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THE METAFICTIONAL NOVEL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By

Matthew J. McDonough

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ABSTRACT

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By

Matthew J. McDonough

My basic aim is to explicate and illumine the metafictional novel through a comparative study of six authors and a sustained consideration of contemporary theory. In the first chapter I establish a theoretical framework for understanding metafiction in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel (as elaborated in *The Dialogic Imagination*) and the poststructuralist theories of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. In the following chapter I examine the origins of the metafictional novel in two early masterpieces, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy.* The third chapter is a discussion of Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* and John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* as exemplars for a brand of parodic, pseudohistorical metafiction which is heavily indebted to *Don Quijote.* In the final chapter I discuss the ludic, deconstructive and postmodernist propensities of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association.*

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I would like to extend my gratitude to three professors at Michigan State who assisted me in my studies in various ways: Philosophy professor Douglas Peterson, who gave me excellent advice on the first chapter; Robert Fiore, a Spanish and Italian professor and *Don Quijote* scholar, to whom I owe the pleasure of my first encounter with Cervantes' great masterpiece (and who responded extensively to the second chapter); and my thesis director, English professor Jim McClintock, to whom I am perhaps most indebted, not only for the guidance he provided in the way of critical commentary, but for sparking my initial interest in metafiction in his graduate seminar on contemporary American literature.

A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATIONS

A cursory glance at the body of this thesis will alert the reader to the fact that in addition to the passages from novels in English, there are direct quotations from Spanish texts, intended for the enrichment of those readers who, like myself, are fluent enough in Spanish to understand them. However, I have no intention of excluding readers who don't know Spanish; consequently, I have included translations for all Spanish passages, including words and phrases quoted in the middle of English sentences.

I would also like to acknowledge my use of several superb translations. Since I am by no means perfectly fluent in Spanish, I found it useful to measure my own translations against those of Gregory Rabassa, whose *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Hopscotch* are unsurpassed and virtually "perfect" translations of García Márquez and Julio Cortázar. I found Walter Starkie's translation of *Don Quijote* to be less commendable; on the whole I think he renders Cervantes' language, which appears astonishingly modern in Spanish (a more stable language over its history, I think, than English), in overly archaic English. Nevertheless, he provides reliable English equivalents for some of the more esoteric words in the *Quijote*.

In general, where its idiomatic peculiarities allowed, I sought a more direct translation of the Spanish than did the translators that I consulted. A linguistic crutch which was especially useful for the translations which were necessary to do on my own (such as quotations of critical commentary in Spanish) was Mario A. Pei's New World Spanish/English English/Spanish Dictionary.

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Chapter 1

Formalist and Poststructuralist Perspectives on Metafiction

The term "metafiction" can be traced to a 1970 essay by William Gass (Waugh 2), a period of intense formal experimentation and avant-gardism when probably more specimens of the genre were being produced than at any time before or since. Nevertheless, I have purposely avoided in my thesis those novelists whose work represents metafiction in its most reactionary and extremist aesthetic stance, for I hope to controvert the tendency to view metafiction as a mere symptom of late sixties and early seventies radicalism.

Contrary to this view, a number of seminal studies have demonstrated that, far from constituting a marginalized, short-lived aberration, metafiction actually *typifies* the inherent potential of all fiction for self-reflexive commentary and flaunting of technical artifice. As Patricia Waugh states at the beginning of her superb study, *Metafiction,* "This form of fiction is worth studying not only because of its contemporary emergence but also because of the insights it offers into both the representational nature of all fiction and the literary history of the novel as genre. By studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity (p. 5)."

Other critics have come to a similar conclusion in expanding the

scope of metafiction to encompass the history of the novel itself. For instance, Robert Alter, in his landmark study, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre,* isolates the nineteenth century as the era in which the self-conscious novel was "eclipsed," and demonstrates how it flourished in the seventeenth, eighteenth and twentieth centuries in such masterpieces as *Don Quijote, Tristram Shandy,* and the novels of Nabokov. Indeed, the so-called "triumph of realism" in the nineteenth century effaces another tradition more skeptical of the novel's ability to offer a verisimilitous representation of "reality." This literary-historical schism outlines a basic tension which is present in all fiction, but which is accentuated in the metafictional novel through a construction of narrative artifice on the one hand, and on the other, its self-critical unraveling or exposure (Waugh 6).

Despite the notorious difficulties in arriving at a definition of literary realism, the metafictional theories stemming from the work of Alter and Mikhail Bakhtin simplify the matter by allowing us to view realism as the natural antipode of metafiction. Theorists of realism who grapple with the inherent paradox of a mode which purports to represent life in a novel as it is "in reality," clearly would benefit from an understanding of metafiction, which openly embraces and highlights this vexing duplicity at the heart of narrative technique. In sum, novelists operating in a realist mode tell a story as if characters were not merely words on a page chosen by an author, but real, autonomous people operating within independent ontological frames,

unrestricted by the narrative and stylistic conventions which give them life beyond their linguistic flatness on the page. As Gass wryly notes, "That novels should be made of words, and merely words, is shocking, really. It's as if you had discovered that your wife were made of rubber: the bliss of all those years, the fears . . . from sponge" (as quoted on p. viii of *Partial Magic*).

Mikhail Bakhtin is one of the most relevant and useful theorists for an expansion of metafiction's provenance to embrace the history of the novel itself, for his theory of the novel demarginalizes metafictional forces or effects, positing them as the very ground for the novel's uniqueness as a genre. Although he never uses any term resembling the word "metafiction," it is clear that the "dialogic potential" of the novel refers to a form of novelistic discourse which is characteristically self-conscious and self-referential. Moreover, he argues that the natural tendency for the novel is to relativize distinct stylistic and generic voices within a multivocal and heteroglot text. The novel is not a "genre" so much as a crucible and melting pot for diverse genres, a space where various "languages" compete for mastery over the text. One need only think of *Don Quijote,* with its incorporation of the picaresque novel, the chivalric romance, the pastoral lyric and novel, arabic tales, etc., to realize the extent to which the novel absorbs and assimilates canonic, already completed genres within its sprawling framework.

Moreover, the heteroglot composition of the novel is handled in such a way as to question the authority of the canonical genre

structures which it incorporates into its dialogic form of discourse. In other words, the novel, in Bakhtin's view, is not a merely passive form of eclecticism or pastiche, but an active interrogation and critique of canonic forms within a "profane," or radically "other"[1] structure of dialogic skepticism. Michael Holquist seizes upon this aspect of Bakhtin's theory of the novel very lucidly in his introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination:*

> The majority of literary scholars are most at home when dealing with canons, which is why Bakhtin said that literary theory is helpless to deal with the novel. Rather, "novel" is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system. Literary systems are comprised of canons, and "novelization" is fundamentally anticanonical. It will not permit generic monoloque (p. xxxi).

The words, "reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that [literary] system," are very close to the way most critics have sought to define metafiction. As Waugh states in *Metafiction,* "Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion . . . and the laying bare of that illusion (p. 6)." A dual focus on the history of the novel (as conceived by Bakhtin) and the fundamental nature of metafiction, lends support to the contention that the novel is inherently or essentially metafictional.

Another aspect of metafiction articulated in Bakhtin's theory is the impulse to self-critique. Bakhtin sees the novelistic appropriation of older generic forms (the "novelization" of epic, for example) as a way of parodying and criticizing these outmoded and brittle forms, in keeping with his view that genres are essentially

organic forms, whose monologic appearance in contemporaneity is attributable to the fact that the already completed genres are actually generic "skeletons." By contrast, the novel is a fluid and still developing genre:

> The study of the novel as a genre is distinguished by peculiar difficulties. This is due to the unique nature of the object itself: the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted. The forces that define it as a genre are at work before our very eyes: the birth and development of the novel as a genre takes place in the full light of the historical day. The generic skeleton of the novel is still far from having hardened, and we cannot foresee all its plastic possibilities (p. 3).

This explains in part the heteroglot and anticanonical *appearance* of the novel, but it is further distinguished from other genres by its impulse to criticism, its treatment of generic stylization as an object for critical representation. The novel assimilates generic forms, but only in order to parody them:

> Parodic stylizations of canonized genres and styles occupy an essential place in the novel. In the era of the novel's creative ascendency--and even more so in the periods of preparation preceding this era--literature was flooded with parodies and travesties of all the high genres (parodies precisely of genres, and not of individual authors or schools)--parodies that are the precursors, "companions" to the novel, in their own way studies for it. But it is characteristic that the novel does not permit any of these various individual manifestations of itself to stabilize (p. 6).

Don Quijote, the archetpyal and paradigmatic exemplar for the novel in so many respects, furnishes us with a perfect illustration of Bakhtin's theorization, for the very *raison d'être* of Cervantes' masterpiece, as the author himself tells his readers in the prologue, is the satirization of the *caballerías,* the chivalric romances so popular throughout Europe in the sixteenth century.

Indeed, one essential aspect of the metafictional fabric of Cervantes' novel is the way in which it imitates a popular genre, not out of reverence, but in the spirit of parody and criticism. It is a form of textual appropriation which opens up a critical distance between the object of representation (the chivalric romances) and the way these books are *contextually* represented in the novel itself. Cervantes' never directly criticizes the books of chivalry, but by accentuating the distance between their characteristic mode of representation (embodied in the imagination and utterences of don Quijote) and their contextual appearance in a comic, picaresque novel, he is able to simultaneously fictionalize and criticize. (As we shall see in the next chapter, metafictional self-criticism functions in *Don Quijote* in a remarkable variety of ways.)

Of course, it is important to note that the novel does not smugly criticize the genres it assimilates, reserving a sort of master-style or language for itself which would be free from parody and critique. As Bakhtin notes, "the novel does not permit any one of these various individual manifestations of itself to stabilize." The novel is not merely critique, but self-critique, mercilessly dialogizing all of its generic stylizations into a heteroglossic and open-ended form:

> To a greater or lesser extent, every novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of "languages," styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation. Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself (p. 49).

This explains why the novel is characteristically metafictional,

not merely metalinguistic. Metalanguage, as formulated in structuralist thought, can be defined as a language system whose object of representation is another language. The concept is a cornerstone of structuralist and New Critical methodology, and allows the critic a strategic, objective distance from which to analyze a text, encoding its meaning in a "master-text" itself impervious to criticism. A *poststructuralist* critique of this concept attacks the privileged status that this form of discourse reserves for itself, and demonstrates how all modes of critical discourse open themselves to deconstruction by the very rhetorical ploys that constitute their critical position. Christopher Norris elucidates this point in *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice:*

> The endpoint of deconstructive thought, as Derrida insists, is to recognize that there is no end to the interrogative play between text and text. Deconstruction can never have the final word because its insights are inevitably couched in a rhetoric which itself lies open to further deconstructive reading. Criticism can only be deluded in its claim to operate (as Eagleton puts it) 'outside the space of the text' on a plane of scientific knowledge. There is no metalanguage (p. 84).

