being as compared with those of human beings, Marshfield, at the end of his sermon, imitates Christ and conjures up another congregation. It is Marshfield's own congregation in New England, and it also functions as the sermon's second group narratee:

> Dearly beloved, let us open ourselves to this lesson. I feel you gathered beneath me, my docile suburban flock, sitting hushed in this sturdy edifice dedicated in the year 1883 and renovated under my canny predecessor in the year 1966. (MS, 106-107.)

---

30 For a closer discussion of the sermons' content, see subsection 6.1.3 below.

After the congregation have failed to prove their faith and make his miracle work, Marshfield, still consciously emulating Christ, curses his flock: "I curse you, then, as our Lord cursed the fig tree; may you depart from this place forever sterile; may your generation wither at the roots, and a better be fed by its rot" (MS, 107). The expulsion of the congregation apparently means that the narrative contract between the narrator and the second narratee is short-lived.

The third sermon opens with a ritual apostrophic ejaculation aimed at God: "O, Lord" (MS, 161), but after it the narratee is again the congregation of Marshfield's fellow ministers. Marshfield relates the sermon more closely to the ministers' (including his own) problems than in the previous one. He punningly ties the word *desert* from the text of the day to the ministers' situation: "I would propose, my dear brethren, who have deserted the world and been deserted by it, to meditate this morning [—]" (MS, 161). Marshfield also recounts, in the historic present, the experiences and impressions shared by the ministers, which again emphasizes the communality of men and seemingly decreases the distance between the group narratee and the narrator.[31] With a rhetorical twist typical of sermons, Marshfield links the concrete with the figural: the desert is, according to his analysis, already familiar to the ministers in its metaphorical sense: "In the parish hearts it was once our vocation, brethren, to safeguard and nurture, did we not feel a frightful desert, of infertile apathy, of withering scorn [---]?" (MS, 164). On the other hand, after describing the survival techniques of the Death Valley flora and fauna, Marshfield sums up the literal and the figural threads in a parable Christ could have invented:

> Live. Live, brothers, though there be naught but shame and failure to furnish forth your living. To those of you who have lost your place, I say that the elf owl makes a home in the pulp of a saguaro. To those upon whom recent events still beat down mercilessly, I say that the coyote waits out the day in the shade. To those who find no faith within themselves, I say no seed is so dry it does not hold the code of life within it, and that except a corn of weath fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Blessed, blessed are the poor in spirit. (MS, 164.)[32]

---

31 Marshfield's ironically elevated style may also be a signal of communality to the group narratee *qua* congregation, who presumably know that life in a desert motel is not as blissful as the account depicts it:

> [The desert's] air, clean and sweet as mythical ether, astounds our faces as we emerge from the shelter of this benign hostel; we see, on the golf course, the frantic sprinklers doing a dervish dance to keep the heartbeat of green alive; lifting our eyes to the hills, or accompanying our excellent Ms. Prynne on one of her well-shepherded nature walks, we confront a cosmos of fragile silica [---] (MS, 162).

Another example of stylistic irony can be found in the beginning of the sermon, in which Marshfield asks his congregation to bracket some characteristics of God from their minds:

> meditate this morning not the loathsome Old testament God, His vengeful plagues and pestilences and His preposterous obsession with circumcision and with His own name, nor upon those enigmatic brutes, such as Moses and David and Samson, upon whom His favor incorrigibly and unlodgeably rests; but upon the desert [---] (MS, 161).

The very act of listing the qualities to be suppressed makes them prominent; the plea to ignore surfaces which ought to sink into oblivion.

Marshfield also ironically literalizes metaphoric expressions or makes far-fetched connections between phenomena: "For those of us whose heads God has turned, so our very collars are shaped like a pivot [---]" (MS, 164).

32 In its animal and vegetal imagery, the parable resembles parts of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns [---]" (Mat. 6:26); "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin" (Mat. 6:28). Also, stylistically, Marshfield uses the anaphora, a figure much in use in the Bible.

The sermon closes by emphazing, again with the help of the biblical anaphora, that the day's text concerns the narrator and the collective narratee: "We *are* found in a desert place. / We *are* in God's palm. / We *are* the apple of His eye." (MS, 166.)

The fourth and final sermon still has the same group narratee of the sanatorium ministers. Again, the identity of the narratee is signalled by the vocative use of "brothers" (MS, 205, 210) and by the references to the profession and experiences the men have shared at the sanatorium (MS, 206, 210). The sermon deals with the mysteries of faith and resurrection on the basis of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "We are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor.:19). Interestingly enough, Marshfield starts to expound on the day's text not by dealing with its content but by concentrating on its narrative form, on the identity of its narratological agents:

> We? Who is this we? We who preach the risen Christ: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain."
> Your? Who is this you? You of Corinth who profess the monstrous new faith, who have received the Gospel [—]. (MS, 205.)

As I stated in the previous chapter, Marshfield provides here not only metahermeneutic but also metanarrative (one is even tempted to call it metanarratological) commentary. He defines the scopes of both the narrator and narratee within Paul's text; in doing so, he also makes the text hermeneutically accessible. Why does Marshfield provide the narratee with this kind of information about a biblical text only here? It may be due to the text's special status among the ones Marshfield has used so far: the day's text is a letter, a written account aimed at a specific audience, unlike the Gospels. The receivers, the intended readers of the letter, know to whom *we* and *you* refer, but the readers of the present need this kind of contextualizing exegesis.

The whole sermon can be interpreted as metaphorically dealing with the status of fictional characters and the relation between reality and fiction. It is, then, understandable that the narrator-narratee relation in the sermon serves the same function. The solidarity or communality found in the two previous sermons was based on the shared profession, experiences, and opposing attitude towards Ms. Prynne; here, in contrast, the communality stems from the common realization of the fictionality of being. This realization also makes Marshfield, as it were, step down from the heights of his pulpit, from the elevated position he has assumed, among the congregation of which he is, narratologically speaking, finally the same order.

6.1.2.2 Narratee as Seducee, Narrator as Main Narratee

I shall now turn to the narratees in the main or frame narrative of *A Month of Sundays*.[33]

The end of the parable is rather hastily patched together from Jesus' words in John 12:24 and from his first Beatitude (Mat. 5:3), resulting in a somewhat comic effect.

33 There are marginal cases which I exclude from my analysis of the narratees. Recounting his sexual adventures, conceivable as embedded narratives, Marshfield sometimes addresses the woman in question. Marshfield's depiction of his affair with Alicia Crick makes him ask her questions and address her with the second person singular (MS, 27; cf. also MS, 31, 35, 37), and reconstructing a play-like conversation with his wife, Marshfield addresses her, in

The most obvious and most often addressed intradiegetic narratee is Ms. Prynne, the manageress of the sanatorium. Marshfield suspects that she reads the diary entries when he is absent. Sometimes Marshfield addresses her in the second or third person singular as if the narratee's identity were not known to him ("dear unknown reader" [MS, 49], "insatiable ideal reader" [MS, 78], "my ghostly reader" [MS, 118]). But Marshfield does know that it is Ms. Prynne who reads his diary, although he does not know her well, as can be deduced from the first address to the narratee; after describing his daily routine, Marshfield writes: "But you know all this. Who are you, gentle reader?" (MS, 6). Marshfield hence asks her explicit questions mainly concerning the narrative and its communicability, and, for a lesser part, herself (MS, 6, 56, 78, 117, 167, 180, 190, 227-28). The narrator also addresses Ms. Prynne by using the imperative - asking either for her forgiveness (MS, 3, 86, 122, 192) or for a certain disposition towards his narrative (MS, 39, 64, 181).

Ms. Prynne is thus an overt narratee, but not much is known about her. More important than her personality, for Marshfield, is her role as a manageress, as a sort of prison wardress. Knowing that Ms. Prynne reads the diary, Marshfield can use writing to insult and shock her, to get her attention; for instance, her face is described as that "of a large, white, inexplicably self-congratulating turtle" (MS, 6). Assuming that Ms. Prynne is prudent and chaste, Marshfield deliberately recounts coarse events in straightforward language, mockingly apologizing for both: "(forgive this term among others, Ms. Prynne and whatever vestrymen are in attendance; that which has existence [*ens*] must have a name [*nomen*])" (MS, 53). The recurring pleas to forgive him indicate that Marshfield is consciously playing with the conventions of the repentantly confessional diary.

Marshfield also uses other techniques to influence Ms. Prynne. Sometimes he tries to please the narratee by accounting for her presumed wishes and anticipating her interests: "My ghostly reader telepathically reminds me that I have written unnaturally little of [---] my offspring [---]" (MS, 118). Marshfield also lets, as it were, the narratee participate in the re-enactment of his erotic adventures on the same narrative level as he does by telling about him and the act of narrating in the first person plural: "our ex-athletic cleric and voyeur [---]" (MS, 13); "there was a bony fellow-counselor one summer we may never find the space for" (MS, 52); "To work. Our leading character, Tom, miscast as a Protestant clergyman [---]" (MS, 76).

Gradually Marshfield comes at least seemingly to realize Ms. Prynne's importance to his narration. Quite trivially, she is the reason for the diary's very existence, because she, as a manageress, decides on the curative methods of the sanatorium.[34] Marshfield also knows that she reads what he writes, which affects his

---

parentheses, with three imperatives (MS, 61).
There are also a few ritualistic exclamations which Marshfield adds to his narration on the basis of free association; a hat given by her mother yields "Mother, protect me" (MS, 77), and the metaphor "The blue night barked as I opened the door" triggers off "Down, Fido" (MS, 77). Incidental, these imperatives do not form signs of the "you" in the sense of a systematically conceived narratee. The same applies to such apostrophic addresses as "Dear silenced words, your recall makes me fond" (MS, 74).

34 The initial narrative situation of the novel resembles Siegfried Lentz's *Deutschstunde* (1968). In both novels, authorities force the narrator to write; both narrators also gain some sort of freedom, not only when they are released after finishing their assignments, but also on the lexical playfield of language.

writing. In a way, the narrative contract in the beginning of the diary is at least seemingly dominated by the narratee, the agent who initially forced the narration into existence. Soon, however, the narrator takes over the position that usually belongs to this agent. At first the narratee is his laughing-stock, mocked because of her looks and almost military rigidity. By the middle of the novel, however, it becomes clear that Marshfield's intention is to seduce his narratee, to turn Ms. Prynne into a seducee.[35] The reminiscence of his erotic adventures is thus aimed at the narratee as a sort of pornography, as writing causing sexual arousal. The narrator articulates his end quite unabashedly when he recounts an unsuccessful attempt to commit adultery with Mrs. Harlow, a member of his congregation:

> the barrier I met in this strange seduction.
> And, speaking of seduction, gentle reader, I feel you attention wandering; Mrs. Harlow's unravished curls rub your sleepy eyes the wrong way. (MS, 139.)

Marshfield also describes "the pairing of carpentry and love-making," "[t]he musky smell of shavings, the ecstatic *ratio* of disassembly" and then pseudo-innocently asks: "Ms. Prynne, am I trying to seduce you? Help me." (MS, 193.) As he gets no "ocular proof" of her compliance, Marshfield conjures up responsiveness from his narratee's part: "I know you are praying for me, Ms. Prynne" (MS, 140). After the third sermon, Marshfield does evoke a response in Ms. Prynne, albeit a feeble one: he thinks he sees the word "Nice" written and erased beneath the sermon's text (MS, 167). Nevertheless, Marshfield is much obliged: "But bless you, whoever you are, if you are, for this even so tentative intrusion into these pages' solipsism [—]" (MS, 167). Towards the end of his diary, Marshfield admits that his reader is indispensable for the existence of the diary and credits her with co-authorship: "Spent an hour rereading [—] the pages we (you and I, reader; without you there would be the non-noise of a tree crashing in the inhuman forest) have accumulated" (MS, 202).

Although it is trivially true in narratology that the narrator always has to aim his or her narration to the narratee(s) - nothing will pass to the implied and actual readers except via that agent - Ms. Prynne is hardly a democratic participant in Marshfield's discourse. Rather, the emphasis on the narratee's role in the diary is just part of Marshfield's seductive masterplan: by seeing the text as the result of two

---

35 I borrow the neologism *seducee* from Ross Chambers (1984, 14).
Robert Detweiler suggests similarities between Balzac's *Sarrasine* and the Updike novel: both deal with the seduction of the reader and are novels of double intentionality, i.e., tell a story and also describe the process of telling a story. This may not be coincidental, since, in 1975, Updike reviewed the English translation of Barthes's *S/Z*, the minute structuralist reading of *Sarrasine*. (Detweiler 1979, 610, 612.) *Sarrasine* is based on a special kind of narrative contract between the narrator and the narratee: the act of narration is exchanged for a night of love. The contract is different in the Updike novel. Initially, Marshfield has to narrate his story in order to be released and presumably to get "cured," which reminds one of the redemptive contract in Mauriac's diary novel *Noeud de vipères*. Soon, however, Marshfield unilaterally changes the contract into a sexual one.
Interestingly enough, Marshfield's semi-senile father, reliving his war-time experiences, provides a punning metalinguistic comment relevant to the novel's narrative contract: "'What is it these frogs say, *le con est le centre du monde*. You know what my tart told me they call an engagement - a *compromis*. Hear it? *Com-promis*! A promised cunt!'" (MS, 126-27.) Hence, Marshfield writes his "tract" - diary - to be exchanged for Ms. Prynne's *con*?
The same pun on *con* also appears in Updike's short story "Aperto, Chiuso" (cf. Updike 1994, 166).

indispensable constituent parts, he attributes it with the characteristics of a baby. This, of course, seems to imply intimacy not only on the narrative but also on the sexual level. Even when Ms. Prynne breaks her silence, and at the same time the conventional hierarchy of narration, by writing comments on Marshfield's manuscript, her contribution to the whole narration remains both metaphorically and literally marginal.

Admittedly, for a short while Ms. Prynne acts as an interpretant when she interprets and evaluates Marshfield's text by writing comments on it. Ms. Prynne's feedback in the form of "grading" appears only twice: the first comment is the erased "nice" of the third sermon and the second, at the end of the fourth sermon: "Yes - at last, a sermon that could be preached" (MS, 212). As these examples show, her contribution to the narrative remains minimal.

Marshfield even declares his love for Ms. Prynne; she is lovable, because

> (a) you are there (b) you run this haven ably (c) you never complain (d) you seem to be alone (e) you read what I write (MS, 223).

His reasons are, except for the second one, related to her availability, to the probability of success in his seductive pursuit. When Ms. Prynne finally comes to Marshfield's room and agrees to make love to him, she fulfills the terms of the narrative contract *he* has created. When the narrator and the narratee thus become one, the narration stops, the discourse turns into intercourse. The goal of narration attained, there is no reason to continue: when the narrator and narratee start making love, the former stops in mid-sentence, producing a blank space on the page (MS, 227). The narrator-narratee relation seemingly changes from one-way domination to a sort of dialogue, but the end-result is by no means democratic or unproblematically harmonious.[36] The relation is undemocratic, dominated by Marshfield's one-way communication. Marshfield never lets Ms. Prynne speak, but always paraphrases *her* words so that they become *his* words. There are a few occasions in the novel when the narrator seemingly articulates the narratee's questions (MS, 54, 201), but we never know whether he transmits them accurately. In a similar fashion, when he asks her three questions after her last comment, the response - "Yes, is your answer, stern" (MS, 213) - is not more than the narrator's guess. Ms. Prynne remains quiet even during his visit to Marshfield's room - or at least he does not recount a word she might have said:

> There was a moment [—] when you could not have seen yourself, when your eyes were all for another, looking up into mine, with an expression without a name, of entry and alarm, and of salutation (MS, 228).

She is, in accordance with his wishes, mute, blank, and devoted to the narrator.

The only characters who, within the text, read the sermons are Ms. Prynne and Marshfield. Indeed, Marshfield performs as his own narratee. Presumably he is the

---

36 As Marshfield succeeds in seducing Ms. Prynne, so he also does with most actual critics: they have tended to read the novel's ending according to the narrator's wishes and to the conventions of diary fiction, tending towards a narrative closure. For the novel's ambiguous resolution, see subsection 6.2.1.1. below.

only narratee to read the whole diary, as is often the case in diary fiction.[37] Ms. Prynne is said to have read Marshfield's sermons, but it is not known whether or not she also reads the diary's other entries. Marshfield himself, in contrast, definitely reads his diary, as the continuous commentary and self-conscious rumination on writing prove.

Some of the questions and the uses of *you*, *we/us* do not refer to any of the narratees introduced above. The situation is similar to that in *Rabbit Redux* which, with the help of indefinite pronouns, referred to narratees unmaterialized as characters and unspecified by the narrator but who resembled the focalizer. Marshfield conjures up a community sharing his disposition, nationality, and presumably gender: "Irony is the style of our cowardice" (MS, 89), "Some people and places just make us feel heavier than others [—]" (MS, 113; cf. also MS, 118, 135, 140, 190,). The same group (or its member) is addressed with *you*: "The four of us circled for ten minutes, like old women gathering fuel in vacant lots you might say [—]" (MS, 185).

The variety of narratees serves both characterizing and thematic functions. The shift from an individual narratee to a collective one and the (at least partial) recognition of Ms. Prynne as an active participant instead of a passive receiver seemingly indicates a change in Marshfield's character. But the change is hardly as unambiguous as many critics have maintained.[38] Marshfield dominates all his narratees, although he seemingly calls on them for co-operation and co-authorship; he persuades both Ms. Prynne and his fictional parishioners to buy into his views, to act according to his wishes. It is revealing that he is finally his main narratee. The different narratees call attention to the transmission process of fiction and to the theme of narration. That the most important narratees are also readers (of the Bible or the diary) makes the actual reader's role more prominent: the reading process is already dramatized in the text. But the reader, exemplified by Ms. Prynne, is still dominated by the narrator: her only visible contributions to the work are a few words written as a comment, or the blank space on the page when the narrator stops narrating to make love with her. Marshfield, however, allows himself to be a bold, innovative, freewheeling reader of the Bible and his own writing. He deprives his readers of the activity he himself practices.

The sermons contain, as I suggested above, ironic remarks which are only meant to be understood by the group narratee of Marshfield's fellow ministers. The mockery is clearly aimed at Ms. Prynne, who reads the sermons but who is excluded from the group narratee *qua* congregation of ministers on the basis of her profession, experiences, and above all, sex. She is nominally praised, but, in fact, put down. The sermons and the erotic reminiscence can be conceived as embedded narratives within the main narrative, having different narratees of their own. Ms. Prynne, who does read the sermons, as Marshfield well knows, is not only mocked but also being seduced.[39] The topics of the sermons (adultery, festive miracles, the persistence of life,

---

37 Cf. Prince 1983, 19; Abbott 1984, 10.

38 Cf. Doody 1979, 211-12; Uphaus 1980, 98-99; Hunt 1980, 193-94, Greiner 1984, 181-82.

39 Doody (1979, 211) makes a similar remark: "[Marshfield] woos [Ms. Prynne] not so much by an admission of guilt or protestation of loneliness as by the challenge and license of the sermons he writes every Sunday."

the *risen* body of Christ) easily serve Marshfield's masterplan of seduction.

The narrator-narratee relations show that Marshfield only needs the addressee to receive his narration in the way he wishes (e.g., to help in creating ironic effects); he does not really appreciate any other kind activity on the narratee's part. The novel's ending is symptomatic in this respect. The narrator describes his (alleged) consummation with the narratee: "your eyes were all for another, looking up into mine" (MS, 228). The final scene also seems to mix the narrator and the narratee to such a degree that the categories start to leak.[40] In spite of all the narratological packing precautions, an extratextual meaning inevitably resonates in the final *you*. It seems that it is not only Ms. Prynne but also the actual reader who is being addressed - and seduced.

Marshfield's sermons indicate that he associates speech with a kind of lecturing, with a mode which makes real, democratic dialogue impossible. His comment on Socrates could describe himself as well: "I have always admired, in the dialogues of Plato, Socrates' smoothness in attaining his auditors' consent to his premises" (MS, 69).

6.1.2.3. Failed Seduction: Resisting Narratees

In his attentive phenomenologico-receptive reading of the novel, Gary Waller notes how Updike's text is didactive and manipulative, thus reducing the reader's interpretive freedom; if we substitute the author's name with "Marshfield" or "narrator" in the following extract, we notice that Waller claims what I found out in my narratological reading of the novel:

> Updike wishes to convey, finally, a pre-existent interpretation of that search [for meaning]. His strategies are therefore to disarm rather than involve the reader. [—]. To achieve his end, Updike is prepared to involve the reader as a participant in solving typographical puzzles, deciphering puns and word-play, fulfilling the role of the Ideal Reader [—]. [—]. The reader, therefore, is given the simple choice of acceptance or rejection of an imposed meaning.[41]

The autodiegetic narrator's dominating role in the novel makes it possible to construct another narratee, who is never overtly addressed and indeed whose very existence is never acknowledged. This resisting narratee can be conceived as the opposite of the actual, textually coded narratees and their ways to react and interpret. If the explicit narratees are finally passive, obedient, and quietly receiving the narrator's dominating narration, the resisting narratee counters all these qualities. The resisting narratee perceives the narrator's false claims of co-authorship and the other narratees' misguidedness. Unlike in *Rabbit Redux*, the resisting narratee's gender is perhaps not as important as his/her attitude and capacity to understand.

As was seen in the previous subsection, the narrator's commentary on his own discourse is in most cases helpful and genuinely clarifying, but in ways unintended; the comments shed light not so much on the discourse as they do on the narrator himself. At some instances, however, the narrator's explanations, in their subjectivity and far-fetchedness, tend to mock the explicit narratee(s): to take the narrator's

---

40 The shuttling of self and other reminds one of the Peggy Fosnacht scene in *Rabbit Redux* (RRx, 197; cf. 5.1.2. above): "I pray my own face, a stranger to me, saluted in turn" (MS, 228). Even the metaphor of blind or blank brow connects the scenes.

41 Waller 1982, 276-77.

comments at face value, without questioning their validity, is to take the passively receiving position the resisting narratee opposes. Marshfield's indulgence in commentary also functions as an index of his narcissistic self-centeredness: he seems to believe that his interpretation is the most interesting and valid one.

The existence of different (groups of) narratees with varying degrees of resistance or understanding creates ironic effects: one narratee accepts the comments off-hand, another doubts their validity, and still another doubts but is also aware of the one who does not. Accordingly, the conception of Marshfield's character becomes more varied: he is either a benevolent narrator, malevolent deceptor, or ironic player of beliefs and presuppositions.

Interestingly enough, the novel's two most important narratees, Marshfield and Ms. Prynne, practise resistance. In a true Foucauldian manner, Marshfield utilizes the dominant structures and discourse of the system that he is subjected to. He appropriates the discourse of power (diary writing as an *institutionalized* punishment and curative method) to such a degree that it becomes a counter-force working for his benefit. The same applies to the four sermons that he prepares: instead of saving his congregation of group narratees, he intends to seduce one of its members. In the sermons, Marshfield also applies appropriation and deletion as strategies of resistance. In the diary entries, Marshfield's metacritical commentary can be conceived as moments of resistance to reading.

Ms. Prynne, for her part, resists narration when she evaluates Marshfield's sermons. In a way, Ms. Prynne also resists Marshfield's prior misconducts and tries, by using her position in the power structure, to correct him. On a more fundamental level, she represents the institutional power of the sanatorium, a force which engenders a counter-force in Marshfield.

If Marshfield the narrator and Ms. Prynne the narratee are resisting agents, why should another resisting narratee be constructed? Marshfield and Ms. Prynne do not resist enough, or if they do, they aim it at wrong directions. Marshfield does not turn resistance to his own use of power, nor does he, in his metacritical commentary, systematically deal with the clashing forces of his own discourse. Ms. Prynne's resistance is literally marginal, or when it is central it is due to her position in the structure of power, not to her own resisting acts. Finally she also submits to Marshfield's seduction, thus discarding her resistance. The resisting narratees that I am constructing would take heed of these shortcomings by concentrating on self-resistance, on the warring forces of signification and see how they relate to gender.

The most obvious resisting narratee would be a heterosexual feminist woman. Marshfield's argumentation is at the same time both systematically misogynist and rhetorically unstable (cf. subsection 6.1.3.1. below), which makes the construction of an opposing feminist narratee somewhat inevitable. Ms. Prynne would not, however, be suitable for a figurehead of such a narratee, since she practises unmarked "masculine" power without accounting for the gender problematics. Rather, a femininist resisting narratee would problematize phallocentric masculinity *qua* insitutionalized gender position be it occupied by woman or man.

A resisting gay narratee could pay attention to the novel's misogynism and preference of male narratees as tokens of homosociality or male bonding, which

causes anxiety to heterosexual, not to homosexual men.[42] Rather, a resisting gay narratee could appropriate the homosocial and read it as a sign of the homoerotic. That Ms. Prynne's looks and conduct are "mannish," but nevertheless desirable to the narrator, that the Reverend indulges in voyeuristic practices, and that the narrator tries to pinpoint homosexual men from the people he meets further problematize Marshfield's sexual preferences.

On the other hand, a resisting lesbian narratee could tap the novel's heterosexualist depiction of women and read it as a demonstration of the basic types of female homosexuals. Ms. Prynne could be seen to embody the non-feminine, 'phallic' butch or dyke, whereas Marshfield's other partners could represent variants within the *femme* category. In this way, the novel's seemingly consistent heterosexual concerns could be questioned.

A resisting ethnic narratee could read the virtual absence of all the other 'races' except the unmarked white as a point of departure for a multicultural interpretation of the novel.

The resisting narratees would not yield to the narrator's domination disguised as irony. By deconstructing the textual dynamic from subaltern, suppressed, marginalized, or gendered positions, the resisting narratees question the very foundation of the narrator's world view and male identity.

Before, nevertheless, going into a deconstructive reading of *A Month of Sundays*, I shall deal with Marshfield as an exegete and see how his readings allegorize the interpretation of the whole novel.

6.1.3. Exemplary Exegeses: Sermons as Allegories of Interpretation

During his four-week stay in the sanatorium Marshfield prepares four sermons, one on each Sunday. In each sermon, Marshfield expounds on a biblical text, giving his interpretation or exegesis of it.

Marshfield uses the biblical texts as pretexts for justifying his own adulterous or otherwise unorthodox behaviour. The sermons and the exegeses presented in them also have thematic underpinnings not only in *A Month of Sundays* but also in Updike's fiction in general, as Robert Detweiler has shown.[43] The possibility of self-interpretation in the sermons has, however, been ignored. For instance, Detweiler sees the homilies as reading interludes commenting on such themes as carnality and theodicy; as interpretive discourse, the sermons are Ricoeurian "models of *in*authenticity that undermine the tradition of realism and prepare the reading community for a reconsideration of the possibility of a mystery."[44] In my reading, the homiletic exegeses function as allegories of the main possible ways of interpreting the whole novel. The sermons thus function as *exempla*, and they indeed seem to have been followed in the novel's actual critical responses, which transferentially repeat the main interpretive alternatives prefigured in the exegeses. Or to put it in a less

---

42 For the homosocial nature of patriarchy and the homosexual anxiety or panic that it creates, see Sedgwick 1989, 243-48.

43 Detweiler 1989, 91-121. Detweiler's account of the sermons in Updike up to *Roger's Version* is the most exhaustive one so far. Sermons also appear in Updike's post-*Roger's Version* output, most importantly in *In the Beauty of the Lilies* (1996).

44 Ibid., xv; emphasis in original.

totalizing way, the diverse readings of the novel to a degree resemble the interpretive options that the sermons present.

6.1.3.1 Lawfully Married: Reading Mismatches

Marshfield cannot expound the *Bible* in the way he is used to: he lacks both the primary and secondary sources and, at the other end of the communication process, an actual audience, i.e., parishioners: "I must preach. But without a Bible, without a copious and insipid encyclopedia of sermon aids and Aramaic etymologies, without an organist, without a congregation" (MS, 41).[45]

The text of the first sermon is from St. John (8:11): "Neither do I condemn thee." The text deals with adultery; the Pharisees accuse a woman of committing adultery but, instead of accepting Jesus's invitation to cast the first stone, flee. It is only then that Jesus utters those words and advises her to go and "sin no more."

After discussing the text's place in the Gospel by John and in the Christian canon in general, Marshfield suddenly pays attention to a seemingly marginal and contingent detail. While the woman was being accused by the Pharisees, Jesus "with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not" (MS, 42; John 8:9). The Gospel does not tell *what* Jesus wrote, but Marshfield interprets *why* he wrote: "He wrote idly, irritating His vengeful questioners, and imparting to us yet another impression of our Lord's superb freedom, of the something indolent and abstracted about His earthly career" (MS, 42). These words could describe Marshfield's writing as well: he partly writes what he writes to irritate his "questioner," Ms. Prynne. The parallel between Jesus and the Reverend as writers can be stretched further. John T. Matthews expounds on Jesus' cryptic writing:

> Symbolically, his writing reflects his reinscription of the Old Testament law (and there is much interpretive speculation that Jesus actually begins to write out the laws covering witnessing, adultery, punishment, or even vindictiveness). He writes twice to signal, perhaps, that there is no difference between the original author and himself; his reinscription of the law may be an interpretation or reading of it, but his interpretation is authorizised by the claim that "I and the Father are one."[46]

In a similar fashion, on the *author*ity of his *author*ship, Marshfield reads, interprets, and reinscribes his own text by commenting and explicating it. The interpretation is supposedly correct, because the writer and the reader are one.

Marshfield also offers a radically new interpretation of marriage and adultery,

---

45 The absence of a real audience makes a big difference to Marshfield, whose sermons used to be "so fetchingly agonized, so fashionably antinomian" (MS, 26) and rely on performing: "pale in my pantomime of holy agitation, self-pleasing in mysleepless sweat, a fevered scapegoat taking upon myself the sins of the prosperous" (MS, 26). Alicia even accuses him of teasing the congregation and acting out his personal psychodrama (MS, 31). Also, in *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, preaching gets attributes of a show, of a rhetorical miracle: "[Wilmot] had knotted his straitjacket; now to get out of it, like the great Houdini" (Updike 1996, 50). However, Marshfield does have a *fictional* audience when he is preaching in writing, the narratees to whom he persuasively addresses his sermons, as I stated in the previous chapter. And the narratees include himself, as I stated above, not unlike in the performed sermons of *In the Beauty of the Lilies*: "A stately power of eloquence seemed to enter [Wilmot] from behind, and he became both actor and audience" (ibid., 98).

46 Matthews 1983, 363.

as if to write out a new law concerning them. The Mosaic law stipulated death by stoning for an adulteress, but it also required at least two eyewitnesses to the crime. By forcing the Pharisees to recognize their own sinfulness and thus to leave the woman alone, with no one to witness against her, Jesus also makes it impossible for himself to condemn her without breaking the law.[47] In other words, Jesus reverses the spirit of the law by enforcing the letter of it. Marshfield applies a similar kind of reading method - turning a double-bind to work against itself; following a law to its extreme - to the problem of adultery. If looking at a woman "to lust after her," as Jesus put it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5:28), means adultery, then the sin seems unavoidable since "who that has eyes to see cannot so lust?" (MS, 44) and since God ordered men to "be fruitful, and multiply" (Deut. 22:28). Thus, "[a]dultery is not a choice to be avoided; it is a circumstance to be embraced" (MS, 45). Consequently, adultery and marriage are not, according to Marshfield's reasoning, each other's opposites but secretly united: "Verily, the sacrament of marriage, as instituted in its adamant impossibility by our Saviour, exists but as a precondition for the sacrament of adultery" (MS, 47).[48]

Marshfield follows Jesus' method of enforcing the laws and letting them develop until there is an aporia, a logical cul-de-sac. Unlike Jesus, however, Marshfield reverses the traditional hierarchy of marriage and adultery by making the former just a precondition of the latter. In doing so, Marshfield takes a non-deconstructive turn and privileges one term of an opposition over the other.

Although Marshfield seemingly harmonizes the opposites by distorting and manipulating the text so that they co-exist in a sacramental paradox, he cannot stop the opposing forces from undermining each other. At least the doubting reader or narratee is likely to assume that Marshfield's motivation for his reading of the text is to get a pretext for his behaviour.

As an allegory of interpretation, Marshfield's reading is a cautionary tale of the power of binary oppositions in Western thinking: even a heretical reading of a sacred text adopts its logic, albeit in a reversed form. The sermon also exemplifies the tunnel vision brought about by the unproblematized presupposition of *man* standing for human beings in general. Marshfield's sophisticated (he does act like a sophist) reasoning of the unavoidability of adultery collapses when Jesus' teaching and Marshfield's question are read as a woman. In a heterosexual context at least, Jesus' statement that looking at a woman to lust after her equals adultery excludes women as possible adulteresses, or even as lusty beings. In a similar fashion, Marshfield's

---

47 Matthews 1983, 363.
A few verses later, the Pharisees use legal conventions against Jesus: "Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true" (John 8:13). Marshfield could be accused of the same malpractice: as a first-person narrator telling his own story, his account is not, according to the pharisaical logic, "true," i.e., objective or unbiased.

48 Marshfield's exegesis bears some striking similarities to that provided by Tony Tanner in his *Adultery in the Novel* (1979). Tanner utilizes the contract/transgression dyad (borrowed from Georges Bataille) to examine the workings of adultery in society and literature; Jesus' rhetorical and logical moves can be seen as attempts to individualize and personalize the monolithic generalities of the Mosaic law (Tanner 1981, 18-24). Although Tanner does not reverse the marriage/adultery opposition, his emphasis on the human reality does resemble Marshfield's concerns.
For an application of Tanner's insights to Updike's fiction, including *A Month of Sundays*, see Greiner 1985, 54-57, 109-114. Unfortunately, however, Greiner is more interested in comparing the novel with Hawthorne than in exegeting Marshfield's exegeses.

question - "who that has eyes to see cannot so lust?" - could be answered with the party he systematically ignores from his line of argument: a woman.[49]

Marshfield's two major flaws in his seemingly elaborate and innovative reading of the Bible allegorize two possibilities of a subversive interpretation of the whole novel: actually deconstructive and gender-conscious ones - both of which I an attempting in this thesis.[50] Marshfield's reading marries a mismatch on the preformative authority of a clergyman, but does not respect the rights of the significant other.

6.1.3.2 Seeking after a Sign(ifier): Generation of a Facetious Reading

The second sermon deals with the miracles of Christ and how they have been interpreted. Marshfield proceeds on the basis of Jesus's response to his mother asking him to perform a miracle: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come?" (MS, 102; John 2:4), and to the Pharisees seeking for a sign: "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall be no sign be given unto this generation." (MS, 102; Mark 8:12). Marshfield sees these instances as proofs of human beings' insatiable appetite for miracles, for supernatural entertainment. On the other hand, there has been an opposite trend in conceiving the miracles. Marshfield introduces a German school of theologians who have tried to reduce the miracles to natural causes, of which he disapproves.

Marshfield offers a third possibility of interpretation by stressing the naturality of the miracles (MS, 103), and the fact that many of them are festive or facetious (MS, 105). Marshfield conceives these non-healing miracles as a sort of comedy (MS, 105-06). For example, walking upon water, turning water into wine, blasting a fig tree, or conjuring a coin in a fish's mouth to be handed to a tax collector are given a reading which analeptically puts Jesus in the same line of comedians as W.C. Fields, Charles Chaplin, and Abbott and Costello. This offers another way of reading the whole novel.

Marshfield is supposed to write his diary to heal himself, to perform a sort of miracle, which, according to his own reading of Jesus' curative miracles, would not be humorous. But his account is comic, which seems to hint that he is not healed at the end of the novel.[51] Rather, Marshfield performs, in writing the diary, a facetious miracle of stylistic play, of innovative use of language. The second sermon thus allegorizes an interpretation accounting for the surface, for the signifiers of the novel, without regarding them as necessary and transparent vehicles for transmitting the inner meanings, the signifieds. This also implies that such a reading will not be as much interested in the novel's thematic concerns - at least if regarded as different

---

49 Paradoxically, the womanizing Marshfield could be described with John's words depicting Jesus' perception after he made the Pharisees flee: "[he] saw none but the woman" (John 8:10). Marshfield looks at women - to lust after them but not to account for them.

50 For the few (at least partly) actualized deconstructive readings of the novel, see Detweiler 1979, Matthews 1983, and Keskinen 1998a.

51 Because Jesus is finally resurrected and is thus alive in the end of his story, his life can be called comic, as opposed to tragic, which implies the protagonist's death (cf. Frye 1973, 43). Similarly, Marshfield survives, but it is questionable whether or not he really changes at the end or merely gives an illusion of it. The majority of critics have believed in Marshfield's change; the few doubting critics include Abbott 1984, Iannone 1989, Detweiler 1989.

from the form - as in the articulation or production of meaning.[52]

It could be argued that those critics who appreciate Marshfield's comic style at the same time deny his overtly expressed change for the better; analogously, the critics who do not find his discourse comic unwittingly express their belief in his healing. Marshfield's double-bind thus covers, if we are to believe in the law of the excluded middle, the logical space of interpretation to the brim. As a stylistic and interpretive whole the novel's cup is even overflowing.