Bakhtin's theory leads us to the same conclusion, but in the context of the novel. There can be no privileged generic stylization in the novel because the process of dialogic subversion, of "novelization," is so pervasive and complete that every mode of generic representation is itself an object of representation, every parodic stylization itself an object of parody. Every novel submits itself to novelistic self-critique. In other words, all novels are metafictional, excepting those which strive against their natural grain to become monologic, submitting the plurivocity of novelistic

discourse to the "dominant 'voice' of the omniscient, godlike author (Waugh, p. 6)."

As I stated earlier, metafiction functions by exploring a fundamental duplicity inherent in all fiction--the tension and difference between the author's striving after realistic illusion and the appearance of narrative veracity on the one hand, and on the other, his awareness that books are merely printed matter, material and linguistic objects having no immediate or intrinsic relation with the reality they seek to represent. For Bakhtin, this ambivalence and discordance typifies the novelistic mode of representation:

> The image of another's language and outlook on the world, simultaneously represented *and* representing, is extremely typical of the novel; the greatest novelistic images (for example, the figure of Don Quixote) belong precisely to this type. These descriptive and expressive means that are direct and poetic (in the narrow sense) retain their direct significance when they are incorporated into such a figure, but at the same time they are "qualified" and "externalized," shown as something historically relative, delimited and incomplete--in the novel they, so to speak, criticize themselves (p. 45).

To expand upon Bakhtin's example of don Quijote, I would assert that Cervantes' character is a direct image of the chivalric knight and the pastoral lover/poet whenever he voices the language of chivalric romances and pastoral poetry, and indeed, a large percentage of Cervantes' novel is given over to this form of direct, generic appropriation. This is not merely in order to set up earlier generic forms for parodic treatment, for Cervantes is in part paying tribute to his predecessors and demonstrating his skill in handling traditional literary forms

(this dual stance toward tradition is analogous to the more fundamental ambivalence at the very heart of metafiction). But the language and figure of don Quijote are also framed in a context which "qualifies" and "externalizes" his identity as a gallant knight.

The implications of this are not merely that don Quijote is "really" a middle-aged man driven mad from reading too much popular literature (as realist interpretations of the novel would emphasize), but that he is also a linguistic fiction. Alter seizes upon this quality of bifurcation in don Quijote's character in *Partial Magic,* relating it to novelistic self-consciousness in the book as a whole:

> . . . Don Quixote . . . exists simultaneously on two very different planes of being. On the one hand, the gaunt knight on his emaciated hack rides in the mind's eye across the plains of a very real La Mancha, appearing as a possible if bizarre figure of his time and place who in fact succeeds in becoming a general image of mankind in all the stubbornness of its idealism and the hopeless futility of its blind misdirections. Cervantes takes pains, on the other hand, to make us aware of the fact that the knight is merely a lifelike model of papier-maché, a design in words, images, invented gestures and actions, which exists between the covers of a book by Miguel de Cervantes (p. 4).

The point I am emphasizing is that Bakhtin's notion of a dialogic, self-critical discourse does not refer to an ontologically unified plane of representation. The distanced image of another's language, in Bakhtin's terminology, does not simply cast that language in an ironic and parodic hue in the mouth of an ontologically whole and unified character, for the language is so thoroughly "bracketed" and set apart that the character becomes little more than a generic abstraction. In other words, the diverse forms of generic

stylization in the novel are not merely relative to the identity of various realistically fleshed-out characters that embody them in speech; rather, they transcend character and engage *directly* in a heteroglossic, dialogic discourse which problematizes the ontological status of the novel as a verisimilitous representation of reality and foregrounds its status as a linguistic object. Bakhtin expresses this metafictional or dialogic level of novelistic discourse in relation to Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin:*

> The author represents Onegin's "language" (a period-bound language associated with a particular world view) as an image that speaks, and that is therefore preconditioned. Therefore, the author is far from neutral in his relationship to this image: to a certain extent he even polemicizes with this language, argues with it, agrees with it (although with conditions), interrogates it, eavesdrops on it, but also ridicules it, parodically exaggerates it and so forth--in other words, the author is in a dialogical relationship with Onegin's language; the author is actually *conversing* with Onegin, and such a conversation is the fundamental constitutive element of all novelistic style. . . . The author represents this language, carries on a conversation with it, and the conversation penetrates into the interior of the language-image and dialogizes it from within. And all essentially novelistic images share this quality: they are internally dialogized images. . . (p. 46).

From the standpoint of narrative realism, there are several disturbing elements in this passage. Not only does realist fiction deny, for the sake of ontological unity, interaction between the author and his characters, but the notion of "an image that speaks" (rather than the character himself) highlights the status of dialogue as literary discourse and effaces its function as living speech in the mouths of the novel's characters. Again, we can see how persistently Bakhtin portrays metafictional self-consciousness and self-referentiality as the very ground of the novel's identity as a genre. Also, Bakhtin's notion of an

"internally dialogized image" reminds us of how thoroughly metafictional self-critique is activated in the novel. In terms of poststructuralism, one might say that fictional self-consciousness functions "at the level of the sign." Although metafictional self-reflection has to do primarily with self-consciousness about narrative devices and conventions, even in a novel as early as *Don Quijote* we find evidence that the novel as genre exhibits self-referentiality at the structural linguistic level.

In the first chapter of *Partial Magic,* Alter provides a lucid and penetrating explanation of the historical and material causes behind this shift in the structure of fictional discourse. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin's brilliant essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Alter links the growth of novelistic self-consciousness with the increasing awareness of the book as a material object, stripped of its cultural "aura," its qualities of uniqueness, irreproducibility, and authenticity, in an era of cultural mass production:

> Ever since Gutenberg, when technology first intervened decisively in the reproduction of artifacts, the rapid expansion and development of Western culture have progressively sharpened a basic ambiguity. The artist, with new means at his disposal, could imagine enormous new possibilities of power in the exercise of his art. At the same time, the conditions of mechanical reproduction made it necessary for the individual artist to swim against a vast floodtide of trash out of all proportion to anything that had existed before in cultural history; and the reproduced art object itself, in its universal accessibility, could be cheapened, trivialized, deprived of its uniqueness, stripped of any claims it might have to be a model of value or a source of truth. . . . The novel as a genre provides a specially instructive measure of a culture caught up in the dynamics of its own technological instruments because it is the only major genre that comes into being after the invention of printing, and its own development--structural and thematic as well as economic--is intimately tied up with printing (pp. 1-2).

This "cultural materialist" interpretation of the history of the novel goes a long way in explaining why it is inherently metafictional. Novelists are acutely aware of the materiality of their own work, and consequently, its status as a structure of words, because the mass production and distribution of literature has stripped it of its ancient aura as a conduit for transcendental meaning and truth. Bakhtin cites a similar historical contingency in defining the uniqueness of the novel as a genre:

> All of these genres, or in any case their defining features, are considerably older than written language and the book, and to the present day they retain their ancient oral and auditory characteristics. Of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book: it alone is organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is, to reading (p. 3).

Certainly "writing and the book" are much older than the printing press, but they clearly become more obtrusive and imposing entities as the printed word begins to proliferate in the Renaissance. It may seem a statement of the obvious to link the novel with writing and the dissemination of books, but it is precisely this material dimension of writing that realist fiction systematically represses and forgets in its imitation of older, oral traditions of narrative.

In this respect, Bakhtin articulates something similar to the guiding theme of Jacques Derrida's project, the contention that all Western literature and philosophy since Plato has been dominated by a "logocentric" metaphysics of presence which systematically represses writing, subjugating it to the perceived authority of a "self-present" voice. Like Derrida, Bakhtin asserts that all

language, whether it is oral or written, embodies a multiplicity of meanings contrary to the illusion of univocity and self-presence which the intimacy of the human voice confers on most forms of discourse.

However, for Bakhtin, it is the novel (rather than the theoretical/critical project of deconstruction), the first genre to be "organically receptive . . . to reading," which liberates the dialogic imagination, along with its qualities of semantic alterity and self-referentiality. In the dialogic novel, as in metafiction itself, the "voice" of the author is made ineluctably aware of its own "otherlanguagedness" through the very nature of the medium of fiction. Novelistic representation, according to Bakhtin, is always a kind of bracketing of the direct word, a reflection of its strangeness in the context of polyglossia:

> Linguistic consciousness [in the novel]--parodying the direct word, direct style, exploring its limits, its absurd sides, the face specific to an era--constituted itself *outside* this direct word and outside all its graphic and expressive means of representation. A new mode developed for working creatively with language: the creating artist began to look at language from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a potentially different language and style (p. 60).

Metafiction typically involves this practice of "bracketed" narrative. As I noted earlier, a character's language may be framed as a highly generic, stylized, or artificial form of utterance, thereby foregrounding the fictionality of the character through his speech, which acquires the status of discursive rhetoric, rather than real words spoken by a real person. Examples of this kind of metafictional/dialogic bracketing are abundant in a novel such as

Tristram Shandy, especially in the interpolated stories, which are framed narratives, tales embroidered within the larger context of the novel. The fictionality of most framed tales is made conspicuous by the fact that a fictional character does the narration, and the presence of a fictionalized narrator inevitably intrudes upon our reading of the tale.

Yet whereas most framed narratives have a clear ontological and discursive separation within the text (the fictionality of the character's tale does not spill over into the "reality" of the frame narrative, even though both are in actuality part of the same fictional weave--the novel as a whole), Sterne's interpolated stories are not clearly separated from the fictionalizing activity of the immediate author, whether it is Sterne himself or one of his characters. In fact, the mingling or "transgression" of fictional frames occurs at three levels (that of the author himself, his characters, and their characters), reinforcing a central preoccupation of the book, which is the process of fiction-writing itself. Thus, the laying bare of artifice in *Tristram Shandy,* the bracketing of the direct word, make it a novel about writing a novel. As Bakhtin notes, it is important to distinguish the dialogic novel in which the mere presence of story-telling characters suggests self-consciousness on the part of the author in a mute, unthematized manner,[2] from those novels which "test" literary discourse by openly and directly thematizing the writing of the novel itself:

> The second type of testing introduces an author who is in the process of writing the novel (a "laying bare of the device," in the terminology of the Formalists), not however in the capacity of a character, but rather as the real author of the given work. Alongside the apparent novel there are fragments of a "novel about the novel" (the classic exemplar is, of course, *Tristram Shandy*) (p. 413).

This is probably the most familiar and easily recognizable of all metafictional devices, though certainly there is a wider range of effects contingent upon the bracketing or framing devices that Bakhtin describes. With all of his rhetoric concerning "voice" in novelistic discourse, it is interesting to note how authorial voice itself can become bracketed, depersonalized and viewed from a distance. A perfect example of this can be found in some of John Barth's fictions, such as "Echo" (from *Lost in the Funhouse*), in which the very concept of authorial voice is placed in parentheses and viewed with skepticism, to disconcerting effect:

> One does well to speak in the third person, the seer advises, in the manner of Theban Tiresias. A cure for self-absorption is saturation: telling the story over as though it were another's until like a much-repeated word it loses sense. There's a cathartic Tiresias himself employs in the interest of objectivity and to rid himself of others' histories--Oedipus's, Echo's--which distract him fore and aft by reason of his entire knowledge (p. 98).

"Telling the story over as though it were another's," Barth's narrator suffers from a crisis of identity, as a profusion of authorial voices breaks into the text, without any single voice establishing authority over the narration of the story. Moreover the story itself is about this struggle, and thus it is perfectly self-reflectional, parodying and baring the illusion of authorial univocity, while reflecting upon its own narrative interiority. The sum effect is a heaping of artifice upon artifice, as the notion of

authorial voice is both indirectly and directly bracketed and thematized.

With Bakhtin, I have attempted to demonstrate the extreme versatility of his theory for the novel. The comprehensive scope of his conception of novelistic dialogism is useful for reversing the perception of metafiction as a radical and marginalized tendency in fiction, and for exploring the truly astonishing *range* of metafictional effects that characteristically display themselves in the novel. By contrast, my analysis of Derrida and Michel Foucault will focus more on metafiction as a contemporary development within literature. My application of poststructuralist theory to the study of metafiction has a two-fold purpose--to illustrate in theoretical terms some of metafiction's characteristic effects and devices, but also to show how poststructuralist thought itself implements an advanced form of "metacritical" self-consciousness and textual/linguistic self-reflexivity. In other words, poststructuralism illuminates metafiction directly, but also by way of comparison, suggesting that together they constitute a more generalized development in contemporary literature and literary-critical discourse--or perhaps in an even larger context in our culture as a whole, such as the phenomenon of "postmodernism" (a question which will receive some treatment in the fourth chapter).

For instance, in his essay, "What is an Author?" Foucault traces the evolution of the "author-function" from the Middle Ages to the present, but doesn't confine the scope of his speculations to

literary discourse. Foucault sees the conception of what constitutes the authority in a literary text as a broad function of culture, cutting across all of the humanistic disciplines and affecting all forms of discourse. Even so, his bold and highly figurative description has particular resonance with respect to the characteristics of poststructuralist thought and metafiction. Foucault seizes upon the breakdown of authorial univocity (which I noted in Barth's "Echo") as a key characteristic of contemporary discourse in general:

> For the time being, I wish to restrict myself to the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it. . . . Beckett supplies a direction: "What matter who's speaking, someone said, what matter who's speaking." In an indifference such as this we must recognize one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing (pp.115-116, *Language, counter-memory, practice*).

The disintegration of authorial voice into a play of multivocal presence and absence which Foucault locates in Beckett is a salient characteristic of contemporary metafiction, as we have seen with Barth. Whether one interprets this development in the Derridean sense of effaced presence,[3] or as Barthes and Foucault are wont to express it, as the "death of the author," it is clear that contemporary discourse has submitted the traditional function of the author as a univocal "presence" to a radical skepticism and self-criticism (or as Bakhtin might note, this monologic authorial presence, the "living breath" of an author, seems to reach back in a nostalgic gesture to an ancient oral narrative tradition, which continues to cast a repressive net over the forces of dialogism in

the novel). Foucault divides this critical shift in the author function into two main themes--the overt thematization of the author's death, and the aforementioned "indifference" towards authorial presence, an attitude which reverses at the structural level writing's traditional role as the direct expression of the author's thoughts and emotions:

> For the sake of illustration, we need only consider two of its major themes. First, the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of "expression"; it only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment. This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier. Moreover, it implies an action that is always testing the limits of its regularity, transgressing and reversing an order that it accepts and manipulates. Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears (p. 116).

There are several elements here which have distinct resonance with respect to metafiction. For instance, the notion of writing as "an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier," is a veritable definition of what I refer to as *linguistic self-reflexivity* --metafictional activity at the level of the sign. As for the "exterior deployment" of this extremely self-referential writing, we can refer to the examples of Beckett and Barth, whose characters frequently lack clear identity and speak as though out of a discursive void, yet are not confined to the bounds of their own interiority (the proof of this is that Beckett's plays, regardless of how disembodied their text becomes, still function as drama). Finally, Foucault's reference to

contemporary writing as a game which continually transgresses its own rules is very similar to the way that many metafictions are deliberately constructed. As Waugh notes in *Metafiction:*

> Metafiction draws attention to the process of recontextualization that occurs when language is used aesthetically--when language is . . . used 'playfully'. . . . Freedom is the moment when the game or the genre is being discarded, but the rules of the new one are not yet defined and are therefore experienced as the 'waning of former rules' (ibid.). Metafiction is in the position of examining the old rules in order to discover new possibilities of the game (pp. 36, 42).

As we shall see in the fourth chapter, Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association* and Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* ("Hopscotch") are both constructed around the idea of a game, and thus directly thematize the "ludic" dimension of metafiction. Yet in principle, all metafiction functions according to a "process of recontextualization." For instance, ordinary language such as dialogue may be taken out of its realistic context and revealed as artifice or fictional rhetoric. Indeed, in its concern with revealing the rhetorical structure of its own narrative artifice, metafiction bears an intriguing relation with deconstruction. As Cristopher Norris notes in *Deconstruction,* the deconstructionist method has more in common with literary qualities of rhetorical playfulness than the philosophical tradition which is its primary target for attack:

> Once alerted to the *rhetorical* nature of philosophic arguments, the critic is in a strong position to reverse the age-old prejudice against literature as a debased or merely deceptive form of language. It now becomes possible to argue--indeed, impossible to deny--that literary texts are less deluded than the discourse of philosophy, precisely because they implicitly acknowledge and exploit their own rhetorical status (p. 21).

If literary language in general is characterized by an implicit acknowledgement of its own basis in rhetoric, then metafiction can be viewed as the least deluded of all discursive modes, since it *explicitly* and systematically *flaunts* its status as a highly rhetorical, artificial form of discourse. Moreover, like deconstruction in the context of the metaphysical tradition, contemporary metafiction implicitly postures itself as a reaction against literary realism. In fact, one could say that where the logocentric, metaphysical tradition perpetuates a myth of truth as self-presence, or as a "transcendental signified"[4] beyond the bounds of language, literary realism supports an analogous conception in its attempt to capture "reality" in its novelistic discourse.

This is not to say that metafiction has no concern for expressing its own version of "reality" or "truth", but as Waugh adroitly notes, metafiction accomplishes this, with characteristic irony, by fictionalizing reality itself:

> Frame analysis and play theory are areas of contemporary social investigation which illumine the practice of metafiction and show the sensitivity of its response to cultural change. They are each, however, aspects of a broader shift in thought and practice whereby reality has increasingly come to be seen as a construct. . . . Metafiction suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world-model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design (p. 49).

Fictional parody of historical narrative is characteristic of many metafictional novels (as we shall see with *Don Quijote, The Sot-Weed Factor,* and *Cien Años de Soledad*), and as a general narrative strategy and technique, it provides yet another key for

differentiating realist fiction from metafiction. Through parodistic imitation and appropriation, metafictional writers reveal the artificial fictional ruses and constructs which historians themselves employ in their narration of historical events but conceal in the guise of objectivity and impersonality. Foucault levels a Nietzschean critique at the traditional historian, who in a scientific pursuit of knowledge of the past, masks a will to power which is rooted in self-interested passions and instincts:

> In appearance, or rather, according to the mask it bears, historical consciousness is neutral, devoid of passions, and committed solely to truth. But if it examines itself and if, more generally, it interrogates the various forms of scientific consciousness in its history, it finds that all these forms and transformations are aspects of the will to knowledge: instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and malice (p. 162).

In a shrewd reversal of the historian's pretension to scientific objectivity and plain-spoken reason, pseudohistorical metafiction exposes the rhetorical ploys and artificial narrative devices of the traditional historian. For instance, a novel such as *Cien Años de Soledad* weds the fictional ruses of repetition and rhetorical superabundance to a pseudohistorical narrative voice, and through its comic exuberance and celebration of narrative invention it suggests, not merely that history is *like* a novel, but that it is deliberately *constructed* through fictive means. *The Sot-Weed Factor* elaborates a similar verdict on historical narrative, but parodizes it in an even more direct manner.

However, it should be noted that, in spite of their comic, parodic treatment of traditional historical narrative, these novels do not

dispense with the notion of history altogether. It is characteristic of the large majority of metafictions that they devote as much energy to the actual spinning of narrative webs as to their self-critical unraveling or exposure, and similarly, *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor* manage to present unique and cohesive visions of history at the same time that they critique and problematize the very idea of historical narrative. As Cristopher Norris remarks (in relation to a historical study by Karl Marx), the disruptive essence of narrative, its tendencies toward digression and discontinuity, continually undermines the efforts of historical discourse to transcend the bounds of its own rhetoricity, though other properties of narrative, such as the technique of "repetition," yield valuable insights into the interpretation of history itself:

> Like the novelist--but to an even higher pitch of obsession--Marx fills in every circumstantial detail to underline the Nephew's role as 'farcical repetition' of the Uncle. The text's sheer density of documentation is oddly reinforced by a pattern of narrative links that lends it a kind of perverse authenticating logic. Textual strategies become, paradoxically, a means of explaining the absurd contingencies of historical happening. That this explanation issues in parodic or 'repetitive' form is precisely a measure of its power to convince (p. 89).

Certainly this is the kind of effect we find in *Cien Años,* with its bewildering repetition of personal names and historical events (all of the colonel's wars and the successive Aurelianos and Jose Arcadios coalescing in a deliberate blur), whose sum effect is indeed the suggestion of a fictive basis for "the absurd contingencies of historical happening."

A similar framework for understanding history in fictive terms

is elaborated in *Don Quijote,* and moreover, the implications of this for a metafictional structuring of the novel are quite explicit. As I shall argue in greater depth in the next chapter, Cervantes' use of a pseudohistorical mode of narration for parodic effect suggests that the pretension to historical veracity maintained so formally in the chivalric romances merely disguises their status as fictions. Moreover, Cervantes' critical balance in parodizing and critiquing the *caballerías,* while simultaneously appropriating their rhetorical and narrative structure for his own self-conscious and ostentatious fictionalizing, defines metafiction's essential mode of operation in the context of historical narrative.