6.1.3.3 The Location of Writing: Reading Spaces

The third sermon expounds on Deuteronomy (32:10): "He found him in a desert place."[53] The sermon's emphasis is on the environment, on the symbolic setting of the Bible. The desert is described as a sort of paper with characters inscribed on it: "but upon the desert [—] that encircles the world of Bible as parched sand girdles an oasis [—]" (MS, 161). On a more cosmic level, the earth can be seen as a sign spaced off by emptiness: "bitter black space surrounds our genial and hazy planet" (MS, 161).[54] Marshfield sees the desert in modern cities as well: "The pavements of our cities are deserted [—]. In our monotonous suburbs houses space themselves as evenly as creosote bushes, whose roots poison the earth around" (MS, 163).

Reading the textualized environment also ties in with the transcendental. The Spaniards named Death Valley, "the harshest basin of the American desert," as *La Palma de la Mano de Dios* ('The Palm of God's Hand') (MS, 165). Thus, reading the environment is "palm reading," finding the supernatural in the natural. It also means, in Marshfield's rhetoric, finding life in what apparently looks dead, or at least giving a personifying reading of impersonal organisms:

> And do we not see, around us [—], the Joshua tree lifting its arms awkwardly in prayer, and hear the organ-pipe cactus thundering its transcendental hymn? What a chorale of praise floats free from the invisible teeming of desert life [—]! [—] Living-stone cactuses mimic the stones they push between [—]. [—] The seeds of desert plants wait cunningly [—]. [—] the Mariposa lily remembers itself, and the sticky yucca blossom invites the yucca moth, and the night-blooming cereus its lunar brother, and the tiny claret-cup cactus holds up its cup to drink. (MS, 165-66.)

The desert is, then, like a book to be deciphered. Unlike a man-made book, however, this specific volume of the book of nature forms a natural narrative with an

---

52 For example, Sue Mitchell Crowley (1985, 212-18) and Marie-Hélène Davies (1983, 64-67) emphasize the novel's playful, ironic, parodic, and humorous aspects. Both George Steiner and Donald J. Greiner point out the thematic function of the novel's style: "However, as in Joyce, so in this latest Updike it is in the puns and acrostics, even at their most brutal, that the heart of meaning lies" (Steiner 1979, 97); "How Marshfield says what he says is the key to his tale" (Greiner 1984, 171). Such critics are, however, a minority among the professional readers of *A Month of Sundays*. Most critics have dismissed the novel exactly for its overabundant indulgement in "style" - jokes, Nabokovian wordplays, and excessive irony - which subordinates characters and serious thematic concerns. (For a useful survey of the novel's critical reception, see Greiner 1984, 170-71, 182-83).

53 Marshfield, without a copy of the Bible available, replaces the original "land" with "place," which changes the extract from a geographical plane onto a more general one. The change may not be thematically coincidental, as I am trying to show in my reading of the sermon.

54 In Updike's *Rabbit Redux*, the word *space* combines the cosmological with the typographical as well.

unconventional, transparent message: "What lesson might we draw from this profusion? The lesson speaks itself. Live. Live [---]." (MS, 166.)

As an allegory of interpretation, the sermon seems to direct the reader's attention to the letter, which "killeth not" but is similar to "the spirit which giveth life," to twist Paul's words (2 Cor. 3:6). According to Crowley, the sermon paradoxically shows how "the desert, our world, is at once dead [—] and alive [—]".[55] Paradoxality was already introduced by the second epigraph, in connection with soul; the peritext also made the first remark on universality and individuality. Put together, these references further reinforce the connection between the outer and the inner, between the world and diary, between environment and Marshfield. The day's text allegorizes Marshfield's situation in two senses: he is supposed to find himself in the desert and, if the desert is metaphorically paper, by writing, by inscribing his narrative on it.[56]

As in the sermon, the environment is often seen as a sort of (arche-)writing, a textualized entity in the novel.[57] The motel itself "has the shape of an O, or, more excactly, an omega" (MS, 4).[58] Marshfield sees the rim pattern of a plate as "intertwined arabesques," which he had "traced and retraced with [his] eyes until it seemed the very pattern of eternity" (MS, 147). The desert sand is "parched" (MS, 161), dinosaur bones tell a "sedimental narrative" (MS, 179), apparently as clearly and unconventionally as the lesson above, and a barbaric doctrine is "preserved in the creed like iguanodon footprints in limestone" (MS, 209).

Marshfield's (arche-)writerly paradox, which comprises such mutually exclusive entities as life and death, nature and culture, the inner and the outer, the singular and the general, does not, however, manage to resolve the inner tensions between them. Rather, Marshfield's interpretive gestures, which aim at a reconciliation or a cancelling of oppositions, foreground the very artificiality and conventionality of such an interpretation. Nature seen as part of culture ceases to be nature. The personified or anthropomorphisized wild nature is, in fact, cultivated, colonized by conventional language. In the metaphor of the book of nature, the main stress falls on the *book*.

6.1.3.4 Minding the Body: Solvent Reading

In his final sermon, Marshfield reads the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the

---

55 Crowley 1985, 225.

56 The "transferential" or allegorical nature of the day's text is hinted at the very beginning of the sermon: "Moses is speaking of Jacob, but it might well be of himself [---]" (MS, 161). Analogously, Marshfield is expounding on Moses's narrative of Jacob but is at the same time telling about himself.
Marshfield's very name incorporates environmental opposites: *marsh* relates to nature, hostility, and disorder, whereas *field* is connected with culture, life-giving, and order.

57 As a rewritten version of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the Updike novel thus retains some of the chracteristics of the American Renaissance, although Marshfield does not textualize human beings and environment as eagerly as Hawthorne's characters, according to Irwin (1980, 244), do.

58 George Hunt (1980, 187-88) provides a lengthy list of the omega's structural and thematic functions in the novel: it reflects the novel's structural shape; it ties in with religion, with the Book of Revelation in which Christ is described as Alpha and Omega; sexually, it connotes the female pudendum; and, as the last letter of the alphabet, suggests the limitations of writing as well as an allusion to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which the novel rewrites. Suzanne Henning Uphaus (1980, 100-01) sees the omega as a man's head and shoulders, which suggests that the novel's action takes place, at the first level, inside Marshfield's head.

Corinthians, the verse of the day being: "we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15:19). Before going into the text's basic concern, the mystery of bodily resurrection, Marshfield digresses to narrate his experiences on a bus trip hosted by Ms. Prynne. When shopping for souvenirs, Marshfield was offered two pamphlets by a religious youth, a freakish Jesus look-alike. The first pamphlet predicts the end of the world on the mixed basis of astrology, numerology, and eschatological historicism. As a whole, the text stands for overinterpretation, for an untenable reading. The pamphlet's style is in keeping with its content:

> You see what Jesus show [sic] me? Isn't that wonderful how God shows His people! Begins the 12th (November), day after the *Peace, peace* and then on (January) 31st with war, war! Savvy? -And sudden destruction! You in the *U.S.* have only until *January* to get *out* of the States before some kind disaster, destruction of judgment of God is to fall because of America's wickedness! (MS, 207; emphasis in original.)

But, as Marshfield suggests, this kind of overinterpretation is accepted by the critical community of "us," i.e., the congregation of ministers: "is not the content, as distinct from the style, the content of our life's call and our heart's deepest pledge?" (MS, 207). The other pamphlet provides, in contrast, a simplified, watered-down reading of the Atonement:

> God is our great father in Heaven and we are his children on Earth. We've all been naughty and deserve a spanking, haven't we? But Jesus, *our big brother*, loved us and the Father so much that he knew the spanking would hurt us both, so he offered to take it for us! (MS, 207; emphasis in original.)

But Marshfield expounds on this "exegesis" and, again asking for his congregation's support, finds its inner motivation similar to the first: "Does not this pornography of faith, like the pornography of copulation printed in the same grimy shop, testify to a needed miracle, a true wonder, a miraculous raw truth [---]?" (MS, 208). Marshfield hence harmonizes and neutralizes the interpretive differences of the two models for reading by reducing them to articulations of the same urge to justify belief.

After warming up his skill, as it were, to see similarities within differences, Marshfield turns to the day's text proper. Dealing with the problem of resurrection in terms of body and soul, Marshfield comes to the conclusion that people exist as bodies and conceive afterlife as a continuation of the ordinary, mundane life in which they live corporeally (MS, 209). From Paul's insistence on Christ's *bodily* resurrection, Marshfield draws the conclusion that "the soul is also the body."[59] Marshfield, thus, "solves" the mind/body problem by equating those entities which, traditionally, have been considered as antithetical. But another paradox remains, as Crowley puts it: "Paul's vision of immortality as a bodily resurrection is at once impossible and *necessary* to us."[60] This means that "[n]o man, unless it was Jesus, believes" (MS, 210). What human beings can only do is to "*profess* to believe" (MS, 210).[61]

---

59 Greiner 1984, 169.

60 Crowley 1985, 225-26; emphasis in original.

61 The Reverend Clarence Arthur Wilmot in Updike's *In the Beauty of the Lilies* expounds on the very same text (I Cor. 15:9) but very different results. Wilmot cannot solve the mystery, except by drawing the conclusion that there is no God (cf. Updike 1996, 12). Belief turns out to be, for Wilmot, necessarily impossible.

Besides the pamphlets and the biblical text, the sermon also alludes to Miguel de Unamuno, Henri Bergson, Claude Pascal. Pascal's *pensée* on the fact that he is located in time and space, and the question who has put him there (*Qui m'y a mis*?) (MS, 211) does not only concern man's relation to God but also a fictional character's relation to his or her author. Marshfield claims, referring to his profession: "We do not invent ourselves [—]" (MS, 211). Only a few lines later, however, he writes about a Mandarin "composing" himself (MS, 211), i.e., arranging or writing his own life. Marshfield traces the presupposition in Pascal's question: "To ask the question is to imply an answer: there is a *qui*, a Who, who has set: we have not been accidentally fallen, we have been placed" (MS, 212). Trivially, Marshfield only exists, for us, in his own writing or composition. It is Marshfield who has put himself (and all the other characters) "there," in the book. But this does not imply that their existence has a specific reason or meaning. As Pascal's *pensée* puts it, "*Il n'y a point de raison pourquoi*" (MS, 212). However, Marshfield himself would probably not accept the transference of a religious axiom to the realm of his own writing. He does have a specific reason for writing, and his seemingly freewheeling discourse still aims at a definitive narrative closure. The last sermon "converts" Ms. Prynne to the Marshfieldian faith in desire: his words finally materialize as her flesh. The narrator and narratee momentarily become one flesh, dissolve into one another, but the narrative's asymmetrical power relations remain unresolved.

The fourth allegory of interpretation thus stresses the inner similarity and interchangeability of different approaches to a text on the basis that it contains one stable truth, be it as trivial as that someone has actually written it or that various models diversely articulate it. The problem of different interpretations is "solved" by dissolving their differences. On the other hand, the sermon allegorizes the narrative structure of the novel, and the fictional status of its characters in a number of "metanarratological" ruminations.[62] The only way they exist "in the flesh" is in writing; to grasp or get hold of them is to deal with mental images brought about by letters on the novel's pages.

6.1.3.5 Unruly Exemplarity: Reading Heretic Reading Heretically

A Month of Sundays differs from such texts as *Billy Budd*, *The Turn of the Screw*, or *Rabbit Redux* in that it does not present contestant interpretations personified by different characters. Marshfield the interpretant does not indulge in interpretive quarrels with his fellow ministers, but the different readings are offered in his homilies. One single narrator-protagonist seems to comprise the interpretive alternatives like the biblical man possessed by demons: "My name is Legion: for we are many" (Mark 5:9). Despite his singular appearence and autodiegetic position in the discourse, Marshfield seems to be demonically plural. But the diversity of his interpretations is partly an illusion. Each of the four sermons sets a paradox equating mutually exclusive alternatives. This equation, as I have tried to show above, does not

---

62 *A Month of Sundays* is the first novel by Updike to get a general metafictional reading, probably because the novel is so overtly self-conscious of its textual operations. For example, Hunt (1980, 183-85) reads the novel through Robert Alter's standard study of self-conscious fiction, *Partial Magic*. See also Greiner 1984, 172-73; Matthews 1983; Detweiler 1979, 609-12; Newman 1988, 109-14.

fully succeed, but leaves room for a resisting reading which applies Marshfield's interpretations against his own reasoning.

Marshfield's four exegeses do not, as such, exactly cover the four main ways of interpreting the novel. The actual reader is not, hence, totally at the mercy of the exemplary exegeses in his/her pursuit of interpretation. For instance, the possibility of a resisting reading resides in what Marshfield ignores or suppresses. More fundamentally, to perceive and account for the prefigured models is *not* coded in the text, but come from without, e.g., from the critical community making it a legitimate approach at a certain historical moment (which I, for my part, hereby performatively prove).[63]

The basic analogy between Marshfield's biblical exegesis and critical interpretation of the novel in which they appear yields interesting implications. To take the exegeses at face value is to grant the novel the status of the Bible, a sacred text, and Marshfield the role of Author-God. Also the very act of giving a sermon implies handing down interpretations from the heights of the pulpit. Only a heretic approach to Marshfield's heretic interpretations at least partly frees the reader from the "forced immanence" (MS, 23) of textually prefigured meanings. A heretic reader "willfully and persistently rejects" promoted meanings and "does not conform with an established attitude, doctrine, or principle."[64] This also applies to the narrative continuum of the four sermons as a whole; a heretic reading questions the narrative closure *qua* reconciliation and healing at the end of the novel that Marshfield explicitly promotes. The possible resisting narratees that I proposed in subsection 6.1.2.3. could indeed be conceived as practising heretic readings of Marshfield's discourse. On a structural basis, it could be argued that the fact that Marshfield is forced to write his diary, whereas the sermons are composed voluntarily, allegorizes the position where the reader's option for a heretic, resisting interpretation resides.

On the preceding pages, I have called Marshfield's sermons exemplary exegeses without problematizing the very exemplarity. Example, *exemplum*, and exemplarity are problematic both in theory and practice.[65] The practice of Marshfield's sermons and his exegeses in them demonstrate this problematics. Thus far I have read the sermons as allegories or models of interpretation and sought to find out if they have been followed in actual critical practice. But, bearing in mind the possibility that "all examples are not just exemplary examples but examples of example,"[66] this kind of reading turns out to be as insufficient as it is obvious. If Marshfield's exegetic examples thus turn to themselves, exemplifying exemplarity along with (or even rather than) models of interpretation, what features of example are hence exemplified? For example, the supposed clarifying function of the exegeses in regard to the possible interpretations of the novel rather problematizes them. On the other

---

63 This is usually forgotten even in the contextualist "return to history" branch of reader-response criticism; history is accounted for in the "specific conditions by which reading proceeds and through which audiences are engaged," but not metacritically, in the reorientation of critical theory and practice (cf. Machor 1993, viii; for a similar tunnel vision, cf. Daly 1993).

64 Cf. *Webster's*, s.v. 'heretic.' A heretic reading relates to choice (*heireisis*) as the etymology of the word suggests, but that choice is not made between the offered alternatives.

65 For discussions of many-faceted exemplarity, see, for example, the essays in Gelley 1995.

66 Miller 1995, 163.

hand, the occasional obscurity of Marshfield's exemplary exegeses seem to shed light on not what he apparently intends to hide, but on himself and his conduct. Thus, instead of suggesting that the reader follow the examples, s/he is forced to recognize the exemplary extra or surplus that gets unwittingly exemplified. This is a feature of example that deconstruction tends to utilize, and I have and will read the novel with similar interests.

What Marshfield's sermons possibly teach is that one should concentrate on what is materially present because the spiritual is not radically different from it.[67] In other words, the reader should not only treat the signifiers as something to be deciphered in order to get to the signifieds and onto the thematic level; the signifiers and the way writing is read can be the novel's theme, the theme of narration.

In the following section, I shall turn to the aspect of *A Month of Sundays* already alluded to a number of times, writing.

6.2 Writing

6.2.1 The Pen and the Tongue: Writing and Speech

As was noted in connection with the peritexts of *A Month of Sundays* (6.1.1. above), the novel's first epigraph is taken from Psalm 45: "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (MS [vii]). It crystallizes a central concern in the novel, the asymmetrical opposition between speech and writing, and at the same time, the metaphoric, arche-writerly intertwinement of the two.

Thomas Marshfield is ordered to write a diary as part of the rehabilitation programme he has to attend because of his adulterous practices. As a patient in the sanatorium for wayward clergymen, he is cut off from women (except for Ms. Prynne whom he regards as asexual for a long time); as a writer, he is cut of from speech.

The forcing of Marshfield to recount his life in writing is presumably intended to make him recognize his disease and provide him with a means of healing. As Marshfield homonymously puts it, "Sullying [a sheaf of paper] is to be my sole therapy" (MS, 3); writing is hence both his only and soul therapy. Marshfield does not, however, regard himself as sick: "In *my* diagnosis I suffer from nothing less virulent than the human condition, and so I would preach it" (MS 4; emphasis in original).

Deprived of women and of his congregation, Marshfield, instead of having sex and preaching, masturbates and writes "*ad libidum*" (MS, 6). Marshfield's account discloses a hierarchical system of interconnected oppositions: he associates speech (voice, sound) with "normal" sexual behaviour and, on the other hand, writing with masturbation. The logic of this connecting is the same as in Rousseau or in *Rabbit Redux*: the logic of the supplement. According to Derrida's reading of Rousseau's texts, Rousseau treats writing as a dangerous supplement to speech just as he sees

---

67 Cf. Doody 1979, 212.

masturbation as a perverse addition to "normal" sexuality.[68] Rousseau tries to keep the two meanings of the supplement - 'addition' and 'substitution' - separate, but when he intends to mean the one, the other is always present in the signifier, undermining the strict distinction.[69] Like writing, masturbation also replaces or substitutes the "normal," i.e., speech or accepted sexuality respectively.[70]

Marshfield pays attention to how people speak, to the quality of their voices, because it seems to indicate a given person's degree of normality. He thinks his own voice is too high, but he has learned to hide it, and he sometimes stammers (MS, 9); his mother once had a beautiful voice, but it was hoarsened by bronchitis so that she stopped singing in church (MS, 19); Jane's father, the Reverend Chillingworth, would mutter, cough and deliver lectures "in virtual whisper" (MS, 50-51, 54); the older men who used to court Jane had had bad breath and would stammer (MS, 55); Ned Bork, Marshfield's clerical colleague, drawls (MS, 59, 143); Frankie's cuckolded husband has "the astronaut's lingo" (MS, 174); and one of Marshfield's fellow-ministers in the sanatorium will slur and grunt (MS, 6, 187). Each of these characteristics is associated, in Marshfield's mind, with the lack or disorientation of sexual prowess.[71] Marshfield has learned to hide his sexual weaknesses; his mother's "voice was, for me, her sex; [---] her hoarseness I transferred in my childish innocence to her lower mouth, which was [---] at the level of my mouth [---]" (MS, 20); the young and virile Thomas and Jane would pet each other while Chillingworth, who was reading downstairs, "would dustily cough beneath us at the oddest moments, so often in synchrony with orgasm as to suggest telepathic discomfort" (MS, 54).[72] Jane's old suitors, like her father, presumably lacked sexual power; Ned and the slurring minister in the sanatorium are allegedly homosexuals and thus gone astray from the "normal"; and Frankie feels her husband is as distant as an astronaut (MS, 108-09). Alicia's sexual vitality is connected not only with her voice (MS, 21), but also with her skills as an organist: "Alicia's power over the organ keyboards was part of her power over me" (MS, 20). The organ is easily associated with orgasm, and indeed Alicia prefers playing hymns with quasi-sexual titles (MS, 113).[73] Marshfield's father, too, had a "great voice [which has] survived into senility to give even his most nonsensical utterances the hollow sonorousness of sermons" (MS, 125); indeed, women and sex are recurrent topics in the old man's otherwise incoherent monologue as if to suggest his persistent sexual prowess (cf. MS, 124-30).

---

68 Derrida 1976, 149-51.

69 Johnson 1981, xiii.

70 Derrida 1976, 144-45.

71 Vocal defects may also relate to weakness or problems in faith as is the case with Marshfield himself, and, perhaps, with Chillingworth, Ned Bork, and the fellow-minister. Losing one's voice as a dramatization of losing one's faith is prominent in Updike's *In the Beauty of the Lilies* (cf. Updike 1996, 52-54, 61, 81).

72 The opposition between the young students and the old scholar is not perfect, since Thomas and Jane would avoid "normal" intercourse and engage in semi-masturbatory "dry-fucking" (MS, 53), which combines the attributes of both speech/intercourse and writing/masturbation.

73 Alicia's favourite "out-of-the-ordinary" hymns include "O Master of the Callous Hand," "Behold a Sower! From Afar," and "Come, Ye Disconsolate, Where'er Ye Languish" (MS, 113).
Playing the organ is associated with pneumatically arousing the congregation, with creating a "wind of power" (cf. MS, 113, 193).

The insistence of voice as true presence appears both throughout Marshfield's narration and, in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, in Dimmesdale's Election Day sermon. The two men even use the same metaphor - organ or organ pipe - as a transmitter of transcendence.[74]

Writing, as Marshfield conceives it in the novel, is masturbatory and phallic. Marshfield "sullies" sheets of paper with his typewriter and stains the sheets of his bed with his sperm: "pustular only if we cross-examine the bed linen. Masturbation! Thou saving grace-note upon the baffled chord of self! Paeans to St. Onan, later" (MS 4). Both activities stem from his isolation in the sanatorium. Both use imagination to conjure somebody who is not present - "He masturbated again, imagining for spite some woman remote, a redhead from the attic of his youth [—]" (MS, 11) - or something which never took place: "Or perhaps these words were never spoken, I made them up, to relieve and rebuke the silence of this officiously chaste room" (MS, 33).

Marshfield seems to feel guilt for both practices. Immediately after praising masturbation, he writes: "I feel myself warming to this, which is not my intent" (MS, 4), which can refer both to writing and onanism. Similarly, when he ejaculates and disseminates without inseminating, Marshfield, drawing on the idea of libidinal economy, regrets: "My seed sank into polyester lint and the microscopic desert grits [---]. I shouldn't have done it, for now my hymn to my mistress will be limp and piecemeal, tapped out half [---]" (MS, 34).

Marshfield has got his phallic conception of writing from his father, from his own conceiver.[75] Preparing sermons on Saturdays, "[Marshfield's father] would type - ejaculations of clatter after long foreplay of silent agony" (MS, 18). In the same paragraph, Marshfield writes about being the youngest in his family: "I had been a kind of afterthought, a mistake" (MS, 18). It is as if his father had made a pregnant typographical error, a slip of the pen(is) by accidentally "writing" him into existence.[76]

---

74 MS, 20, 165; Hawthorne 1988, 164.

75 As I stated in section 2.1. above, to regard writing as a phallic activity is nothing new in Western thinking. For example, Derrida has traced Freud's metaphors for writing and found out that one of them, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*, is phallic: "[Writing] entails making a liquid flow out of a tube onto a piece of white paper [---]" (quoted in Derrida 1986, 229). Hence, the pen assumes the role of the phallus and the paper functions as the vagina. The logic of the metaphor is also in keeping with the hierachical oppositions between man/woman, activity/passivity, sender/receiver, narrator/narratee, author/reader; the first term in each pair is the privileged one and, as my narratological analysis of the novel's narrator-narratee relationship suggested,
Marshfield embodies all of them. As a male writer, he is an active sender of messages which the woman (or otherwise passive) narratee or reader is supposed to receive.

76 Old and demented, Marshfield's father also foregrounds - this time in speech - the arbitrariness and conventionality of the bond between signifier and signified, between name and person, by mistaking a box of chocolates for a book, or his son for other people (MS, 130, 124). The father's mistakes do, however, follow a certain "narrative" logic: he picks up personae from the paradigm in a fixed order, which makes the syntagm (and the whole discourse) understandable: "My father tended to move through these confusions in the order of my listing [given in the text]; so our interviews went from fraternal cordiality to frightened antagonism" (MS, 124). Towards the antagonistic pole of his discourse, Marshfield's father tends to accuse his son (cast as some man) of committing adultery with his wife (i.e., Marshfield's mother) (MS, 129). The father hence solicits not only the structure of the sign but also that of culture (as conceived by Freud and structuralists), the taboo of incest and other rules for regulating sexuality in social systems. The two structures are interrelated, since the binary logic (of the sign) stems from sexual differentiation (Scholes 1974, 197). Like his son, the father radically questions the very foundation of marriage,

It is noteworthy that both Marshfield and his father are described as writing a sermon; the difference between the two is that the son's sermon will never be articulated before an actual congregation but will only exist in writing (hence the attributes of masturbation), whereas the father's sermon will be heard, his writing will turn into sound, to "speech," which presumably makes the narrator describe it in terms of intercourse.

Other images relate to writing, phallus, and religion as well: the tower of Babel people erected (MS, 86) amounted to the dispersion and confusion of languages; the mustard seed in Jesus's parable stands for faith but also, metonymically, semen (MS, 101, 220), and Marshfield brags that he is "as ready to stand and ejaculate as to stand and spout the Apostles' Creed" (MS, 59-60).[77]

When Marshfield writes he also disseminates: his words multiply and replenish the diary.[78] The women whom Marshfield describes are all pale (MS, 6, 27, 49, 108) as if to suggest that they are paper on which he writes with his pen(is), that feminine blankness is phallically inscribed.[79] The principle of inscription also applies, in

---

which Robert Scholes rather lucidly calls "a sacrament of structuralism" (ibid., 198), as he does that of signification.
In his unintentional solicitation of language, the father resembles Harry's mother or Nelson in *Rabbit Redux*.

77 The bone imagery forms a chain of signification combining phallic writing, sex, goodness, and faith. Hunt (1980, 186) insightfully notices the importance of the novel's bone images, but ignores their relation to writing and narration. The initial occurrence of bone is located in the very beginning of the novel, in Marshfield's rumination about the meaning of prefixes; in retraction, he feels like a spiritual brother to "broken-boned" athletes in traction (MS, 4): his phallic "bone" (cf. *boner* = 'erection') is, too, dysfunctional.
Bones and skeletons also function as metaphors for the novel's construction; Marshfield, inspired by dinosaur-bones, treats some people he knows as bones in a "sedimental narrative" (MS, 179-80; cf. also my reading of the third sermon above). Marshfield comments on the interpretation of (actual) dinosaur-bones: "And the scramble of those huge bones! - as hard to decipher as the spaghetti of motive and emotion heaped in our hearts!" (MS, 179). The bones also tie in with the thematics of writing in the sense of inscription, trace, and supplement. The fossilisized bones print a trace in the ground, and as aeons of years pass, the bone itself disappears, leaving only the matrix behind: thus the supplementary matrix, initially only an addition parergonically framing the original, becomes a substitute for the bone. The "original" only exists as a trace in the additive substitute, but no more removed from presence by differance than what it represents.
Again, Marshfield connects the sedimental with the human; he addresses Ms. Prynne: "O you are the matrix of us all; grain by grain you bring us down [---]" (MS, 180). Marshfield seems to play with the etymology of the word *matrix* which goes back to the Latin word for 'mother' and 'womb.' Although Ms. Prynne is nominally the "mother" of all the ministers in the novel (and of the diary), she remains, in actual practice, only a marginal character.

78 Genuine dissemination in Derrida's sense has interesting feminist ramifications: "Dissemination, in contrast to insemination, implies that the male power to generate is short-circuited, for penetration does not occur. Without penetration there is no mastery of the feminine and no imprisoning of masculinity within familiar (phallic) boundaries. At the same time, generation through scattering plurality, non-phallic multiplicity, is confirmed." (Hules 1985, xxiii.) Recounting his adolescent petting sessions with Jane, Marshfield seems to take both pleasure and pride in the disseminative "revelation" induced (MS, 53-4). But, as I suggested earlier on, Marshfield's adult disseminative practices aim at a definite goal, a closure, unlike Derridean dissemination. Hence, Marshfield's seeming freeplay turns out to be of a phallic, inseminative, and controlling nature.

79 Frankie Harlow's paperiness is emphasized by the description of her pants: "(enhanced with a ribbon of ruffle and a floral weave of watermark delicacy)" (MS, 153). The depiction resembles Updike's poem "Pussy: A Preliminary Epithalamium" (1977), which utilizes the book metaphor in describing a woman: "slips / through whose weave your triangular blot like a watermark / shines in the minds of the masculine perusers" (Updike 1977, 80). Cf. also the depiction of a young bride's pubic hair that "almost seemed painted on her belly's supple

Marshfield's thinking, to sound and speech. Referring to mutual sexual satisfaction, Marshfield notes: "Women are cellos, fellows the bows" (MS, 84). Marshfield expects receptiveness and obedience from women although he seemingly calls for their co-operation, as I suggested in my analysis of the novel's narrator-narratee relationship (6.1.2.2.). This can be seen clearly when Marshfield, struck by temporary impotence, forces Frankie Harlow to repeat blasphemous phrases after him to get excited: "I gave her more words to say. She passed them through her lips obediently, untastingly like a child in catechetical class" (MS, 155). Earlier on, Marshfield expressed his impotence by writing: "my penis hung mute" (MS, 131) - he could not, as it were, phallically articulate anything, his pen(is) was not ready, which is why he switched to the tongue, to twist the psalmist's words (Ps. 45).

Ms. Prynne, the narratee and the object of Marshfield's seductive pursuits, is, too, like a sheet of paper on which Marshfield writes his characters.[80] Marshfield never lets her speak but always paraphrases *her* words so that they become *his* words. Ms. Prynne remains silent when she finally enters Marshfield's room and agrees to make love to him; she only articulates by movements: "You seemed lost in thought, only your hand speaking to me, lightly drawing my penis up into its ideal shape [—]" (MS, 228). If speech is, according to logocentrism, closer to truth, logos, or thought than writing, then unarticulated speech is even closer. When Marshfield and Ms. Prynne make love, narration stops as if to suggest that the whole seductive narrative is just a masturbatory substitution of, or supplement to, lovemaking.

Logocentric and phallic, Marshfield incorporates phallogocentrism.[81] As an author, Marshfield is a paternal *authority*, who protects the unity of meaning and the certainty of origin: the diary and its possible interpretations dramatized by the sermons are conceived by him. Although he courteously credits Ms. Prynne with co-authorship, it only means that she receives his narration and is once allowed to come in contact with the sending pole (pun intended), her phallic inscriber (MS, 228). The possible resisting narratees sketched in subsection 6.1.2.3. oppose exactly this hierarchical structure and its implications.

---

parchment" (MS, 203). For a discussion of women as fiction and the use of graphic metaphors in Updike's poetry, see Keskinen 1989.

80 For narrative seduction and readability, see Chambers 1984, 205-23. I dealt with Marshfield's seduction of the narratee and its relation to Balzac's *Sarrasine* (and to Barthes's *S/Z*) in subsection 6.1.2.2. above.

81 The term was probably coined by Hélène Cixous, and it refers to assuring a rationale for a masculine order exemplified by the asymmetric hierarchical opposition between man and woman. Phallogocentric thinking traverses various discourses in different disguises. In psychoanalytic discourse, man is conceived as an unmarked, original case from which woman is a deviation, a falling-away. Accordingly, woman is defined by the lack, by what makes her different from man. For example, Freud conceives woman as a supplement to and parasite of man on the basis of her "lack" of a penis, the token of the *normal*, first human being. The Lacanian school of psychoanalysis, although nominally opposing it, continues the same phallogocentric train of thought by forming the (purely symbolic) phallus according to the model of the male penis. In the Christian myth of creation, woman, taken from man's body in the form of a rib, is created as a supplement ("helpmeet") to him. The semantics, morphology, and etymology of the words *man* and *woman* betray the same logic. (Culler 1983, 165-67.)

6.2.1.1 Pen- and Tongue-Twisting Rhetoric

Marshfield's rhetoric, the metaphors he uses, show how the concepts of writing and speech overlap in his mind. He describes writing as if it were speech: his sermons are written to be spoken; Karl Barth's text has a "voice" (MS, 25); when Ms. Prynne writes a comment on his sermon, Marshfield exclaims: "You spoke. You exist" (MS, 212); and he sometimes addresses the narratee as if he were talking to her (cf. MS, 139).

On the other hand, speech and sound get attributes of writing: "I could hear [—] voices - or, if not quite voices, then the faint rubbed spot on the surface of silence that indicates where voices have been erased" (MS, 14). Marshfield describes his father's act of writing a sermon: "These sounds of ministerial activity engraved themselves upon a deadly silence" (MS, 18). A sarcastic remark "etch[es] with acid" (MS 63) as if it were inscribed in metal. All of these metaphors imply physical, visible inscription, i.e., graphic writing. The mixed realms of writing and speech suggest that both of them belong to arche-writing.

Thus, Marshfield cannot keep speech and writing separate any more than he can isolate "normal" intercourse from masturbation. The first term in both oppositions turns out to depend on the very qualities that have been predicated in the second.

The novel's ending does not mean a harmonious unification, a reconciliation of opposites nor a sign of a change in Marshfield. The love-making scene is not unlike Marshfield's seduction: it is dominated by him; it ultimately reflects his own face:

> There was a moment, when I entered you [—] when you could not have seen yourself, when your eyes were all for another, looking up into mine, with an expression without a name, of entry and alarm, and of salutation. I pray my own face, a stranger to me, saluted in turn. (MS, 228.)

The scene can be read as masturbation, as an "imaginary seduction"[82] of an imagined object never to be "possessed" in reality. The only unification that seems to take place is that the subject and the object, Marshfield and the character he created, become one. Because they were "of the same spirit" from the very beginning, this "union" will keep Marshfield as separated from other subjects as in the sanatorium. On the other hand, the desire to possess a "real" woman repeated in other sexual relationships is grounded in distance, making them moments of a generalized masturbation.[83]

The above is, of course, analogous with arche-writing. Marshfield embodies both: he speaks by writing and has intercourse by masturbating or by having masturbatory relationships. To adopt the words of Psalm 45, Marshfield's tongue "is" his pen and his pen his tongue. He writes both graphically and vocally.

I read Marshfield's sermons as allegories of reading above, but, as self-reference, they also tie in with (the act of) writing and the oppositions related to it. In the first sermon, Christ's writing and teachings on adultery function as self-description, summing up Marshfield's and the whole novel's concern with speech/writing and marriage/adultery oppositions. Like Jesus, who erased what he wrote, Marshfield privileges speech over writing; unlike Jesus, however, he "teaches" by writing. The case is different with the marriage/adultery opposition which Marshfield reverses

---

82 Cf. Derrida 1976, 151.

83 Cf. Johnson 1981, xiii; Culler 1983, 104.

and then neutralizes. One wonders if reversal and neutralization represent a self-description of the text's operations in general and if the speech/writing opposition could be given the same treatment. As Marshfield's metaphors for speech and writing show, the text is indeed unable to keep the two separate and prevent them from overlapping and developing towards neutralization.

The other three sermons contain a similar kind of tension between retaining and neutralizing oppositions. Marshfield resists the idea of reducing Jesus' supernatural miracles to natural causes, but still advocates the notion of man living in two worlds at the same time. The third sermon exalts writing, but only metaphorical, not actual, graphic writing; God's transcendental writing in the Book of Nature is, in fact, spiritual and thus identical to logos, thought, and speech.[84] The fourth sermon neutralizes the soul/body opposition by simply equating its antithetical terms. All in all, the sermons promote as curiously inconsistent an attitude towards binary oppositions as does the whole novel; both the moments of self-reference and the novel itself oscillate between retaining, reversal, and neutralization.