This brashly ludic and polemic stance before the tradition of historical narrative is characteristic of a broader mode of treatment in metafiction, the way that it represents and utilizes external textual sources in general. Metafiction's concern with the various *intertextual* strands in its own eclectic composition (expressed by Bakhtin as *polyglossia* in the novel), is thematized and represented in its relationship with books of the past. Foucault describes this thematization in an essay on *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* in which he seizes upon Flaubert as the paradigmatic exemplar for contemporary literature and draws an analogy with Manet in painting:

> Flaubert is to the library what Manet is to the museum. They both produced works in a self-conscious relationship to earlier paintings or texts--or rather to the aspect in painting or writing that remains indefinitely open. They erect their art within the archive. They were not meant to foster the lamentations--the lost youth, the absence of vigor, and the decline of inventiveness--through which we reproach our Alexandrian age, but to unearth

> an essential aspect of our culture: every painting now belongs within the squared and massive surface of painting and all literary works are confined to the indefinite murmur of writing. Flaubert and Manet are responsible for the existence of books and paintings within works of art (pp. 92-93).

According to Foucault, the presence of past works in modern literature (in the form of references, quotations, stylistic and generic imitation, etc.) does not signal a nostalgia for a lost great tradition, nor an "anxiety of influence" (to paraphrase Harold Bloom), but a self-conscious and deliberate form of intertextual appropriation which ultimately causes literature to transgress the categories of both "work" and "author." Intertextuality in novels, in the form that Foucault recognizes, tends naturally to a metafictional critique or deconstruction of those traditional categories which seek to fence off the "work," with its self-contained form and meaning, from the disruptive differential and allusive effects of *écriture* ("writing" in its most general sense), and which strive to prevent the author from becoming cannibalized by his own work.[5] In Foucault's blunt but colorful formulation:

> Where a work had the duty of creating immortality, it now attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author. . . . If we wish to know the writer of our day, it will be through the singularity of his absence and in his link to death, which has transformed him into a victim of his own writing (p. 117).

As I noted earlier, some of the metafictions of John Barth both implicitly and explicitly focus on the exploration and thematization of this event. His metafictional dramatization of the author's death and continuing absence is most cleverly and directly expressed in an story like "Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction." Intended for

live tape performance, this piece both rhetorically and explicitly highlights the author's absence, which constitutes the basic condition of his textual existence, despite the illusion of presence conferred by the residual persistence of authorial voice after his "death." As in some of Beckett's work (*Rockaby, What Where,* etc.), a disembodied voice muses on the absurdity of its own existence:

> My situation appears to me as follows: I speak in a curious, detached manner, and don't necessarily hear myself. . . . Are you there? If so I'm blind and deaf to you, or you are me, or both're both. One may be imaginary; I've had stranger ideas. I'm a fiction without real hope. Where there's a voice there's a speaker. . . . I must compose myself (pp. 35-36).

Barth is engaged in a metafictional reflection on that curious duplicity of textual narrative in which authorial voice sustains, through a generalized discursive strategy, the illusion of presence, stubbornly refusing to submit itself to the endlessly variegated though basically undifferentiated,[6] self-proliferating weave of textuality which poststructuralism asserts as the basic character of writing in general.

There are more "extreme" examples of contemporary metafiction, such as Christine Brook-Rose's *Thru,* which does not merely dramatize the effects of absence, intertextuality, and difference, but *abolishes* the constructs which tend to obscure them, and submits the narrative to an entirely self-referential discursive weave. Yet the Barth stories have the admirable quality of artistic balance which, I would argue, characterizes the best metafiction. Like Cervantes and Sterne and the other authors represented in this study, Barth does not radicalize metafictional discourse to the

point where it ceases to function as narrative.

Indeed, postructuralist thought itself alerts us to metafiction's dual focus and activity, its simultaneous obligation to narrative and self-critique. As Foucault reminds us, "the writing of our day . . . is not restricted to the confines of interiority. On the contrary, we recognize it in its exterior deployment (p. 116)." Similarly, most metafiction does not seek to completely cut itself off from traditional narrative constructs and devices, but merely *externalizes* what was previously (in realist fiction) the disguised, artificial interior of a narrative discourse committed to a curious silence and forgetfulness about its own status of fictionality.

Chapter 2

Early Exemplars: Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*

In looking at *Don Quijote* and *Tristram Shandy* as early exemplars for the metafictional novel, I must admit a certain amount of apprehension in treading critical ground which Robert Alter has covered so lucidly and definitively in *Partial Magic.* Of course, Alter does not exhaust the possibilities for this type of study, but he does define its essential parameters. According to Alter, *Don Quijote,* a work so frequently seized upon as an exemplar for literary realism, is also the initiator of a radically other tradition, that of the "self-conscious novel":

> One measure of Cervantes' genius is the fact that he is the initiator of both traditions of the novel; his juxtaposition of high-flown literary fantasies with grubby actuality pointing the way to the realists, his zestfully ostentatious manipulation of the artifice he constructs setting a precedent for all the self-conscious novelists to come (pp. 3-4).

Some of the stylistic and narrative devices in *Don Quijote* which call attention to its purely fictional status are more pervasive than others. Certainly there are a few key episodes in both parts of the novel which call into question the predominantly realist coloring which critical posterity has given Cervantes' masterpiece, but there are also characteristic turns of phrase and rhetorical stances which more consistently signal an extreme self-consciousness on

Cervantes' part in the very act of writing fiction.

Perhaps the most important set of metafictional cues are all of the highly rhetorical passages referring to the historical veracity of the novel itself. Cervantes repeatedly reminds us that we are reading a "tan verdadera como puntual historia" [a truthful and assiduous history], or variations on this phrasing, though he is obviously satirizing this very pretension, which is conventionalized in the *caballerías.* It is important to note the inevitable duplicity of the word *historia,* which ambiguously carries both the sense of "story" and "history." Indeed, Cervantes ironically highlights this fundamental duplicity in the very opening lines of the novel: "En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme. . . (p. 97)" [In a place in la Mancha, whose name I don't want to recall. . .].

The first clause is a line from a ballad and is accordingly set off from the subsequent text. That is to say, it is *bracketed* in the text and flaunted as an obvious convention. It is but an extension of this stylistic duplicity to recognize, as Alter emphasizes, that don Quijote himself "exists simultaneously on two planes of existence." On the one hand he is more "realistic," more complex and multidimensional than Amadis of Gaul or don Belianís, but he is also conventionalized by Cervantes in a highly self-conscious way.

Cervantes' pseudohistorical parody of the conventional "historical" narrative embodied in the *caballerías* is perhaps most audaciously and ostentatiously represented in Chapter VIII of the first part, where don Quijote is engaged in a furious battle with a

Biscayan squire. The narration becomes increasingly conventionalized until the very climax of the scene, at which point Cervantes freezes the action, with the explanation that no further manuscripts detailing the knight's adventures could be found in the archives of la Mancha.

On one level, the truncation of the story at this point is perfectly plausible, provided that we accept Cervantes' assurances that this is indeed a "true history" of a famous knight of la Mancha. Yet it is obvious that Cervantes is playing with literary convention in a disorienting, highly ostentatious manner,[1] and from the standpoint of literary realism he effects a quite disturbing "violation" and transgression of ontological frames. Don Quijote is suspended precariously in an uncertain ontological space, as his author searches for the "second author's" manuscripts which will again animate him and allow him to finish the episode with the Biscayan. A stylistic analysis of the narration leading up to this startling interruption of the story's action is itself revealing:

> Venía, pues, como se ha dicho, don Quijote contra el cauto vizcaíno, con la espada en alto, con determinación de abrirle por medio, y el vizcaíno le aguardaba asimesmo levantada la espada y aforrado con su almohada, y todos los circunstantes estaban temerosos y colgados de lo que había de suceder de aquellos tamaños golpes con que se amenazaban; y la señora del coche y las demás criadas suyas estaban haciendo mil votos y ofrecimientos a todas las imágenes y casas de devoción de España, porque Dios librase a su escudero y a ellas de aquel tan grande peligro en que se hallaban (p. 152-153).

> [Don Quijote, as we said before, advanced toward the wary Biscayan, his sword raised on high, determined to cleave him in two, and the Biscayan, on his part, waited for him with his sword also raised and protected by his cushion, and all the bystanders were frightened and suspenseful as to the outcome of those prodigious blows with which they threatened eachother; and the lady in the coach and her womenservants were making a thousand vows and offerings to all the

statues and places of devotion in Spain, that God might deliver them and their squire from that terrible peril in which they found themselves.]

The phrase, "con determinación de abrirle por medio" [determined to cleave him in two], recalls the conventionalized battle scenes of the *caballerías,* where every blow of the mighty Cid or Roland's sword would cleave a Moor to the belt, and the "circunstantes . . . temerosos y colgados de lo que había de suceder" [bystanders, frightened and suspenseful as to the outcome], appear as spectators, as removed from the action as the readers of Cervantes' tale. The sum effect is a mounting sense of artificial, conventionalized representation as the story's frame is exposed, and one gets the sense of looking at a painting, and indeed Cervantes explicitly evokes this quality in the following chapter when he describes an actual picture of the battle scene in the manuscript which the "second author" acquires in a Toledan marketplace.

At one level, Cervantes is merely satirizing the formal conventions of the *caballerías,* but it is also clear that in the same stroke he is employing, with astonishing technical ease and grace, the essential methods of metafiction. That is to say, he is deliberately laying bare the artificial framing devices, the rhetorical and stylistic conventions which structure the episode with don Quijote and the Biscayan.

Once the frame of the painting has been exposed,[2] so to speak, Cervantes can openly explore a number of tantalizing questions concerning fictional technique. As I noted in the introduction,

metafiction characteristically exposes itself to self-critique in the very act of fictionalizing, in a kind of ludic juggling act. Cervantes' consummate skill as a self-conscious author is exemplified by the artistic grace and balance with which he makes the transition from the truncated action of the eighth chapter to the resumption of don Quijote's "history" in the following chapter. Consider the rhetorical control of the last paragraph in the eighth chapter:

> Pero está el daño de todo esto que en este punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito destas hazañas de don Quijote de las que deja referidas. Bien es verdad que el segundo autor desta obra no quiso creer que tan curiosa historia estuviese entregada a las leyes del olvido, ni que hubiesen sido tan poco curiosos los ingenios de la Mancha, que no tuviesen en sus archivos o en sus escritorios algunos papeles que deste famoso caballero tratasen; y así, con esta imaginación, no se desesperó de hallar el fin desta apacible historia, el cual, siéndole el cielo favorable, le halló del modo que se contará en la segunda parte (p. 153).
>
> [But it is most unfortunate that at this point the author of this history leaves the battle in mid air, with the escuse that he couldn't find any more writings pertaining to these great deeds of don Quijote than those already related. It is true that the second author of this work refused to believe that so curious a history could be consigned to oblivion, or that the wits of la Mancha could have been so lacking in curiosity, that they would not have in their archives or in their registries some writings pertaining to this famous knight; and thus, with this belief, he did not despair of finding the ending of this delectable history, which, by the favor of Heaven he did find, as shall be related in the second part.]

Cervantes is employing the rhetoric of the historian against the very notion of historical veracity in a work of fiction. He is of course satirizing the historical pretensions and conventions of the *caballerías,* where the heroes all have historians to record their exploits for posterity, but the critical space that this opens up in the text makes it a commentary as well on some of the technical

pecularities inherent in pure fiction. As Barth does in his story, "Echo," Cervantes shows how the sense of presence and univocity which narrative voice confers on itself is really a skillful illusion. Even at this early point in the novel, Cervantes has indicated that there are no fewer than four authors of don Quijote's "history"--the unidentified first and second authors, Cervantes himself, and Cide Hamete Benengeli, an arabic scribe introduced in Chapter IX (not to mention the *morisco* [a Christianized Moor] who translates Hamete Benengeli's text into Spanish!).[3]

The authorial interruption of the episode with don Quijote and the Biscayan is merely the most extended and ostentatious of countless passages in the novel where Cervantes uses stylistic parody to open the text up to a self-critical awareness, and in the process problematizing conventions of narrative pace and voice, as well as the ontological status of his characters. As Alter notes, it is conspicuous that nearly all of the characters in *Don Quijote* reveal themselves to be readers of the *caballerías,* and don Quijote has extensive literary discussions with several characters (Sansón Carrasco in II. 3-4, the canon in I. 47-48, and don Lorenzo in II. 18).

Not all of these passages are truly self-referential, for some only obliquely acknowledge the work *Don Quijote* itself. Nevertheless, though *Don Quijote* is not as obtrusively or insistently a "novel about writing a novel" as *Tristram Shandy,* an episode such as don Quijote's encounter and discussion with Sansón Carrasco is as audacious a break with literary realism as any

example from contemporary metafiction. In the second chapter of the second part, Sancho comes to his master (who is bedridden, still recovering from his adventures in Part I) with some startling news:

> . . . anoche llegó el hijo de Bartolomé Carrasco, que viene de estudiar de Salamanca, hecho bachiller, y yéndole yo a dar la bienvenida, me dijo que andaba ya en libros la historia de vuestra merced, con nombre de *El Ingenioso Hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha;* y dice que me mientan a mí en ella con mi mesmo nombre de Sancho Panza, y a la señora Dulcinea del Toboso, con otras cosas que pasamos nosotros a solas, que me hice cruces de espantado cómo las pudo saber el historiador que las escribió.
>
> Yo te aseguro, Sancho--dijo don Quijote--, que debe de ser algún sabio encantador el autor de nuestra historia; que a los tales no se les encubre nada de lo que quieren escribir (pp. 43-44).

> [" . . . last night Bartolomé Carrasco's son arrived, coming from his studies in Salamanca, which he just recently finished, and as I went to welcome him, he told me that already there are books recounting your grace's history, with the title of *The Ingenious Gentleman don Quijote of la Mancha;* and he says that they mention me in it by my very own name, Sancho Panza, as well as the lady Dulcinea of El Toboso, along with other things that happened to us alone; and I bless myself in amazement at how the storyteller could know these things that wrote them down."
>
> "I assure you, Sancho," said don Quijote, "that the author of our history must be some wise enchanter, for to such as they are, nothing is hidden that they want to write about."]

Again, there is a level on which Cervantes is merely sustaining the parody of historical narrative, but it is important to note that this passage effects a fundamental shift in the ontological status of don Quijote and Sancho which isn't overtly signaled in Part I of the novel. For instance, when in the second chapter of Part I, don Quijote implores, "¡Oh tú, sabio encantador, quienquiera que seas, a quien ha de tocar el ser coronista desta peregrina historia, ruégote que no te olvides de mi buen Rocinante, compañero eterno mío en todos mis caminos! (p. 106)" [Oh thou wise enchanter, whoever thou

may'st be, whose duty it will be to chronicle this strange history, I implore thee not to forget my good horse, Rocinante, eternal companion of all my travels!], he does not cease to be a flesh and blood knight riding his hack on the plains of la Mancha, despite the fact that the self-referential overtones of his words point to his other "plane of being," that of a purely fictitious character dreamed up in the fertile imagination of his author, Cervantes.

By contrast, the actual material presence of Part I in the second part of *Don Quijote* plays havoc with the ontological frames which are so rigidly ordered in strictly realistic fiction. Given that only a month or so has passed between the end of don Quijote's first two sallies and his meeting with Sansón Carrasco, an impossibly brief span of time for a historian to record and circulate an account of his "famous" exploits, the reader is jarred into a consciousness of don Quijote and Sancho's status as purely fictive creations when he is informed that *Don Quijote de la Mancha* is a literary sensation throughout Spain. In fact, the characters themselves seem to have an uneasy sense of being mysteriously followed by their "historian," the omniscient, godlike author who seems to be omnipresent yet is essentially absent from the text. As in the episode with the Biscayan, where we are shown the conventional framing devices of the scene until it seems like a static picture, the reader is suddenly made aware of the purely fictional status of don Quijote and Sancho when they themselves unexpectedly confront their literary alterity in an astonishingly material form.

As Patricia Waugh notes in *Metafiction,* this process of "frame-breaking" is the basic procedure by which metafiction exposes its own artifice and examines the limitations of conventional fictive constructs:

> One method of showing the function of literary conventions, of revealing their provisional nature, is to show what happens when they malfunction. Parody and inversion are two stategies which operate in this way as frame-breaks. The alternation of frame and frame-break (or the construction of an illusion through the imperceptibility of the frame and the shattering of illusion through the constant exposure of the frame) provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction (p. 31).

Metafictional frame-breaking in *Don Quijote* occurs within varying contexts, and at times the framing structures are so complicated and interwoven that their transgression induces a sense in the reader akin to vertigo. For instance, if we pursue the ontological implications in the episode with Sansón Carrasco in II. 2, we see the beginning of a kind of Chinese box effect,[4] for don Quijote and Sancho are confronted with a book in which they are literary characters (Part I of *Don Quijote*) and begin to wonder if they are themselves mere fictions, begin to sense the frame which encloses them (Part II of the novel).

Some of the most exquisite and subtle metafictional games played out in the novel center on the tension between appearance and reality encapsulated in the concept of *desengaño* [disillusionment]. The ordinary acceptation of this baroque key-word is of a coming to one's senses, a return from chimerical madness to some ground level of reality, a stripping away of false

appearances, etc., and certainly this is the sense adumbrated in the final chapter, where don Quijote returns to his former self and announces, "Yo fui loco, y ya soy cuerdo: fui don Quijote de la Mancha, y soy agora, como he dicho, Alonso Quijano el Bueno (pp. 575-576)."[5] [I was mad, and now I am sane: I was don Quijote of la Mancha, and now I am, as I have said, Alonso Quijano the Good.]

Yet throughout the novel, and at crucial moments in terms of don Quijote's effort to distinguish between appearance and reality, various characters reinforce his illusions, paradoxically by openly flaunting and acting out the literary conventions which structure don Quijote's "madness." Consider the ornate artificiality of Dorotea's speech when she adopts the role of the princess Micomicona:

> --De aquí no me levantaré, ¡ oh valeroso y esforzado caballero!, fasta que la vuestra bondad y cortesía me otorgue un don, el cual redundará en honra y prez de vuestra persona y en pro de la más desconsolada y agraviada doncella que el sol ha visto. Y si es que el valor de vuestro fuerte brazo corresponde a la voz de vuestra inmortal fama, obligado estáis a favorecer a la sin ventura que de tan lueñes tierras viene, al olor de vuestro famoso nombre, buscándoos para remedio de sus desdichas (p. 362).
>
> [From here I will not rise, oh valorous and invincible knight, until your goodness and courtesy shall grant me a favor, which will redound to your honor and renown, and benefit the most disconsolate and injured damsel that ever the sun beheld. And if the valor of your mighty arm be equal to what is heard of your immortal fame, you are obligated to succor a luckless woman that from such a faraway land comes, drawn by the scent of your famous name, seeking from you a remedy for her misfortunes.]

The curate, Dorotea and the others are of course making don Quijote the unknowing butt of a sustained joke, but there are moments when he demonstrates a remarkable lucidity and a kind of

reluctant awareness that the chimeras of his imagination are precisely that, elaborately gilded, artificial literary constructions. In this respect, the role-playing games that Dorotea, the curate and the barber play with don Quijote are like formalized chivalric masques in which all of the participants are collectively "quixotized." In this respect, it is important to note that the rhetorical structure of Dorotea's eloquent supplication before don Fernando in I. 36 is not really very distinct from that of her language when she is playing the princess Micomicona before don Quijote (even the gesture of supplication is repeated). Indeed, the ostentatious formality of the scene and the improbability of its plot both call attention to its artificiality, and as in the interpolated tales, we have the sense that the story is constructed with an extremely self-conscious awareness of literary convention.

Don Quijote himself, in moments of piercing self-awareness, clearly recognizes his literary flights of imagination as artificial constructs rather than an objective reality independent of the rhetorical structure of his chivalric orations. In II. 11, Sancho and don Quijote are approached by a very convincing apparition of archetypal dramatic characters, a group of actors representing a royal "Parliment of Death," and don Quijote's reaction is quite distinct from the mad flights of fancy which provide so many of the memorable comic episodes in the first part of the novel:

> --Por la fe de caballero andante --respondió don Quijote--, que así como vi este carro imaginé que alguna grande aventura se me ofrecía, y ahora digo que es menester tocar las apariencias con la mano para dar lugar al desengaño.

> Andad con Dios, buena gente, y haced vuestra fiesta, y mirad si mandáis algo en que pueda seros de provecho; que lo haré con buen ánimo y buen talante, porque desde muchacho fui aficionado a la carátula, y en mi mocedad se me iban los ojos tras la farándula (p. 105).
>
> ["By the faith of a knight-errant," answered don Quijote, "that as I saw this cart I imagined that some great adventure was at hand, but now I do declare that it is necessary to test appearances with your hand in order to undeceive yourself. God speed you, good people, and carry on your festival, and mind you, if there is anything in which I may be of service to you, I will perform it willingly, because from childhood I have always been fond of the masquerade, and in my youth I had a longing for the stage."]