What do the remarks made in this subsection contribute to the interpretation of the novel? At least they indicate the novel's plurality and inner complexity: the dicrepancy between what it explicitly claims and what its rhetoric asserts. By the same token, a deconstructive reading of the novel may shed light on the persistent misreading of its ending. Critics have tended to read the novel as a gradual movement towards a Jungian self-realization, Freudian harmony, or existential-psychological resolution of the problem of faith; a liberation from the psychological trap and a sanctification through reification; a unification of language, sex, and religion; and a redefinition of American religious heritage through an allegoric overview of its history, and a unification of writer and reader.[85] What all these interpretations share is the final reconciliation of opposites, of harmony found within Marshfield and in his relationship with the world. Although all these readings are in keeping with what Marshfield wants to claim, what he professes to have gained during the month, the ending is hardly unambiguous. Critics have, I believe, taken his words and the generic conventions of diary fiction for granted. The rule of the closure in (diary) fiction is so strong that it has overshadowed the novel's internal unresolved contradictoriness.[86]

The intended therapeutic function of writing does not "heal" or change Marshfield. H. Porter Abbott reads the novel as an ironic travesty of a maieutic or therapeutic diary.[87] In the sanatorium, writing as a cure is literally institutionalized. Its healing function is based on the assumption that the true self is the hidden self and that writing is just a tool for its excavation.[88] Neither of these assumptions apply to

---

84 Cf. Derrida 1976, 15.

85 Hunt 1980, 193-94; Doody 1979, 211-12; Greiner 1984, 181-82; and Uphaus 1980, 100 respectively.

86 For closure and conclusion as conventions of reading, see Rabinowitz 1987, 160-69.

87 Abbott 1984, 46-47.

88 Ibid., 47. Early in the novel, Marshfield expresses his doubts about the possibility of curing (in both the transitive and intransitive senses of the verb). He listens to Mrs. Halow's account of her marital troubles and comments: "She was crying out, and I must listen--listen not in hope of curing, for our earthly ills elude all earthly ease [---]" (MS, 82).
The very word *cure* seems to carry a conceptual dichotomy not unlike Plato's *pharmakon*, or *drug* in *Rabbit Redux* (cf. subsection 5.2.2. above): the word can refer to a 'remedy' but also to

Marshfield: he reveals everything, which can mean the same as hiding everything ("So we all learn to say nothing as a way of saying it all" [MS, 201]), and his writing is not an objective and transparent tool, but foregrounded as a theme of narration. Forced to write, Marshfield tries to turn writing against the powers that be, epitomized by Ms. Prynne, but writing double-crosses him as well by undermining his apparent intentions (to prove that he has been healed, that he has learned to know himself, that he has developed into accepting women as equals). Marshfield's misinterpretation of himself is inscribed in the diary and transferred on to critics' misreadings of the novel.

It may be the case that Marshfield is as suppressive and manipulative in his overall narration as he is in his commentary. The possibility of Marshfield's unreliability as a narrator casts a shadow of doubt on all the events he describes. There may not have been any comments on the margins of his manuscript, not to mention an actual consummation of the narrator and the narratee. This possibility does not, however, seriously solicit my reading of the novel so far, for the events narrated - whether actual or fabricated - *discoursively* reveal the points that I have made above.

Interestingly enough, the critics who have read *A Month of Sundays* either as a representative of the diary novel (Abbott 1984) or as a conscious version of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (Iannone 1989), have noticed the problematic nature of its ending. Accounting for the conventions of genre and the functions of intertextuality hence turns out to be of vital importance in understanding the Updike novel. In the following subsection, I shall deal with both.

6.2.2 (Re)writing Characters: Self-Consciousness, (Inter)Textuality, Genre

6.2.2.1 Self-Consciousness

As will be clear from the preceding, *A Month of Sundays* is a self-conscious or metafictional novel. It embodies its textual condition as a part of its content, and it reflects itself by being fiction about (writing) fiction. Drawing on Robert Alter's *Partial Magic*, a standard study on the self-conscious novel, George Hunt notes that the Updike novel realizes ten characteristics of metafiction:

1. the initial playful power of the writing experience: "This is fun. First whittle the puppets, then you move them around" (MS, 12);
2. its arbitrary nature: "These sentences have come in no special order. Each of them has hurt. Each of them might have been different, with the same net effect" (MS, 19);
3. its temporal artificiality: "Why can't I keep this in the present tense?" (MS, 28);
4. the dubiety of invention: "Or perhaps these words were never spoken, I made them up, to relieve and rebuke the silence of this officiously chaste room" (MS, 33);
5. its complex relationship to "truth": "Worse, I must create: I must from my lousy fantasies pick the nits of truth. What is truth? My fantasies are what concern you?" (MS, 91);

---

its opposite, 'poison.' Marshfield is conscious of the dichotomy; his wife says that his spying on Ned Bork is "sick," to which he answers: "He's in my cure of souls" and adds an etymological aside "*Curo, curate, curare*" (MS, 17). Marshfield is playing here with the common root of the three words; they all stem from the Latin *cura* 'cure, care of souls.' The double meaning is introduced with *curare*, the word for the extract used in arrow poisons and in medicine by South American Indians. The poisonous aspect of the word is emphasized when Marshfield notes on Ned's sermon: "a penetrating nasal enthusiasm that arrowed forth from his mouth our denomination's curare-tipped formulae" (MS, 143).

6. the resultant confusion between imagined and real existence: "It occurs to me, remembering that fabled time when I lived in the real world and had my being there" (MS, 117);
7. its illusory but intoxicating omnipotence: "They seem dolls I can play with, putting them now in this, now in that obscene position" (MS, 178);
8. and yet, its problematic actuality: "Spent an hour rereading [—] the pages we (you and I, reader; without you there would be the non-noise of a tree crashing in the inhuman forest) have accumulated" (MS, 202);
9. the awareness of differing "existences": "You are yet the end, the *intelligens entis*, of my being, insofar as I exist on paper. Give me body (MS, 220; emphasis in original);
10. the final ambiguity about fiction's ultimate source and meaning: "Did I dream this? [—] The day after tomorrow, my month may seem a metaphor [—]" (MS, 226).[89]

Diary fiction is by its very nature self-reflexive: it reflects its narrator's mind and, as metafiction, its status as a verbal representation.[90] A diarist sitting and writing alone by a desk inevitably calls attention to writing (as action) itself.[91]

As Marshfield describes his writing process, how he writes characters on blank sheets of paper, he also calls attention to the diary's fictional characters, including himself, who come into existence in the same way. This brings about narrational paradoxes. Ms. Prynne, the narratee, twice addresses the narrator, thus breaking the "rule" of one-way communication between the two agents in realistic fiction. Besides paradoxes of the communication between the narrator and the narrated world, the novel contains paradoxes pertaining to the narrator-text relation. The narrator is aware that he appears in a text, as a written entity, but it is not quite clear who has written the text (MS, 220).

Marshfield, by rearranging and rewriting characters, also unfolds the traces of other signifiers in words; he, to use Derrida's term, disseminates. But what differentiates Marshfield's activity from Derrida's is that the former has a goal in mind: he wants to manipulate the direction the words are moving, to bring them to a specific conclusion or closure. Marshfield plays, as it were, golf on a lexical course: "Golf, gold, good, gods, nods, *nous*, gnus, anus, Amos. Eight strokes, with some cheating and a one-putt" (MS, 185).[92] In a similar fashion, he manages to get from "love" to "free":

> Love, fove (Webster's preferred spelling for fauve, meaning a tawny beast), foee (an expression of contempt), free. Only three deft shots, a birdie! The words are the same underneath, and free love is not a scandal but a tautology. (MS, 190)

Love is also, according to Marshfield's rewriterly reading, secretly connected to knowledge: "one cannot know and not love*" (MS, 191); "*Know, enow, 'nuff, luff" (MS, 191n). This kind of identity within differences is not unlike what Freud found in

---

89 Hunt 1980, 184-85.

90 Abbott 1984, 38-39.

91 Ibid., 15-16, 50.

92 "Word golf" itself is an allusion to Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* (1962), in which Kinbote, the narrator, indulges in a like practice. Updike's admiration for Nabokov is a well-known fact, as his numerous reviews prove (cf. Updike s.a., 192-221).
The word-game is not, however, to be limited to Nabokov only. Besides an actual game (which Raymond Roussel calls "metagram"), the practice can also be found in the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins, and it is closely related to the figure of "metaplasm" in classical rhetoric. (Cf. Stewart 1990, 90-91.)

dreams - Marshfield notes: "Freud's darkest truism: opposites are one" (MS, 189) - or what sometimes is assigned to Derrida in deconstructive readings of literature. Although seemingly deconstructive, Marshfield's dissemination, however, aims at reconciliation, the cancelling of opposites rather than at the recognition of existing disparity, mutual exclusiveness, and the simultaneous significatory dependence. Derrida's disseminative, anagrammatic wordplay, on the contrary, refuses to halt and totalize itself. Marshfield's lexical curves mime the fulfillment of desire (the ideal being a hole-in-one), whereas Derrida's play mimes the movement of that desire. In a similar fashion, Marshfield aims at harmony, unification, and a reconciliation of opposites on a more general level, but without real success.

In any case, Marshfield's iterative use of language brings about radical permutations in signifiers and, finally, creates the novel. As I noted above (in subsection 6.1.1.), Marshfield's word golf can be read as a metaphor for the novel's construction. Marshfield rewrites signifiers, characters (both personages and graphic symbols), conventions, literary and mythical texts, which results in the emergence of *A Month of Sundays*. Hence word golf is a *mise en abyme du code*.

The extract quoted above - the eight-stroke permutation of *golf* into *Amos* - serves as a good example of this concisely reflecting tendency. As Robert Detweiler remarks, Amos is - besides a fellow-minister's name and a biblical character - an acronym of the novel's title; furthermore, the eight words condense the narrative of chapter 23, miniaturizing it in a *mise en abyme de l'énoncé*.[93] Even a smaller entity than a word - one single letter - can be seen to reflect the whole novel; as Hunt notes, the novel's structure - that is, its *énoncé* - is shaped like the Greek letter omega.[94] Donald J. Greiner states how Marshfield's whole narrative is formed like a sermon.[95] The sermons within the novel thus also function as a *mise en abyme de l'énoncé*: they reflect in miniature the story-line or the structure of the whole work.

What is most prominently present in *A Month of Sundays* is, of course, the *mise en abyme de l'énonciation*: the production and reception of the diary (novel) is constantly present in the form of an autodiegetic narrator and different narratees who either read or metaphorically listen to the text.

An overtly self-conscious work, *A Month of Sundays* does not hide its reflexivity, but presents it as a ubiquitous element of narration.

6.2.2.2 Recurring Characters

The novel's fictional characters have not been born *ex nihilo*. Some of them have intertextual ancestors. As a rewritten version of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), the novel retains some names as interfigural[96] references to this intertext. In the following, I shall concentrate on the nominal or *character*istic features between the two novels, instead of providing a systematic comparison of them. Such comparisons

---

93 Detweiler 1979, 617.

94 Hunt 1980, 187.

95 Greiner 1984, 177. For a discussion of the sermons' links to *The Scarlet Letter*, see Kesterson 1979, 11.

96 Interfigurality is a neologism coined by W.G. Müller. It means the various "interrelations that exist between characters of different texts" (Müller 1991, 101 & passim.).

have already been made,[97] and my interests here do not relate as much to intertextuality as to recurring characters (in the dual meaning of personages and letters).

Ms. Prynne obviously alludes to Hester Prynne, the young woman married to Roger Chillingworth, who commits adultery with the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. Both women are, according to Hunt's analysis, ideal readers of a "tale about sacredotal infidelity and alone can receive [the man's] repentence and dramatic forgiveness."[98] But, as I stated above, Ms. Prynne is ideal, because she is made as blank as a piece of paper. Hunt also notes how Prynne's character directs the reader's attention to Updike's reversal of Dimmesdale's Puritan dilemma to that of Marshfield, a "poor Wasp stung by the new work-ethic of sufficient sex, sex as the exterior sign of interior grace" (MS, 218).[99]

Jane's father is named Wesley Augustus Chillingworth and he is, like Roger, a theologian. He is not as totally evil a character as his literary predecessor, but he still represents, for Marshfield, lifelessness and a theological opponent (cf. MS, 50-56). Jane, too, opposes Marshfield ideologically: she is liberal in religion but conservative in sexual matters; he is a religious anti-liberal but sexually radical.

Marshfield himself is, then, a rewritten version of Arthur Dimmesdale. Not only does his position in the structure of adultery cast him in that role, but also his name, by virtue of its logical similarity to that of his intertextual ancestor, points at Hawthorne's character.[100] The opposition within the men's names hints at the oppositeness within their characters: Dimmesdale is a strict promotor of the soul/body dualism, whereas Marshfield attempts a reconcilation of the dyad.

It is quite correct to state that there are twenty-six characters of *The Scarlet Letter* which recur in *A Month of Sundays*. The characters are those of the English alphabet. This is not only a jocular statement, for there are valid reasons for a "literal" conception of the character. The material basis of literature or inscription in general is foregrounded in both novels. In a truly Puritan manner, *The Scarlet Letter* revolves around signs and their possible meanings, especially the letter "A," the first letter of the alphabet. *A Month of Sundays*, for its part, employs the omega, the last letter of the

---

97 For a concise account of *The Scarlet Letter vis à vis* Updike's trilogy based on it, see Iannone 1989, 55-59. James A. Schiff (1990) has written his doctoral thesis (which is also published as a monograph) on the subject. As rewritten versions of the Hawthorne intertext, *A Month of Sundays* focuses on Dimmesdale, *Roger's Version* on Chillingworth, and *S.* on Hester Prynne. Why rewrite *The Scarlet Letter*? For one thing, it is generally regarded as the first major American novel, which obviously gives Updike a chance to work with a well-known basic text resonating with a large (American) audience. Secondly, the novel's themes - marriage and adultery, mind and body, the sacred and the profane - have interested Updike throughout his career. In addition to these rather obvious thematic reasons, one could propose more formal or elementary grounds. As Schiff states, the very ambiguity and repression of certain scenes in *The Scarlet Letter* calls for rewriting (Schiff 1990, 6). But the possibility of a rewrite is, in my reading, more fundamental than that. The emphasis on the variable, polysemous, and ubiquitous characters in the Hawthorne novel is an invitation to continue the practice in other works. Besides Updike's trilogy, Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978) is a bold response to that invitation.

98 Hunt 1980, 185.

99 Ibid., 185.

100 Davies (1983, 64) interprets Marshfield's name, without accounting for the Hawthorne intertext, as an index that "he is in no-man's-land between belief and disbelief, fidelity and adultery, and likes to plunge in the moistest parts of female anatomy." Dimmesdale's name comprises contradictory meanings similar to marsh/field: (obscurely) dim / (an open) dale.

Greek alphabet. Alphabetically, then, the two novels belong to the same closed system, and are also each other's opposites: the beginning and the end of that system. Both of these characteristics make it possible for the omega (or O) to draw the reader's attention to the alpha (or A), and to treat the dissimilar as a sign of the similar.[101]

Within the - by definition - open systems of both novels, there is considerable variation and differentiation in the meanings and contexts of the letters. The meanings attributed to the letter "A" within the Hawthorne novel include Adultery, Adultress, Able, Admirable, and Angel[102]; the letter appears embroidered on Hester's breast, in Pearl, stigmatized on Dimmesdale's breast, in the night-time sky, and as a herald on a tombstone.

In both novels, the major female figures are inscribed by men: Hester has to wear an embroidered scarlet "A" upon her breast as a punishment for adultery; Ms. Prynne is written, phallically inscribed by Marshfield to be seduced, to act as his partner in adultery. Lloyd Smith's analysis of Hester's written self could easily be that of Ms. Prynne: "As Hester wears the letter on her breast, she becomes the letter and, in the eyes of the community, nothing else [—]."[103]

The adultery of Hester Prynne and Chillingworth results in a child, Pearl; that of Ms. Prynne and Marshfield yields the diary, which only exists by virtue of the (redemptive, curative, and especially seductive) narrative contracts.[104]

The literally literary characteristics of both Hawthorne and Updike could be called hypersemanticization of signifiers. The materiality of graphic signifiers is foregrounded in both novels: instead of regarding the letter as an insignificant and conventional articulation of the signified, the sensual-emotive and iconic quality of the graphic character is utilized.[105]

The relationship between the two novels is not, however, simply that between

---

101 Of course, the situation does not have to be as overdetermined as in this case. If any letter of the alphabet is used prominently in a modern American novel, it is very likely to be connected with Hawthorne, Transcendentalism, or the rhetoric of Puritanism in general. Hence, Thomas Pynchon's *V.* can quite justifiably be read through the Hawthornian text, although the letter in question is different. (Admittedly, "V" could be read as a pictogram of the reversed "A," with the horizontal bar removed; this strategy would at least increase similarity *qua* difference.) Also Sue Grafton's alphabetical series - especially the first novel *A for Alibi* - is likely to be received, especially in academic circles, with *The Scarlet Letter* in mind.
Furthermore, the letter need not appear in the title to evoke Hawthornian associations; for example, the famous opening line of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* - "A screaming comes across the sky" - can be rewritten as a poetic metalinguistic comment:
"'A' screaming comes / Across the sky."

102 Not to mention what critics have dreamed up: Adam's Fall, America, Allegory, and so forth.

103 Lloyd Smith 1984, 13.

104 Cf. subsection 6.1.2. above. Of course, one could argue that the Hawthorne novel, too, has come into existence only because of the theme of adultery it deals with, but the Updike novel functions as a metaphorical substitute for a baby, not merely as a vehicle for its depiction.

105 For hypersemanticization, see Coste 1989, 87-91.
Early on in his career, Updike himself stated, apparently following Joyce's similar credo in *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, that his project was to write "in [his] life twenty-six novels [---] each to be dominated by one letter of the alphabet" (quoted in Strawson 1993, 19). As for the other two novels of the *Scarlet Letter* trilogy, *Roger's Version* features the homophonic "I" and *S.* the serpentine and monetary "S."
One is reminded here of Mallarmé's statements that literature is the total expansion of the letter and that literature is therefore appropriately called the letters (Mallarmé 1956, 380, 850).

an original and a representation, between ground and figure, between a hypotext and hypertext. The two novels problematize originality and priority both internally (i.e., within themselves) and externally (*vis-à-vis* other texts). As Matthews notes, Hawthorne's novel rewrites a fictional manuscript by one Mr. Pue.[106] The introductory "Custom-House" scene claims that the novel to follow is not a direct account of what has really happened but a rewritten version of that manuscript (which was, needless to say, a version of the original happenings). Furthermore, Hawthorne's early short story "Endicott and the Red Cross" is usually regarded as the germ of the novel. Thus, *A Month of Sundays* rewrites the "original" which is already a representation of a (existent or non-existent) fictional intertext.

What this state of affairs seems to be pointing at is the deconstructive theory of doubling, the general principle of duplication, which is a major feature in all the infrastructures of deconstruction (cf., for instance, supplementarity and iterability).[107] A traditional approach to the problematics of *The Scarlet Letter* as an intertext of *A Month of Sundays* would seek similarities and differences between the two, regarding the former as the original and the latter as its copy or version. Even accounting for Mr. Pue's manuscript would also easily fall into this binary logic of doubling; in this case, the Hawthorne novel would be the (first) double and the Updike novel a simulacrum, a copy of the copy, a double of the double, signifying the original.[108] But, bearing in mind the general principle of doubling, one could see the relationship differently: since the identity of the original rests on the possibility that it can be doubled, the very duplication can be regarded as the cause of its existence, instead of seeking it in a presupposed dialectically deducible anterior unity. The doubled exists on account of what it is not (i.e., its double). *The Scarlet Letter* is not thus an *Urtext*, but a copy of a fictitious "original," which presupposes, in order to exist, its doubles and simulacra, including *A Month of Sundays*. Furthermore, each novel in Updike's trilogy is in *intra*textual relations with the other parts of the suite, thus modifying versions (of versions).

The relationship between *The Scarlet Letter* and *A Month of Sundays* (or the whole trilogy) is, albeit existent, somehow sporadic and nominal. Even a systematic comparison of the novels in question tends to produce somewhat obvious readings, as Schiff's work, in itself, shows. This state of affairs may point at two ramifications of the relation. On one hand, the play of the signifier, the itinerary of the letter within the novels can be more intriguing than the interplay between the two, as I have tried to show so far in this subsection. On the other hand, other texts and other generic conventions may open up the one-to-one relation which the recurrence of characters seemingly suggests. In the following, I shall deal with this other opening.

Another important intertext in the Updike novel is the life of Jesus as told by the Evangelists. Not unlike Skeeter in *Rabbit Redux*, Marshfield imitates Jesus' life and acts by casting himself in a divine role. Early in the novel, Marshfield, reminiscing his childhood, writes: "Though the library was lined with books that mingled Heaven

---

106 Matthews 1983, 369; Matthews 1985, 149-53. Genette calls this kind of found manuscript, on which a narrative is ostensibly based, a pseudohypotext (Genette 1982, 435).

107 Cf. Gasché 1986, 225.

108 Simulacrum is, of course, Plato's concept for the mimetic relationship between *eidos* and its *eidolon* or *eikon*; cf. Gasché 1986, 226-27.

with our daily dust, none could explain the riddle of my existence" (MS, 19). The trope echoes the last lines of the Gospel according to John (21:25): "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Marshfield also metaphorically performs miracles, the tokens of Jesus' divinity. Recounting his listening to Frankie Harlow's problems, Marshfield notes: "And indeed her devils, outpouring, did take up residence in swine, [—]" (MS, 82; cf. Matt. 8:31-32). Also, Marshfield's golf yields a paradoxical statement: "I was a miracle-worker even if I lost" (MS, 186).

Describing the final love-making scene, Marshfield echoes the part of the Bible he had earlier (at least seemingly) despised: "your eyes were all for another, looking up into mine [—]" (MS, 228); cf. "And then some young megalomaniac came along and said, Look at Me [—]" (MS, 155).

No emulation of Jesus's life would be complete without a crucifixion scene; Marshfield rewrites it as a depiction of his two sons: "As I writhed to escape my life, [the sons] were agonizing but inert; they were the two galvanized nails in my palms [---]" (MS, 118). Again, we see the general system of doubling at work here: Marshfield imitates Jesus, who, for his part, imitated the prophesies and types of the Old Testament in order to "fulfill what had been written."

6.2.2.3 Conventional Confessions

As I suggested in the previous subsection, *A Month of Sundays* plays with the conventions of diary fiction by presenting an ironic travesty of a maieutic or therapeutic diary. One could detect a similar kind of treatment of another set of conventions in the novel, those of the confessional narrative. A preparatory sketch, with the help of Dennis A. Foster's account, of some typical features of the confessional form may prove useful in this respect. Confession usually implies a narrator revealing a secret to a narratee. Since the forms of (actual) confessing are almost invariably the same from one confessor to another, the nature of sin is shown to be predictable and almost ritualistic, as is absolution.[109] The case is somewhat different with written confessional narratives: the very length and complexity of confession defies an automatic, conventional labelling of sin, but requires interpretation on the reader's part; at the same time, the reader is likely to be "contaminated" by the sins confessionally depicted, to participate in sinning by transferentially repeating them, and, in fact, to be seduced by the narrative.[110] Foster conceives the confessional form very broadly - he reads not only the obvious *Confessions* by Augustine or *Diary of a Seducer* by Kierkegaard, but also *The Scarlet Letter*, *Absalom, Absalom*, and *The Unnamable* - claiming that "narratives of many kinds reproduce patterns of power, desire, guilt and obligation" found in confession.[111]

It is noteworthy that the first 19 chapters (i.e., two thirds) of *A Month of Sundays* mainly recount Marshfield's (sinful) past, which makes the novel resemble an

---

109 Foster 1987, 2-3.

110 Ibid., 3-4.

111 Ibid., 7.

autobiography, memoirs, or more notably, a confession. The depiction of the simultaneous or the immediate past typical of diary fiction is thus in a minority position in the novel.[112] Marshfield's confession in diary form starts with a ritualistic plea for forgiveness: "Forgive me my denomination and my town [—]" (MS, 3), which seemingly connects the novel with such repenting accounts as *Confessions* by Augustine and Rousseau. The mockingly elevated style, however, soon reveals that Marshfield's confessions differ from his predecessors: "My bishop, bless his miter, has ordered [—] me brought here [—]" (MS, 3). Throughout his diary, Marshfield narrates his "sins" without expressing guilt or regret; quite the contrary, he indulges in recollecting his erotic adventures. On the other hand, Marshfield seems to be consciously using confessional conventions to contaminate Ms. Prynne - the person who is able to absolve, i.e., release him - with his sinning and thus discoursively seduce her.

The Dimmesdale of *The Scarlet Letter* is an unsuccessful confessor as well, but for dissimilar reasons. He genuinely wants to confess, or rather he wishes he had the courage to disclose his sins in an unequivocal way. Dimmesdale does confess "more than a hundred times": "He had told his hearers that he was altogether vile, a viler companion of the vilest, the worst of sinners, an abomination, a thing of unimaginable iniquity; and that the only wonder was that they did not see his wretched body shrivelled up before their eyes by the burning wrath of the Almighty."[113] But Dimmesdale is either misunderstood or his intentions get tangled up in rhetoric, turning the truth into a lie. Both instances of failure are connected with conventions. Either Dimmesdale's auditors, acknowledging the conventions of preaching, interpret the literal as the metaphorical, or he himself is carried away with the conventional language and structure of homilies. The deliberately failed confession produces paradoxical effects: the congregation regards Dimmesdale's self-condemnation as a token of his saintliness and spiritual purity; and because Dimmesdale can foresee their misinterpretation, his burden of sins gets heavier still with cheating. When Dimmesdale finally gets to genuine confession, in the novel's penultimate chapter, his relief is short-lived: he is so consumed by his burden that he instantly dies.

Dimmesdale's earlier confessions were too vague and unspecific to be taken as anything else than homilic rhetoric. On the contrary, Marshfield's depictions of his "sins" are too graphic and detailed to be but seductive. Only in the end does Dimmesdale succeed in communicating his confessional intent; in the conclusion of *A Month of Sundays*, Marshfield succeeds in seduction. Dimmesdale dies purified; Marshfield continues to live, satisfied.

In spite of their differences, the two men's confessions seem to be structurally analogous. David B. Kesterson notes how Marshfield's writing desk serves the same function - confrontation of fear and a means of self-expression - as does the pillory for Dimmesdale.[114] Furthermore, Marshfield's sermons and Dimmesdale's scaffold scenes

---

112 For the temporality of diary fiction, see Abbott 1984, 29-30 and Martens 1985, 4-5. Besides being a hybrid of a diary and confessional novel, *A Month of Sundays* also resembles epistolary fiction. The diary entries can be conceived as epistles, as a few critics have done; Waller (1982, 270) calls the entries didactic or doctrinal letters aimed at the reader, whereas Detweiler (1989, 100, 104) regards them as seductive love letters to Ms. Prynne.

113 Hawthorne 1988, 99.

114 Kesterson 1979, 11.

equidistantly punctuate the two men's development.

As regards the confession's function to the confessor, Foster, drawing on Lacan's insights on language and consciousness, states that confession is "an attempt to objectify the self - to present it as a knowable object - through a narrative that 'restructures' [—] the self as history and conclusions."[115] Marshfield indeed reifies his self, professing to have cured his soul in the course of narrative, and nominally cancels the subject/object dualism, but without genuine success, as I stated in the preceding chapter.

Kierkegaard's *Diary of a Seducer* (which forms a part of *Either/Or*) shares many aspects with *A Month of Sundays*, although it has been, to my knowledge, ignored in the readings of the Updike novel. In recounting his seduction of Cordelia in his diary, the protagonist, Johannes, seduces the eavesdropping narratee materialized as a reader - whose initial is significant in the Hawthorne context - "A." The diarist awaits his love returned in the form of commentary, which will perpetuate the discourse; his love is hence narcissistic: "seeing his bookish representation of love mirrored for him in Cordelia inspires him to write of love."[116] Foster states that "A." functions as a model for subsequent readings of the diary, that "any reader who would understand the diary must, like 'A.,' invest himself in the text to know it," and revise it, as "A." does, for his/her own use.[117] Foster implies, in spite of his emphasis on the reader's freedom to utilize the text, that s/he should remain open to transference, and be seduced by the text. Nevertheless, the possibility to read against the grain, to resist the narrator's intentions, could be as fruitful here as with the Updike novel.[118]

In his "enforced confessions" (MS, 188), Marshfield tries to force a conventional ending upon the narratees and the reader. But Marshfield does not actually change; he merely cites the confessional convention of a change.

---

115 Foster 1987, 10.

116 Ibid., 34.

117 Ibid., 38.

118 Another confession of a wayward minister, George Eliot's "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton" (1857), may loom behind the Updike novel. The two works share at least the name Amos and (albeit, in Barton's case, alleged) adultery. For a discussion of the Eliot short story as a religious confession, see Pace 1986.

7 THE COUP

7.1 Reading

7.1.1 Explicator in Exile: Narrator's Commentary

The narrator of *The Coup* is Colonel, President-for-Life, Hakim Félix Ellelloû, who, after a coup in his native Kush, is writing his autobiography while exiled in Nice, France.[1] A cornucopia of religions, myths, and languages, Kush (and consequently its ex-leader, Ellelloû) need various kinds of commentary - mainly metalinguistic and metacultural - in order to be understandable to an uninitiated narratee. An autobiography, the novel also contains commentary on the act of writing.[2] Before going into the narrator's comments within the main body of the text, I shall first deal with the novel's peritextual features.

---

1 The novel consists of Ellelloû's fictitious autobiography or memoir depicting his rise to and fall from the presidency of Kush, a fictitious North African country. Ellelloû was born of rape in 1933, joined the army at the age of seventeen, and some five years later - four of which he spent studying in America - was appointed to king Edumu's attaché. After the coup of 1968 Ellelloû became a minister, and eventually president. Ellelloû causes the death of an American aid. In 1973, to lift the curse of drought and famine from Kush, Ellelloû executes Edumu, who had been kept imprisoned after the coup. The deed will not change the dire situation, but, on the contrary, makes Ellelloû anguished; also, the king's head stolen immediately after the execution is rumored to prophesize against the president. Ellelloû sets out for a difficult journey through the desert to find the head. He finally succeeds in his pursuit, and discovers that the head is electronically manipulated by Michaelis Ezana, the Minister of the Interior, with the help of Russian troops. The president destroys the head, and, because the people who had come to see the head fail to recognize him, is scarcely saved by his bodyguards. Ellelloû continues his journey, and finds an Americanized town which bears his own name. In the town, he tries to cause a riot against an oil refinery, but is again unrecognized and beaten by the crowd. While Ellelloû hides disguised as an odd job man, Dorfû, a former police spy and Minister of the Interior, appoints himself president. Ellelloû returns to the capital to ask for a pension and permission to leave the country, but is soon imprisoned. Finally Dorfû gives Ellelloû freedom and a pension; his mistress, Kurunda, and three of his four wives - Sheba, Kadongolimi, and Candace (aka Candy) - will not join him in exile, but he moves to the French Riviera with Sittina and her children.

2 Every autobiograpy is a self-interpretation: both the writing self deciphers him/herself and writing interprets itself (Starobinski 1980, 74). Hence, autobiography is also criticism of autobiography. I shall turn to the *The Coup*'s relation to autobiographical conventions in subsection 7.2.3. below.

7.1.1.1 Coups de peritexte

As a **peritextual** comment, the novel's title, *The Coup*, allows for a number of possible readings. Literally, a coup refers to a 'blow, stroke.' In established expressions loaned from French to the English language, the word exists as the first member of such compound nouns as *coup de grâce* ('stroke of mercy'), *coup de main* ('a sudden attack in force'), *coup de plume* ('a literary attack, satire'), *coup d'état* ('a sudden decisive exercise of force in politics; the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group'), *coup de théâtre* ('a sudden sensational turn in a play; a sudden dramatic effect or turn of events; a theatrical success'), and *coup d'oeil* ('a brief survey').[3] The most obvious referent of the novel's title relates to the political meaning of *coup*; the novel is, the peritext of the title seems to suggest, mainly about the overthrow(s) of Kush's government(s) and leader(s). That the novel is the personal autobiography of Ellelloû, however, seems to contradict the political expectations evoked by the title and draw attention to the other - metaphysical, individual, and literary - aspects of *coup*. On the other hand, the narrator crystallizes, by giving a dramatic survey of his and the nation's violent history, the different meanings in himself; hence, when Ellelloû refers to one meaning, it implies that the narratee ought simultaneously to account for the others as well.[4] Ellelloû's autobiography and Kush's history are, to a degree, one.[5]

The next peritextual threshold consists of Acknowledgments, which discloses the sources of the epigraphs, African history, and geography used by the author.[6] Since the peritext concisely gives valuable information, it deserves to be reproduced here:

---

3 Cf. *Webster's*, s.v. 'coup de ...'

4 For instance, the beheading of the king is both a 'stroke of mercy' (the intention is to lift the curse from Kush) and a 'sudden attack in force' (the king's head is *coupé* by the sword in Ellelloû's hand). A 'sudden dramatic turn of events' takes place when Ellelloû realizes his being the reason for the curse, like Oedipus getting a similar insight causing a 'sensational turn' in Sophocles' play. Ellelloû gives a 'brief survey' of Kush and his past, which also functions as a satire.
Perhaps not surprisingly, the polysemous word *coup* has been utilized in the novel's critiques as its metalanguage: "*The Coup*'s coup is style" (Oates 1982, 85); "The publication of *The Coup* in late 1978 was itself a *coup* for John Updike" (Hunt 1980, 195; emphasis in original).

5 I shall give a reading of *The Coup* from this viewpoint in subsection 7.2.2. below.
Clearly conscious of its literary predecessors, the novel invites one to read it through the intertexts of other fiction relating to Africa (see "Acknowledgments" for possible works of relevance); analogously, the title could serve the same purpose: e.g., Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* comes close to the Updike novel as regards orthography (albeit not phonology), the motive of changed (or mistaken) identity, and the theme of writing. For a closer look at the Waugh and other intertexts of the Updike novel, see subsection 7.2.2. below.

6 The peritext is signed with the initials "J.U.," which seems to indicate that it is to be attributed to John Updike rather than to the narrator or "editor-narrator."
It is not uncommon in Updike's fiction to find such minute disclosures of sources of information or inspiration. *The Centaur* gives an index of the mythical figures cast as realistic characters at the end of the novel. In a peritext of *Roger's Version*, 19 authors of articles and books (without the titles, though) are mentioned as sources of ideas, and three persons are thanked for oral information given, and *S.* makes explicit, in an "Author's Note" peritext, the books on Oriental thinking used. Similar acknowledgements also appear in *Brazil* and *In the Beauty of the Lilies*, both of which deal with out of the ordinary subject matter.
There is a dedication between the title *The Coup* and Acknowledgments, but I shall not deal with that peritext here, since it does not relate to commentary.

Acknowledgements

The Koran quatations are from the Penguin Classics translation by N.J. Dawood. The Melville lines at the head of Chapter IV come from 'The House-top: A Night Piece,' composed during the Draft Riots of July 1863 in New York City, when George Opdyke was mayor. The epigraph for Chapter VII is taken from an address given by Professor el-Calamawy at a conference on 'Arab and American Cultures' that she and I attended in Washingron in September of 1976. Professors George N. Atiyeh of The Library of Congress, G. Wesley Johnson of the University of California at Santa Barbara, and Carl R. Proffer of the University of Michigan have generously responded to requests for information. My African history derived from books by Basil Davidson, Robert W. July, E. Jefferson Murphy, Olivia Vlahos, J.W. Nyakatura, Alfred Guillaume, Paul Fordham, Colin Turnbull, Alan Moorehead, Leda Farrant, Jacques Berque, Roland Oliver, and J. D. Fage. For geography, I used the *National Geographic* magazine, children's books, *Beau Geste*, and travellers' accounts from Mungo Park to Evelyn Waugh, from René Caillié to John Gunther. Two out-of-the-way volumes of especial value were *The Politics of Natural Disaster: The Case of the Sahel Drought*, edited by Michael H. Glantz, and *Islam in West Africa*, by J. Spencer Trimingham. Thurston Clarke's *The Last Caravan*, a factual account of the Nigerien Tuareg during the 1968-74 drought, was published while I was retyping my manuscript, too late for me to benefit from more than a few details of its informational wealth. My wife, Martha, helped with the typing and, for the year in which she was this novel's sole reader, beautifully smiled upon it. Not that she, or any of the above, are responsible for irregularities in my engineering of *The Coup*.

J.U.

(C, [7].)

The novel's first epigraph, functioning as a comment on the whole work to follow, is from the Koran: "Does there not pass over a man a space of time when his life is a blank?" (C, [8]; sura 76). The peritext emphasizes at least two points pertinent to the novel's concerns: Ellelloû, an overthrown leader writing his memoirs in exile, is in retraction (not unlike Marshfield in his sanatorium), forcing him to review his past; the blankness of life utilizes a scriptural metaphor suggesting that life is a material which can be inscribed. The first implication states the basic narrative contract or motivation, and the second the metaphoric identification of writing and life in the novel, thus commenting on the **symbolic** code.

The novel is divided into seven chapters, plainly indicated in roman numerals in the classic rhematic fashion.[7] The fourth and the last chapters bear epigraphs of their own: the former is by Herman Melville: "Beneath the stars the roofy desert spreads / Vacant as Libya" (C, 111), and the latter by Professor Sahair el-Calamawy: "The struggle between man and fate is a totally alien concept to Arab culture" (C, 216). Paratextually, the chapters with epigraphs suggest, of course, their relative importance as compared with the plain ones.