On the surface, this would seem to be yet another stage in Alonso Quijano's gradual "return to his senses" which culminates in the final chapter in the repudiation of his chivalric alter-ego, don Quijote. But this is a crucial misreading of don Quijote's character prior to his death-bed conversion, a puzzling scene which commentators as diverse as Nietzsche[6] and Alter have viewed as incompatible with his essential identity as it is manifested throughout the novel. In this scene with the acting troupe, Don Quijote demonstrates a shrewd self-awareness in referring to his acting ambitions and in his recognition of dramatic artifice as precisely that--a carefully contrived construct designed to create an illusion. It is curious that don Quijote cannot (perhaps *elects* not to) distinguish between a barber's basin and a gold helmet (I. 21), or some wineskins and a giant (I. 35), and yet he discerns with perfect lucidity that the actors are not the figures they represent.

The scene as a whole signals an inversion of fancy and fact which has shaken don Quijote out of his normally unself-conscious role-playing, and which begins in the previous chapter with the "enchantment" of Dulcinea, where Sancho playfully insists that a

swinish *labradora* [peasant woman] passing by on an ass is in fact the lady Dulcinea. Don Quijote can't believe his eyes, and concludes rather warily that the evil enchanters which persistently plague him have changed Dulcinea's appearance to that of a common village wench. The scene is a crucial one, for in the previous chapter (II. 9, where don Quijote and Sancho enter el Toboso to seek out Dulcinea) don Quijote signals an awareness of the artificiality of his conception of Dulcinea, in effect confessing that she is simply an ornate mental construct which he has concocted in his imagination:

> --Habla con respeto, Sancho, de las cosas de mi señora --dijo don Quijote--, y tengamos la fiesta en paz, y no arrojemos la soga tras el caldero.
> --Yo me reportaré --respondió Sancho--, pero ¿con qué paciencia podré llevar que quiera vuestra merced que de sola una vez que vi la casa de nuestra ama, la haya de saber siempre y hallarla a media noche, no hallándola vuestra merced, que la debe de haber visto millares de veces?
> --Tú me harás desesperar, Sancho--dijo don Quijote--. Ven acá, hereje: ¿no te he dicho mil veces que en todos los días de mi vida no he visto a la sin par Dulcinea, ni jamás atravesé los umbrales de su palacio, y que sólo estoy enamorado de oídas y de la gran fama que tiene de hermosa y discreta? (pp. 89-90)
>
> ["Speak respectfully, Sancho, of the affairs of my lady," said don Quijote, "and let us keep our feast in peace, and not throw the rope into the well after the bucket."
> "I'll keep my peace," replied Sancho, "but how can I have the patience to listen to your worship saying that you expect me, after only one glimpse of my lady's house, to recognize it always and to find it in the middle of the night, when you yourself can't find it, who must have seen it a thousand times?"
> "You will drive me to despair, Sancho," said don Quijote. "Look here, you heretic: Have I not told you a thousand times that never once in my life have I seen the peerless Dulcinea, nor have I ever crossed the threshold of her palace, and that I am enamored only by hearsay and the great fame she possesses of beauty and wit?]

As Alter adroitly notes, "Don Quixote is utterly clear about the fact that Dulcinea is his own invention yet deadly serious about his unswerving devotion to the ideal fiction he has made for himself (p.

25)," and that as early as the thirteenth chapter of Part I, "his words call our attention to her status as a fiction, to the fact that she is woven out of those impossible and chimerical attributes by a bookish mind that has come to believe in the possibility of their literal existence (p. 28)."

What I am trying to suggest with the passages I have drawn from Part II of the novel is that the process of *desengaño* eventually becomes for don Quijote a way, so far from repudiating, of consciously accessing the resources of his distinctly literary imagination and recognizing the deliberate artifice through which their constructions are woven. In other words, *desengaño* in Cervantes' novel is both a metaphor and device for the metafictional exposure of artifice. If we keep this sense of the word firmly in mind, don Quijote's words before the group of actors take on a striking resonance in a way quite distinct from the ordinary sense of becoming "disillusioned." For instance when he says, "es menester tocar las apariencias con la mano para dar lugar al desengaño," the obvious surface meaning of "seeing the truth behind the appearances" yields to something like "managing or handling the artifice in order to lay it bare."[7]

As this analysis of the dual function of *desengaño* demonstrates, Cervantes exemplifies what Waugh and others have identified as the basic activity in metafiction--the weaving of fictional artifice and its deliberate exposure or unraveling, or in different terms, the affirmation of the powers of the fictive imagination on the one

hand, and an impulse to self-critique on the other. As Alter notes, an obvious cue that *Don Quijote,* and in particular, the interpolated tales are constructed with a self-conscious attention to artifice is the fact that at various points characters interrupt with critical commentary. The instances he cites are the curate's remarks about the trite conventionality of the captive's tale and don Quijote's interruption of don Pedro's puppet show to comment on the inverisimilitude of a plot element, but a no less provocative instance of critical self-commentary occurs in II. 2. John Jay Allen comments very pointedly on the irony of this passage in the introduction to his Cátedra edition of *Don Quijote, Part II* :

> Don Quijote, Sancho y Sansón comentan y critican el libro en el Capítulo 3, conversando sobre el talento y los motivos del sabio Cide Hamete, y de lo verídico del relato. En el capítulo anterior anticipa Cervantes esta nueva yuxtaposición de literatura y vida con un diálogo entre Sancho y don Quijote sobre la reacción de la gente del pueblo a sus hazañas: "--En lo que toca --prosiguió Sancho-- a la valentía, cortesía, hazañas y asunto de vuestra merced, hay diferentes opiniones: unos dicen: 'Loco, pero gracioso'; otros: 'Valiente, pero desgraciado'; otros: 'Cortés, pero impertinente.'" (Pág. 43.)
>
> Estas tres alternativas abarcan casi toda la vasta extensión de la crítica de 350 años: don Quijote será "loco, pero gracioso" para la mayoría de los lectores durante casi dos siglos después de su publicación y para algunos críticos del siglo xx; será "valiente, pero desgraciado," para toda la crítica desde el Romanticismo que idealiza al Caballero de la Fe; será "cortés, pero impertinente," para los que vislumbran una lección moral en la vida del protagonista (p. 12).

> [Don Quijote, Sancho and Sansón comment upon and critique the book in Chapter 3, discussing the skill and motives of the sage Cide Hamete, and the verisimilitude of the story. In the previous chapter Cervantes anticipates this new juxtaposition of literature and life with a conversation between Sancho and don Quijote about the reaction of the townspeople to his exploits: "As to your worship's valor, courtesy, exploits and affairs, there are different opinions: some say: 'Mad, but amusing'; others: 'valiant but unfortunate'; others: 'Courteous but saucy.'"
>
> These three alternatives encompass almost all of the vast extent of 350 years of criticism: don Quijote will be "mad, but amusing" for the majority of readers for almost two centuries after its publication and for some twentieth-century critics; he will be "valiant, but unfortunate," for all of the

critics after Romanticism, who idealize the knight-errant of the faith; he will be "courteous, but saucy," for those who envisage a moral lesson in the life of the protagonist.]

There is a curious kind of ontological bifurcation evoked in the scenes Allen refers to. On the one hand, we have the sense that don Quijote and Sancho are more complex and inscrutable than the way they are characterized by readers and critics of Cervantes' novel, who would reduce don Quijote's character to the tension between polarized pairs of adjectives (their critique in the third chapter of the verisimilitude of Hamete Benengeli's account adds to this sense of their depth and complexity as characters). The self-referentiality and self-consciousness of their discussion of Part I of the novel elevates Sancho and don Quijote to the same level of awareness and autonomy as Cervantes, who ironically and coyly responds to his critics through Sancho's comments.

Yet there is also a quite contrary effect, a disturbing sense that don Quijote and Sancho are *flattened* whenever they demonstrate an awareness that they are literary characters. When Sancho voices Cervantes' amusement with respect to critical opinion and openly refers to the novel as a work of pure fiction dreamed up in the imagination of its author, we are reminded once again, in the words of Alter, that don Quijote is "merely a lifelike model of papier-maché, a design in words . . . which exists between the covers of a book by Miguel de Cervantes (p. 4)."

As I emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, the basic rhetorical mode through which Cervantes sustains this

metafictional duplicity of character is his satirical appropriation of the language and conventions of the *caballerías*. In this respect, the final words (before the poetic epitaphs) of Part I of the novel are a veritable tour de force of rhetorical balance and *double entente* :

> Y los [epitafios y elogios de la vida de don Quijote] que se pudieron leer y sacar en limpio fueron los que aquí pone el fidedigno autor desta nueva y jamás vista historia. El cual autor no pide a los que la leyeren, en premio del inmenso trabajo que le costó inquerir y buscar todos los archivos manchegos, por sacarla a luz, sino que le den el mesmo crédito que suelen dar los discretos a los libros de caballerías, que tan validos andan en el mundo; que con esto se tendrá por bien pagado y satisfecho, y se animará a sacar y buscar otras, si no tan verdaderas, a lo menos de tanta invención y pasatiempo.
>
> Las palabras primeras que estaban escritas en el pergamino que se halló en la caja de plomo eran éstas. . . (p. 592).

> [And such {epitaphs and eulogies of don Quijote's life} as could be deciphered and interpreted the trustworthy author of this original and matchless history has set down here, and he asks no recompense from his readers for the immense pains it has cost him to search and investigate all the archives of la Mancha to drag it into light. All he asks is that they give him as much credit as sensible men are wont to give to the books of chivalry, which are held in such high esteem in the world; and with this he will consider himself well paid and satisfied, and will be encouraged to go in search of others, if not as truthful as this one, at least as inventive and entertaining.
>
> The first words that were written on the parchment scroll found in the leaden box were these. . . .]

As he does throughout the novel, Cervantes here uses the outmoded and brittle rhetoric of the *caballerías* to controvert the notion of historical veracity in fiction. Yet he doesn't completely dispense with the idea of history, and critics who see in *Don Quijote* merely a satirical rejection of the *caballerías* have taken Cervantes too much at the surface meaning of his words, when he announces in various guises throughout the novel that he intended it as an invective against the books of chivalry.

On the contrary, the rhetoric of historical veracity, of tattered manuscripts detailing the true histories of famous heroes, is revived and translated through a form of parodistic appropriation which allows Cervantes to declare a new level of creative autonomy as an author.[8] The emergent novel form, as invented so confidently by Cervantes, is not "tan verdadera" [as truthful] as the *caballerías* purport to be, but casts its verisimilitude in the form of "invención y pasatiempo" [invention and entertainment]. This essentially ludic stance in the *Quijote* before the idea of history, pointing toward the notion that history is itself a fictional narrative, sets a masterful precedent for such confidently pseudohistorical novels as *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor,* as we shall see at further length in the third chapter.