The Melville epigraph draws attention to the symbols of stars and vacant, blank desert, but also, being the only Western and American one among the epigraphs, to the link between America and Africa. As the "Acknowledgements" disclose, the Melville lines are taken from the poem "The House-top: A Night Piece," which was written during the Draft Riots in July, 1863. Indeed, the chapter abounds in Ellelloû's reminiscences of his four-year stay in the U.S., and in the associative juxtapositions of

---

7 Cf. Genette 1987, 276.

America and Africa, city and desert. The epigraph also relates to the black/white opposition, since Melville wrote his poem during the American Civil war, which at least nominally centered around the rights of (African-American) slaves.[8] Hence, the epigraph functions as commentary on both the **symbolic** and the **proairetic** codes.

The epigraph preceding the seventh, final chapter can be read in two ways: it either gives a correct interpretation of Arab culture and Ellelloû's bahaviour in it, or the comment is ironic because of his possible divergence from the stereotype. In either case, the epigraph is a comment on the **cultural or referential** code, giving information about a stereotypic body of cultural knowledge. That the chapter ends the novel will probably raise the reader's expectations about a solution or narrative closure in it.

Although the novel is of Ellelloû's making, in the same way that *A Month of Sundays* is of Marshfield's, the authorship of the peritexts is not quite unambiguous. The "Acknowledgments" are clearly authorial, and to be attributed to Updike; that peritext also contains information which also seems to make him, in the disguise of an "editor-narrator," the originator of the last epigraph: Ellelloû could not have attended the same conference as the author! All the other peritexts are to be attributed to Ellelloû: fluent in French and experienced in politics, Ellelloû knows the meanings of the word *coup*; he is apt to quote the Koran, which he knows well; and he is also knowledgeable of American literature.

7.1.1.2 Commentary as Familiarization and Defamiliariazation

To turn to the text proper, the narrator provides the narratee with **metalinguistic** commentary on the polyglot terms and expressions he uses. In its simplest form, commentary appears as a translation given parenthetically after a word supposedly in need of explication: "[---] the three traditional Arab qualities of *rejela* (valor), *sirge* (thievisness), *dhiyafa* (hospitality)" (C, 112; emphasis in original). The explaining translations also appear as postmodifications:

> Sheba rode a camel of the coveted *azrem* shade - pinkish eggshell, dun toward the tail and white in the huge eyelashes [—] (C, 154; emphasis in original).

> the traditional tambourine, *alghaita, kakaki, hu-hu*, hour-glass drum, end-blown reed flute, or that single stringed instrument, whose sounding box is a goatskin-covered calabash, called the *anzad* (C, 74; emphasis in original).

Sometimes the narrator gives a more detailed account of a given word's meaning, including its (fictional) etymology:

> [Kutunda] used here a technical Sara term [sky-criminal] referring to an offender not against his fellow men but against the overarching harmony of common presumptions: 'political criminal' would be our modern translation (C, 48).

> [—] Dorfû, an expressive Salu term with the double meaning of 'solidarity' and 'consolidation.' [—] Actually, the Salu *dorfû* has the root meaning of 'crocodile-torpid-on-the-riverbank-but-far-from-dead,' as distinguished from *durfo*, 'crocodile-thrashing-around-with-prey.' (C, 222; emphasis in original)

---

8 The poem was published in a collection called *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866).

> 'Dorfû. Are you aware that the word, in Salu, also signifies the torpor suffered by a reptile when it has swallowed too big a meal? Mothers putting their babies to sleep murmur *dorfû, dorfû*...' (C, 236; emphasis in original)

It would be natural to assume that the narrator translates a (supposedly) unknown word when he uses it for the first time in his narrative; this is not, however, the case. For instance, recounting his experiences in an Islamic meeting in America, Ellelloû translates probably the most common Arabic expressions: "*Takbīr!* God is great! *Mā shā ' allah*: it is as God wills." (C, 137), although he had already used them in his narrative.[9]

Metalinguistic commentary also appears in a more indirect form. Reproducing Edumu's final speech, Ellelloû explains the use of a French expression in square brackets, but does not give its meaning: "'Of what am I accused by these poor soldiers, those apostles of '*le socialisme scientifique*' [for Wanj had no words for this concept]?'" (C, 62-3). Annoyed by the talking head's vilifications, Ellelloû utters a swear word which is given as a metalinguistic comment: "[I] exclaimed aloud the Berber word for still-fresh camel dung" (C, 180).

The English language is a foreign one for Ellelloû, and he pays similar attention to its words as he does to African languages. Ellelloû indicates the metalinguistic treatment of English within English discourse by using inverted commas. When recounting his stay in America, Ellelloû continuously comments on "everyday" words, thus making the familiar strange, defamiliarizing automatic or habitual ways of discourse (and perception) in a true Shklovskian manner. Discussing racial problems with Candy's father, Ellelloû halts at the expression "our American black people" and gives the following comment:

> I had already enough converse with the disciples of Elijah Muhammad to hear the word 'colored' as strange, but this strangeness was swallowed by the expanding strangeness of the preceding 'our.' I looked at my feet, for I was travelling in trecherous territory. (C, 132.)

Earlier on, Ellelloû had given an account of such an American drugstore term as "soda jerk" (C, 114), and listed the three pejorative names for a black person which he had been called when working as a part-time waiter (C, 118).

The framing of words with inverted commas also serves a mocking function, underlining the discrepancy between a linguistic sign and the context in which it appears. An Islamic preacher denigrades the civil-rights movement by excessively repeating (and manipulating) its key words, which the narrator puts in quotation marks: "the 'sitting-in,' 'lying-in,' 'sliding-in,' 'begging-in,' [—]" (C, 136). In a like fashion, Ellelloû vilifies the Americanized president of Zanj by listing such framed political phrases as 'tribal integrity,' 'our great African masses,' 'total impartiality,' or 'our color-blind Constitution' (C, 167).

Another important form of commentary in *The Coup* relates to the **cultural or**

---

9 The reason for this inconsistency could be that, on the level of story, this incident precedes all other appearances of the expressions; it is only on the level of discourse that the time sequence appears to be twisted. Also, for Ellelloû, the Arabic spoken in America sounds sweet and fresh (C, 137), and it relates to his gradual conversion to the Islamic persuasion. The story/discourse distinction will not, however, always explain the inconsistency of translations. For example, the Arabic qualities quoted above (C, 112) are translated again later on (C, 153), although the latter incident is posterior both story- and discourse-wise.

referential code. The commentary is all the more important, because Ellelloû has a double function as a narrator: on the one hand, he has to explicate African manners and other culturally determined bodies of knowledge to non-African narratees or readers; on the other hand, he has to transmit intelligibly his American experiences to non-Americans.[10] *The Coup* thus differs from Updike's novel *Brazil* (1994), which is also set in a foreign culture, in that the latter seeks to familiarize Brazilian characteristics for Americans, not vice versa.

The novel opens with the depiction of Kush and its people, which yields commentary on African cultures. Recounting a discussion with his third wife Sittina, Ellelloû supplements a simple description with a metacultural explanation: "She spat, a Tutsi courtesy" (C, 58); the comment is necessary, because in a general Western context, spitting in a like situation would be interpreted as a sign of disapproval, abjection, or impoliteness. Retelling Kutunda's allegorical story about Michaelis Ezana cast as the mythological figure Roul, Ellelloû provides an extensive comment on his properties:

> Roul the desert devil, a creature of blanched bones and arbitrary flesh, who sets lakes all around us yet renders the spot where we stand burningly dry (C, 72).

The narrator briefly comments on the Arabic calendar by writing an explication: "Colonel Ellelloû finally departed Istiqlal in the last month, Dhū 'l-Hijja, of that troubled year" (C, 110). Sometimes the commentary is discreet, embedded as part of the narrator's imagery, as in the description of Kutunda's house where "[s]hafts of radiant dust swirled like barber poles" (C, 46); in the otherwise African setting, this kind of simile taken from a Western cultural context can be regarded as an explanatory, familiarizing comment.

Revealingly, the narrator provides more commentary on American culture than on other ones. Ellelloû's first visit to an American drugstore proves symptomatic. He translates what he sees into the discourse of African culture, trying to make American phenomena more accessible to African narratee(s). Ellelloû reads advertisements totemistically and their signifieds as those of his own culture: "[—] above a jumble of faded cardboard totems, a counter that promised some kind of drink, perhaps a silvery *arak* or, in accordance with the symbols advertising sun-tan lotion, palm wine" (C, 89; emphasis in original). The same animistic tendency pervades his subsequent description of the drugstore:

> these walls and racks crowded with intensely captive spirits, passionate, bright, and shrill, their cries for the release of purchase multiplied by the systematic madness of industrial plenty. Boxes contained little jars, little jars contained capsules, capsules contained powders and fluids that contained relief, catharsis, magic so potent, as advertised by their packaging, that young Hakim feared they might explode in his face. (C, 89.)

Indeed, Ellelloû conceives shopping as a religious ritual with patrons "like drugged worshippers selecting a pious trinket or potion from the garish variety of aids to self-

---

10 I shall deal with the narratees in the next subsection, but it should be noted here that they cannot simply be categorized according to the native/non-native dichotomy: it is easy to see that there is at least a narratee knowledgeable of American culture and capable of grasping the irony brought about the defamiliarizing description of American life.

worship" (C, 90). Ellelloû also aims his keen eye at another entity epitomizing American culture, the American home. He regards the house of Candy's parents as a cage or a trap (C, 129), which contains objects whose function he does not know:

> And what were these little saucers, with tiny straight sides and bottoms of cork, scattered everywhere, on broad sofa arms and circular end tables, as if some giant had bestowed on the room the largesse of his intricate, oversize coinage? (C, 130)

The answer to this cultural dilemma turns out to be "coasters," and Ellelloû sums up the lesson of the incident: "By such sudden darts into the henceforth obvious, anthropology proceeds" (C, 136). Ellelloû's other anthropological findings include the hierarchy of drugstore "soda jerks," "townies," and students (C, 114) as well as the meaning of "the pink, 'sanitizing' cake of soaplike substance that reposed within the bottom lip of urinals in the men's 'rest' rooms of some American service stations and restaurants" (C, 213).

The irony of this kind of metacultural commentary is, of course, that by familiarizing America for Africans Ellelloû defamiliarizes it for Americans. But the irony can be even more profound and less intentional, soliciting the very status of Ellelloû as a narrator. In her insightfully minute reading of *The Coup*, Joyce Markle lists a considerable number of occasions when the events narrated are illogical, inconsistent, or plainly impossible.[11] Instead of criticizing Updike for abandoning his talent, Markle notes that the narrator is unreliable and that the novel, in its inconsistencies and flexible conception of time, is a kind of dream or fantasy.[12] The former statement is quite true, and the latter possibly fruitful to the novel's analysis. But then Markle, drawing on the inconsistent dialogue, the native Africans' knowledge of American culture, and narrative illogicalities, states:

> We are, then, being strongly coaxed by this novel to suspect another narrator, or at least to suspect the existence of a Felix Ellelloû who is not revealed directly to us and who does not necessarily resemble President Ellelloû.[13]

According to Markle, this other narrator might not be an African, not even black, and that he - the gender *is* indeed masculine - resembles Updike himself, which she regards as the novel's most profound problem.[14] Markle's observations are sharp, but they do not necessarily imply the existence of another narrator besides Ellelloû. Rather, as I shall be suggesting later on in this study, Ellelloû incorporates various strata of cultural influences, and he functions as a relay between African and Western cultures, hence having traits of both black African and white American narrators within himself.[15]

---

11 The incidents include physical impossibilities (driving a car in the desert on one tank of gasoline for a whole day), cultural inconsistencies (the manners, religions, and slavery described do/did not exist in that part of Africa), or unrealistic turns of plot (a miniature American city in the middle of a vacant area) (Markle 1982, 283-85).

12 Ibid., 285-90.

13 Ibid., 298.

14 Ibid., 298-300.

15 Interestingly enough, Ellelloû's very act of writing his autobiography mixes cultural presuppositions. According to Gusdorf, autobiography is a Western phenomenon implying a sense of individuality not found in all cultures and at all times; when a non-Westerner sets

In the course of his narration, Ellelloû asks (or at least articulates) a number of questions, thus providing **metahermeneutic** commentary. Another metahermeneutic vein is formed by Elleloû's search for the reason for Kush's pests, the final answer being, Oedipus-like, the searcher himself. As in *A Month of Sundays*, the questions can be categorized on the basis of their form as 1) wh-, 2) yes/no, and 3) negative-interrogative ones:

1) Why did the king love me? (C, 14)
What dim wish to do right [—] had led him to the fatal edge of safety that he imagined had no limits? (C, 42)
[—] her daughter ... who had vanished. *Horreur!* Where? (C, 131.)

2) Should I be getting royalties? (C, 40)
Mtesa, a traitor? (C, 51)
Were the police coming for him? (C, 124)

3) When are times not desperate? (C, 11)
But who, in the world, now, does not live between two worlds? (C, 57)
For have not African tyrants been traditionally strangers to their domains, and should not ideal rule attempt to harmonize not only the powers, forces, and factions within the boundaries but the vacancies as well, the hallucinations, the lost hopes, the dim peoples feeble as ropes of sand? (C, 80-81)

The questions are aimed at the narratee(s) or at the narrator himself, who either asks them because he wants to know or merely articulates the narratee's (anticipated or supposed) interrogations.[16]

The questions, including that of the epigraph, in the third category provide the (at least presupposed) answer in their grammatical form. A small minority of other questions are also answered directly or indirectly with a quotation from the Koran (C, 42, 118, 127, 165, 213). In general, the questions foreground the inquiring tendency of Ellelloû's autobiographic project: he writes in order to find out about himself, his country, and about America. The questions also render his narration mysterious and problematic for the narratee(s): the narrator forces the addressee(s) to find answers for themselves. For instance, Ellelloû's unconventional, anthropological interpretation of American men's room paraphernalia is likely to evoke other kinds of answers as well:

> The pink cake of strange substance, no doubt petroleum-derived, had sat across the porcelain slots meant to carry urine away; what purpose did this obstruction serve? A spiritual purpose, that of a talisman, a *juju*, an offering to the idea of purity. (C, 213; emphasis in original)

Ellelloû's attempts to lift the curse from his country by looking for its reason everywhere else except in himself, until he is forced to face the truth, obviously parallels the story of Oedipus. Kush suffers under the curse of drought and famine, which is lifted immediately after Ellelloû is removed from leadership in a coup. Like

---

to write his/her autobiography, s/he inevitably follows the Western conventions of the genre (Gusdorf 1980, 29). Robert F. Sayre limits the scope of autobiography even more by stating that it is "a wide-spread and characteristic form of American expression" (Sayre 1980, 146). In Ellelloû's narrative, there are also elements of specifically black American autobiography, for instance the motive of wearing masks, or the reminiscence of Malcolm X's spiritual and political development and conversion(s) (cf. Rosenblatt 1980, 175-79; Eakin 1980, 181-84).

16 I shall deal with the narratees in the next subsection.

Oedipus, he will not believe the correct diagnosis of the situation given by a blind man (in Sophocles, Tiresias; in Updike, king Edumu [C, 21]). The final realization of the truth is bitter for both men ("All this, Ellelloû thought sadly, I achieved by ceasing to exist. *I* was the curse upon the land." [C, 219; emphasis in original.]), and results in their going into exile.

Ellelloû's autobiography is self-conscious of its status as a verbal representation of happenings which are themselves fiction-like or at least elusive. This state of affairs yields **metacritical** commentary or **commentary on the act of writing**.

Ellelloû lays bare some of the sources he is utilizing in his narrative. In the novel's introductory section dealing with the geography, economy, and political history of Kush, Ellelloû reveals that he is "copying these facts from an old *Stateman's Year-Book*, freely [—]" (C, 11). In a similar fashion, when quoting the Koran, he sometimes pinpoints the suras in question (C, 27, 70, 96). When the suras are left unspecified, the source is, however, always indicated typographically by the use of italics, and in some cases by explicitly referring to the Koran, "the Book," or "the Book of Books."

The (physical) act of writing is also explicitly referred to: "My hand grows too heavy to write as I remember this misery" (C, 30); "The very ink in my pen coagulates at these memories" (C, 66). Also the scene of writing, a café table in Nice, as opposed to the arid landscape of Kush, is alluded to a few of times:

> These details are not easy to reconstruct, as I write where I do, with its distractions of traffic, its *ombrelles* and promenading protégés, its tall drinks of orange Fanta and seltzer water braced with a squid-squirt of anisette" (C, 126; emphasis in original; cf. also C, 11, 36, 249).

Ellelloû pays attention to the technical side of his discourse as well. Early in the novel, he discloses the reason for the shifting of the first and third person singular in his narrative:

> Yet a soldier's disciplined self-effacement, my Cartesian schooling, and the African's traditional abjuration of ego all constrain this account to keep to the third person. There are two selves: the one who acts, and the 'I' who experiences. This latter is passive even in a whirlwind of the former's making, passive and guiltless and astonished. [—] Ellelloû's body and career carried me here, there, and I never knew why, but submitted. (C, 12.)

The same discoursive decision is underscored later on in the novel as the narrator's comment: "It may be, Ellelloû reflected [and I now, with greater distinctness, write]" (C, 80), and as the (then) omniscient narrator's articulation of a character's thought: "There comes a time in a man's life, the beggar thought, when he thinks of himself in the third person" (C, 226). As for the personal pronouns, Ellelloû also comments on the use of the first person plural; Dorfû reads an extract from the Koran, which makes the ex-leader think: "Dorfû and Allah both, Elleloû noticed, preferred to say *We*. A trick of leadership he himself had failed to master." (C, 241: emphasis in original.) Some sort of *pluralis majestatis* is, however, used throughout Ellelloû's narrative, and it ties in with his (discoursive) leadership, to his authority of being the author, in narrator-narratee relations (cf. the next subsection).

For a few times, Ellelloû vividly recounts events which he has not witnessed himself by being physically present. To justify this aspect endangering the verisimilitude of his narrative, Ellelloû gives explanatory notes: "At the same time,

Ellelloû later learned from reliable sources, [—]" (C, 141); "Meanwhile (to extrapolate) [---]" (C, 191). Apparently these comments are supposed to be extended to such a similarly unwitnessed scene as the welcoming of Mrs Gibbs at the airport (C, 172-75).[17]

The use of the tenses also turns out to be in need of commentary in Ellelloû's autobiography. The reference book he is using is out-of-date: "President of Kush was (*is*, the *Stateman's Year-Book* has it) Colonel Hakim Félix Ellelloû - that is to say myself" (C, 12; emphasis in original). Ellelloû may also choose the "wrong" tense for personal reasons; describing the costume of a neighbouring country's president, whom he despises, Ellelloû comments: "He wore (and still wears, but for my own peace of mind let this description be consigned to the past tense) [---]" (C, 166).

Ellelloû's evaluation of his own discourse yields such comments as "[I express this badly. The wet ring from my Fanta has blurred the manuscript. /—/]" (C, 135.), or "[Ellelloû], by a series of ripping, knotting, and measuring actions that like certain of these sentences were maddeningly distended by seemingly imperative refinements and elaborations in the middle, constructed a rope of caftans and agals [—]" (C, 141). Ellelloû also comments on orthographical peculiarities which are not of his making: "One of Dr Frederic (without the *k*, yes) Craven's courses [—]" (C, 168); Ellelloû briefly comments, when a French newspaper prints Michaelis Ezana's name as "Michael Azena [misprint]" (C, 250).

The commentary on the **proairetic** code is scarce in the novel. There are a few simultaneous events which the narrator ties together with such conventional markers as "at the same moment" (C, 141) and "meanwhile" (C, 191, 219). The narrator may also link an episode to a prior one:

> As once before in these pages [—] (C, 141).
> [Dorfû] settled cross-legged on his green cushion, opened the Koran with curved thumb, and read, where he had left off nearly a year before [—] (C, 241).
> The numbness [—] I had experienced before in the course of this narrative, at most of its crucial turns (C, 247).

The **metasymbolic** commentary is limited to a few exemplary cases. Describing a set of brass scales in Candy's parents' house, Ellelloû reads symbolic meanings into it: "Once an honest artifact, it had been polished, welded, and loaded with plastic lilies. Fixed forever, like the strange Christian heaven, where nothing happened, not even the courtship of houris." (C, 130.) In a like fashion, Ellelloû connects Ezana with the characteristics of his watch

> of which the face, black, lit up with the hour and minute in Arabic numerals when a small side button was pressed. This watch fascinated his subordinates, who wondered where, in its scanty black depths, the device soiled the many minutes it was not called upon to display. So it was with Michaelis Ezana, who could produce whatever facts and figures were asked for, yet whose depths remained opaque. (C, 50-51.)

---

17 Another impossibility in Ellelloû's narrative relates to language. Starting to recount king Edumu's speech at the execution, Ellelloû notes: "He spoke in no language that Ellelloû knew" (C, 62); nevertheless, the lengthy, rhetorically elaborate speech is quoted and even commented metalinguistically (C, 62-3). Only after the speech does the narrator provide an explanation: "Colonel Wambutti, who spoke Wanj, crouched forward and murmured the gist of the king's words into Ellelloû's ear. The President promptly nodded, comprehending the challenge." (C, 63.) That he is only given the "gist" of the speech does, however, imply that the version given in the novel is for the most part created by Ellelloû.

One could apply Ellelloû's method of seeing material objects as carriers of meanings not immediately present to such apparent symbols of the novel as the skull, orange, the McDonald's sign, and so on.

As for the commentary on the **semic** code, Ellelloû reads and interprets new faces and settings throughout the novel. For instance, he sees the history of Kush in king Edumu's blind eyes:

> not blue yet not brown either, a green, rather, blanched by his blindness to a cat's shallow-backed yellow, always reminded me that his royal line had come from the north, contemptuous and foreign, however darkened - arrogant assailants, themselves in flight, bringing with them, worse than their personal cruelties, the terrible idea of time, of history, of a revelation receding inexorably, leaving us to live and die to no purpose, in a state of nonsense (C, 14-15).

In America, Ellelloû sees his fellow students as representatives of stereotypical qualities - both physical and mental:

> Muslimized, bitter-and-colored Oscar X from Chicago's South Side: quiet cinnamon-and ginger Turnip Schwarz up the river from East St Louis. Med Jhabvala, with his pointed beard and fluting, female voice, and myopic, beautiful Wendy Miyamoto, from San Fransisco, who got 99s on all her exams and rarely said a word [—]. There was even an Indian on campus, a Dakota called Charlie Crippled Steer, who stalked along in fur-lined earflaps and threw things at track meets [—]. He did not like anybody, [—] his mouth a sad slash, his eyes small as currants. (C, 116.)

The various kinds of commentary provided by the narrator have several functions. The metalinguistic commentary reveals that Elleloû is a polyglot and that he realizes his mediating function between two (or more) linguistic systems. Thematically, the presence of many languages foregrounds the novel's concern about their constitutive role in Kush, Ellelloû, and in *The Coup* itself. The metacultural commentary serves a like function: the narrator shuttles between (at least) two cultures, explaining, familiarizing their characteristics to the narratees; at the same time he defamiliarizes and creates ironic effects. The familiarization/defamiliarization dichotomy that he embodies also points at Ellelloû's double role as a translator and an artist. The former functions seem to assist the understanding of the unknown, while the latter ones, in accordance with the insights of Russian Formalists, make the known foreign. But the dichotomies are further problematized by the fact that some of the languages and cultural habits are, in fact, fictional, non-existent outside the artistic world of *The Coup*. Ellelloû the *traduttore-traditore* not only provides translations but also linguistic treacheries.

The metahermeneutic commentary draws attention to the enigmatic qualities of the novel (including the Oedipus intertext), and serves as a model for the narratees' like reading operations. The commentary on the act of writing, of course, contributes to the novel's self-consciousness, its status as a textual artifact not representing reality, but fictionalizing an already fictional entity. The laying bare of the scene of writing, on the other hand, also relates to verisimilitude: the scene is naturalized and made to stand for the "real" in narrative. The comments on the proairetic, semic, and symbolic codes are less prominent in the novel, and serve mainly as models for the narratees' (and readers') preferred interpretive operations.

In the following subsection, I shall turn to the agents that the narrator's metacommentary is aimed at, the narratees.

7.1.2 We Kushites and Others: Narratees

7.1.2.1 Africans and Americans

As I stated in the previous subsection, Ellelloû, the narrator, functions as an explicating relay between two cultures, African and American. This state of affairs makes it possible to reconstruct the novel's main groups of narratees.

In the beginning of the novel, Ellelloû gives an introductory account of Kush's geography, history, and economics. The constant use of the first person plural in the discourse reveals that the narrator addresses his words to Kushite narratees:

> Our peanut oil travels westward [—] (C, 9).
> our revolutionary council (C, 10).
> In Kush we never cease dreaming of intercourse between dark and fair skin [—] (C, 43).
> There is a sweetness, a docile pithy soul-quality of taste, to our Kushian goobers that I have never met elsewhere (C, 105).

Sometimes the nationality of the narratee(s) is left unspecified, but still it is Africans, as opposed to Americans (or more generally, Westerners), that are presupposed: "but we Africans have little difficulty in adjusting upwards to luxury and power" (C, 240-41).

There are, however, cases in which the use of *we* or *us* does not yield a culturally specific narratee, but presupposes the human kind in general:

> *Unclean*, we are all unclean, with our smudges of truth (C, 71; emphasis in original).
> Our friends all die to us, some before we are born (C, 164).
> What we most miss, of those those that slip from us, is their wit that attends those who know us - lovers, grandmothers, children. The sparks in their eyes are kindled just once by our passing. (C, 231.)
> Our skulls are rooms, closeting each brain with its claustrophobic terror [—] (C, 240).[18]

On the novel's last page *us* refers not only to all human beings but to all (fictional) characters, when Ellelloû describes himself as writing his autobiography:

> he pens long tendrils like the tendrilous chains of contingency that have delivered us, each, to where we sit now on the skin of the world, water-lilies concealing our masses of root (C, 250).

As regards the gender of the narratee, a few addresses betray that a male one is presumed. The following example, taken as a whole, clearly assumes a male addressee, although the *we* as such is unmarked in terms of gender:

> [Angelica Gibbs] was right, it is hard for a man to believe that his sexual power over a woman, however abused in its exercise, has diminished: as if we imagine that these our mysterious attractions travel in a frictionless ether, forever, instead as they do, upon the rocky and obstructed ground of other human lives (C, 228).

It is revealing that only once does Ellelloû explicitly include women in the scope of *we*:

---

18 This sentence is, however, completed with a statement tending towards a Kushian definition of *us*: "and all Istiqlal, a mass of mud boxes, comprised a mosaic of inescapable privacies" (C, 240).

> The little hard-cornered challenges - to honor, courage, manliness, womanliness - by which our lives had been in poverty shaped were melting away, [—] (C, 220).

This could, I think, be read as symptomatic of Ellelloû's tendency to masculinize the unmarked first person plural; for him, *we* stands for males, unless otherwise stated.

Another use of the first person plural relates to a convention of metanarration. The narrator halts his narrative, and invites the narratee to interpret Ellelloû's character with him: "Let us step back for a moment, onto the spongy turf of psycho-historical speculation. There was in our young hero [—] an absorptive chemical will [—]." (C, 164.) The narrator also addresses the narratee with another conventional sign of the "you," which indicates both his receptive role and gender: "Lest the reader imagine [—], he should understand [—]" (C, 200).

The use of the imperative forms another sign of the narratee, although not specified as regards the gender or nationality:

> Credit the now (in some quarters) discredited Ellelloû with the grandeur of his response in this hour (C, 63).
> Blue smoke had risen from the inner courtyard of the Palais in rectangular clouds, like cloudy cakes released from a mold. Think of it. [—] Think of the blade of that guillotine [–]. (C, 64.)
> Allah was mighty, immovable and undiscernible; so was President Ellelloû; praise him (C, 219).

The only times that the gender of the "you" is specified are the addresses to two narratee-characters. They are, in fact, the only intradiegetic narratees in the novel. Angelica Gibbs, whose husband's death Ellelloû had caused but whom he does not know personally, is given a long, 24-line (mockingly) rhetorical address:

> Dear lady, why are you one of this quintet gathered, in the haze of my mind's eye, to make alliance against Colonel Ellelloû [—]. I 'zero in' on your face, dear Mrs Gibbs, you mother of fatherless sons, you trekker through endless supermarket aisles and gargantuan consumer of milk and gasoline, How can you hate me - me, a fatherless son? (C, 175.)

Another woman apostrophically addressed is Ellelloû's ambitious co-worker at the luncheonette he is working in after the coup:

> Oh Rose, my Secret Love and Queen of the Hop, my Sugarfoot Standing on the corner amid Autumn Leaves, my Naughty Lady of Shady Lane, in this chronicle too crowded with vexed women yours is the unique aura of happiness, of the bubbling, deep-fat aroma of productive, contented labor, as hoped for by Adam Smith (C, 218).[19]

Again, as with the first person plural, the unmarked *you* seems to refer to a male narratee, the marked sense used only in connection with a woman.

Ellelloû's metacommentary dealt with in the preceding chapter contributes to the classification of the novel's narratees. Although the scope of *we* is clearly limited to African (males) or, to a lesser degree, to the assumed universals of human kind, the metalinguistic and metacultural commentary discloses that the narrator has two main group narratees in mind, Westerners (especially Americans) and Africans (especially

---

19 Both addresses, in their discrepancy between the object of desire and the style, can be read as parodies of the motive of unattainable lady.

Kushites). The explication of African customs, mythology, and words would be pointless, unless Ellelloû did not aim it at non-natives. Analogously, the commentary on the American phenomena and terms implies a non-American narratee. But the dichotomy is not as simple as this. We may well assume that there is a (Western or specifically American) narratee who does not need Ellelloû's comments on American culture or language, but who does not skip it as useless; instead, s/he is likely to notice the irony created by the defamiliarization of what s/he already knows. Seeing a familiar culture through a stranger's eyes is not an unusual device in literature - in fact, it is one of the commonplaces of satire.[20] The satirizing defamiliarization does not, however, function the other way round, as it were, chiasmatically: a Kushite narratee regarding commentary on his/her culture as an unnecessary extra is not possible, because Kushian culture and languages do not exist - they only have referents in fiction.[21]

On the other hand, the very translation or paraphrasing of words foregrounds and defamiliarizes, by drawing attention to the arbitrariness and conventionality of language, the linguistic medium. For instance, chapter two opens with an indirect metalinguistic comment: "In the season the toubabs call fall [—]" (C, 43), which is interesting as regards the presupposed narratee: if the plain Kushite word for autumn were used, it would exclude Westerners from the scope of narratees; if, on the other hand, the (American) English word were given as such, without a comment, it would presuppose a non-African narratee. That the word *fall* is given as an indirect translation of the corresponding non-English word, albeit supplemented with the discriminating *toubab*, indicates that the phrase is mainly addressed to an American narratee as a defamiliarizing comment.[22]

The questions already classified in my treatment of the novel's metahermeneutic commentary also help one to sketch the portraits of the narratees. As always with the questions in narrator's discourse, it is not easy to decide to whom they should be contributed. Most of the questions are, however, unambiguous in this respect, for they are more or less explicitly posed by the narrator himself:

> Why did the king love me? I ask myself this in anguish [—]" (C, 14).
> Why, [Ellelloû] wondered, generation after generation, century after century, must vulgarity repossess all the energy? (C, 61-2)
> I wondered if I should sit, and would the sofa swallow me like some clothy crocodile? (C, 130)

In the cases above, it is the narrator who is asking the questions himself without being able (or willing) to answer them. Also, the specific information given in some questions seems to point at the narrator as its originator, as in:

---

20 One is reminded here of Voltaire's *contes Zadig* (1747), *Histoire des voyages de Scarmentado* (1756), and *Candide* (1759), or of such modern novels as R.K. Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) and Tama Janowitz's *A Cannibal in Manhattan* (1987).
For a reading of we/they dialectic in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, see Parameswaran 1992, 194-99.

21 Of course one could argue that Kush is used as a vehicle for satiririzing Africa in general, but I think this not the case; Kush is utilized, so to speak, "colonianistically," mainly to contribute to the treatment of the "mother country," the U.S.

22 The case is different in the narrator's explanation of the year's month in the Arabic calendar (C, 110) referred to in the previous chapter: here the comment functions as familarization of the supposedly strange for a Western narratee.

> Did the stairway go down to the girls' school or to the prison where dissident rural chiefs and adolescents addicted to contraband comic books underwent laborious courses of political re-education, with seminars on the Thousand Uses of the Peanut and the Thought of Josef Stalin thrown in for second offenders? (C, 145)

As was stated previously, the negative-interrogative questions include the presupposed answer in their grammatical form; they can also be contributed to the narrator, because he tends to make such aphoristic generalizations on the basis of his experiences.

There are also questions which could be attributed either to the narratee or to the narrator anticipating the narratee's interests. The description of his student days in America yields the following questions: "Was I happy? They called me so [—]"; "Where was I? The Off-Campus Luncheonette was foggy [—]." (C, 118.) Since Ellelloû himself knows his state of mind and whereabouts, the questions arise from the narratee's curiosity. To which (group of) narratee(s) they should be attributed remains, however, ambiguous. In any case, a dialogue is established between the narrator and his counterpart with the help of the question-answer structure.[23]

However, when, as a student, Ellelloû is wondering the meanings of American phenomena by posing such questions as the one on the "coasters" (C, 130), he himself belongs to the Kushite narratees, *us*. When in Kush and explicating its curiosities, he does not, however, identify with the American/Western narratee, but remains in his role of a narrator. Again, this difference underlines the importance of America in *The Coup*: America is commented on not only because it is "strange," but because it is more significant than Kush in the narrative.

The cultural knowledge of the narratee(s) is presupposed and anticipated by the unexplained use of certain concepts. For instance, Ellelloû repeatedly uses the metrical system instead of feet and inches, which indicates his non-American bias and implies a narratee who is knowledgeable of the non-Anglo-Saxon measures. On the other hand, when concisely announcing Ellelloû's departure for the quest of the talking head, the narrator gives the day's temperature both in Fahrenheit and centigrade (C, 110), thus serving both national groups of narratees. The narrator's tendency to state the names of plants in Latin may indicate that he has non-native narratee(s) in mind (C, 72, 80, 157, 227). Latin here functions as a *lingua franca*, making it possible for foreigners knowledgeable of botanics to grasp the plant in question; the natives, in contrast, would immediately recognize it by the mention of the common, unscientific name (cf. C, 157).

An autobiography or memoir resembles a diary in the sense that the narration is at least partially aimed at the narrator him/herself. Ellelloû is presumably trying to find out and explain the reasons for his current state of affairs, which also relates to

---

23 The quotations from the Koran strategically placed after questions also serve as answers, thus literally creating an intertextual dialogue (cf. 7.1.1. above).
There are a few occasional cases in the novel which articulate a character's question without his/her being a narratee. Retelling Sittina's story, Ellelloû lets her question be heard in free indirect discourse: "that awful Mrs Ezana - how can he stand her?, she's *such* a bluestocking [---]" (C, 55; emphasis in original). Imagining Ezana's feelings in a situation he has not witnessed, the narrator still omnisciently penetrates the minister's thoughts: "Why, then, had the oppressors come? As Ezana moved barefoot through the deserted museum, the nagging question merged with the discomfort in his feet [---]" (C, 142). Also, in the final scene of the novel, the French people's possible questions concerning Ellelloû are articulated: "How did he come here? the pink passersby perhaps ask [---]" (C, 250).

his state, Kush. Basically, then, the narrative situation in *The Coup* resembles that in *A Month of Sundays*: both men recount their past and the incidents that led to their present situation in writing. The two narrators also function as their own narratees, but the narrative contract between the two roles of Ellelloû is not quite clear. Perhaps, if solving the riddle of his fate is his main motive for writing, then the contract would be a hermeneutic one.[24] By the same token, the split in the writing subject - the one who experiences and the one who acts - would be cured in the process of narration. None of these objectives are met in the narrative. Although some sort of "truth" about Ellelloû is discovered (he is the curse of Kush), no "healing" of the divided subject takes place. On the contrary, the last two pages of the novel describe, in the third person, Ellelloû as writing the very text we are reading, but he, in the first person, notes in the novel's last sentences: "He is writing his memoirs. No, I should put it more precisely: Colonel Ellelloû is rumored to be working on his memoirs." (C, 250.) Not even the act of writing memoirs is a certainty, a stable fact, not to mention the subject supposed to perform (or receive) the act.[25]

The different narratees mainly serve a thematic function, and, to a lesser degree, characterization. The dichotomies between Kush and America, men and women, and the acting and experiencing selves are underscored with the help of the narratees. As all hierarchic dichotomies, these ones are apt to consume themselves, to be undermined by their inner conflicting forces; I shall return to this aspect of the oppositions in subsections 7.2.2. and 7.2.3. below. The narrator's attitude towards the two main narratees discloses the novel's ironic or satiric concerns: the commentary on American culture is not, after all, mainly aimed at Kushites but at the narratee knowledgeable of America and capable of grasping the defamiliarizing intent. The narrator-narratee relations also reveal Ellelloû's personality: when he ignores the difference in nationality or culture, he still maintains it in gender by regarding the males as unmarked, universal human beings. He also seems to believe in a stable, definable identity of the subject, although his very narrative - both structurally and content-wise - points at its diametrical opposite.

---

24 Georges Gusdorf emphasizes the hermeneutic quality of writing a biography: "since he writes of someone who is at a distance or dead, the biographer remains uncertain of his hero's intentions; he must be content to decipher signs, and his work is in certain ways always related to the detective story" (Gusdorf 1980, 35). But this kind of project is not alien to autobiographers either, especially if they do not merely narrate life as an already existing entity but as an inquiry to its meanings and motives, as Ellelloû finally does.

25 I shall return to the problem of the divided writing subject and its relation to the autobiographic genre in subsection 7.2.3. below.

7.1.2.2 Significant Others: Resisting Narratees

The narratees coded in Ellelloû's discourse leave room for addressees who are unaccounted for, the possibility of whose existence is completely ignored. That eclipsed space can be occupied by constructing a variety of resisting narratees. The non-totalized Africans, Americans, and women could be included in that resisting category.

Although the narrator accounts for the cultural multilayeredness of his possible narratees, an "impossible" one, i.e. a narratee not conceived as possible or worth taking into account could be utilized in reading against the grain of Ellelloû's intentions. Joyce Markle and Malini Shueller read *The Coup* in a manner which, despite the novel's apparent claims, points at a colonial bias in Ellelloû's narrative world.[26] Both the Africans and Americans are, after all, conceived as homogenous groups, without accounting for their inner heterogeneity. The resisting narratees from either of the groups share features that distinguish them from their totalized bulk name. The cases of Candy and Ellelloû himself dramatize the arbitrary and constructed nature of ethnicity and nationality: both are more or other than what their origins suggest. The Africa of *The Coup* is treated colonianistically and stereotypically, only as a vehicle for satirizing America. By the same token, *The Coup*'s America is saturated with the typical, which undoubtedly sharpens satire's edge but at the same time loses any singularity. For the resisting narratees from either of the groups, *we* is too totalizing a pronoun.

Another common uncommon feature between Africans and Americans is, of course, gender. While not claiming that *woman* signifies the same in Africa and America, I would propose that, in *The Coup*, gender is a more profoundly distinctive feature that ethnicity, nationality, or 'race,' since the narrator's totalizations are fundamentally based on the unmarkedness of man *qua* human being in general. Thus, the resisting woman narratee would mainly pay attention to the systematic exclusion of one gender from the novel's narrative contracts. This kind of resisting approach to the novel would produce readings that would question the narrator's dominating position or the validity of his interpretations disguised as commentary. To account for the African/American distinction within the female gender would further complicate the category of *woman*, and open up resistance to the narrator's doubly (or four times) discriminating discourse.

Thus, resisting narratees would be sensitive to the both colonial and sexist biases in the narrator's discourse, and be able to account for ethnicity in receiving both. But these variants still work within the heterosexual framework. I suggest that Ellelloû's four wives and one mistress, his significant others, could be conceived as models for a lesbian resisting narratee. The different women could be read as suggesting differences within the category *woman-as-wife*: the five women are united, true, via their husband/lover, but they also form a sort of lesbian bond behind his back. Polygamy as a multiplied version of the sacrament of heterosexual marriage (and by implication, heterosexuality) itself furnishes a means of a legitimate one-sex, homosocial co-habitation. This is not to suggest that Elleloû's wives would actually

---

26 Markle 1982; Shueller 1991. I shall deal with these articles in greater detail in the next subsection.

indulge in homosexual or even homoerotic relations, but that the presence of such a possibility could be used to resists the novel's overall heterosexualism. By analogy, then, also a male gay narratee could be constructed, although the intensified male homosociality is perhaps less subversive than in the case of Ellelloû's significant others. Men already hold the power in the novel, so the construction of a narratee representing that gender (albeit with a different sexual orientation) does not deviate from the established hierarchy of force as much as a lesbian woman, who is doubly ruled out from it.

The narrator-narratee relations revealed by the metacommentary, thus, foreground the hermeneutic, interpretive aspect pertinent to the novel. In the following subsection, I shall deal with this phenomenon in connection with the interpreting characters, interpretants, and how they allegorize the reading operations *The Coup* is calling for.

7.1.3 Religion, Politics, and the Rule of the Reader: Allegories of Interpretation

7.1.3.1 Between Marx and Muhammad

The quarrels and disputes in *The Coup* do not perhaps form as systematic models for interpretation as they do in *Rabbit Redux*; neither does Ellelloû read written texts in the manner of Marshfield in *A Month of Sundays*. The disputes are spread throughout *The Coup*, and they mainly deal with political and religious issues, so that the acts of interpretation shuttle between Marx and Muhammad. Ellelloû eventually embodies both tendencies, as he does African and American ideologies, making it possible for him to comment on both.

The disputes and the consequent changes in Ellelloû's ideology are not presented in the order in which they presumably took place in the story, but the time sequence is changed by the discourse: the outcome is, then, shown before the reasons and development which lead to it.[27] The oldest disputes in the novel, story-wise that is, take place during Ellelloû's student years in America. Oscar X, a character resembling Skeeter in his firm beliefs and militant rhetoric, represents a racist sect of Black Muslims on campus. Oscar X reduces (racial) problems to evolution, to genetics; according to him, the white race was intentionally developed from the original black people by genetic manipulation, and the outcome was the "supreme insult to Allah" (C, 119). Oscar X hence represents racial or ethnic essentialism. At the other pole of the conversational axis, Esmeralda Miller, a Marxist and the only black woman on campus, transcends the racial difference by introducing some allegedly universal concepts by Marx:

---

27 One could argue, as always with the story/discourse opposition, that the former does not necessarily represent the true or original sequence of events, but only a mimetic illusion of it. This objection is especially important in *The Coup*, in which Ellelloû is an unreliable narrator narrating his own story; he is likely to shape the narrative according to both his own interests (an apology for his own beliefs, opinions, or actions) and the conventions of autobiography or memoir (to create a logical whole revealing a whole subject).

> 'You're both [Oscar X and Barry Little] talking about alienation, man's alienation from his species being, and you can't talk about that without talking about self-estrangement induced by forced labor. These racial categories are archaic, they have nothing to do with the class struggle; the black bourgeoisie, where it exists, is as oppressive, and in the last analysis as inevitably self-destructive, as the white, and now we have to add the yellow. Look at Liberia.' (C, 119.)

Esmeralda's conception of 'race' could be called constructivist or cultural. Esmeralda's Marxist analysis, supplemented by Wendy's allusions to Lenin, does not, however, make Oscar X adopt his opponent's terminology or frame of reference; he bluntly answers: "'The white man is the devil'", and gives the whites vilifying epithets, calling them "*facts*" (C, 120; emphasis in original). Ellelloû, functioning as a mouthpiece of common sense not unlike Harry in *Rabbit Redux*, calls for the operationality of both interpretations:

> 'The dictatorship of the proletariat, the divinity of this and that itinerant - the crucial question isn't Can you prove it? but Does it give us a handle on the reality that otherwise would overwhelm us?' (C, 121)

Gradually Ellelloû becomes interested in Oscar X's Islamic persuasion, and finds its believers strangely African-like (C, 123). Also, inspired by a Messenger's speech, Ellelloû is certain that Islam meets his requirement of workability:

> I would find myself wild with visions of what must be done, of nations founded on the rock of vengeance and led by such quiet brown hate-inspired men as this, our Messenger (C, 137).

> He taught me that the evils I had witnessed were not accidental but intrinsic. He showed me that the world is our enslaver, and that the path to freedom is the path of abnegation. He taught me nationhood, purity, and hatred [—]. (C, 138.)

Ellelloû has to test his newly-adopted faith in conversations with Esmeralda. She accuses him of being an American and Christian instead of African and Islamic (C, 147-48). He will not, however, talk as much about the functionality of Islam as about the dysfunctionality of Marxist theory in describing or changing the world (C, 148-50). Both ideological structures - religion and politics - are, in Ellelloû's mind, interchangeable, because they are based on faith, as can deduced from his comment on her vilification of Islam: "'I don't mock your faith'" (C, 148).

For Esmeralda, Ellelloû represents a fall from the original Africanness, a person who should learn from American blacks, whereas for Candy's father, he stands for a genuine African, who ought to reproach the fallen state of black Americans (C, 132-35). A somewhat different kind of critique is given by Ellelloû's professor Craven, who accuses him of failing to show genuine Africanness, i.e., what was taught in the professor's own course, in the exam: "'you seemed to show less gut feeling for the African ethos than some of the middle-class kids in the course'" (C, 169). But, as Ellelloû puts it, "'you have made an idea of blackness; when you look at me, you see an idea [of blackness], and ideas do not talk back [—]'" (C, 171). An analysis of the motivation behind the criticizing characters' statements shows that none of them are genuinely pursuing the "truth," but rather trying to advance their own good. Esmeralda is jealous of Ellelloû's liaison with Candy and is trying to seduce him - with success; Candy's father is uneasy about his daughter dating a black man, but

projects his anger onto American blacks; Professor Craven is, for his part, jealous of Candy, who is his occasional mistress. Hence, various layers of interpretation - both cultural and political - are projected onto Ellelloû in America; one could even say that his identity consists of different ideological strata, of interpretive traces. Ellelloû has to negotiate between what he looks like, what he thinks he is, and what he is expected to be. These three variables are not compatible, but produce a disharmonious, divided subject.

The two main interpretive scenarios presented in the discussions taking place in America are, then, political (specifically Marxist) and religious (specifically Islamic). The dyad can be extended so that the political also signifies the "actual," the referential, the mimetic-metonymical relation to reality, whereas the religious stands for all that depends more on metaphor, on the transcendental meaning of what is.[28]

---

28 In one of the most recent readings of the novel, Malini Schueller notes that the reception of Updike's fiction - including *The Coup*, which Schueller labels as his most overtly political novel - has generally been apolitical and that the author's spiritual aspects have usually been emphasized. Drawing on modern theories of colonial/imperialist discourse, Schueller claims that this state of affairs is in keeping with the tendency of this specific discourse to "present itself as ideologically innocent." According to Schueller, *The Coup* is basically "a text that simultaneously empowers the norms of middle-class America and works to contain the threat of revolution and Otherness that the Third World poses." The novel does this by drawing on the (from the Western viewpoint, that is) "typical" history of an African country, by utilizing allegedly universal myths, and by hiding its colonial overtones in satire. (Schueller 1991, 113-27.) Like Esmeralda, the critic sees these fabrications as indices of false ideology, covering the real oppressive mechanism of reality. Hence, Schueller, without making use of the overtly political allegory of reading the novel presents, in fact participates in the mode of reading it anticipates. What separates Shueller's reading from Esmeralda's Marxist one is, of course, the former's refusal to cancel opposing racial categories in the face of some presumably universal concepts. Other critics have also emphasized the novel's referential and political dimensions. Augustine Chukwu reads *The Coup* through a history book dealing with Africa's problems, and underscores how the novel "depicts the economic and political situation of in an imaginary African nation" (Chukwu 1982, 61).
Many critics have also taken pains with locating Kush on African map: Kathleen Lathrop gives a detailed comparison of the history, geography, and economy of Kush and Niger to prove that former refers to the latter (Lathrop 1985, 250-53). Mali, Burkinafaso, Chad, and Libya have also been suggested (Schueller 1991, 116; Towers 1979, 159; Detweiler 1984, 156-57; Karl 1983, 259). Ellelloû, too, has been read as a fictionalized version of Haile Selassie (Detweiler 1984, 157), Mobutu Sese Seko and Idi Amin (Chukwu 1982, 62), Diori of Niger (Lathrop 1985, 252), or Libya's Muammar Qaddafi (Karl 1983, 259). On the other hand, mistakes, impossibilities, and improbabilities have also been traced in the novel's depiction of Africa - even to the degree that the defects in referentiality have been regarded as defects in the novel's poetic quality (Markle 1982, 283-85; Schueller 1991, 116).
True to the established way of reading Updike's fiction, many critics have interpreted *The Coup* from theologic or mythical viewpoints. George Hunt, whose book on Updike utilizes religious and myth criticism, does not try to determine the novel's verisimilitude but reads it as a conglomerate of (Western) religious thinking (the Bible, Bunyan), myths (Oedipus, Fisher King, American Adam), and their literary applications (*The Waste Land*, *Lolita*, *Pale Fire*, Updike's own prior works). Hunt's only references to actuality are to the American events the novel allegorizes. (Hunt 1980, 195-206.) Although initially trying to establish the actual location of Kush, Lathrop soon turns to a conventional myth critical reading of the novel by interpreting it as a version of a hero's monomyth as sketched by Jessie Weston and Joseph Campbell (Lathrop 1985, 254-58). In a similar fashion, Judie Newman traces the allusions to biblical characters that the novel's proper names bear, thus trying to show how *The Coup* taps the most important source of myths in the West, the Bible (Newman 1988, 116-17). It is noteworthy that, although the novel's religious-mythical reading is allegorized by an Islamic person quoting the Koran (Oscar X), none of the critics I have read, including myself, have utilized that tradition or that religious text as a model for analysis. Apparently the critics' own lack of knowledge about Islam has made them read the novel as if it was mainly based on the Christian tradition. The substitution of the familiar for strange, is, in fact, a common colonial or imperialistic act: one's own culture is privileged to the degree that it is regarded as universal. The critics have not, then, been able to follow Ellelloû's example in functioning as intercultural relays, as interpretive shuttles.

Back in Africa, Ellelloû indeed seems to incorporate different, even mutually exclusive identities and interpretive strategies, as his various disguises and names suggest. He goes to visit the imprisoned king to ask for advice as how to lift drought and famine from Kush. The king answers that the silence brought about by starvation "anticipates the silence of Paradise" (C, 18), which seems to imply the divinity and ultimate goodness of the pest. On the other hand, the king advises Ellelloû to accept American food aid, but the president rather seeks for a ritualistic solution to the problem: he sees the execution of the king as a purifying rite restoring Kush's well-being (C, 22). Ellelloû, although allegedly an Islamic Marxist, here draws on native religions to justify regicide. On the other hand, in his last presidential speech, Ellelloû interprets the meaning of the drought in the king's Islamic manner: "'the drought is a form of the Manifest Radiance, and our unhappiness within it is blasphemy'" (C, 214).

Discussing the famine with his Minister of the Interior, Ellelloû extends Ezana's political interpretation of it (famine is "'L'Émergence, given a fortuitous climatic dimension'") into:

> 'The famine exists, and therefore must have a meaning, both Marxist and divine. I think it means our revolution was not thorough enough; it left a pocket of reaction here in the Palais d'Administration, on the floor below us, in the far wing. I know you know the king still lives.' (C, 53.)

That Ellelloû embodies two interpretive stategies - political and religious - does not necessarily point at their mutual interchangeability and inner similarity, but rather at the pragmatic use of different models: the interpretive force of each method varies from one situation to another. By the same token, Ellelloû's tendency, in his mind and narrative, to juxtapose Africa with America, to treat both as familiar or strange, functions as a means of satire in the novel. As with the interpretive stategies, this shuttling between the poles of a dyad provides the two possible way of conceiving the target of satire.[29]

7.1.3.2 Dorfû: The Ascent of the Reader

The last of Ellelloû's interpretive companions is a reader, the mysterious young man with a plum-coloured fez who pops up in the crucial turns of the narrative, eventually becoming President of Kush, Dorfû. Could Dorfû's development allegorize the reader of the novel? Dorfû at first appears reading aloud the Koran's suras describing Paradise for the imprisoned Edumu to ease his boredom (C, 16).[30] The king uses the

---

29 As I stated in the previous subsection, the defamiliarization of the familiar mainly functions as a satire of America. This seems to be a view shared by many critics of the novel. For instance, Frederick R. Karl views Kush as "a shadow presence of America," and stresses the comic sides of the novel's cultural mix (Karl 1983, 260); Suzanne Henning Uphaus finds in her stylistic reading of *The Coup* how America is being satirized (Uphaus 1980, 119); and Barbara Lemeurier underlines its critique of American society and Third World policy (Lemeurier 1982, 101, 103-11; cf. also Detweiler 1984, 156-60). On the other hand, the apparent satirizing intent can be reversed, read against the grain, as Schueller does by suggesting that "the reliance on satire [---] functions to legitimize an imperialistic discourse that denies the political existence of the Third World" (Schueller 1991, 115).

30 The very name of the Islamic sacred book ties in with graphic inscription and its reception: the Koran derives from the Arabic noun *qur'ān* ('book,' 'reading') which is akin to the verb *qara'a* ('to read, recite').

reader as if he were a record player, turning him on and off according to his moods, and Ellelloû suspects the man is a police spy (C, 21). When Ellelloû arrests Ezana, Dorfû is appointed Acting Minister of the Interior (C, 102-3), and later he uses Ezana as his servant-like translator (C, 193-94). After becoming president, Dorfû takes one of Ellelloû's wives, Kutunda, as his mistress, and the ex-president is, reversely, in a similarly lowly position to the reader in the beginning of the novel (C, 237). Ellelloû is even imprisoned, and when Dorfû comes to visit him, the new president continues reading aloud the Koran from the sura where he left off mid-sentence in the same cell nearly a year earlier (C, 241). Dorfû also discusses presidency and the way Ellelloû conceived it:

> 'You died, as President, in the city that bears your name. Now the honor of the *Presidency* must be safeguarded. [—]'
> 'You took the name Freedom, and have been captive, until now, of your demons. Our capital is called Independence, yet our polity is an interweave of dependencies. Even the purity of water is a paradox; for unless it be chemically impure, it cannot be drunk.' (C, 242; emphasis in original)

Dorfû hence stresses the paradoxality of Ellelloû (and Kush).

As for freedom, Ellelloû, drawing on general mechanics, maintains that it obeys the laws of (perhaps unconceivable) directionality and movement[31]; but '"How delicious it is, my President, to pause in movement, and to feel that divine momentum hurtling one forward!"' (C, 243). Dorfû, who has experienced parachuting, in contrast, stresses that one cannot step aside from the general movement which, when it is participated in, feels like stasis: '"The wind does not feel the wind. To be within the will of Allah is to know utter peace."' (C, 243.) The two men's differing stands relate to their different positions: Ellelloû is ousted, in distraction, and thus (seemingly) able to halt in the movement of history and narrative, whereas Dorfû participates as an active particle or agent in both. Exiled, Ellelloû sits in stasis at a café table re-experiencing and reproducing the past movement in writing. The interpreter, the analogy seems to suggest, is to play an active role in the meaning production, to rule the writer as a reader. The reader, allegorized by Dorfû's development, ought not content him/herself to a passive voicing of writing as if it was the holy text of the Koran, but rather to interpret even if it meant turning against its authority and apperent intentions. But the dichotomy is not clear-cut: Ellelloû not only writes, but also, by providing commentary of various kind, functions as his own reader, thus embodying in himself another dyad besides the experiencer/actor one. Reading and writing are thus two sides of one act; the dichotomy between separate author and reader, text and commentary, novel and criticism are - as in *A Month of Sundays* or, albeit less obviously, in *Rabbit Redux* - abolished.[32]

---

31 For a more detailed account of Ellelloû's conception of the (fatalistic) physical laws, see C, 128-29. In Robert Nadeau's reading of the novel, Updike "uses concepts from the new physics as ontological justification for his view of duality" (Nadeau 1981, 119).

32 The critics who have usually been sensitive to the self-reflexive features of Updike's fiction have also noticed those traits of *The Coup* that suggest "audience participation." Hunt and Greiner note some of the novel's metalinguistic and metacritical instances (Hunt 1980, 198, 200-204, 206; Greiner 1984, 34, 36, 41). Detweiler even suggests that "myth is appropriated by Updike to 'deconstruct' itself, and in doing so to demonstrate how fiction on revolution,

What about Ellelloû's four wives and one mistress? Do not they allegorize interpretive options? True, the women of Ellelloû's life differ from each other and symbolize divergent variations of either "womanhood" or of Africa, as some critics have pointed out.[33] But these conflicting characteristics are of static and essential nature, and do not as such relate to any interpretive view of the (fictional) world. Perhaps typical of Updike, the women allegorize themselves or their nation, not any critical stands relating to them.

In the section to follow, I shall turn to the aspects of writing in *The Coup*.

7.2 Writing

7.2.1 The Talking Head; or, the Gramophone in Africa: Speech and Writing

The opposition between speech and writing is, one could easily assume, especially pertinent to a novel like *The Coup*, set both in Africa and America, dealing both with African and Western cultures. Indeed, there are instances in the novel which support this kind of stereotypic dichotomy. While making his last evocative speech as president, Ellelloû notices how the American or Americanized personnel communicate with each other in writing: "the P-R man and the white engineer scratching quick memos - contingency plans, 'scenarios' - to each other" (C, 212). Kush is, in contrast, "still [a] predominantly oral culture" (C, 209). But the speech/writing, original/representation, act/experience, Africa/America, or black/white oppositions are not as clear-cut as that. In this subsection, I shall deconstruct the first two, and in the following subsections the rest of the dyads.

Ellelloû pays special attention to oral language, and several (public) speeches are depicted in his narrative. True to the assumed orality of African culture(s), Ellelloû's fellow citizens are described as skillful rhetoricians, who are able to give elaborately sustained speeches. The king's speech about his innocence shortly before his execution evokes his listeners with exclamations and questions to a degree that Ellelloû feels compelled to answer it with his own oral performance. He asks the audience to "be deaf to this criminal's blasphemies," and, drawing on quotations from the Koran, assumes the role of the nation and Allah in the purifying execution he is about to perform (C, 65). Ellelloû beheads the king with his own hands, but the head is stolen and swiftly removed from the scene of execution.

Towards the end of the novel Ellelloû again tries to persuade a crowd of people orally. Attempting to evoke riot among his listeners and make them destroy the oil

---

its style adroitly handled, can also comment on a revolution of fiction" (Detweiler 1984, 159), and Newman writes how "*The Coup* undercuts the powers of the imagination as it celebrates them, only to deconstruct itself in its turn" (Newman 1988, 124). Unfortunately, however, the latter two critics do not proceed from dropping the term "deconstruction" to its actual application in their readings. As with *Rabbit Redux* and *A Month of Sundays*, the only sustained deconstruction of *The Coup* that I know of appears in the present thesis.

33 George Hunt (1980, 204-205) interprets Ellelloû's women from an archetypal viewpoint, categorizing them as projections of the *anima* and Kush. Barbara Lemeunier (1982, 111-13) sees the women as representations of "various aspects of African life."

refinery, Ellelloû assures them that he equals freedom and that the destruction of the factory is both a spiritual and political necessity:

> 'You see at my back a monstrous pyramid, foul in its smell and foul in its purpose, a parasite upon the soil of Kush and a corrupter of its people. As your President I command you, as your servant I beg you, to destroy this unclean interloper.' (C, 211.)

> 'Hasten that Day of Disaster, blessed soldiers of our patriotic army, and shoot the giant slave of grease mercifully in the throat, and restore this ancient Rift to its pristine desolation, beloved of Allah, the wise and all-knowing.' (C, 213.)

But, unable to convince his audience of his identity, Ellelloû fails to make the soldiers shoot and the crowd destroy; in contrast, he is mugged.

Another public speech is located in the middle of the other two. It is allegedly performed by the dead king's spirit through his severed head, which has been set on display as a tourist attraction in a cave. When the show begins, the head opens his/its eyes and focuses them on Ellelloû, which he regards as overdoing the act: "Fighting down the vomitus of superstitious terror rising in my craw, I reasoned that in this detail the enemies of my state had forfeited credibility" (C, 179). Also, there is something machine-like about the head's functioning, and Ellelloû soon realizes than an "electrical system [—] was picking up and broadcasting the vibrations of the lungless voice-box" (C, 179). The head accuses Ellelloû of the drought, and urges: "'Citizens of Kush: Overthrow Ellelloû! Overthrow Ellelloû, and the rain will fall!'" (C, 181). The head claims that Ellelloû is not a suitable leader for Kush, because he bears traces of American culture and other foreign influences:

> 'This man, while proclaiming hatred of the Americans, is in fact American at heart, having been poisoned by four years there after deserting the *Troupes coloniales*. He is profoundly unclean.' (C, 179; emphasis in original)

> 'Even as his public self put on a wrathful show of extirpating traces of foreign contamination, his private self, operating upon the innocent vacancy of our sublime but susceptible territory, engenders new outbreaks of the disease' (C, 180).

Ellelloû's "disease" is, according to the head, contagious, so that "'traces of decadent, doomed capitalist consumerism creep into the life-fabric of the noble, beautiful, and intrinsically pure Kushite peasants and workers'" (C, 180).

There is, of course, a discrepancy between what the head states and how it becomes articulated. Although the head allegedly voices the dead king's thoughts, his spirit, directly, Ellelloû soon begins to doubt the medium's "high fidelity": "I felt the hand of a hack writer had intruded these phrases into the tape [—]" (C, 180). The voice emitting from the head's mouth is not, then, a direct, self-present articulation of the speaker's thought, intention, or logos ("'This has been a vision vouchsafed to me in Paradise'" [C, 181]), but as removed from the actual moment of uttering as writing in the phonocentric meaning of the word. Recorded speech is a representation, a reproduction, an iterable entity, and a supplementary double of the "original." The head is not saying what it is claiming to be saying: its lips are - both literally and metaphorically - "clearly out of sync" (C, 181): the voice is the king's, but it is operated by Russian intelligence. The *phōnē* has (always already) become a *graphē* or *gramme*, and the talking head, by repeating what has been recorded, is a kind of phonograph

or gramophone.[34]

There is also a radical discontinuity in the head's statements. Although condemning Ellelloû of introducing foreign elements into Kush and of American consumerism, the head is guilty of both, as its final words indicate:

> 'This has been a vision vouchsafed to me in Paradise, where the veil is lifted from the eyes of men. It comes to you courtesy of Soviet technology. Thank you for your attention. [—] For your further entertainment a slide show depicting the Kush national heritage will be shown on the wall behind me.' (C, 181.)

The talking head could also be examined with the help of non-deconstructive post-structuralism. A sustained critique of Derrida's idea of (basically ahistorical) phonocentrism, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) by Deleuze and Guattari stresses the specific nature of language in capitalism: signifiers, transcendental or other kinds, have given way to information flows and data processing in which the meaning of a message is not important but the manipulative change in behaviour that it brings about is:

> Language no longer signifies something that must be believed, it indicates rather what is going to be done, something that the shrewd or the competent are able to decode, to half understand.[35]

Since, according to the authors, "writing has never been capitalism's thing" and since "[c]apitalism is profoundly illiterate," the language to be studied does not relate to signifying codes but to decoded flows of information producing simulacra without stating their meaning.[36] Deleuze and Guattari propose a "schizo-analytic" model which studies the inscription of earth, of the deposit, and of money. Utilizing the authors' insights, William Pietz analyzes an article called "The Phonograph in Africa," which appeared in the *New York Times* in 1885. The phenomena dealt with in the article bear striking resemblance to the talking head episode in *The Coup*. The author of the newspaper article imagines how the recently invented phonograph would serve in exploring Africa. If an African king's voice were recorded and then replayed on a suitable occasion,

> no African would venture to disobey the voice of his King ordering to 'bring the white men food', and the fact that the voice issued from the phonograph instead of the King's own lips would add, if anything, additional force to the order.[37]

The author extends the possibilities of the apparatus from the regal to the transcendental by suggesting that it could be called a "portable god":

---

34 The situation would not be radically different, had the king personally recorded his own voice on a tape to be played through the head. The assumed self-presence and spatio-temporal undistancing guaranteeing the directness and truthfulness of expression would be removed in this case as well. Of course, this is somewhat of a truism in deconstruction, which underlines the arche-writerly and différance-ridden quality of both speech and writing.
My use of the pun on the gramophone is indebted to Derrida 1988.

35 Deleuze & Guattari 1977, 250.

36 Ibid., 240-41.

37 Quoted in Pietz 1990, 268.

> A god capable of speaking, and even of carrying on a conversation, in the presence of swarms of hearers could be something entirely new in Central Africa, where the local gods are constructed of billets of wood, and are hopelessly dumb. There is not a central African who would dare refuse to obey the phonograph god.[38]

As in *The Coup*'s talking head scene, "language is not viewed here as primarily an instrument for the communication of messages and meanings, but rather as an instrument of political power, power to command economic and social behaviour."[39] In *The Coup*, the king's head is not only the king's head, but also a god-like object by virtue of technology, allegedly emitting the logos but, in fact, exercising political power.

Could the aspects of speech dramatized by the talking head be utilized in the analysis of other oral communication in *The Coup*? It is noteworthy that, in his last speech, Ellelloû's voice is electronically amplified. He is, although speaking to his listeners face-to-face, removed from them by technology not very much unlike the king's talking head.[40] The medium changes, or at least magnifies and enpowers, the message, as the description of Ellelloû's talking into the microphone suggests:

> It was as if he had seized a gun; he became potent[41]; the crowd halted, conceding him a little stage of bare earth. His heart was pounding; his hand, holding the instrument, looked to his own eyes small and magically withered. He was beset by variable mental winds. [—] But then he began to talk, and the breath of his throat as it leaped the inch between his lips and the spongy tip of the microphone was in his ears taken up by an amplified echo that seemed to blanket the world and impose a hush upon all its multitudinous contra-indications, and his heart was at peace in the center of the storm of his voice. (C, 209-10.)

Ellelloû spouts his words against technology, but it is, paradoxically, technology that gives him the power to enunciate his criticism so effectively. He hears himself speak (*s'entend parler*) through mechanical loudspeakers which distance him from the moment of utterance. As if to naturalize this apparent paradox, Ellelloû, towards the end of his speech, translates the apparatus into an African, non-technical metaphor: "the microphone [---] now seemed the narrow neck of a great echoing clabash trumpet" (C, 214).

Although using a semi-divine medium and emitting logos, Ellelloû's speech relates to political power, to the manipulation of the listeners' social behaviour and the land's economic situation.

The gramophone, in the form of a jukebox, is described at length in the novel. The repertoire of the jukebox at a luncheonette in the town called Ellelloû consists of

---

38 Quoted in Pietz 1990, 269.

39 Pietz 1990, 269.

40 Cf. the depictions of the apparatus in the head and those used by Ellelloû respectively:
> roots of color-coded wiring cleverly threaded through the top sheet of Plexiglass[---]. [---] The skull had been enlarged, to receive so much mechanical and electronic apparatus [---]. (C, 182.)
>
> a tangle of wire and an assortment of electronic boxes - loudspeakers, transformers, tuners (C, 208).

41 Seeing the microphone for the first time, Ellelloû describes it in explicitly phallic terms: "a hand mike of the phallic type, with a glans of soft rubber" (C, 208). Ellelloû does not, thus, conceive writing as a phallic activity (unlike Harry and the narrator in *Rabbit Redux*, or Marshfield in *A Month of Sundays*). The microphone as an instrument removing live speech to another realm does, however, tie in with the same logic as phallic inscription.

American songs from the 1950s, and they take the narrator down the memory lane; as he leaves the place, "Love Letters in the Sand" begins to play "very scratchily" (C, 203), as if to suggest the inscribed nature of the Kushite desert and Ellelloû himself. Ellelloû returns to the luncheonette, now as a worker, and again describes the jukebox records:

> Kush was the last stop on a long descent through levels of national development, these records, their grooves scoured of all but hoarse ghosts of song, had taken twenty years to reach the Ippi Rift from their source in the America of the Fifties. Over and over, hearty, hollowly healthy voices, blended with violins toward an uplifted climax of pre-rock wail, a ululant submission to the patriotic, economic call to sublimate. (C, 217-18.)

The jukebox reproduces recorded sounds and voices not unlike the dead king's talking head.[42] But the reproductive or iterative quality of voice is not limited to technical innovations only. "Natural" or "live" speech is also described in similar terms. Kutunda repeats her husband's sentence "mechanically" (C, 93); Oscar X utters an Arabic phrase "with the precision of something rehearsed" (C, 164); and Professor Craven says "'I will' [---] in unwilled echo of his broken wedding vows" (C, 170).

Throughout his narrative, Ellelloû uses the metaphors of breath or wind. In the religious sense, the metaphors refer to logos, transcendental spirit, or divine intent, in which speech and thought are absolutely identical.[43] By definition, the metaphor pertains to omnipotency: "The Mercedes clove through the crowd like the breath of Allah" (C, 36); the king's stolen head passes through the crowd "like a loud but harmless wind" (C, 67). The logic of the metaphor seems to attribute divine characteristics to Ellelloû: he has a "rumor, a gust of wind, for a father" (C, 187), and when people recognize him in the Gibbs episode, his semi-divinity is apparent:

> And the crowd behind me, having taken up my name, was now returning it to the fore with such a windy swollen chorusing that my claim to authority seemed divinely reinforced. '*Ellelloû, Ellelloû*': it was a whirlwind (C, 35; emphasis in original).

In a similar fashion, Ellelloû believes he is filled with Allah's spirit when he is executing the king: "The divine breath grunted into my chest and the scimitar descended" (C, 66). Since Ellelloû and Kush are repeatedly equalized (C, 64, 180), Ezana's following comment could be interpreted as a testimony of Ellelloû's godlike immediacy and presence of meaning: "'The air of Kush is transparent, there are no secrets, only reticences'" (C, 52).

The sun repeatedly gets attributes of the divine, an immediate origin from which meanings pour forth. Starting to make his speech, the king "in his blindness stared directly into the sun, orating" (C, 62). Ellelloû, while and after executing the king, also seems to establish a connection to the sun:

> I lifted the sword high, so that the reflection from its flashing blade hurtled around the

---

42 The titles of the songs also relate to the novel's themes and especially to its protagonist's situation. For instance, "Cry Me a River" ties in with the theme of drought, "Que Sera, Sera" with the fatalistic course of events, and "The Happy Wanderer" condenses Ellelloû's nickname and his itinerant characteristic (C, 218).

43 Although Ellelloû is naturally referring to Allah in his narrative, the logic of his reasoning is the same as in Judeo-Christian tradition, the Hebrew *ruah* and the Greek *pneuma* meaning "wind," "breath," "soul," and "spirit" (cf. Derrida 1986, 9, 304).

> square like a hawk of lethal brightness, slicing the eyes of the crowd and the hardened clay of the facades, the suttered fearful windows, the blached, pegged walls and squat aspiring minaret of the Mosque of the Day of Disaster. In the glare of the sky the swooping reflections were swallowed, disgorged again upon the earth as the scimitar was lowered and steadied. A speech in response to the king's seemed called for. (C, 65.)
>
> Sun. The clay of the square was accepting yet another day's merciless brilliance. (C, 66.)

But the sun, too, repeats itself, or rather presents representations of its assumed original: "Most grotesquely, the sun each day beat upon these scenes with the serene fury of an orator who does not know he has made exactly the same points in a speech delivered the day before" (C, 30). The sun, seemingly orbiting the earth, is thus stuck in the same groove.

As for conversational speech, the arche-writerly qualities are prominent in it as well. Visiting the imprisoned king, Ellelloû addresses him in conventional rhetoric, and the king replies in like speech acts:

> 'Splendor of Splendors,' Ellelloû began, 'thy unworthy agent greets thee.'
> 'A beggar salutes a rich man,' the king responded. (C, 16.)

Both men are exchanging ritualistic greetings, which do not express their true feelings or intentions, but are being merely iterated, "quoted" in a new context.[44] The same tendency pervades other discussions as well. When in Africa, Ellelloû tends to embed quotations from the Koran in his speech as iterable blocks of ready-made language (C, 27, 76, 92, 99, 163, 189, 190, 226).[45] Discussing politics in America, however, Ellelloû alludes to the key words of Feodor Dostoevsky, Sigmund Freud, and David Riesman; and his main adversaries - Esmeralda and Oscar X - use Marxist-Leninist and Black Muslim phrases with the same intent respectively (C, 119-22, 147-50, 164). Writing is hence used as speech, and the quarrels between characters turn out to be battles between books.

The citational use of language also appears on the level of phonemes. Visiting heavily drinking Russian soldiers, who emit "Cyrillic barks" (C, 26), Ellelloû gets tangled up in a linguistic (or more specifically, phonemic) duel with one Colonel Sirin:

> I responded with the seventy-seventh sura of the Koran ('*Woe on that day to the disbelievers! Begone to that Hell which you deny*!') as translated into my native tongue Salu, whose glottal rhythms enchanted the Reds in their dizziness. Our store of reciprocal heroes exhausted, the briefing blackboard was dragged forth and we matched toasts to the letters of our respective alphabets.
>
> ' ш !' the colonel proposed, milking the explosive sound for its maximum richness.
>
> I tactfully responded with the beautiful terminal form of 'ق .'
>
> ' ж !!' he boasted, '*le plus belle* letter all over goddam world!'
>
> I outdid him, I dare believe, gracefully proposing, 'ج .' (C, 27; emphasis in original)

---

44 The phenomenon is even more prominent in the scene in which Dorfû, who is "rehearsed in some ceremonial English," greets Americans at the airport by saying - with exquisite intonation - '"Good-bye"' (C, 174). Although contrary to Dorfû intention, the expression presumably fulfils the ritualistic role of the proper speech act in that situation.