Tristram Shandy draws upon this new sense of authorial autonomy to similar parodic and comic effect, and in many ways it provides an even more exemplary precedent for the metafictional novel than *Don Quijote.* In *Tristram Shandy,* Sterne abuses history and books of the past so systematically and ostentatiously that he foregrounds the very act of writing. It is in this sense that *Tristram Shandy* becomes "a novel about writing a novel." However, as Chrisopher Ricks notes in his introduction to the book, Sterne does not altogether dispense with plot and a world external to the novel's discursive weave:

> Sterne's greatness is not simply that he wrote a novel about writing a novel; his triumph is due to the fact that (unlike most of his imitators) he gave as much of his genius to his invented world (the characters of Mr. Shandy and

Toby) as to the theme of inventing it (p. 24).

The ways in which Sterne maintains this bifocal attention recall some of Cervantes' ontological inversions. As I noted earlier, there is a paradoxical dual sense of depth and flatness whenever Sancho and don Quijote become aware of their status as fictional characters, for we perceive that they are mere linguistic constructions, but also that behind these flat abstractions lie complex and ultimately inscrutable personalities. In fact, I would argue that it is an author's open acknowledgement of his characters' inscrutability which guides the metafictional impulse to abandon realistic portraiture, opting instead for an ostentatiously artificial form of representation. Consider the following description of Mrs. Shandy, in which the narrator (Tristram) moves quite fluidly from realistic to metafictional description:

> My mother was going very gingerly in the dark along the passage which led to the parlour, as my uncle Toby pronounced the word *wife*.-- 'Tis a shrill penetrating sound of itself, and Obadiah had helped it by leaving the door a little ajar, so that my mother heard enough of it, to imagine herself the subject of the conversation: so laying the edge of her finger across her two lips--holding in her breath, and bending her head a little downwards, with a twist of her neck--(not towards the door, but from it, by which means her ear was brought to the chink)--she listened with all her powers:--the listening slave, with the Goddess of Silence at his back, could not have given a finer thought for an intaglio.
>
> In this attitude I am determined to let her stand for five minutes: till I bring up the affairs of the kitchen (as Rapin does those of the church) to the same period (pp. 352-353).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an *intaglio* is a "figure or design incised or engraved; a cutting or engraving in stone or other hard material . . ." and certainly this is the kind of

image we get when Tristram decides to leave his mother in a frozen, comic eavesdropping gesture for five minutes while he takes care of other narrative business.[9] As in *Don Quijote* (especially in the frozen battle scene at the end of the eighth chapter, Part I), we have the sense that the narrative framing device has been exposed, and moreover, that this process is overtly thematized in the idea of an actual frame enclosing a static, painting-like scene.

Another interesting way in which frame-exposure is thematized (rather than merely activated) is in the metaphor of the novel as a theatrical stage:

> I beg the reader will assist me here, to wheel off my uncle Toby's ordnance behind the scenes,--to remove his sentry-box, and clear the theatre, *if possible,* of horn-works and half moons, and get the rest of his military apparatus out of the way;--that done, my dear friend Garrick, we'll snuff the candles bright,--sweep the stage with a new broom,--draw up the curtain, and exhibit my uncle Toby dressed in a new character, throughout which the world can have no idea how he will act. . . (p. 438).

There is a kind of inverted parallel between this description and don Quijote's encounter with the acting troupe (II. 11). In both instances acting and theater props and conventions function as a metaphor for the novelist's use of artifice and illusion in delineating character, but in *Don Quijote* we have the impression that the knight has a very real encounter with the actors, and the effect of metafictional self-reflection stems from the *double entente* with which Cervantes imbues don Quijote's words. By contrast, Sterne/Shandy is a much more intrusive narrator, and by

directly appealing to the reader to assist in constructing the scene, our impression of uncle Toby as a linguistic fiction is much more pronounced.

In fact, one of the most common of all metafictional devices is the adoption of a rhetorical stance which exposes and plays upon the role of the reader. In realistic fiction readers are customarily addressed as though they were in the narrator's presence, although in actuality they are merely *rhetorically* invoked. Novelistic discourse is essentially a monologue posing as a dialogue between writer and reader. Sterne is acutely aware of the paradoxes embodied in narrative voice, and at one point he teasingly invites the silent reader to participate in the writing of his novel, leaving a blank page where he can depict the widow Wadman as he pleases:

> To conceive this right,--call for pen and ink--here's paper ready to your hand.--Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind--as like your mistress as you can--as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you--'tis all one to me--please but your own fancy in it (p. 450).

This manner of directly addressing the reader can be rather unsettling, insofar as it draws attention to the discursive distance which tends to estrange the writer from his audience. But on the other hand, Sterne's tone in this passage is warmly humanizing, for it embraces the reader in the best rhetorical tradition of *pathos* (in classical terms, the mode of persuasion which influences the audience's frame of mind). In this sense, Sterne dialogizes the novel by breaking down the passivity of the reader.

But there is also a way in which this rhetoric of familiarity

simply underscores a metafictional irony. Consider the following passage, in which Sterne overtly claims to be catering to his readers by providing an abundance of details concerning his "life and opinions":

> I know there are readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all,--who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of everthing which concerns you.
>
> It is in pure compliance with this humour of theirs, and from a backwardness in my nature to disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so very particular already. As my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and, if I conjecture right, will take in all ranks, professions, and denominations of men whatever . . . I find it necessary to consult every one a little in his turn; and therefore must beg pardon for going on a little further in the same way: For which cause, right glad I am, that I have begun the history of myself in the way I have done; and that I am able to go on tracing every thing in it, as Horace says, *ab Ovo* (pp.37-38).

The acute irony of this passage is that in promising to tell everything to the minutest detail, Sterne/Shandy continually loses himself in endless digressions which all but obscure the novel's plot behind a labyrinthine web of allusions to his father's scholarly texts and his uncle Toby's books on military fortification. Moreover, his satisfaction over having started his history *ab Ovo* ("from the egg") is shot through with multiple irony and comic relish, for the very opening of the book is a hilariously oblique description of the circumstances leading up to the moment of his conception.

That Mr. Shandy is interrupted at this crucial juncture by his wife's reminder to set the clock is an ironic precedent for the way Tristram will go about writing his autobiography--continually interrupting the flow of his narrative with intrusive digressions

which reveal more about his hyperactive imagination than his life history. In fact by the thirteenth chapter of the fourth volume, Tristram has only proceeded in his narration to the end of his first day of life. Yet the way in which he confesses this loss of narrative control to his readers is anything but chaotic in its rhetorical balance and mastery of self-referential technique:

> I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost no farther than to my first day's life--'tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it--on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back--was every day of my life to be as busy a day as this--And why not?--and the transactions and opinions of it to take up as much description--And for what reason should they be cut short? as at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write--It must follow, an' please your worships, that the more I write, the more I shall have to write--and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worships will have to read.
> Will this be good for your worships' eyes? (p. 286)

Sterne highlights the absurdity of the autobiographer's task with a comic paradox, suggesting that it is impossible to live a life and write it at the same time, because the narration gets bogged down in endless digression and regression, as the author traces causes outward and backward in an ever widening network in which origins are never revealed. This image of eternal regression holds a unique fascination for modernist and metafictional writers. As Waugh remarks, "Images of infinite regression remind the reader of the fictive nature of the chronology assumed by realism (p. 142)."

Since any attempt to represent the temporal flow of events in their totality is doomed to a cycle of infinite regression, realist

narrative conceals a basic artifice in its attempt to suggest a verisimilitous chronology of events. By contrast, Sterne makes the reader aware of the basic tension foregrounded in all metafiction by reminding us that a book is essentially different from the reality it seeks to represent. As a structure of words, the novel is unrestricted in its ability to extend its network of textual references and allusions, yet quite limited in its capacity to convey a truly verisimilitous sense of character and chronology.

As I noted earlier, Sterne does not try to resolve this tension on one side or the other of language and "reality," nor does he vacillate schizophrenically between realistic description and metafictional self-reflection. As Ricks notes in his introduction, "his gaze is genuinely bifocal even if that often means a comic squint (p. 27)." Consider the following passage, in which Sterne comically flaunts and satirizes conventions of narrative pace:

> It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle Toby rung the bell, when Obadiah was ordered to saddle a horse, and go for Dr. Slop, the man-midwife;--so that no one can say, with reason, that I have not allowed Obadiah time enough, poetically speaking, and considering the emergency too, both to go and come;----though, morally and truly speaking, the man, perhaps, has scarce had time to get on his boots.
>
> If the hypercritic will go upon this; and is resolved after all to take a pendulum, and measure the true distance betwixt the ringing of the bell, and the rap at the door;--and, after finding it to be no more than two minutes, thirteen seconds, and three fifths,--should take it upon him to insult over me for such a breach in the unity, or rather probability, of time;--I would remind him, that the idea of duration and of its simple modes, is got merely from the train and succession of our ideas,--and is the true scholastic pendulum, ----and by which, as a scholar, I will be tried in this matter, --abjuring and detesting the jurisdiction of all other pendulums whatever (pp.122-123).

Once again we find Sterne stepping back from his novel and

examining its inner workings, like a watchmaker examining minute gears and springs under a lamp. With his characteristic sensitivity to the predicament of the reader, Sterne reminds us that Obadiah has been gone for as long as it has taken us to read the *textual* interval of his absence. Of course, his "genuinely bifocal" gaze is also fixed on the sense of time suggested by the events in the story itself, but this apparent concern with a realistic chronology of events is merely another pretext for a digression on technique.

Likewise, his reference to Locke's philosophy of perception is not so much a justification of an implausible chronology in the actual story as it is a key to his self-reflexive technique of spinning a web of textual allusions which flit in and out of the story, but are not organized by any contingency in the plot. For instance, the allusions to military fortification are related to Uncle Toby's books, but their connections with other texts is clearly a result of the activity of the narrator, Tristram (or Sterne). Like Cervantes, Sterne highlights the activity of his own imagination and self-consciously flaunts his narrative technique, but to such a manic and systematic degree that he effaces the story and its characters beneath a kind of textual game which is more nearly the novel's "plot" than Tristram's birth and Uncle Toby's courting of the Widow Wadman.