45 His written narration is also interrupted by a like device, perhaps suggesting the basic similarity between speech and writing in the narrator's mind (C, 23, 42, 70, 93, 97, 127, 175, 184, 198, 250).
As a general narrative strategy, Ellelloû intersperses memories from America to those from Africa, thus juxtaposing and equalizing both not unlike speech and writing. I shall deal with this aspect of Ellelloû's autobiography in the next subsection.

The elemental sound material (Kristevan pun intended), phonemes, which are as such meaningless but which have the capacity to change a word's meaning within a linguistic system, are hence used as quoted, iterated entities in a "conversation." The phonemes have, thus, diverged from any hypothetical original moment of utterance and in that respect resemble writing as it is defined in phonocentrism. That the sounds are conceived in graphic terms, as elements of alphabet, further suggests the arche-writerly quality of speech.[46]

If the words or phonemes one is using are not one's own, if the assumed self-present intentionality of speech turns out to be as iterable as writing, and if the "original" is always already a representation or reproduction, is, then, human individuality - in the sense of a whole, differentiated, uncontaminated subject - also a logocentric illusion? The novel does point in this direction. Ellelloû's identity is not stable, nor is his outer appearance, as the Gibbs episode indicates. Trying to prove to soldiers that he is the president, Ellelloû at first bluntly states it, then presents a medal the Soviets had awarded him, and, when neither of these tokens assure his captors, suggests that his face be compared with the official portrait of the President. To meet this last objective, Ellelloû tries to "compose [his] features into Ellelloû's calm, hieratic blur" (C, 35); he, in other words, tries to imitate the reproduction of his "original" self, present a faithful simulacrum of a copy made of himself.[47] The soldier compares the two faces, "original" and "copy," and states '"No resemblance' [—] in several languages" (C, 36). By a curious reversal of logic, Ellelloû has hence become a supplement to his copy, an inessential extra compensating for a lack in the supposedly complete "original."[48] Put in another way, the relationship between the represented and the representation dramatizes the folding-together of identity and difference: to mean equals not to be, making it impossible for a signifier to be identical with itself. Another scene relating to mistaken identity takes place, when Ellelloû destroys the king's talking head and gets tangled up in the middle of a slide show:

---

46 The whole episode is written in the manner of Vladimir Nabokov, to one of whose pseudonyms, of course, the name Sirin alludes. Cf. the Nabokovian play with sounds and metaphors in the description of a Russian lieutenant's linguistic skills: "[his] Arabic was smeared with an Iraqi accent and [his] French sloshed in the galoshes of Russian *zhushes* [---]" (C, 26; emphasis in original).

47 The situation resembles Updike's short story "Three Illuminations in the Life of an American Author," in which Bech, the author suffering from the writer's block, cannot even write his own name, reproduce an iterable signature, i.e., imitate his own hand.
In his essay "Signature Event Context," Derrida stresses exactly this iterability of signature as the source of its effects, although the general notion of it emphasizes intentionality and presence to consciousness: "In order to function, that is, in order to be legible, a signature must be able to detach itself from the present and singular intention of its production. It is its sameness which, in altering its identity and singularity, divides the seal." (Derrida 1982, 328-29.)
In *The Coup*, signatures only appear as metaphors: the dramatic events in Kush's history "had been lumped and smoothed into one trimphant sequence whose signature was the green flag" (C, 219), and Dorfû's fez, the token by which he is identified throughout the novel, is "his signature" (C, 240).

48 The legal tender of Kush participates in a similarly supplementary chain of substitutions: "paper *lu* - so called, the malicious wit of the departing French had it, because they were circulated *in lieu* of hard currency" (C, 24). The word *lu* also ties in with the problematics of reading, for it is the past participle form of the French verb *lire* ('to read'). Is, then, the reception of hard facts (reality) in the form of reading printed paper a supplement to original actuality? Or are the economies of legal tender and reading somehow intertwined?

> A patriotic poster was unfurled beside Ellelloû's face; the crowd of tourists, comprehending little and cowering back from the violence, applauded as if this comparison were part of the show, of the Kush national heritage. [—] Due to the poor photogravure of the poster, my identity was unsettled until one of the Soviets came forward and shook my hand [—]. (C, 183.)

Throughout the novel the narrator repeats, in several languages, the statement "I am Ellelloû," but he does not usually convince his auditor(s) (C, 39, 153, 183, 207, 210). Ellelloû's statement is like a vocal signature, by definition repeatable, iterable, imitable and thus detachable from the present intention of its production in order to be singular and functional as a token of intention and identity. As the narrator states shortly before the first assurance of his true identity, "Some had not heard of Ellelloû, some thought he was a mere slogan [—]" (C, 33). Ellelloû's statement is not his own, nor is (his) signature; neither of the linguistic entities are unconventional or independent of the context they appear in, which results in the uncontrollability of their significatory effects. Another aspect of Ellelloû, to be dealt with in the next chapter, makes the situation even more undecidable: he is not quite certain of his own identity, so not even the intentionality behind his iterable utterances is stable. After hearing the opinion that "Ellelloû" is "the wind" and "the air between mountains," he feels sickened and "lost in the center of that great transparent orb of responsibility which was mine" (C, 33). On the other hand, as Jacques Lacan has stated, the difference between subject and language is not a radical one, since both the unconscious and language share the same structure. Ellelloû is, then, as iterable and apt to supplementarity as the language which finally structures him - both in the sense that he is a fictional character and also in the more general sense of an actual human consciousness.

In the following subsection, I shall deal with the dualistic splits both within Ellelloû and Kush, and the reproductive or rewriterly nature of the whole novel.

7.2.2 Alphabetic Africa; or, Mischief in Black and White: Textuality of Nation, Subject, and Novel

Kush and its people are heavily textualized in *The Coup*. I shall first deal with the inscribed nature of environment and human beings, especially Ellelloû, and then have a look at what this state of affairs contributes to the novel's black/white and Africa/America oppositions. Furthermore, I shall examine the novel's intertextual and metafictional features.

7.2.2.1 Nation

The novel's opening makes its clear that the borders of Kush are based on an arbitrary convention or agreement defined by colonial forces: all its boundaries except one are "drawn by a Frenchman's ruler" (C, 9). Like any writing, Kush is apt to rewriting, redefinition:

> This arbitrary and amorphous land descended to [King Edumu] from the French, this slice of earth with its boundaries sketched by an anonymous cartographer at the infamous Berlin Conference of 1885 and redrawn more firmly as a military zone for occupation a decade later, its pacification not complete until 1917 and its assets to this day mortgaged to La

> Banque de France and its beautiful brown thin people invisible on every map - what was it? (C, 15)

But still, like language, Kush defies an all-encompassing definition:

> The border of Kush in the northwest is nine-tenths imaginary. [—] the vast departments of French West Africa were differentiated only in the mysterious accountancies of Paris. But since 1968, when our purged nation took on a political complexion so different from that of neighboring Sahel - Kush's geographical twin but ideological antithesis, a model for neo-capitalist harlotry [—] - border outposts have been established to safeguard symbolically, in the ungovernable vastness, our Islamic-Marxist purity. (C, 33).

Hence, Kush is inscribed into existence, its geography is graphic, "flooded with ink of European tints" (C, 248). To use the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, the colonially defined existence of Kush represents the schizo-analytic level of the primitive territorialization of coded flows (the inscription of the earth's body), the "geo-graphism."[49]

As the Melville epigraph suggests, the land within the borders of Kush is vacant, blank as paper. But the apparent emptiness is delusive, for it is actually a blankness of a palimpsest, of erased historical strata: Kush was "named for a vanished kingdom, the progeny of Kush, son of Ham, grandson of Noah" (C, 10). The royalty, ousted in the fourth century by the Christians, retreated into the wastelands of the present Kush,

> erecting cities soon indistinguishable from the rocks, until their empty shattered name, a shard of grandeur, was salvaged by our revolutionary council in 1968 and, replacing the hated designation of Noire, was bestowed upon this hollow starving nation as many miles as years removed from the original Kush, itself an echo: Africa held up a black mirror to Pharaonic Egypt, and the image was Kush (C, 10).

Hence the rehabilitated Kush, purged of its colonial French stratum, is itself a copy, a "remake" of the original. The situation is less complex in the renaming of cities: the colonial names are simply changed into Arabic ones, since there are no "original" Kushite towns to be rehabilitated (C, 10).

The Kushite institutions bear traces of the colonial past. The French literally founded the nation of Noire on their language and ideals: Palais d'Administration des Noires has sixteen pilasters "representing the sixteen most common verbs that require *être* instead of *avoir* as auxiliary in all compound tenses. Its façade is topped with eight marble statues [—] that symbolize the eight bourgeois virtues [—]" (C, 45; emphasis in original). Although the building is used for other purposes in the present Kush, the colonial foundation persists, and also foregrounds the constitutive role of language in the novel. Furthermore, as Frederick R. Karl notes, the novel's biblical intertext suggests dispersion of languages: "Kush or Cush (Genesis 10: 6-8) comes in the Bible just before the description of Babel; a language and a people proliferate [—]."[50]

Especially the area of Balak, extensively described in the novel's fourth and fifth chapters, is blank: it is characterized by a "local absence of color," its sky is white and earth "only dreary variety of gray," the world's dullest flowers bloom there, and its

---

49 Deleuze & Guattari 1977, 188.

50 Karl 1983, 259.

fauna consists of white scorpions and black snakes (C, 111). The parched desert is paperlike, but like palimpsestic parchment, it is not totally blank or devoid of inscription. The sand "at moments seemed an immense page of print too tiny to read" (C, 113). The caravan itself is also transporting, among other goods, writing implements:

> boxes and boxes of Bic pens, Venus pencils, and Eberhard Faber typewriter erasers. There were also [—] black ribbons on metal spools, white correction cartridges, and steely, spherical, UFOish IBM type elements for not only Arabic alphabet but for the 276 characters of Amharic and the antique squiggles of Geez. (C, 112.)[51]

The Balak section also abounds in Ellelloû's memories and associations from America; it is as if the (seeming) lack of signifiers in the area evoked him to fill it with his own, to mentally (and, when writing his autobiography, graphically) inscribe the blankness.

The travellers, when approaching the site where the talking head's cave is located, also find man-made signs and inscriptions. Centuries ago, the herdsmen and hunters of the Green Sahara had painted pictures on the cave walls, depicting their everyday and religious life. Ellelloû reads these pictures as a historical document, as a stratified text dramatizing cultural evolution:

> Brown, gray, custard, pepper, cinnamon: the colors of our African cookery depicted, with the primitive painter's numinous, nervous precision, the varieties of cattle, as the herding culture replaced the hunting. These very herds, no doubt, had helped turn the grassland from green to tan, to dust, to nothing. (C, 155.)

Towards the beginning of their journey, Ellelloû had explained to Sheba the laws of nature and the ecological history of Balak. Refusing to believe that the desert was once green, and that men hunted elephants and antelope there, Sheba asks for visual proof, for pictures depicting the alleged state of affairs. Ellelloû claims to have seen such pictures in books, but Sheba still doubts: "'Things can be made up and put into books. I want to see a picture on a rock'" (C, 128). She, in other words, prefers the "natural," hieroglyphic or pictographic sign to the conventional and arbitrary one reproduced by print. Although both signs are pictorial, the one in the book clearly gets, in Sheba's reasoning, attributes of conventionality and arbitrariness - not unlike phonemic writing.

---

51 The merchant of the caravan provides Ellelloû with a fabulous, Joseph Helleresque or Thomas Pynchonesque explanation of these unlikely articles: they are destined to Iran, for the "'Shahanshah [---] has much wish to modernize. In his hurry he buy typewriters from West Germans and paper from Swedes and then discover only one type eraser not smudge paper. American know-how meanwhile achieve obsolescence such that only fitting spool stockpiled in Accra as aid-in-goods when cocoa market collapse. Formula of typewriter eraser held secret and cunning capitalists double, redouble price when Shah push up oil price to finance purchase of jet fighters, computer software, and moon rocks. French however operating through puppet corporations in Dahomey have secured formula as part of multibillion-franc deferred-interest somatic collateral package and erect eraser factory near gum arabic plantations. Much borax also in deal, smuggled by way of Ouagadougou. Now Sadat has agreed to let goods across Nile if Shahanshah agrees to make anti-Israeli statement and buy ten thousand tickets to *son-et-lumière* show at Sphinx.'" (C, 153; emphasis in original.) The story is not only absurdly comic, but it also thematically relates to the inter-relationship of economy, politics, and writing.

Strangely enough, then, the site in which Sheba and Ellelloû find the pictures contradicts both travellers' expectations. She would have assumed naturalness and unconventionality, he obeyance to the logic of physical laws (C, 128-29), but the area appears man-made, or at least anthropomorphized, and as if defying gravitation:

> The geology was strange. Certain summits appeared to have been molded by a giant, ill-tempered child, finger-furrows distinct and some petrified depressions holding the whirling ridges of what seemed a thumbprint. The terrain felt formed by play, of an idiotic sort that left no clues to the logic of the game. A frozen bulbousness - double-dip, Reddi-Whip accumulations of weathered lava topped by such gravitational anomalies as natural arches and big boulders balanced on smaller - gave way to cleavages and scree as geometrically finicking as the debris of a machinist's shop. (C, 155.)

Nature is described in similarly mechanistic terms earlier in the novel, when Kutunda says: "'They are lovers, the earth and the sky, and in the strength of their passion fly apart as quickly as they come together. They are like one of the white men's mighty machines; a single speck will bring it to a halt.'" (C, 48.) In *Rabbit Redux*, the narrator used the same metaphor in connection with a printing machine and Skeeter and Jill making love: "and they fly apart like ink and paper whirling to touch for an instant" (RRx, 330). The metaphor in *The Coup*, then, equates not only natural objects with human beings, i.e., personifies them, but also with a machine, probably a linotype machine, thus underscoring the inscribed nature of the world.[52]

The same discontinuous tendency prevails in the final inscriptions Ellelloû and Sheba find in their journey, the graffiti. Ellelloû makes clear the connection between the old and modern inscriptions: "The quality of the rock-paintings, too, was subtly changing; daubed ground ochre and charcoal paste gave way to a furry, swirling technique of primary colors sprayed from a can" (C, 157). The depiction of the graffiti - their pictorial and verbal motives, the editing and erasure of the palimpsest-like inscriptions - bears considerable resemblance to those in *Rabbit Redux* (cf. 5.2.3.):

> Swastikas, stylized genitals, and curious forms involving circles attached to crosses or arrows or circumscribing a kind of airplane[53] replaced the magical representations of Green Sahara's vanished animists. Some of the hieroglyphs could be read: ROCKETS, CLASS OF '55, GAY IS GOOD, REVOLUCION AHORA, QUÉBEC LIBRE, HELTER SKELTER, FAT CITY. The letters of this last were themselves fat; this style was prevalent. Many of the inscriptions had been overlaid: the simple sign STOP had been amended to STOP WAR and then an anti-pacifist had scratched out the S. Some inviting surfaces were muddy with a mad tangle of colors, defying all decipherment, even if Sheba and I had had the stomach for it, which we did not. (C, 157.)

The graffiti continue inside the cave, where the inscriptions are even more varied as regards languages and styles than outside:

> TEX LOVES RITA, a wall opposite proclaimed, and from this same wall, and those adjacent, the names of many more thronged like clouds of the damned to my attention, not all of them written in the flatfooted alphabet Roman imperialists marched throughout Europe, but many in our own incomparably dancing Arabic script, and some in the chunky formations of St Cyril, the flowerets of lower-case Greek, Asia's bamboolike brushstrokes, and the staring, rectilinear symbols of Tiffinagh, that traces Tamachek onto the sand (C, 158).

---

52 On the mythological level, the separation of the earth from the sky is, of course, one of the recurring motifs in myths of creation.

53 This is apparently a defamiliarized description of the peace sign.

The cave had presumably been a "bower of love" and still is "love's memorial" (C, 158), which makes Ellelloû conceive writing in erotic and phallic terms: "So many names, so much love, so many cries uttered on the verge of *la petite morte*, so much sperm [---]" (C, 158; emphasis in original). The overabundance of signifiers - in (American) English, French, Spanish, and Oriental languages - dramatizes the cultural layers stratified in the nation of Kush. The strata do not co-exist peacefully, unlike the hunters' and herdsmen's pictures, but are in a state of war, challenging and cancelling each others' meanings. The journey from the natives' signs to a multi-cultural condition also charts Ellelloû's cultural strata: animism, French education, Marxism, Islam, and the America of the 1950s (he started his studies at college in '55) - all form his present being. That the journey has been into the American layer of his mind is further underscored by the "indelible" last graffiti, a mysteriously displaced quotation from his student years: "HAPPY LOVES CANDY" (C, 158).

7.2.2.2 Subject

Ellelloû and other characters in the novel are regarded as textual entities. The journey through the palimpsest desert of Balaka in a caravan graphically depicts the paperiness of the body. In the beginning of their journey, the travellers are overlaid by layers of dust and turn as colourless as the arid environment - or vaguely inscribed paper:

> the flaring edges of [Sheba's] lips and nostrils were emphasized as by an ink-laden fine quill. The stem of her neck, the virtuoso arabesques of her sullen profile, and the perfect, burnished crimpings of her ears all looked limned and shaded by an artist whose effects the addition of color would have muddied. Sheba was petite, the only one of my wives smaller than I, and her beauty was sharpened to a blueprint precision [—]. (C, 111-12.)

The whole caravan is a "papery line of silhouettes," and, exhausted after reaching the cave scribbled with graffiti, "[Sheba] had become the gray of the cardboard that stiffens a fresh ream of paper" (C, 157).

The same metaphoric equation of the body and paper recurs elsewhere in the novel as well. The old imprisoned king's hands seem "two-dimensional" and as having "papery grace" (C, 14, 17). Ellelloû repeatedly uses the metaphor of people being "parched" in the apparent senses of 'dry' or 'thirsty,' in which, however, the etymological trace of 'parchment' still lingers on (C, 17, 159). The mind is also regarded as a surface which can be inscribed and erased: "The Mercedes had driven all night, to erase the fire from the dark of our minds" (C, 43); "*Eradicate tourism*: [Ellelloû] made a mental note" (C, 92; emphasis in original); Oscar X says to Ellelloû: "'I want to wipe you from my mind'" (C, 162); and, guessing how Sheba would be changed, was she transported to Yemen, Ellelloû assumes: "She would forget him; he would shrink to the size of a *bi* in her mind" (C, 187; emphasis in original).[54]

The same logic of inscription and erasure also applies to abstract entities: Ellelloû justifies the execution of Edumu as a "blowing away of a speck of dirt" (C, 65).

---

54 Ellelloû used the same metaphor drawn from the alphabet in his paean to Mrs. Gibbs's face: "I see [---] a tooth bared by a vagary of thought and incandescent in the sun, a speck, no bigger than a *bi*, no bigger than the dot on a *bi*, a speck of lipstick, a clot of blood" (C, 175).

Kadongolimi claims that the "God of Mohamet is a no-God, an eraser of gods" (C, 84). Arguing with his bodyguards about Western capitalistic moral, Ellelloû punningly extends the scribal metaphor:

> 'Imagine yourself a statistic on a toubab's accounting sheet, and further imagine that by inking you out, you and a thousand others, he can save a dollar, a shilling, a franc or even a *lu* on the so-called bottom line. [—] the ink will flow. You will be Xed out by Exxon, engulfed by Gulf, crushed by the U.S., disenfranchised by France [—].' (C, 190.)

Just as Kush's past is a text written by the colonialists, so is its present inscribed by native rulers, as Ellelloû bitterly notes: '"And tell my successor, I forget his pseudonym, that in the annals of history moderation is invisible ink"' (C, 235). The chain of signification formed by the various uses of the metaphor "clot of blood" also utilizes inscription: it can refer to Edumu (C, 65), to a mosque bearing that name (C, 96), to man (C, 107), to menstruation blood (C, 124), and to a speck of lipstick on Angela Gibbs's tooth (C, 175).

That the environment and the body are surfaces on which signs can be written or printed provides one with a possible means to deconstruct the novel's black/white opposition. The logic of inscription implies a blank surface on which black marks are written, or vice versa; erasure complicates the matter, but it still obeys the same logic: a prior sign is cancelled by inscribing another one on it in such a way that both are simultaneously decipherable. As regards writing and printing, the "zero-degree" case would have black inscription on white surface.

In *The Coup*, the black/white opposition relates to the cultural opposition between Africa and America (or Western culture in general). The colour of the skin is not, however, a permanent, indelible inscription of culture, but subject to change and erasure: in his last speech, king Edumu claims that the rulers of Kush are "in truth white men, though their faces wear black masks" (C, 63); Ellelloû suspects that his American college plans to transform him "into a white-haired, lily-livered black man" (C, 138), and indeed Oscar X calls him a "black man with a white man's head" (C, 162); and Ellelloû describes the Americanized president of Zanj as a "negative print of Santa Claus" (C, 167).

Besides the metaphorical bleaching of the black skin, the novel suggests literal shades of black, differences in colour within the supposed racial unity. In America, the slave masters have, according to a Black Muslim speaker, "so mongrelized the American black man that not a member of this audience was the true ebony color of his African fathers" (C, 136). Ellelloû notices a similar phenomenon after making love to Esmeralda:

> the slaver's sperm, it seemed, had entered her blood line to steal shine from her skin, and joyful African protuberance from her body. When she left the bed, instead of glimmering in the darkened room like a candle, she vanished. (C, 152.)

In a similar fashion, African life is contaminated by American elements, and, to a lesser degree, vice versa. Sittina's dress and the interior decoration of her home are a mixture of African and Western styles, and she "lives between two worlds" (C, 55-7); Candy is trying to reconstruct an American home of the 1950s in her "French villa spun of sub-Saharan materials" (C, 104); and the town called Ellelloû is very much like an American one, complete with a luncheonette - owned by two natives bearing the

un-Kushite names Bud and Rose - serving fast food in the rhythm of a jukebox playing American hits of the 1950s. The recurring mirage-like apparition, whether in Ellelloû's mind or in external world of Kush, of two golden parabolas condenses two cultural strata in one sign (C, 29, 72, 198): it can be a minaret of an Islamic mosque or the American McDonald's sign.

On the other hand, some, albeit few, aspects of American culture bear traces of Africa: in Ellelloû's college town, there was a drugstore called "Oasis" which abounded, at least in his view, in animistic and totemistic paraphernalia (C, 89, 114), and Ellelloû interprets Richard Nixon's unravelling before his nation as "theatre in the best African tradition, wherein the actor is actually slain!" (C, 192). That an opposition does not tend to stay "pure," that its members cannot remain uncontaminated by their counterparts but become as if irrevocably intertwined seems to point at the structure of trace, which constitutes the terms in the first place. The logic of writing and erasure will not imply an identity within differences - that black and white, Africa and America are basically the same - but rather suggests that both oppositions, besides being constituted by the difference from the opposing terms, have the capacity to be reinscribed and read under erasure. Hence, cultural entities are not rigid or stable, but as arbitrary and conventional as language, whose characteristics they share.

7.2.2.3 Novel

What is the meaning of this insistence on the inscribed nature of nation and subject? As in the cases of *Rabbit Redux* and *A Month of Sundays*, the emphasis on textuality serves the novel's self-consciousness, awareness of its fictionality. Kush is a fictitious setting in which fictitious characters are engaged in acts of interpretation. As the narrator and inscriber of his autobiography, Ellelloû is not only writing down the happenings, but is also composing, creating them. The setting and characters, including Ellelloû, are made of characters written and printed on the novel's pages. Ellelloû's narrative strategy - the use of the first and third persons - also results in narrational paradoxes. For instance, the novel's ending leaves the impression that Ellelloû is still engaged in the act of writing his memoirs, although the novel's text has already presented it in its entirety (C, 250). It is also paradoxical, as I stated above (7.1.1.2.), that sometimes Ellelloû justifies his narration of events which he has not witnessed personally, but sometimes he depicts similar scenes as if he were an omniscient narrator, disregarding vraissamblance.

To treat the novel in Dällenbach's reflexive terms, the recurring metacritical and metalinguistic commentary foregrounds, not unlike in *A Month of Sundays*, the production and the reception of the novel by epitomizing the writer and reader in Ellelloû's person, and hence can be called a *mise en abyme de l'énonciation*. Ellelloû's doubling as an orange seller or rather as a vendor of their poetic substitutes in the form of songs belongs to the same category: spinning songs about what is absent reflects the recounting of the past in the autobiography (cf. C, 68-69, 225, 232). Similarly, Ellelloû's likening the construction of a rope with that of sentences is a *mise en abyme of de l'énonciation*: text is produced like textile (C, 141). As for the production of narrative, there are a few instances in the novel that can be read as "metanarratological" reflections of its structuring. As Greiner notes, Ellelloû's shuttling between the first and third persons can be read as a metaphor for the novel's

narrator-character relations: "The 'I' may be passive before the whirlwind of the 'he,' but the 'I' controls the tale of the 'he' who acted."[55] In a similar fashion Ellelloû's observation of the talking head's presentation can be interpreted as a comment on an intrusive, or otherwise overt narrator (as in *The Coup*): "I felt the hand of a hack writer had intruded these phrases into the tape [—]" (C, 180).

As regards the *mise en abyme de l'énoncé*, Kutunda's embedded stories serve this function. She tells a mythical story about Ezana cast as the desert devil and set in a fantastic setting (C, 72). As Markle notes, the story gives an accurate interpretation of Ezana as Ellelloû's political enemy, and it also foreshadows the unlikely location of Ellelloûville.[56]

The erased and edited graffiti as well as the general scribal nature of Kush and its people can be read as instances of *mise en abyme du code*, reflecting the novel's rewriting and palimpsestic quality. The insistence on the rumours giving differing versions of supposedly actual events also ties to this "recycling" characteristic of the novel (cf. C, 11, 52, 59, 102, 120, 197, 249, 250).[57]

The textuality also suggests links to intertextuality, to other Western novels dealing with Africa. The nature of Africa as presented by *The Coup* is alphabetic, i.e., it is self-consciously made of letters, although the novel does not, of course, directly bear any other resemblance to the over-systematized and overtly arbitrary structure of Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa* (1974).[58] Some of the possible intertexts are hinted at in the "Acknowledgments" peritext (cf. 7.1.1.1. above). Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1932) and *Black Mischief* (1938) prove especially important in this respect. The fictitious North-East African country Ishmael of the former novel mainly exists, like Kush, on maps, and is consequently enlarged and nominally developed, when they are revised (cf. Waugh 1972, 117). The country also has layers of European (Russian, German, English) and African cultures within its texture, again reminding one of the same feature of Kush. Rumours becoming or triggering off real events as well as the motive of mistaken identity are shared by both novels. Journalistic writing, in *Scoop*, does not primarily describe actual events but rather creates them; for instance, the fact that one William Boot is mistaken for a John Boot and sent to Ishmaelia to cover the presumed civil war there factually "changes" the former man into the latter and the hoax into a political conflict.

Black Mischief also foregrounds the intertwinement and clash of two cultures, and the power of fiction-making. The novel is set in the fictitious East African country Azania, ruled by Seth who, after taking a B.A. degree at Oxford University, has returned to his native country. Seth invites his English friend Basil Seal to come over to Africa, which, along with other British citizens residing in Azania, brings about comic misunderstandings and mixures of styles and codes (cf. Seth's menu for an imperial banquet; Waugh 1952, 164). Frederick R. Karl calls *The Coup* "'black mischief'

---

55 Greiner 1984, 34.

56 Markle 1982, 286-87.

57 There are several parallels in the characters' lives. Ezana and Dorfû rise to power not unlike Ellelloû had done; Ellelloû's fate parallels Edumu's - they are even sentenced to the same prison cell. As for the sentence, it provides a structuralist means of conceiving the novel's parallellism: characters exist in the same paradigm and can (or must) alternately occupy the same position in the syntagm - the discourse being that of rise and fall.

58 For a concise account of the Abish novel's metafictionality, see Waugh 1984, 47-48.

updated into contemporary political terms, but without any of the complicating elements," and his comparison of Ellelloû and Seal yields the following statement: "Ellelloû is the mirror image of Seal - an antimodernization force, a return to purity, a man who has a low estimate of Africans."[59]

As regards American narratives set in Africa, one is reminded of Ernest Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) or Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), in which, as antithetical parallels, an American has to face the simultaneous vitality and undecipherability of African culture. The Bellow novel also features a well-intentioned but megalomaniacally destructive protagonist, who hence resembles Ellelloû.

The Coup also contains intratextual references to Updike's other novels. As George Hunt notes, Ellelloû is a conglomeration of Updike's many anterior characters, embodying such traits as

> the quaint solemnity of Hook [in *The Poorhouse Fair*], the cultural conservatism of Rabbit [in *Rabbit Redux*], the cosmic befuddlement of George Caldwell, the fuzzy romanticism of Peter [both in *The Centaur*], the puzzled wariness with the opposite sex of Joey Robinson [in *Of the Farm*], the nostalgia of Piet [in *The Couples*], the sense of displacement of Bech [in *Bech: A Book* and *Bech Is Back*], the messianism of Skeeter [in *Rabbit Redux*], the manic self-absorbtion of Marshfield [in MS], and the double-mindedness of Jerry Conant [in *Marry Me*]. Ellelloû is Updike's Proteus, shape shifting and reincarnating the full gallery of Updike character inventions.[60]

As for overabundant style and some thematic features, Vladimir Nabokov's works are relevant albeit less systematically utilized intertexts of *The Coup*. In Hunt's words, "Kush is Ellellou's [sic] Lolita and, when we meet him composing his memoir, he is much like Humbert Humbert, a character now *in extremis*, suspected of mental aberration. The memoir itself, of course, also recalls the crazed coloration of Kinbote's voice in *Pale Fire* and that mad king's recreation of distant Zembla."[61] I disagree with Hunt when he proposes that the Nabokovian comic conflict in *The Coup* is between the real Kush and Ellelloû's depiction of it.[62] Rather, the seemingly matter-of-fact treatment of the fictitious Kush and its cultural peculiarities results in comic effects, not unlike that of the pseudo-Slavic Zembla in *Pale Fire*. The satire or comedy is based on the play on stereotypic bodies of cultural knowledge, not on the discrepancy between what is and what the narrator's erroneous mind makes of it.

The intertextual links of *The Coup* cannot be restricted to modern novels written in the English language. The novel extensively alludes to myths and ancient texts as well. The drought, the waste land setting, and the old king as a possible reason for both seem to point at the Fisher King myth. Ellelloû ritually executes King Edumu in order to restore Kush's fertility, but at the same time he ironically becomes impotent and remains as infertile as the dry land (C, 70-71). The Fisher King myth is absorbed in the novel through a number of palimpsestic layers of texts. The written versions of

---

59 Karl 1983, 260.

60 Hunt 1980, 197. For similar, albeit less extensive, observations of Ellelloû's intratextual "relatives," see Towers 1979, 159; McGill 1979, 162-66; Detweiler 1984, 156; Newman 1988, 124; Markle 1982, 282-83.

61 Hunt 1980, 200. For a useful narratological survey of *Pale Fire*, see Tammi 1985, 197-221.

62 Ibid., 200.

myth can be traced back to J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), to its subsequent analysis from a literary viewpoint in Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), and to its most famous treatment in literature, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).[63] As I suggested in subsection 7.1.1.2. above, Ellelloû's search also ties in with the story of Oedipus: he turns out to be the reason for Kush's curse, he is told this by a blind man, and he finally ends up in living in exile.

Epitomizing both Western and Oriental influences, Ellelloû also presents, in Hunt's analysis, the myth of the American Adam as a mixture of Whitmanesque style (an extended "Song of Myself" supplemented with a fall and an expulsion from Eden) and the Koran's descriptions of Paradise.[64] The Western strata predominate in the analyses of *The Coup*, which is presumably due to critics' limited knowledge of Oriental thinking but also to the novel's "colonialistic" treatment of Africa as a vehicle for dealing with America.

Hence, writing, both in the literal and metaphoric senses of the word, serves as a moment of Ellelloû's and his country's inscribed nature as well as the novel's general logic of construction. By the same token, nation, subject, and the novel are exposed to deconstruction.

In the following subsection, I shall turn to Ellelloû's personal and narrational dichotomy as presented in his purported autobiography.

7.2.3 Experience vs. Act: The Divided Writing Subject

There is a peculiar split both in Ellelloû's self and in his narrative. That split is discoursively articulated as a constant shuttling between the first and third persons. It is one of the generic conventions of autobiography or memoirs to execute narration in the first person, or, if the author wishes to distance him/herself from the biographical subject and treat him/herself as an "external" protagonist, to use the third person.[65] In both cases, however, the choice is usually stable: once the discoursive strategy is chosen, the person will not change in the course of the

---

63 The novel's mythical intertext has been dealt with by Hunt 1980, 199 and Newman 1988, 119. For an exhaustive account of Frazer's influence on modern writers, see Vickery 1973.

64 Hunt 1980, 197-98.

65 The genre of *The Coup* is not quite unambiguous. To be certain, it is a novel, but it is also cast as a non-fictional narrative depicting the rise and fall of its narrator. Ellelloû himself calls, as do most critics (cf. Uphaus 1980, 111; Hunt 1980, 195; Greiner 1984, 34; Lathrop 1985, 250), the novel a (purported) memoir, but I would rather conceive it as a fictional or pseudo-autobiography. I make the same distinction between the two concepts as does M.H. Abrams: "Autobiography is a biography written by the subject about himself or herself. It is to be distinguished from the memoir - in which the emphasis is not on the author's developing self, but on the people and events that the author has known or witnessed [---]" (Abrams 1988, s.v. 'autobiography'). Admittedly, the terms - including another close synonym, confession - are commonly used as practical synonyms; even Updike's own autobiography, *Self-Consciousness*, bears the subtitle *Memoirs*, although it is more about the author's self than about people met or events witnessed.
In the following reading of *The Coup*, I shall utilize general theories of actual autobiographies, bearing in mind Renza's observation that fiction sometimes formally mimics autobiography (Renza 1980, 269), and thus participates in both its narrative and "ideological" conventions. For the narrative contract in autobiography, see subsection 4.4.3. above.

narrative, at least not as often as in *The Coup*.[66] As for narrational temporality, *The Coup*'s general logic of using the tenses is that the past - regardless of the person - is narrated in the past tense, and the present of the scene and act of writing in the present tense.

The Coup opens as a conventional autobiography as regards the use of person: the first word of the text proper is "My" (C, 9). However, the beginning of the autobiography does not deal with the author's birth or childhood, but with geography and history of Kush, which effaces the first person almost completely from the novel's first four pages. Only two references to the narrator and the narratee in the form of *our*, and one comment on the scene of writing before the narrative strategy is explained indicate that the first person is still in use.

Quoting from an outdated copy of the *Stateman's Year-Book*, Ellelloû writes that the president of Kush was "Colonel Hakim Félix Ellelloû - that is to say, myself" (C, 12). This makes him explain the shift of persons in a comment on the act of writing:

> Yet a soldier's disciplined self-effacement, my Cartesian schooling, and the African's traditional abjuration of ego all constrain this account to keep to the third person. There are two selves: the one who acts, and the 'I' who experiences. This latter is passive even in a whirlwind of the former's making, passive and guiltless and astonished. The historical performer bearing the name of Ellelloû was no less mysterious to me than to the American press wherein he was never presented save snidely [—]. Ellelloû's body and career carried me here, there, and I never knew why, but submitted. (C, 12.)

The writing subject is hence divided into two - into actor and experiencer - and the opposition between the members seems to be subordinated to a more general one, that between mind and body. The one who experiences represents mind and is articulated in the first person, whereas the one who acts stands for body and is expressed in the third person. On the basis of this explication of Ellelloû's narrative strategy, the following assumptions could be made: In the comments on the scene or act of writing, it is the experiencer who is foregrounded; the mental depiction or reproduction of past events is not, then, regarded as action, but as an experience of it. The dramatic physical events, in contrast, tie in with action, and they are devoid of interpretation, evaluation, or feeling conceived as experience. In the following, I shall systematically chart the occurrences of the shift in the person used, and see if they converge with Ellelloû's metanarrative comment.

The person changes 51 times during the narrative, the length of the segments ranging from a few lines (C, 136) to twenty pages (C, 23-43, 72-91, 185-207). The novel both opens and closes with the first person.[67] At first Ellelloû's discourse seems to follow the principle stated in his metanarrative comment. Visiting the imprisoned king, Ellelloû initially depicts the interior of the cell and Edumu's gestures "coolly" in the third person, but then he begins to *experience feelings*, as the text repeatedly undescores:

---

66 For example, Caesar's whole *Commentaries* is written in the third person, whereas the first part of La Rouchefoucauld's *Mémoires* is narrated in the first and the second one in the third person (Starobinski 1980, 76). Michel Leiris's *Frêle bruit* comes a little closer to *The Coup* by sometimes shuttling between the objectified "he" and the subjective "I" (cf. Brée 1980, 196).

67 As my reading of the novel's first pages suggested above, the person in use will not always be prominently present in the discourse if it deals with other referents besides the narrator; thus, for instance, the description of Kush's geography and history remains relatively unmarked person-wise.

> [—] Ellelloû *felt* that he had failed. He *felt* himself at the center of a cosmic failure, his failure to communicate the reality of suffering at one with the cosmic refusal to prevent this suffering. Held mute in a moment without a pose, mask, Ellelloû *felt* the terror of responsibility [—]. (C, 18; emphases mine.)

Indeed, in the sentence after the next, the narration switches to the first person and remains that way until Ellelloû leaves the cell (C, 23). In a like manner, Ellelloû's alternate visits to his wives and mistress yield changes in the person, depending on the degree of intimacy he feels with them. The description of his new mistress, Kutunda, starts in the third person, but, after they have spent the night together, the first person is introduced (C, 45-46). The structure is different in his second visit to Kutunda: the depiction of the scene begins in the third person, disclosing the indices of her Westernization, but when her nakedness is described, the narration shifts to the first person; however, Ellelloû is struck by impotence, and he merely falls asleep by her side - his waking up and leaving her place are, again, narrated in the third person (C, 69-73). Hence, action yields the third person, whereas (the experience of) inaction prompts the first.

Ellelloû narrates the whole episode of visiting his third wife, Sittina - which ends in his declaration of love - in the first person (C, 54-59). Ellelloû's call on his first wife, Kadongolimi, from whom he has estranged a long time ago, is given entirely in the third person (C, 81-88). Ellelloû begins the description of his visit to Candace, his American wife, in the first person (C, 103-108), but her persistently hostile attitude towards her husband makes him back off to the third person (C, 108).

In the novel's last chapter, Ellelloû again pays visits to his wives - this time to persuade each of them to join him in exile. Candace turns his offer down in a short scene narrated in the third person (C, 227-28); Kadongolimi gives a like answer in a longer episode, which is for the most part articulated in the first person (C, 228-31). The call on Kutunda is narrated in the third person, until Ellelloû's sexual arousal changes the person into the first one (C, 236) - however, his hopes for both sex and a travelling companion are in vain, since he is shortly arrested. After being released and given permission to leave the country, Ellelloû visits Sittina; the episode opens in the first person, but when he comes to suggest that they travel together, the narration, as if backing off in anticipation of a negative reply, shifts to the third person (C, 247). However, her answer is positive in both aspects that were negative in Kutunda's case.

The fourth and fifth chapters, which describe Ellelloû's and Sheba's journey through the desert, are punctuated by frequent shifts in the person used. This does not stem from the varying degree of intimacy between the travellers but rather from Ellelloû's tendency to associate Kushite phenomena with his American memories which are embedded in the journey-frame. The general discoursive strategy in these shifts is that Ellelloû's experiences in the Kushite "present" are narrated in the first person, whereas his American past is reproduced in the third person. Sometimes, however, the shift in the scene does not yield a corresponding shift in the person, but the American third person is extended to Africa, especially if the return to the Kushite frame is a short one (C, 122), or the first person "leaks" into the embedded reminiscences (C, 129).

Among the most dramatic incidents in *The Coup* are the execution of Edumu and, later on in the novel, the destruction of his mechanically talking head, and the

attempted annihilation of the oil refinery. The speeches and the preparations preceding the beheading are narrated in the third person, but when the action itself starts, when Ellelloû raises the scimitar, the first person is introduced (C, 64) and thereby his (empathic) feelings about the execution: "I could feel, through the pink mists my verbal frenzy had set to swirling in my skull, his [Edumu's] sensations, his struggling frailty [—]" (C, 66). Ellelloû's tearing apart of Edumu's head in the cave is narrated in the third person, as action, until he is arrested and his looks are compared with those of a photogravure of the president (C, 183). The most dramatic turns in the refinery scene are narrated in the third person (C, 207-15), and only after the subsequent mugging is the first person used (C, 216). The last shift is, nevertheless, dramatic: it is located at the juncture of the sixth and seventh chapter, and it also breaks the tense strategy of overall narration by using the present tense - "I live" (C, 216) - normally used in the segments depicting the act and scene of writing.[68]

Although the overall discoursive scheme of his narrative seems to be in keeping with Ellelloû's explicitly stated act/experience dichotomy, there are, nevertheless, some interesting exceptions to the "rule" or aberrations in its application. Ellelloû's call on Kadongolimi is presented in the third person, which would imply mere action, but the depiction abounds in experiences and feelings:

> The smells of rancid butter, roasted peanuts, pounded millet, salted fish, and human eliminations mixed in an airy porridge that Ellelloû's nostrils, after a minute of adjustment, found delicious: the smell of being Salu. He unbuttoned the top button of his khaki shirt and wondered why he didn't visit Kadongolimi more often. Here was earth-strength. (C, 81.)

The speech acts preceding Edumu's execution are narrated in the third person, but when the most dramatic physical acts of beheading begin, the person is shifted to the first (C, 66), which seems to reverse the usual relationship between the verbal and the non-verbal. Ellelloû's dramatic tearing of Edumu's talking head is narrated in the third person in its entirety, but experiences and feelings - especially tactile ones - are not absent from it:

> Edumu's head shocked Ellelloû's haptic sense with its weight, far less than when filled with watery brains and blood, and its texture, which combined those of paper and wax, dead in such different ways. [—] Yet, despite the small distortion of scale, Ellelloû, hugging the head to his chest to break the last stubborn connections, found tears smarting in his eyes, for in life this head, mounted atop the closest approximation to a father the barren world had allowed him, had never been held by him thus, and the act discovered the desire. They had been two of a kind, small cool men more sensitive than was efficient to the split between body and mind, between thought and deed. (C, 182.)

That final statement, in fact, explicitly articulates the wavering nature of the oppositions, which the discourse, by vacillating between the first and third persons, betrays.

That the terms of the experience/act opposition cannot be kept separate, and that they (at least occasionally) intertwine, deconstructs the whole dyad supposedly

---

68 This aberration may thematically suggest how the layers of time and experiences intertwine in the act of writing: the repesentation of past events is directly related to the present of writing, or reversely, writing affects the depiction of the past seemingly making it (both grammatically and metaphysically) present.

mutually exclusive entities. The same undoing of a presupposed principle by the discoursive practice applies to the Cartesian mind/body opposition, to which the first dyad is clearly subordinated. The "bodily" act will not be purely devoid of "mental" experience, nor will a state of mind exist without accounting for the body. In his comment on the shift of persons, Ellelloû seems to be dodging responsibility by assuming the "passive and guiltless and astonished" role of the experiencing "I" (C, 12). Hence, the narrative strategy does not necessarily stem from the mixture of the noble qualities of a disciplined soldier, Cartesian schooling, and African tradition, but rather from Ellelloû's reluctancy to face himself as a subject responsible for his own deeds.

How does the act of writing relate to the experience/act dyad? Does writing belong to either of these categories, or does it function as a relay between the two? Can writing be conceived as an attempt to bridge the split in the writing subject? The comments on the act of writing dealt with in subsection 7.1.1.2. above may prove illuminating in this respect. Ellelloû, disguised as a beggar and having suggested to Michaelis Ezana that the president (i.e., himself) be given a pension, makes a generalizing, aphoristic comment: "There comes a time in a man's life, the beggar thought, when he thinks of himself in the third person" (C, 226). The statement can be read as a comment on Ellelloû's act of writing or on his discoursive decision. A time has come in Ellelloû's life, when he not only thinks of but also writes about himself in the third person: exiled and set to work on his memoirs, he is deprived of his power as a head of state and remains in stasis, the only activity being writing.[69] That writing is not an act in the sense of other acts in the novel is suggested by the discoursive strategy to narrate the explicit comments on writing in the first person, which relates to experience. However, at the end of the novel, on its very last two pages, Ellelloû's writing is described in the third person (and in the present tense), as an act equal to serious work:

> He has always a drink at his elbow, a Fanta, Campari-and-soda, or *Citron pressé* with a dash of anisette; he seems to be an eternally thirsty man. His other elbow pins down a sheaf of papers. He is writing something, dreaming behind his sunglasses, among the clouds of Vespa exhaust, trying to remember, to relive. (C, 249; emphasis in original)

> his face [is] downcast to the *cahiers* in which he pens long tendrils like the tendrilous chains of contingency that have delivered us, each, to where we sit now on the skin of the world, water-lilies concealing our masses of root (C, 250; emphasis in original).

The second extract is, in its use of the indefinite *we* and/or references to the narratee(s), an amalgam of the third and first persons. The first person unambiguously takes over in the novel's last sentence: "He is writing his memoirs. No, I should put it more precisely: Colonel Ellelloû is rumored to be working on his memoirs." (C, 250.) The shift from the third person to the first seems to correspond to

---

69 Ellelloû's presidential autobiographic project is in keeping with Georges Gusdorf's ironic formulation of its commonplaces: "as soon as they have the leisure of retirement or exile, the minister of state, the politician, the military leader write in order to celebrate their deeds (always more or less misunderstood), providing a sort of posthumous propaganda for posterity that otherwise is in danger of forgetting them or of failing to esteem them properly. *Memoirs* admirably celebrate the penetrating insight and skill of famous men who, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, were never wrong [---]" (Gusdorf 1980, 36; emphasis in original).

the degree of certainty, but does it still relate to the experience/act opposition? Thus far, Ellelloû had narrated his Kushite and American past, but now his acts of writing describe his acts of writing in Riviera. The difference between writing as an act and as an experience, narrated in the third and first persons respectively, is extremely slight. In this sense, writing, by turning on itself, does "heal" the split in the writing subject, but on a more general level the opposition persists. The result of Ellelloû's acts of writing, his autobiography, the discourse of *The Coup* testifies the still-existing division within the writing subject.

Jean Starobinski's observations of the third-person narrator in autobiography are worth quoting in relation to Ellelloû:

> The effacing of the narrator (who thereby assumes the impersonal role of historian), the objective presentation of the protagonist in the third person, works to the benefit of the event, and only secondarily reflects back upon the personality of the protagonist in which he has been involved. Though seemingly a modest form, autobiographical narrative in the third person accumulates and makes compatible events glorifying the hero who refuses to speak in his own name. Here the interests of the personality are committed to a "he," thus effecting a solidification by objectivity.[70]

The narrational decision is even more revealing in *The Coup*: although Ellelloû nominally effaces his self by keeping to the third person (C, 12), his inability to sustain his narration in one single person, whether the third or first, in contrast doubly foregrounds the writing subject and the division within it.

The split within a writer is somewhat of an inevitability in the autobiographic genre, as many studies on the subject emphasize. To write an autobiography means harking back to a time and self already gone, resulting in a division of the subject into a present writing self and a past written self - both of which are metaphorically expressed by style.[71] But there is an even more profound split in the act of writing (autobiography), or more generally, in any signifying act.[72] As Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics of presence states, the subject's articulated "I" cannot possibly signify self-presence but rather his/her absence - inevitable deferral - from being present to him/herself. Hence, meaning always already brings about the split between being and non-being, presence and absence, present and past.

The difference in time and self also amounts to another feature of autobiography visible in *The Coup*, the reassembly and regrouping of the diffuse elements of one's life into a complete and coherent whole.[73] By doing so, every autobiographer resembles a writer of fiction, who is to select the most telling details from the mass of experiences and incidents. There is hence a presupposed teleology in the reproduction of one's life in writing: because the writer (supposedly) knows where his/her life has lead, s/he is likely to select those details of the past that

---

70 Starobinski 1980, 77. The same reversing tendency applies to the insistent use of the first person: "the exclusive affirmation of the 'I' favors the interests of an apparently vanished 'he.' The impersonal event becomes a secret parasite on the 'I' of the monologue, fading and depersonalizing it." (Starobinski 1980, 77.)

71 Ibid., 74.

72 For an intriguing account of Derrida and autobiography along these lines, see Smith 1995, 172-91 & passim.

73 Gusdorf 1980, 35.

support the present outcome. This line of reasoning is logically correct if the precedence of life over writing is accepted, or, to use Derrida's terms, if life is conceived as a plenitude to which writing is only an inessential extra, a supplement. However, this is not necessarily the true order of autobiographical elements, although the very word seems to suggest the following hierarchy: self (*autos*), life (*bios*), writing (*graphē*). As in Ellelloû's case, the autobiographer's self and life are discovered in the act of writing, "the dynamics or drama of autobiographical cognition occurs in terms of the written performance itself."[74] Ellelloû's life and writing do not depend on the relation of supplementarity, but they rather turn out to be of the same order: a pseudo-autobiography, *The Coup* does not mime any original self or life but anterior (autobiographical) writing and its conventions; taken as Ellelloû's real autobiography, the novel also defies a simple original/representation or plenitude/supplement opposition by metafictionally suggesting that both the writer and his narrative consist of writing (cf. subsection 7.2.2 above). The life/writing opposition is, of course, similar to the story/discourse one, both of which are, if not completely deconstructed, then at least problematized in the course of the novel by its very insistence on their hierarchical structures.

On the last pages of the novel, narrative folds in on itself: on its completion, *The Coup* hesitatingly describes the possibility and process of its own conception. The situation resembles M.C. Escher's litograph "Technen" ("Drawing Hands," 1948), which paradoxically depicts two hands drawing each other into existence. But the written narration of writing or the drawn depiction of hands bringing about the narrative and picture in which they appear respectively do not mark self-presence but rather the absence of that presence marked by graphic inscription.

---

74 Renza 1980, 270.

CONCLUSION

Reading what I have written about reading and writing in John Updike's three novels, I notice not only the redundancy of this sentence, but also how the key words of my approach intertwine, fold in on my own critical operations. In the course of my analyses of the Updike novels, reading and writing turned out to be, rather than members of an opposition, operations sharing each other's characteristics and implying one another to a degree that their relation approaches, rhetorically speaking, chiasmus. Reading is writing, and writing is reading. Reading, interpretation of writing, means its reinscription, rewriting; writing a text implies reading operations, be they performed by fictional readers other than the narrator, by the narrator him/her/itself, or by the text - with the help of commentary and other means - itself.

How does my thesis seem to read itself? What kind of commentary is the reader provided with? What sort of readers are preferred in the narrative contract of my story of reading and writing? To answer these questions would yield another thesis, albeit not necessarily less relevant to the dual problematics of my "original" one. But, leafing through my writing, its texture and layout, I do see features "transferred" from the object language of the novels studied on to the metalanguage of the thesis. The sometimes overabundant footnotes appear to me as various sorts of metacommentary: proairetic (cross-references), linguistic (etymologies and definitions of the words used), hermeneutic (questions, guesses), critical (possible intertexts, ruminations on literary concepts). The footnotes and the comments within the main body of the text are as if extensions of Marshfield's and Ellelloû's like practices. My tendency to use alliteration in chapter and section headings seems to mime the rhetoric of titling in the Rabbit novels. In a similar fashion, my initial reading/writing opposition is over and over again deconstructed by the failed attempt to treat them separately.

To conclude the "results" of the thesis in a more conventionally academic manner, the following observations can be made.

I analyzed the reading performed by text itself with the help of narratology and paid special attention to the narrator's commentary and the narratees functions as tokens of their response to text. Characters, too, perform as readers in the text that they appear in, and their reading operations, especially the so-called allegories of

interpretation, can, by virtue of transference, be seen as contributing to actual reception.

In the Writing chapter of the theoretical part, I dealt with the problematics on a more fundamental level by introducing deconstruction and theories of self-reflexivity. Deconstruction thematized the lines of opposing forces that writing hides in order to maintain its solidity; those forces can be teased out and brought into play so that textual logic is undone. I both presented and criticized theories of self-reflexivity or metafictionality, which assume that writing duplicates, exhibits, represents itself but which often forget the unintentional counter-tendencies brought about by such textual self-possession.

Reading and writing were combined in connection with resistance and appropriation, which brought the extratextual into play in the form of an actual reader's ability to choose what to do with a text. But at least some of the choices turned out to be already offered by the text either as reader positions anticipated by the resisting narratee or as general or constitutive self-resistance.

I then metacritically reread narratology with the help of deconstruction and resisting reading. I problematized the concept of communication, the phonocentricity, and the narratee's conception in standard narratology in order to pave the way to my reading of the three Updike novels.

The theoretical part of my thesis could be summed up as follows. Prose (fiction) reads itself, performs reading operations usually regarded as belonging to actual readers' repertoire. However, textual self-analysis does not solely facilitate actual reading but also hinders it, resists reading. On the other hand, the actual reader, for his/her part, is entitled to resist a text, including its own resistance. What a text pursues with resisting its own reading is to hide the discrepancies in its rhetoric or logic, the forces that endanger its significatory solidity.

My readings of the Updike novels resulted in the following observations. *Rabbit Redux*, although seemingly a realistic-modernist novel, did, however, turn out to contain its extradiegetic narrator's commentary on all the codes defined in section 1.1. The majority of comments are on the hermeneutic code, which, thematically, underscores Harry's, the main focalizer's, state of being lost, of not quite knowing the answers. The protagonist's work as a linotypist also yields - rather surprisingly, considering the novel's apparent realism - metacritical commentary. The novel's peritexts are, in my view, to be contributed to an "editor-narrator," and they provide, in the form of chapter titles, table of contents, and epigraphs, proairetic metacommentary not much found in the main narrator's discourse. The narrator has a definite white male American bias as regards the narratees, which means that blacks, women, and non-Americans are excluded from the narrative contract. Only in marginal instances, when women function as focalizers, is there a female narratee (who is white) to be discerned. This state of affairs points at a male, heterosexual, and white dominance in the preferred mode of reading, which makes it possible to sketch a number of resisting narratees, who read against the narrator's intentions. These narratees, as all the other ones in the novel, are extradiegetic and not materialized as characters. The novel's major characters, for their part, provide four models for interpretation, thus allegorizing the main ways - at least partly realized in the novel's actual reception, including the present thesis - of reading *Rabbit Redux*.

Writing is opposed to speech as something unnatural and is contrasted with the natural in the novel. However, the oppositions overlap and intertwine in the actual practice of their logical and metaphoric articulation, so that they are finally deconstructed. The same undermining tendency applies to the writing/life and news/reality oppositions dramatized by Harry's typesetting and the graffiti on the wall of his house. The printing plant scenes, supported by mirror symbolism, also function as metafictional, self-reflective instances. *A Month of Sundays* is a diary novel excessively and explicitly commented upon by its intra- and autodiegetic narrator, the Reverend Tom Marshfield. The narrator is also responsible for the novel's peritexts, so there is not another, "editor-narrator," in it. The commentary includes all the codes, but, due to the novel's self-consciousness, metalinguistic, metacultural, and metacritical comments predominate. The novel has four narratees, whose narrational statuses are either overt or covert, either intradiegetic or extradiegetic. Again, as in *Rabbit Redux*, male narratees are preferred, although the narrator's discourse is nominally aimed, with a seductive intent, at a female narratee. Although calling for the female narratee's co-authorship, the narrator's relationship with all his narratees is that of sermonizing one-way discourse. This actual exclusion of a whole group of narratees makes it possible to construe resisting narratees opposing the narrator's preferred way of reading. The four sermons that Marshfield writes, in their exegeses of biblical texts, function as allegories of reading the whole novel. The novel's actual reception has, to a degree, followed the interpretive models, even the apparent misreadings, provided by the sermons.

As in *Rabbit Redux*, speech and writing form a basic opposition in *A Month of Sundays*, and it also metaphorically relates to the natural/unnatural opposition. The oppositions, however, overlap in Marshfield's rhetoric and deconstruct their very foundations. Writing a diary seemingly functions as a means of healing, in accordance with the conventions of the genre, Marshfield, and of the split between mind and body. In my reading of *A Month of Sundays*, however, I have tried to show, unlike most critics of the novel, that no such therapeutic development or unification takes place, that language, in its contradictoriness and heterogeneity, dooms such projects to fail. The novel is a self-consciously rewritten version of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and it, by drawing attention to the production and reception of fiction, to letters and characters, is metafictional in a number of other ways as well.

The Coup purports to be a memoir or an autobiography, a representative of a genre making commentary somewhat inevitable. Some of the peritexts could be of the main narrator's, Ellelloû's, making, while some make it necessary to construct an "editor-narrator." Because of his mediating position between two (or more) cultures, Ellelloû predominantly comments on the linguistic and cultural codes. Besides these codes, his autobiographic project, aimed at solving the mystery of his fate, yields metahermeneutic commentary, and his self-consciousness of writing metacritical one. Ellelloû's status as a go-between also affects his narratee relations. In the sections describing American culture, the narratee is basically an African male, while the depiction of African peculiarities implies a non-African, presumably American or other Westerner. Because of the novel's satiric quality, the descriptions of America also imply another narratee capable of grasping their defamiliarizing irony. It is also possible to sketch resisting narratees, who see through the narrator's basically colonial discourse and reads it with an ethnic interest. Ellelloû's disputes in America and in

Africa, on religion and politics, yield two models for interpreting the novel. The role of the reader is allegorically raised into prominence, thus emphasizing another interpretive stand, particularly used in the present thesis.

The intertwinement of the writing/speech opposition is dramatized in the overlapping of metaphors pertinent to its members, in the "gramophonic," iterative quality of both. Furthermore, the nation, self, and novel are all shown to participate in general textuality and the logic of inscription and erasure. The textuality also includes the intertexts - other Western novels set in Africa - looming behind *The Coup*, and the self-reflexive moments of various kinds. The last and - both story- and discoursewise - basic opposition of experience and act, of the first and third person, relates to the split within the writing subject, not reconciled in the "end" of Ellelloû's autobiographic project, but rather soliciting, deconstructing his self, nation, and narrative.

The portrait of Updike's fiction sketched in the thesis differs considerably from the generally established, mainstream readings of his work, and sometimes the Updike of my thesis is barely recognizable. This is, obviously, partly due to the critical tools used, but apparently there is more to Updike's fiction itself than has yet met the scholars' eye. The rather sporadic and impressionistic observations of Updike's metafictional or deconstructive concerns suggested by a few critics were, in the present thesis, consistently studied with the help of a host of critical approaches. I hope that my thesis does not represent "anti-canon deconstructionist chic, which flatten[s] everything eloquent, beautiful, and awesome to propaganda baled for the trashman," or prove that "[*d*]*econstruction despises art, stripping away all its pretenses*," as the narrator of *Memories of the Ford Administration* characterizes the alleged commonplaces of (the American form) of the discipline.[1]

Although the use of several approaches has, I now observe, amounted to a sometimes overabundant use of critical terms and varied models for describing almost identical phenomena, it has, on the other hand, provided me with a heuristic way of analyzing complicated and delicate differences.

For instance, Roland Barthes's five codes (supplemented by my own ones) turned out to be fruitful in reading the narrators' comments as reading operations. Furthermore, it would have been difficult to treat the commonly noted but somehow indefinite narrational male bias of *Rabbit Redux* without a prior knowledge of the features of the narratee or of focalization systematically classified by narratologists. Moreover, in *A Month of Sundays*, the narrator's manipulative, rhetorically seductive, discourse could perhaps have convinced me of the novel's final reconciliation of opposites, had I not read it through narratological (and deconstructive) frames of reference. My analysis of the anomalous discoursive strategy in *The Coup* also greatly profited from the narratological apparatus. As for the contribution of reader-response criticism to the study, the allegories of interpretation that I found in the three novels dramatized the problematically transferential structure of reading: some of the interpretive models provided by the novels were extendedly realized for the first time in the critical practice of the present thesis.

Lucien Dällenbach's complicated taxonomy of the cases of the *mise en abyme* helped me to notice and classify the novels' self-referential textual mirrorings. The

---

1 Updike 1993, 201, 175; emphasis in original.

idea of intertextuality was not a main concern in the thesis, but the rewriting quality of both *A Month of Sundays* and *The Coup* made it necessary to deal with their intertexts, especially when they contributed to the novels' deconstructive reading.

As for deconstruction, my treatment of the discipline could be accused of a thematic reading. Admittedly, my approach, in its emphasis on the "methodological" application found in practical literary criticism, to a degree justifies the accusation. But my introduction of some possible deconstructive themes or strategies of reading by no means implies that meaning pre-exists as signifieds which literature exemplifies as signifiers, or that a deconstructive "method" of reading would find that ontologically anchored true but hidden meaning. What my deconstructive readings "found" or articulated as critical writing were some problematic oppositions similar to the ones commonly encountered in the thinking of Western metaphysics. Especially the opposition between speech and writing turned out to be of seminal - pun not unintentional - nature in the novels, and that opposition was treated with a number of Derrida's "key terms."

To use both narratology and deconstruction in the same study seemingly resembles the impossible attempt to mix fire and water. Although the two disciplines were presented separately in the theoretical part of the thesis, they were occasionally combined - but were not, of course, reconciled - in the application. Updike's fiction sometimes - either by self-consciously providing metanarratological commentary or more discreetly (or even unintentionally) allegorizing narrative structures - anticipated and at the same time undermined the model used in its analysis. Furthermore, the resisting narratees, "present" only by virtue of their absence and dissimilarity to the preferred or acknowledged narratees, that I constructed in all the three novels shared the undoing tendency typical of deconstruction. On the other hand, the briefly sketched possible resisting narratees were, I now realize, somewhat stereotypical and as if automatically generated by binary logic. Thus, the possibly diversifying interpretive force of the resisting narratee turned, in my application, into an unintentional consolidation of stereotypes.

The function of the (sub-)genre as an interface between the author, text, and reader would probably deserved to have been theorized in the first part of the thesis, for my reading of the Updike novels paid attention to that very phenomenon. On the other hand, strict economy between the theory and application was not my aim in the first place, so I take the overflow of the actual as a sign of the necessary incompleteness of any theory as regards covering the variables of the phenomenon it seeks to investigate.

In the three Updike novels read from my dual viewpoint, no narrative continuum was found, neither was it searched for. Rather, certain features pertinent to the logic of inscription and erasure were observed to recur. To be certain, Updike turned out to be more apt to use techniques typical of postmodern writers - self-consciousness, commentary on and anticipation of critical acts, unreliable narrators, parodic use of history, intertexts, and genres - than is usually acknowledged. But my acts of reading performed on Updike's writing, which appeared to read itself, did not discover any "development" or linear movement towards a teleologic goal, towards, say, a more elaborate use of the features, but instead witnessed the repetition of some basic oppositions of Western metaphysics, repetition resulting not in consolidation but in solicitation.

My own writing is, of course, vulnerable to resistance. The strategic decision to keep reading and writing separate has produced some conceptual redundancy and overlapping, but it could also be read as a sign of an awkward theoretical crosscurrent within me. I have, so it seems, tried to have a post-structuralist omelette without breaking the structuralist eggs. Moreover, the postulation of the resisting narratee could be interpreted as a desperate attempt to textualize the contextual. In a similar fashion, the very distinctions between narratological categories that enabled me to analyze complicated narrative phenomena also prevented me from accounting some other aspects. To regard *you* primarily as a sign of the narratee, brackets the undeniably naive but potentially productive *I* (the actual reader) from its scope of reference. The final scene of *A Month of Sundays* is symptomatic of this uneasy leakage of categories, of the interplay between the actual and the textual.

On the whole, the self-critique that I am presenting in the Conclusion could be seen as a last minute bid to undermine the resisting criticism of an ill-intentioned reader. These self-conscious gestures will not save my thesis from resistance, nor is it my intention. But like any conventional confession, these self-critical moves function as an acknowledgement of defects or sins that both the confessor and the ultimate absolver already know. My readings, like all writing, silently call for, not forgiveness but for a response, resistance, deconstruction.

YHTEENVETO

Tutkimuksessa kartoitetaan ja arvioidaan tapoja, joilla kertovan proosan voidaan ymmärtää lukevan tai tulkitsevan itseään. Laajahkoa teoreettista kehitelmää sovelletaan vuonna 1932 syntyneen amerikkalaiskirjailija John Updiken romaaneihin *Rabbit Redux* (1971; suom. *Amerikkalainen tarina*, 1973), *A Month of Sundays* (1975) ja *The Coup* (1978; suom. *Minä olen eversti Ellellou*, 1980). Ongelmakenttää lähestytään narratologian, lukijakeskeisen kirjallisuustieteen, feministisen ja gender-tutkimuksen, itsensä tiedostavan fiktion ja vastustavan lukemisen teorioiden sekä dekonstruktion avulla.

Tutkimuksen narratologinen osuus keskittyy kertoja- ja yleisö-agenttien (ransk. *narrataire*; eng. *narratee*) rooleihin ja niiden väliseen kommunikaatioon. Kertojan kohdistamat kommentit omaan diskurssiinsa ovat eräänlaisia luku- tai tulkintaoperaatioita, jotka tavallisesti ymmärretään kuuluvan yleisön, aktuaalisen tai implisiitin lukijan tehtäviin. Kertojan kommentaaria luokitellaan Roland Barthesilta peräisin olevan viiden koodin avulla (hermeneuttinen, referentiaalinen, seeminen, proaireettinen ja symbolinen koodi); täydennykseksi postuloidaan myös kerronnan tai kirjoittamisen koodi. Yleisön roolit ja tehtävät on johdettavissa kertojan diskurssin niistä merkeistä, jotka implikoivat jotakin vastaanottaja-agentin käsityskyvystä, luonteesta, sukupuolesta, kansallisuudesta jne. Selvin tällaisista merkeistä on yleisön puhuttelu ("rakas lukijani"), mutta myös toisen (sinä, te) ja ensimmäisen persoonan monikko (me) - idiomaattisestikin käytettynä - antavat tietoa vastaanottaja-agentin piirteistä. Suurin osa yleisöä koskevasta informaatiosta on realistis-modernistisessa fiktiossa johdettava diskurssin taustaoletuksista. Yleisötyypit voidaan luokitella samaan tapaan kuin kertojatkin; on olemassa piilossa ja esillä oleva, suora ja epäsuora, luotettava ja epäluotettava, yksittäinen ja kollektiivinen yleisö. Yleisön tehtävänä on ensinnäkin toimia välittäjänä kertojan ja (implisiitin) lukijan välillä. Yleisöllä voi olla myös henkilökuvaukseen, tematiikkaan, tulkitsemiseen ja kerrontatilanteen luonnollistamiseen liittyviä tehtäviä. Kiintoisa erikoistapaus yleisön kannalta on toisen persoonan kerronta, jossa tavallisesti marginaalisessa asemassa oleva agentti siirtyy ainakin muodollisesti diskurssin keskiöön.

Tutkimuksen lukijakeskeiseen teoriaan liittyvissä jaksoissa esitellään käsitteet interpretantti, tulkinnan allegorisointi ja transferenssi. Interpretantti merkitsee fiktion henkilöä, joka tulkitsee ympäristönsä tapahtumia, hahmoja ja tekstejä; tällä tavoin interpretantti on analogisessa suhteessa tekstin ulkopuoliseen interpretoijaan - tulkitsijaan - ja hänen ymmärtäviin tai selittäviin pyrintöihinsä. Tulkinnan allegoriassa interpretantti toimii tekstimaailmansa systemaattisempana tulkitsijana, jonka toimet tarjoavat kokonaisia lukemismalleja. Erilaiset lukutavat dramatisoituvat tyypillisesti interpretanttien välisinä kiistoina, tulkinnallisina erimielisyyksinä. Nämä tulkinnan mallit tai strategiat näyttävät usein siirtyvän - interpretoijien sitä tiedostamatta - teoksen todelliseen reseptioon. Kaunokirjallisuuden lukemisen siirto- ja vaihtosuhdetta voidaan jäsentää myös psykoanalyysista peräisin olevilla transferenssi- ja vastatransferenssi-käsitteillä. Lukijan ja tekstin suhde näyttäytyy analogisena psykoanalyytikon ja potilaan suhteelle. Asetetaanko lukija potilaan vai analyytikon asemaan, riippuu siitä, sitoutuuko

teoreetikko Freudin klassiseen psykoanalyysiin vai Lacanin revisioituun versioon siitä. Käytännössä transferentiaalisuutta tietoisesti hyödyntävät luennat palautuvat useimmiten tekstuaalisen immanenssin taustaoletukseen, ajatukseen tekstistä merkitysten lähteenä ja alkuperänä.

Tutkimuksessa problematisoidaan tekstuaalisen itseanalyysin keinoja ja päämääriä korostamalla sitä, että tarjottu tulkinnallinen apu on omiaan myös vaikeuttamaan tai estämään lukemista.

Dekonstruktio esitellään työssä sekä Jacques Derridan teoriana että käytännön kirjallisuustieteellisenä "metodina". Derridan dekonstruktioksi nimeämää filosofista suuntausta lähestytään puheen ja kirjoituksen välisen opposition sekä siihen läheisesti liittyvien "käsitteiden" (*différance*, supplementti, jälki, iteroitavuus) avulla. Metateoreettisesta (Rodolphe Gasché, Jonathan Culler) ja kirjallisuustieteellisestä (Culler, Barbara Johnson, Shoshana Felman) dekonstruktiosta hahmotetaan tiettyjen toistuvien tulkinnallisten strategioiden ja kriittistien eleiden perusteella "metodia", vaikka se Derridan näkökulmasta onkin käsitteellinen oksymoron. Kirjoituksen sisäinen jännitteisyys - esimerkiksi epäsuhta retorisen ja grammaattisen, poeettisen ja loogisen, marginaalisen ja keskeisen välillä - hajottaa tekstin näennäisen yhtäpitävää luonnetta. Vaikka tekstuaalisen purkutyön ainekset ja voimat ovat jo olemassa kirjoituksessa, tutkimuksessa kritisoidaan ongelmattoman itsedekonstruktion ajatusta.

Kirjoitus voi monin tavoin heijastella, toistaa, varioida ja metaforisoida omaa rakentuneisuuttaan tai toimintaansa. Kirjoituksen itserefleksiivisyyttä, metafiktiivisyyttä tai *mise en abyme* -luonnetta esitellään aiheen standarditeorioiden avulla (Robert Alter, Lucien Dällenbach, Patricia Waugh). Samalla ilmiötä eritellään narratologisesti ja problematisoidaan dekonstruktiivisesti: tekstuaalinen itsereflektio ei ainoastaan lujita teoksen identiteettiä, vaan tuo mukanaan myös hajottavia vastavoimia.

Vastustavan lukemisen ja lukemisen vastustamisen mahdollisuuksia käydään läpi sekä ideologiselta että tekstuaaliselta kannalta. Judith Fetterleyn edustama varhainen feministinen vastustava lukeminen osoitetaan, vaikkakin heuristiseksi ja produktiivikseksi, essentialismissaan ongelmalliseksi ja identiteettikäsityksissään ristiriitaiseksi. Sama pätee joukoon homo- ja lesboteoreettisia mallinnuksia ei-heteroseksuaalisesta vastustavasta tai mukauttavasta lukemisesta. Ross Chambersin teoria oppositionaalisesta lukemisesta hahmottaa strategiaa, joka sekä tuottaa tekstin vastustusta että reagoi tekstin omaan resistanssiin. Tutkimuksessa täydennetään Chambersin narratologiaa hyödyntävää mallia vastustavan yleisön käsitteellä. Tätä yleisötyyppiä ei ole koodattu kerrontaan muuten kuin negaationa: poissaolonsa ja kerronnallisen sopimuksen ulkopuolelle jättämisensä kautta. Vastustava lukeminen voi postuloida tällaisen vastavoiman kerronnalliselle voimalle subversiiviseksi lukijapositioksi. Tutkimus spekuloi myös tekstin itsensä harjoittamalla vastustuksella ja sen suhteella dekonstruktioon. Lukematta jättäminen ja tekstin muuntelu ilmenevät tutkimuksessa sekä radikaaleina vastustuksen muotoina että lukemiseen olennaisesti kuuluvina piirteinä. Fiktion kitka, kirjoitetun kielen lukemiselle aiheuttama materiaalinen vastus osoittautuu poeettisuuden tai kirjallisuudellisuuden tärkeäksi ehdoksi.

Ennen siirtymistä Updiken kolmen romaanin käsittelyyn dekonstruktiota ja vastustavaa lukemista sovelletaan tutkimuksen alussa melko ongelmattomana esiteltyyn narratologiaan. Tarinan ja diskurssin ero, kirjallisuus kommunikaationa, narratologian fonosentrisyys sekä yleisön määritelemien suhde sukupuoleen, "rotuun" ja valtaan problematisoidaan kerronnan teorioiden dekonstruktiivisella luennalla.

Updiken romaani *Rabbit Redux* osoittautuu tutkimuksessa poikkeavan näennäisestä modernistis-realistisesta kerronnasta. Ekstradiegeettinen kertoja kommentoi ahkerasti, ja romaani sisältää lukuisia metafiktiivisiä piirteitä. Kertojan hyväksymä yleisö on valkoinen, miespuolinen, heteroseksuaalinen ja amerikkalainen. Kerronnallisen sopimuksen ulkopuolelle jätetyt ryhmät konstruoidaan tutkimuksessa mahdollisiksi vastustaviksi yleisöiksi. *Rabbit Redux*in päähenkilöt edustavat eri lukutapoja ja tarjoavat näin neljä tulkinnan allegoriaa, jotka ainakin osittain ovat toteutuneet romaanin reseptiossa. Puheen ja kirjoituksen oppositio liittyy romaanissa luonnollisen ja luonnottoman vastakohtaisuuteen. Oppositioparit kuitenkin sekoittuvat romaanin diskurssissa siinä määrin, että ne kriisiytyvät ja altistuvat dekonstruktiolle. Sama ilmiö tapahtuu romaanin elämä – kirjoitus- ja todellisuus – uutiset -oppositioissa.

A Month of Sundays -päiväkirjaromaanin autodiegeettinen kertoja kommentoi kirjoitustaan ylenpalttisesti; näennäisesti tämä auttaa lukijaa, mutta todellisuudessa häneltä peitellään tärkeitä asioita. Romaanissa on neljä yleisöä, joista miespuoliset ovat hyväksyttyjä, vaikka kertoja näennäisesti suuntaakin kerrontansa - viettelytarkoituksessa - intradiegeettiselle naisyleisölle. Romaanista on konstruoitavissa kerronnallisen sopimuksen negaation kautta vastustavia yleisöryhmiä. Kertojan kirjoittamat neljä saarnaa allegorisoivat eksegeeseissään romaanin pääasiallisia tulkintatapoja. Nämä lukemismallit ovat jossain määrin siirtyneet ilmeisine virhetulkintoineenkin romaanin todelliseen vastaanottoon. *Rabbit Redux* - romaanin tapaan puheen ja kirjoituksen oppositio liittyy luonnolliseen ja luonnottomaan. Kertojan retoriikka kuitenkin sekoittaa oppositiot ja dekonstruoi niiden perustan. Yleisestä tulkinnallisesta konsensuksesta poiketen romaani ei tutkimuksessa mukaudu päiväkirjaromaanin terapeuttiseen ja eheyttävään konventioon. Tietoisesti uudelleen kirjoitettuna metafiktiivisenä versiona Nathaniel Hawthornen *The Scarlet Letter*istä (1850) Updiken romaani käsittelee korostetusti kirjallisuuden tuottamista ja vastaanottoa.

The Coup esittäytyy muistelmana tai omaelämäkertana, joissa molemmissa kommentointi on miltei väistämätöntä. Kertojan asema kahden kulttuurin - afrikkalaisen ja amerikkalaisen - välillä painottaa erityisesti kielellisen ja kulttuurisen koodin kommentointia. Kertojan välittäjyys vaikuttaa myös hänen yleisösuhteeseensa. Amerikkaa kuvailevissa jaksoissa yleisönä on pääsääntöisesti afrikkalainen mies, kun taas Afrikasta kertovat osuudet implikoivat ei-afrikkalaista, ilmeisesti amerikkalaista tai yleensä länsimaista miesyleisöä. Kertojan pohjimmiltaan koloniaalinen diskurssi antaa mahdollisuuden postuloida vastustavia yleisöjä. Kertojan poliittiset ja uskonnolliset kiistat tuottavat kaksi tulkinnan allegoriaa; lukijan asema korostuu toisessa niistä, ja sitä tutkimus hyödyntää romaanin luennassa. Puhe ja kirjoitus kietoutuvat yhteen romaanin metaforissa niin, että opposition rakenne purkautuu. Kansakunta, subjekti ja romaani itse näyttävät rakentuvan ja purkautuvan yleiseen tekstuaalisuuden, merkitsemisen

ja ylipyyhkimisen logiikan mukaisesti. Romaanin tekstuaalisuuteen kuuluu myös koko joukko intertekstejä - lähinnä lansimaisia, Afrikkaan sijoittuvia romaaneja - sekä monenlaisia itserefleksiivisiä piirteitä.

Tutkimuksessa piirtyvä kuva Updiken fiktiosta poikkeaa huomattavasti kirjailijan vakiintuneesta maineesta. Updikea on pidetty alkutuotantonsa perusteella amerikkalaisen keskiluokan, esikaupunkielämän ja pienten henkilökohtaisten konfliktien taitavana vaikkakin rajoittuneena kuvaajana, joka edustaa jälkijättöistä realismia antautumatta muotokokeiluihin. Vaikka tutkimuksessa esitetyt valtavirrasta poikkeavat painotukset epäilemättä johtuvat osittain lukutavasta, myös Updiken kirjailijanlaadussa on sellaisia puolia, jotka ovat aikaisemmin jääneet vähälle huomiolle. Updiken sanataiteessa näyttää tapahtuneen 1970-luvulla käänne, joka lähensi häntä amerikkalaisiin postmodernisteihin mutta joka peittyi kirjailijan modernistis-realistisen maineen alle.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Key to Abbreviations of Updike's Novels Studied

C John Updike, *The Coup*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1980 (1978).

MS John Updike, *A Month of Sundays*. 2nd ed. London: André Deutsch 1987 (1975).

RRx John Updike, *Rabbit Redux*. New York: Fawcett Crest 1983 (1971).

Other Sources

Abbott 1984. H. Porter Abbott, *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Abrams 1988. M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Fifth ed. Forth Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Ahokas 1991. Pirjo Ahokas, *Forging a New Self: The Adamic Protagonist and the Emergence of a Jewish-American Author as Revealed through the Novels of Bernard Malamud*. Annales Universitatis Turkuensis, Ser.B, Tom.192. Turku: Turun Yliopisto.

Allen 1976. Mary Allen, *The Necessary Blankness: Women in Major American Fiction of the Sixties*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Alter 1975. Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alter 1979. "Updike, Malamud, and the Fire This Time." Thorburn & Eiland 1979, 39-49.

Attridge 1988. Derek Attridge, "Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's afarid of *Finnegan's Wake*." *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*. Ed. Jonathan Culler. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 140-55.

Bal 1992. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Trans. Christine van Boheemen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barthes 1966. Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité*. Paris: Seuil.

Barthes 1970. *S/Z: Essai*. Paris: Seuil.

Barthes 1979. "The Death of the Author." *Image - Music - Text*. Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath. Glasgow: Fontana. 142-48.

Barthes 1982. *Le Plaisir du texte*. Paris: Seuil.

Barthes 1984. *Essais critiques IV: le bruissement de la langue*. Paris: Seuil.

Bell 1987. Bernard W. Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amhearst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Bennett 1993. Andrew Bennett, "On Not Reading: Reading Theory." *Reading Reading: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Reading*. Ed. Andrew Bennett. Tampere English Studies 3. Tampere: University of Tampere. 221-37.

Bennett 1995. "Introduction." *Readers and Reading*. Ed. and Introduced by Andrew Bennett. London: Longman. 1-19.

Bennett & Royle 1995. Andrew Bennett & Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory: Key Critical Concepts*. London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Benveniste 1985. Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. Vol. 1. Paris: Gallimard.

Bercovitch 1978. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jerimiad*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bleich 1988. David Bleich, "Gender Interest in Reading and Language." Flynn & Schweickart 1988, 234-66.

Bonnefoy 1990. Yves Bonnefoy, "Lifting Our Eyes from the Page." Trans. John Naughton. *Critical Inquiry*, 16:4, 794-806.

Booth 1965. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Booth 1983. Wayne C. Booth, "Afterword to the Second Edition". *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Boyd 1983. Michael Boyd, *The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP.

Brée 1980. Germaine Brée, "Michel Leiris: Mazemaker." Olney 1980, 194-206.

Brooks 1984. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Calinescu 1993. Matei Calinescu, *Rereading*. New Haven: Yale UP.

Campbell 1982. James Campbell, *The Masks of God, Vol.1: Primitive Mythology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Carrard 1984. Philippe Carrard, "From Reflexivity to Reading: The Criticism of Lucien Dällenbach". *Poetics Today*, 5:4, 839-56.

Cave 1988. Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Chambers 1984. Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction*. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota UP.

Chambers 1991. *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Chang 1996. Briankle G. Chang, *Deconstructing Communication: Representation, Subject, and Economies of Exchange*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Chatman 1983. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell UP.

Chatman 1988. "On Deconstructing Narratology." *Style*. 22:1, 9-17.

Chatman 1990a. *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Chatman 1990b. "What Can We Learn from Contextualist Narratology." *Poetics Today*. 11:2. 309-28.

Christensen 1981. Inger Christensen, *The Meaning of Metafiction: A Critical Study of Selected Novels by Sterne, Nabokov and Beckett*. Bergen, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

Chukwu 1982. Augustine Chukwu, "The Dreamer as Leader: Ellelloû in John Updike's *The Coup*." *The Literary Half-Yearly*. 23:1, 61-69.

Cizel 1993. Annick Cizel, "La Voix de l'Afrique dans *The Coup* de John Updike." *Voix et langages aux Etats-Unis, II*. Ed. Serge Ricard. Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence. 79-97.

Coste 1989. Didier Coste, *Narrative as Communication*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Crawford & Chaffin 1988. Mary Crawford & Roger Chaffin, "The Reader's Construction of Meaning: Cognitive Research on Gender and Comprehension." Flynn & Schweickart 1988, 3-30.

Critchley 1993. Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Crowley 1985. Sue Mitcell Crowley, "John Updike and Kierkegaard's Negative Way: Irony and Indirect Communication in *A Month of Sundays*." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 68:2, 212-28.

Culler 1975. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Culler 1980. "Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading". Suleiman & Crosman 1980, 46-66.

Culler 1981. *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Culler 1983. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Culler 1988. *Framing the Sign: Critics and its Institutions*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Daly 1993. Robert Daly, "Cooper's Allegpries of Reading and 'the Wreck of the Past.'" James L. Machor (ed), *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP. 109-72.

Davies 1983. Marie-Hélène Davies, "Fools for Christ's Sake: A Study of Clerical Figures in De Vries, Updike and Buechner." *Thalia: Studies in Literary Humor*. 6:1., 60-72.

Deleuze & Guattari 1977. Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York: Random House.

Derrida 1973. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP.

Derrida 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Derrida 1981a. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida 1981b. *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida 1982. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida 1984. "Two Words for Joyce." Trans. Geoff Bennington. *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*. Ed. Derek Attridge & Daniel Ferrer. London: Cambridge UP. 145-59.

Derrida 1986. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida 1987a. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond. Trans*. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Derrida 1987b. *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*. Paris: Galilée.

Derrida 1988. "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce." Trans. Tina Kendall & Shari Benstock. *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*. Ed. Bernard Benstock. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. 27-75.

Derrida 1990. *Limited Inc*. Trans. Samuel Weber et al. Evanston: Northwestern UP.

Derrida 1991. *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. Ed. Peggy Kamuff. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Derrida 1992. "'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida." Trans. Geoffrey Bennington & Rachel Bowlby. *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York: Routledge. 33-75.

Derrida 1996. *Résistances à la psychoanalyse*. Paris: Galilée.

Detweiler 1979. Robert Detweiler, "Updike's *A Month of Sundays* and the Language of the Unconscious." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. XLVII: 4, 609-25.

Detweiler 1984. *John Updike*. Revised ed. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Detweiler 1989. *Breaking the Fall: Religious Readings of Contemporary Fiction*. London: Macmillan.

Diengott & Lanser 1988. Nilli Diengott & Susan S. Lanser, "Narratology and Feminism." *Style*. 22:1. 42-60.

Doody 1979. Terrence A. Doody, "Updike's Idea of Reification." *Contemporary Literature*. XX:2, 204-20.

Dällenbach 1977. Lucien Dällenbach, *Le récit speculaire: contribution à la étude de la mise en abyme*. Paris: Seuil.

Eakin 1980. Paul John Eakin, "Malcolm X and the Limits of Autobiography." Olney 1980, 181-93.

Eiland 1982. Howard Eiland, "Updike's Womanly Man." *The Centennial Review*. XXVI:4, 312-23.

Elam 1994. Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms. en Abyme*. London: Routledge.

Ellis 1988. John M. Ellis, "What Does Deconstruction Contribute to Theory of Criticism?" *New Literary History*. 19:2. 259-79.

Evans 1991. J. Claude Evans, *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Falke 1974. Wayne Falke, "'Rabbit Redux': Time / Order / God". *Modern Fiction Studies*. 20:1, 59-75.

Federman 1981. Raymond Federman (ed.), *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*. Chicago: Swallow Press.

Feidelson 1953. Charles Feidelson, Jr, *Symbolism and American Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Felman 1977. Shoshana Felman, "To Open the Question." *Yale French Studies*. 55-56, 5-10.

Felman 1985. *Writing and Madness: Literature / Philosophy / Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Martha Noel Evans and the author. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Felman 1993. *What Does a Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Fetterley 1981. Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Fiedler 1982. Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel. Revised ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fish 1971. Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Flynn 1988. Elizabeth A. Flynn, "Gender and Reading." Flynn & Scheickart 1988, 267-88.

Flynn & Schweickart 1988. Elizabeth A. Flynn & Patrocinio P. Schweickart (eds.), *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Foster 1987. Dennis A. Foster, *Confession and Complicity in Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Foucault 1990. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fremont-Smith 1981. Eliot Fremont-Smith, "Rabbit Ruts." *The Village Voice*. 30 (Sept. 1981), 35.

Freud 1961. Sigmund Freud, *The Psychoanalysis of Everyday Life. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey. Vol. 6. London: Hogarth Press. 1-310.

Freud s.a. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Avon Books.

Freund 1987. Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism*. London: Methuen.

Frye 1973. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP.

Frye 1983. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. London: Routledge/Ark Paperbacks.

Fuss 1989. Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. New York: Routledge

Gado 1973. Frank Gado (ed.), *First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing*. Schenectady: Union College Press.

Gallop 1985. Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Gasché 1986. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.

Gasché 1994. Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

Gates 1986. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes." *"Race," Writing, and Difference*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1-20.

Gates 1989. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self*. New York: Oxford UP.

Gelley 1995. Alexander Gelley (ed.), *Unruly Exemples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

Genette 1982. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degrée*. Paris: Seuil.

Genette 1985. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Genette 1987. *Seuils*. Paris: Seuil.

Genette 1988. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Godzich 1994. *The Culture of Literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

Greiner 1983. Donald J. Greiner, "Pynchon, Hawkes, and Updike: Readers and the Paradox of Accessibility." *The South Carolina Review*. 16:1. 45-51.

Greiner 1984. *John Updike's Novels*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP.

Greiner 1985. *Adultery in the American Novel: Updike, James, and Hawthorne*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press.

Gusdorf 1980. Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Trans. James Olney. Olney 1980, 28-48.

Hawthorne 1988. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Norton Critical Edition. Ed. by Seymour Gross et al. New York: W.W. Norton.

Heller 1974. Erich Heller, *Franz Kafka*. New York: Viking.

Henderson 1978. Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man". C.G. Jung (ed.), *Man and his Symbols*. London: Picador. 95-156.

Holland 1997. Nancy J. Holland (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida*. University Park: Pennsylvania UP.

The Holy Bible. The American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible. 1901 ed. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, s.a.

Holub 1985. Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*. London: Methuen.

Hules 1985. Virginia Thornike Hules, "Introduction: A Topography of Difference." *French Feminist Criticism: Women, Language, Literature - An Annotated Bibliography*. Ed. Elissa Gelfand and Virginia T. Hules. New York: Garland. xv-xlviii.

Hume 1984. Kathryn Hume, *Fantacy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*. New York: Methuen.

Hunt 1980. George Hunt, *John Updike and the Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Hutcheon 1980. Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier UP.

Iannone 1988. Carol Iannone, "Adultery, from Hawthorne to Updike." *Commentary*. October. 55-59.

Ifri 1983. Pascal Alain Ifri, *Proust et son narrataire dans A la Recherche du temps perdu*. Genève: Librairie Droz.

Irigaray 1989. Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP.

Irwin 1980. John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*. New Haven: Yale UP.

Iser 1974. Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Iser 1987. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Jackson 1985. Edward M. Jackson, "Rabbit Is Racist." *College Language Association Journal*. 28:4. 444-51.

Jahn 1996. Manfred Jahn, "Windows of Focalization: Deconctructing and Reconstructing a Narratological Concept." *Style* 20:2. 241-67.

Jakobson 1968. Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." *Style in Language*. Thomas E. Sebeok (ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press. 350-77.

Jardine & Smith 1987. Alice Jardine & Paul Smith (eds.), *Men in Feminism*. New York: Meridian.

Johnson 1981. Barbara Johnson, "Translator's Introduction." Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. vii-xxxiii.

Johnson 1982. *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Johnson 1989. *A World of Difference*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.

Johnson 1990. "Writing." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia & Thomas McLaughlin. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 39-49.

Kappeler 1980. Susanne Kappeler, *Writing and Reading in Henry James*. London: Macmillan.

Karl 1983. Frederic R. Karl, *American Fictions 1940/1980: A Comprehensive History and Critical Evaluation*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kennard 1988. Jean E. Kennard, "Ourself behind Ourself: A Theory for Lesbian Readers." Flynn & Schweickart 1988, 63-80.

Keskinen 1989. Mikko Keskinen, "Lihaan kirjoitettu: nainen sanataiteena John Updiken lyriikassa." *Nainen ja kirjallisuus. Juhlakirja apulaisprofessori Jenny Liljalle*. Ed. Katriina Kajannes. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjallisuuden laitos. 195-211.

Keskinen 1991. "Tulkinnan allegorisointi John Updiken romaanissa *Rabbit Redux*." *Miten valehdellaan*. Ed. Markku Ihonen. *KTSV* 45. Helsinki: SKS. 43-60.

Keskinen 1992. "Kirjoituksen ääni ja vimma: tekstin ja fonotekstin luennasta." *Tekstinkätkentäjuttu*. Toim. Markku Ihonen. *KTSV 46*. 77-80.

Keskinen 1993a. "Psychocultural Reception: On the Transferential Structure of Reading." *The Cultural Study of Reception*. Ed. Erkki Vainikkala. Publications of the Research Unit for Contemporary Culture 38. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä. 101-114.

Keskinen 1993b. "Reading on the Threshold: Gérard Genette's Peritexts as Interpretive Commentary." *Reading Reading: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Reading*. Ed. Andrew Bennett. Tampere English Studies 3. Tampere: University of Tampere. 159-182.

Keskinen 1996. "Kriittisiä transpositioita: intertekstuaalisuuden teoriat kirjaimen ja metaforan välissä." *Mustat merkit muuttuvat merkityksiksi. KTSV* 49:1. Helsinki: SKS. 30-51.

Keskinen 1998a. "Exemplary Exegeses: Sermons as Allegories of Interpretation in John Updike's *A Month of Sundays*." *American Studies in Scandinavia*. 30:1. [forthcoming]

Keskinen 1998b. "Rabbit Resisted." Rev. of O'Connell 1996. *American Studies in Scandinavia*. 30:2. [forthcoming]

Kesterson 1979. David B. Kesterson, "Updike and Hawthorne: Not So Strange Bedfellows." *Notes on Modern American Literature*. III:2. Item no. 11.

Kettunen 1983. Keijo Kettunen, "Yleisö kertomuksessa." Kettunen & al. 1983, 108-20.

Kettunen & al. 1983. Keijo Kettunen & al. (eds.), *Taiteen monta tasoa: tutkielmia estetiikan, kirjallisuus- ja teatteritieteen aloilta*. Professori Maija Lehtosen juhlakirja 10.1.1984. Helsinki: SKS.

Knutson 1989. Susan Knutson, "For Feminist Narratology." *Tessera*. 7. 10-14.

Koestenbaum 1990. Wayne Koestenbaum, "Wilde's Hard Labor and the Birth of Gay Reading." Joseph A. Boone & Michael Cadden (eds.), *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*. New York: Routledge. 176-89.

The Koran. Trans. N.J. Dawood. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1986.

Koskimaa 1994. Raine Koskimaa, "Deus ex machina eli voiko virtuaalilämä olla hyvä?" *Uusi aika: kirjoituksia nykykulttuurista ja aikakauden luonteesta*. Publications of the Research Unit for Contemporary Culture No. 41. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä UP. 114-24.

Kosonen 1995. Päivi Kosonen, *Samuudesta eroon: naistekijän osuus George Gusdorfin, Philippe Lejeunen, Paul de Manin ja Nancy K. Millerin autobiografiateorioissa*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopiston taideaineiden laitos.

Kristeva 1978. Julia Kristeva, *Séméiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Seuil.

Lacan 1977. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock.

Lacan 1986. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lanser 1986. Susan S. Lanser, "Toward a Feminist Narratology." *Style*. 20:3. 341-63.

Lanser 1988. "Shifting the Paradigm: Feminism and Narratology." *Style*. 22:1. 52-60.

Laplanche & Pontalis 1967. Jean Laplanche & J-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychoanalyse*. Paris: P.U.F.

Lathrop 1985. Kathleen Lathrop, "*The Coup*: John Updike's Modernist Masterpiece." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 31:2. 249-62.

Lejeune 1982. Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Contract." Trans. R. Carter. *French Literary Theory Today*. Ed. Tzvetan Todorov. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 192-222.

Lemeurier 1982. Barbara Lemeurier, "A Fable of Modern Times: America and Africa in John Updike's *The Coup*." *Les Americains et les autres*. Ed. Serge Ricard. Actes du GRENA. Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence. 101-16.

Lloyd Smith 1984. Allan Gardner Lloyd Smith, *Eve Tempted: Writing and Sexuality in Hawthorne's Fiction*. London: Croom Helm.

Locke 1979. Richard Locke, "Rabbit's Progress." Thorburn & Eiland 1979. 35-38.

Lodge 1984. David Lodge, "Hugging the Shore: Updike & the World of Books." *Encounter*. LXIII:2. 63-66.

Longman. *The Longman Dictionary of the English Language*. 1984 ed. London: Longman.

Machor 1993. James L. Machor, "Introduction: Readers/Texts/Contexts." Machor (ed.), *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the*

Contexts of Response. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP. vii-xxix.
Macnaughton 1982. William R. Macnaughton (ed.), *Critical Essays on John Updike*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co.
Mallarmé 1956. Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres completes*. Ed. Henri Mondor & G. Jean-Aubry. Paris: Gallimard.
de Man 1971. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. New York: Oxford UP.
de Man 1979. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven & London: Yale UP.
de Man 1993. *The Resistance to Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Markle 1975. Joyce B. Markle, *Fighters and Lovers: Theme in the Novels of John Updike*. New York: New York UP.
Markle 1982. "*The Coup*: Illusions and Insubstantial Impressions." Macnaughton 1982, 281-301.
Martens 1985. Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Martin 1986. Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
Matthews 1983. John T. Matthews, "The Word as Scandal: Updike's *A Month of Sundays*." *Arizona Quarterly*. 39:4. 351-80.
Matthews 1985. "Intertextuality and Originality: Hawthorne, Faulkner, Updike." *Intertextuality in Faulkner*. Eds. Michel Gresset & Noel Polk. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 144-57.
May 1972. John R. May, *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
McCaffery 1986. Larry McCaffery (ed.), *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-Bibliographic Guide*. New York: Greenwood Press.
McGill 1979. Deborah McGill, "Boy's Life." Thorburn & Eiland 1979, 162-66.
McHale 1993. Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge.
McInerney 1988. Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City*. Glasgow: Flamingo/Collins.
McKelly 1989. James C. McKelly, "For Whom the Bull Flows: Hemingway in Parody." *American Literature*. 61:4. 547-62.
Melville 1947. Herman Melville, *The Collected Poems of Herman Melville*. Ed. Howard P. Vincent. Chicago: Packard and Co.
Miller 1995. J. Hillis Miller, "Parabolic Exemplarity: The Example of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*." Gelley 1995, 162-74.
Mills 1994. Sara Mills, "Reading as/like a Feminist." Mills (ed.), *Gendering the Reader*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 25-46.
Müller 1991. Wolfgang G. Müller, "Interfigurality: A Study of the Interdependence of Literary Figures." Heinrich E. Plett (ed.), *Intertextuality*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 101-21.
Nadeau 1981. Robert Nadeau, *Readings from the New Book on Nature: Physics and Metaphysics in the Modern Novel*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.
Neary 1992. John Neary, *Something and Nothingness: The Fiction of John Updike & John Fowles*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.
Newman 1988. Judie Newman, *John Updike*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Norris 1983. Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. London: Methuen.

Oates 1982. Joyce Carol Oates, "*The Coup* by John Updike." Macnaughton 1982, 80-86.

O'Connell 1974. Shawn O'Connell, "Rabbits Remembered." *Massachusetts Review*. 15. 511-20.

O'Connell 1996. Mary O'Connell, *Updike and Patriarchal Dilemma: Masculinity in the Rabbit Novels*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.

Oldsey 1972. Bernard Oldsey, "Rabbit Run to Earth." *Nation*. 10 Jan., 1972. 54-55.

Olney 1980. James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

Olster 1991. Stacey Olster, "Rabbit Rerun: Updike's Replay of Popular Culture in *Rabbit at Rest*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 37:1. 45-59.

Olster 1992. "Rabbit Is Redundant: Updike's End of an American Epoch." *Neo-Ralism in Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. Kristiaan Versluys. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 113-29.

O'Sullivan et al. 1994. Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Sauders, Martin Montgomery & John Fiske, *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*. Second Ed. London: Routledge.

Pace 1986. Timothy Pace, "'The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton': George Eliot and Displaced Religious Confession." *Style*. 20:1. 75-89.

Parameswaran 1992. Uma Parameswaran, "The We/They Paradigm in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*." *Us/Them: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures*. Ed. Gordon Collier. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 189-99.

Perec 1990. Georges Perec, *Un Homme qui dort*. Paris: Folio/Gallimard.

Perry 1979. Menachem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings." *Poetics Today*. 1:1-2. 35-64, 311-61 respectively.

Phelan 1989. James Phelan, *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Phelan 1994. "*Self-Help* for Narratee and Narrative Audience: How 'I' - and 'You'? - Read 'How'." *Style* 28:3. 350-65.

Pietz 1990. William Pietz, "The Phonograph in Africa: International Phonocentrism from Stanley to Sarnoff." *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*. Ed. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 263-85.

Piwowarczyk 1976. Mary Ann Piwowarczyk, "The Narratee and the Situation of Enunciation: A Reconsideration of Prince's Theory." *Genre*. 9:2. 161-77.

Prince 1980. Gerald Prince, "Notes on the Text as Reader". Suleiman & Crosman 1980, 225-40.

Prince 1982. .Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Function of Narrative*. Berlin: Mouton.

Prince 1983. Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee." Trans. by Francis Mariner. Tompkins 1983, 7-25.

Prince 1985. "The Narratee Revisited." *Style*. 19:3, Fall. 299-303.

Prince 1987. *A Dictionary of Narratology*. Aldershout: Scolar Press.

Prince 1988. "The Disnarrated." *Style*. 22:1. 1-8.

Prince 1990. "On Narrative Studies and Narrative Genres." *Poetics Today* 11:2. 271-81.

Prince 1992. *Narrative as Theme: Studies in French Fiction*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Rabinowitz 1977. Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences." *Critical Inquiry* 4:1. 121-41.

Rabinowitz 1987. *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP.

Ray 1977. William Ray, "Recognizing Recognition: The Intra-Textual and Extra-Textual Critical Persona." *Diacritics*. Winter 1977, 20-33.

Renza 1980. Louis A. Renza, "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography." Olney 1980, 268-95.

Richardson 1991. Brian Richardson, "The Poetics and Politics of Second Person Narrative." *Genre* XXIV, Fall. 309-330.

Ridell 1994. Seija Ridell, *Kaikki tiet vievät genreen: tutkimusretkiä tiedotusopin ja kirjallisuustieteen välimaastossa*. Tampereen yliopiston tiedotusopin laitoksen julkaisuja. Sarja A 82/1994. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.

Rimmon-Kenan 1983. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Methuen.

Ristoff 1988. Dilvo I. Ristoff, *Updike's America: The Presence of American History in John Updike's Rabbit Trilogy*. New York: Peter Lang.

Rivkin 1987. Julie Rivkin, "Resisting Readers and Reading Effects: Some Speculations on Reading and Gender." *Narrative Poetics: Innovations, Limits, Challenges. Papers in Comparative Studies*. Vol.5. Ed. James Phelan. Columbus: The Ohio State UP. 11-22.

Rojola 1991. Lea Rojola, "Moninainen subjekti ja vastustuksen mahdollisuus." *Monikasvoinen subjekti: tutkilemia kaunokirjallisuuden subjekteista*. Toim. Juha Hyvärinen. Ser. A, n:o 23. Turku: Turun yliopiston taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos. 7-19.

Rojola 1995. "Teksti nimeltä R.B.: Roland Barthes ja minä." *Subjekti. Minä. Itse: kirjoituksia kielestä, kirjallisuudesta, filosofiasta*. Toim. Pirjo Lyytikäinen. Helsinki: SKS. 80-105.

Rose 1979. Margaret A. Rose, *Parody/Metafiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction*. London: Croom Helm.

Rosenblatt 1980. Roger Rosenblatt, "Black Autobiography: Life as the Death Weapon." Olney 1980, 169-80.

Ross 1989. Stephen M. Ross, *Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice: Speech and Writing in Faulkner*. Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press.

Russell 1979. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. New York: Meridian.

Sabry 1987. Randa Sabry, "Quand le texte parle de son paratexte." *Poétique*. 69, 83-99.

Sabry 1993. "Les lectures des héros de romans." *Poétique*. 94, avril. 185-204.

Sale 1981. Roger Sale, "Rabbit Returns." *New York Times Book Review*. Sept. 27, 1981. 1, 32-34.

Sayre 1980. Robert F. Sayre, "Autobiography and the Making of America." Olney 1980, 146-68.

Schibanoff 1988. Susan Schibanoff, "Taking the Gold Out of Egypt: The Art of Reading as a Woman." Flynn & Schweickart 1988, 83-106.
Schiff 1990. James A. Schiff, *Updike's Version: Rewriting Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter"*. Michigan: UMI.
Scholes 1967. Robert Scholes, *The Fabulators*. New York: Oxford UP.
Scholes 1974. *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*. New Haven: Yale UP.
Scholes 1987. "Reading Like a Man." Jardine & Smith 1987, 204-18.
Schor 1980. Naomi Schor, "Fiction as Interpretation / Interpretation as Fiction". Suleiman & Crosman 1980, 165-82.
Schuchalter 1991. Jerry Schuchalter, "'You Can't Go Home Again': Ethnicity and Eros in the Development of an American Topus in the Fiction of John Updike." *Etnospektri: kirjoituksia kirjavista identiteeteistä*. Ed. Juha Hyvärinen & Tapio Mäkelä. Turku: Turun Yliopiston Ylioppilaskunta.
Schweickart 1988. Patrocinio P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading." Flynn & Schweickart 1988, 31-62.
Schuerewegen 1987. Franc Schuerewegen, "Réflections sur le narrataire: *Quidam et Quilibet*." *Poétique*. 70. 247-54.
Searles 1985. George J. Searles, *The Fiction of Philip Roth and John Updike*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.
Sedgwick 1989. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic." *Speaking of Gender*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Routledge. 243-68.
Sethuraman 1993. Ramchadran Sethuraman, "Writing Woman's Body: Male Fantasy, Desire, and Sexual Identity in Updike's *Rabbit, Run*." *LIT*. 4. 101-22.
Shueller 1991. Malini Shueller, "Containing the Third World: John Updike's *The Coup*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 37:1. 113-27.
Skura 1981. Meredith Anne Skura, *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process*. New Haven: Yale UP.
Smith 1995. Robert Smith, *Derrida and Autobiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
Sorrentino 1982. Gilbert Sorrentino, "Never on Sunday." Macnaughton 1982, 77-79.
Starobinski 1980. Jean Starobinski, "The Style in Autobiography." Trans. Seymour Chatman. Olney 1980, 73-83.
Steiner 1979. George Steiner, "*A Month of Sundays*: Scarlet Letters." Thorburn & Eiland 1979, 93-106.
Stewart 1990. Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Stewart 1996. *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.
Strawson 1993. Galen Strawson, "Coupling like Rabbits." *TLS* 26 Feb. 1993. 19.
Suleiman 1980. Susan R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism". Suleiman & Crosman 1980, 3-45.
Suleiman & Crosman 1980. Susan R. Suleiman & Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP.
Tallent 1982. Elizabeth Tallent, *Married Men and Magic Tricks: John Updike's Erotic Heroes*. Berkeley: Creative Arts.

Tallis 1988. Raymond Tallis, *Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan.
Tammi 1984. Pekka Tammi, "Kerronnallisista paradokseista ja itsensä tiedostavista fiktioista: esimerkkinä Vladimir Nabokovin 'Merkkejä ja symboleja'." Kettunen & al. 1983, 121-37.
Tammi 1985. *Problems of Nabokov's Poetics: A Narratological Analysis*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
Tammi 1988. "Onko tällä tekstillä lukijaa? Lukijan, tekstin ja lukemisen käsitteistä (suomalaisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen kannalta)." *KTSV* 42. 201-47.
Tammi 1991. "Esijälkinarratologisia huomautuksia." *Synteesi* 1-2/1991. 165-90.
Tanner 1979. Tony Tanner, *City of Words: A Study of American Fiction in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. London: Jonathan Cape.
Tanner 1981. *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.
Taylor 1984. Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Thurburn 1979. David Thurburn, "Introduction: 'Alive in a Place and Time'". Thurburn & Howard Eiland 1979, 1-9.
Thurburn & Eiland 1979. David Thurburn & Howard Eiland, *John Updike: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1979.
Todorov 1980a. Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose*. Paris: Seuil.
Todorov 1980b. Tzvetan Todorov, "Reading as Construction". Trans. by Marilyn A. August. Suleiman & Crosman 1980, 67-82.
Tompkins 1983. Jane P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP.
Towers 1979. Robert Towers, "Updike in Africa." Thurburn & Eiland 1979, 157-61.
Updike 1968. John Updike, *Verse (The Carpentered Hen & Telephone Poles)*. New York: Fawcett Crest (1958 & 1963 respectively).
Updike 1975. *Rabbit, Run*. Revised Penguin Ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1960/1964).
Updike 1977. *Tossing and Turning: Poems*. London: André Deutsch.
Updike 1978. *The Centaur*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1963).
Updike 1983. *Rabbit Is Rich*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1981).
Updike 1988. *S*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Updike 1991. *Rabbit at Rest*. New York: Fawcett Crest (1990).
Updike 1993. *Memories of the Ford Administration*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1992).
Updike 1994a. *The Afterlife and Other Stories*. New York: Fawcett Crest.
Updike 1994b. *Brazil*. New York: Fawcett Crest.
Updike 1996. *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Updike 1997. *Toward the End of Time*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Updike s.a. *Picked-Up Pieces*. London: André Deutsch (1966-1975).
Uphaus 1980. Suzanne Henning Uphaus, *John Updike*. New York: Ungar.
Vainikkala 1991. Erkki Vainikkala, "Poeettinen funktio ja reseptiotutkimus." *Nykyajan sadut: joukkoviestinnän kertomukset ja vastaanotto*. Ed. Juha Kytömäki. Helsinki: YLE & Gaudeamus. 117-42.
Vainikkala 1993. *Oppinut taikina: kirjoituksia kirjallisuuden teoriasta, kielestä ja kulttuurista*. JYY:n julkaisu n:o 30. Jyväskylä: JYY.

Vanderwerken 1975. David L. Vanderwerken, "Rabbit 'Re-Docks': Updike's Inner Space Odyssey." *College Literature*. 2/1975. 73-78.

Vickery 1973. John B. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

Waldmeir 1978. J.J. Waldmeir, "*Rabbit Redux* Reduced: Rededicated? Redeemed?" *Essays in Honor of Russell B. Nye*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP. 247-61.

Waller 1982. Gary Waller, "Stylus Dei or the Open-Endedness of Debate? Success and Failure in *A Month of Sundays*." Macnaughton 1982, 269-80.

Waugh 1952. Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief*. London: Chapman & Hall.

Waugh 1972. *Scoop*. London: Chapman & Hall.

Waugh 1984. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen.

Webster's. Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. 1989 ed. New York: Portland House.

Williams 1976. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Glasgow: Fontana/Croom Helm.

Wilson 1981. W. Daniel Wilson, "Readers in Texts." *PLMA*. 96:5. 848-63.

Witvliet 1987. Theo Witvliet, *The Way of the Black Messiah: The Hermeneutical Challenge of Black Theology as a Theology of Liberation*. New York: SCM.