This is not to repudiate Ricks' contention that Sterne maintains an exquisite rhetorical balance and a "bifocal gaze," but there are many passages in which the purely textual existence of the

characters is clearly foregrounded. A particularly subtle instance of this kind of ontological shift can be seen in Mr. Shandy's "discussion" with Rubenius on the topic of Tristram's clothing:

> After my father had debated the affair of the breeches with my mother,--he consulted Albertus Rubenius upon it; and Albertus Rubenius used my father ten times worse in the consultation (if possible) than even my father had used my mother: For as Rubenius had wrote a quarto *express, De re Vestiaria Veterum,*-- it was Rubenius's business to have given my father some lights.--On the contrary, my father might as well have thought of extracting the seven cardinal virtues out of a long beard,--as of extracting a single word out of Rubenius upon the subject.
>
> Upon every other article of ancient dress, Rubenius was very communicative to my father;--gave him a full and satisfactory account of
>
> The toga, or loose gown.
>
> The Chlamys. . . (p. 424).

The sustained irony of this passage consists in the fact that although Mr. Shandy is consulting a book by Rubenius, Sterne fully extends the playful suggestion that they are having a conversation. Applying Bakhtin, I would say that Sterne brings Mr. Shandy and Rubenius into a dialogic relationship, recontextualizing and bracketing Rubenius' language to such an extreme that they actually seem to be conversing. Or in poststructuralist terms, there is a perfectly intertextual relationship between all of the books that Tristram cites and the novel itself, such that the boundaries of "the work" are freely transgressed. At one level Rubenius is the author of a book on ancient clothing in Mr. Shandy's library, but just as the "real" characters in *Tristram Shandy* can become flattened whenever Sterne highlights their status as fictionalized word structures (as in the description of Mrs. Shandy as an *intaglio*) characters and dead authors can interact with their "living" readers

by transcending the arbitrary textual boundaries of the works which ordinarily confine them.

I don't mean to make too much of this one passage, but it is a clear example of a metafictional thematization which Sterne activates throughout the novel--the sense that the ordinary constructs, both material and ontological, which distinguish a book from the world which contains it are uncomfortably transgressed both inside and outside the novel. In other words, Sterne's awareness that language ultimately and ineluctably structures our understanding of "world" and "reality" allows him the bifocal vision of the both the fictionality of literary characters and the materiality of fictional books. This latter quality is apparent in Tristram's divulgence to the reader that he has torn out the twenty-fourth chapter, as well as in the following passage:

> We'll not stop two moments, my dear Sir,--only, as we have got through these five volumes, (do, Sir, sit down upon a set--they are better than nothing) let us just look back upon the country we have passed through.-- (p. 397)

The highlighting of the book as a material object is an important metafictional device, especially if it is recognized by characters in the novel itself, for it activates an ontological inversion which reaches out to include the reader himself. Jorge Luis Borges describes this effect quite succinctly in "Partial Magic in the *Quijote*" (as quoted by Alter in his book):

> Why does it disturb us that Don Quijote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet?* These inversions suggest that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators,

> can be fictitious (p. 1).

John Barth has much the same thing in mind when in an essay entitled, "How to Make a Universe," he suggests that by analogy God is an author (and we his characters), since authors routinely create miniaturized universes of their own through the medium of fiction. Of course, he does not mean to infer by this that authors have an omniscient and omnipotent artistic control over their novels; rather, he ironically suggests that perhaps we are God's first go at creating a universe, since he seems to have botched it in so many respects!

A quality in Sterne which Barth obviously emulates is his self-deprecation as a novelist, and as Waugh notes, one of the most characteristic attitudes in metafictional narrators is "a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations. . . (p. 2)." As I remarked earlier, Sterne, like Cervantes, operates at a new level of creative autonomy, flaunting and exploiting the conceivably unlimited technical resources of the novel at a time when it is just emerging as a genre. But as Ricks remarks in his introduction, Sterne was also acutely aware of the novel's inherent limitations:

> Certainly the rise of the novel was a great achievement, but Sterne seems to have been one of the first to realize that a novelist, just because he was indeed creating, might be tempted to think himself endued with godlike powers of scrutiny. So instead of the omniscient, omnipotent narrator humorously deployed by Fielding, Sterne substitutes the vague half-knowledge and frustrated impotence of Tristram (p. 13).

As we have seen in *Don Quijote* and *Tristram Shandy,* the

"godlike" omniscience and omnipotence so characteristic of the realist mode of narration is bracketed and parodied in metafiction, as when Cervantes, with pseudohistorical, ironic relish, has don Quijote implore his "chronicler" to remember his good horse, even though he is alone on the planes of la Mancha (though not within the discursive weave of the novel, which is indefinitely peopled with fictions, including the dialogized "voice" of the author). Yet the paradox of this essentially ludic narrative strategy is that in rhetorically questioning the validity of its own representations, it simultaneously declares the author's autonomy in manipulating the very artifice which structures his discourse of self-criticism. The metafictional novel's profound entrenchment in the wiles and *double entente* of its own rhetoric and the bifurcated referentiality of its technical artifice already align it with the strategies of deconstruction, several centuries before its incipient appearence in the stylistic implosions of Nietzsche. In this respect, Cervantes and Sterne can be viewed as the initiators of a genre and aesthetic so profoundly expansive and self-aware that, like the world of Shakespeare's plays, their novels seem to embrace the whole of modernity from the vantage of its very threshold.

Chapter 3

Pseudo-History and the Literature of Hermetic Excess: Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* and John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*

I have chosen to couple these two novels in my analysis primarily because they both use a pseudohistorical rhetoric as the basis of their metafictional activity, and in this sense they are heavily indebted to *Don Quijote.* Yet there are other ways in which these contemporary masterpieces recall the techniques and resources of Cervantes' great exemplar for the novel--*Cien Años de Soledad* in the encyclopedic variety of its narrative fabric, its stylistic and anecdotal superabundance, and *The Sot-Weed Factor* in its relentless satirizing of the pretensions of historical fiction (present in a more subtle manner in *Cien Años* as well).

Moreover, it is relevant to note that both of these works were produced in the 1960s, a period in which American and Latin American novelists were experimenting with the form of the novel, challenging its traditional generic parameters and questioning its capacity to accurately render the new reality of the electronic, cybernetic culture of information and technology. Many novelists expressed a collective sense of stylistic and formal exhaustion, as both critics and authors began to wonder if they had witnessed the "death of the novel," but by the same token, they were also invigorated and liberated by the atmosphere of avant-garde

experimentalism which became more highly charged in the late sixties and early seventies (Barth vii-viii, *Lost in the Funhouse*).

That they should turn their attention to the roots of the genre is hardly surprising if we consider that the novel first emerged in a period of formal transition and experiment. Moreover, as Barth reminds us in his essay on the "literature of exhausted possibility," the novel has always been conscious of itself as a derivative and "decadent" genre, appropriating older literary forms through parodic imitation:

> Suppose you're a writer by vocation-- a "print-oriented bastard," as the McLuhanites call us--and you feel, for example, that the novel, if not narrative literature generally, if not the printed word altogether, has by this hour of the world just about shot its bolt, as Leslie Fiedler and others maintain. . . . If you were Borges you might write *Labyrinths:* fictions by a learned librarian in the form of footnotes, as he describes them, to imaginary or hypothetical books. And I'll add that if you were the author of this paper, you'd have written something like the *Sot-Weed Factor* or *Giles Goat-Boy:* novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author.
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> If this sort of thing sounds unpleasantly decadent, nevertheless it's about where the genre began, with *Quixote* imitating *Amadis of Gaul,* Cervantes pretending to be the Cid Hamete Benengeli (and Alonso Quijano pretending to be Don Quixote), or Fielding parodying Richardson. "History repeats itself as farce"--meaning of course, in the form or mode of farce, not that history is farcical (pp. 71-72).

It is not coincidental that each of the works considered in this thesis is a *comic* masterpiece, a farcical sendup of traditional historical narratives, or a ludic transgression of novelistic conventions. Yet as Barth clearly recognizes, the representation of history as a "farcical repetition" does not turn it into a meaningless farce, but merely insists that its inevitable embodiment in a textual narrative confines its form to the comic recursiveness and convolution so characteristic of self-conscious novelists. As I

noted in the first chapter, the traditional historian's solemn pretensions to scientific objectivity are part of a rhetorical ruse which systematically denies its own basis in narrative rhetoric. By contrast, a novelist like García Márquez is acutely and ironically aware of this fundamental duplicity, continually undercutting the rhetoric of his own historical narrative in the same gesture with which he weaves it.

The very opening lines of *Cien Años de Soledad,* like those of the *Quijote,* highlight with ironic relish an awareness of their own farcical basis in pseudohistorical rhetoric:

> Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer el hielo. Macondo era entonces una aldea de veinte casas de barro y cañabrava construidas a la orilla de un río de aguas diáfanas que se precipitaban por un lecho de piedras pulidas, blancas y enormes como huevos prehistóricos. El mundo era tan reciente, que muchas cosas carecían de nombre, y para mencionarlas había que señalarlas con el dedo (p. 59).

> [Many years later, in front of the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that remote afternoon when his father brought him to discover ice. Macondo was at that time a village of twenty adobe houses built along the banks of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.]

In passages like this, *Cien Años* reads like a parody of the bible, with its rhetoric of mythic origins and a distanced narrative voice which suggests a panoramic perspective on history as a whole. The bible offers a unique framework for highlighting the narrative and rhetorical basis of history because it frames historical time within the parameters of the book itself. The world begins with *Genesis* and ends with *Revelation,* and so does the book which renders it.

García Márquez shrewdly recognizes in this structure an expression for some of the curious properties of the novel--the way in which the narrator abruptly enters a historical continuum of action in the beginning and arbitrarily truncates it at the end. In an ironic departure from the realist convention of beginning the novel *in medias res,* García Márquez acknowledges that the purely textual existence of his characters is initiated on the first page of the novel.

Another metafictional cue in this opening passage is the curious sense of spatial and temporal displacement suggested by the rhetorical structure of the first sentence. The phrase is repeated in the opening of a later chapter, and in both instances it is clear from the context of the metafictional structure of the novel as a whole that García Márquez is signalling a *textual* displacement of consciousness.[1] Through a metafictional complicity with the author, the characters have access to different areas of the text, as the temporal progression of traditional oral narrative acquires a spatial quality which characterizes its textual reality in a novel.[2] For instance, the Colonel Aureliano, just before he is to be executed, expresses a sense of *déjà vu* and omniscience which ironically signals his awareness of his status as a character in García Márquez's novel:

> Estaba enterado de los pormenores de la casa: el suicidio de Pietro Crespi, las arbitrariedades y el fusilamiento de Arcadio, la impavidez de José Arcadio Buendía bajo el castaño. . . . Desde el momento en que entró al cuarto, Ursula se sintió cohibida por la madurez de su hijo, por su aura de dominio, por el resplandor de autoridad que irradiaba su piel. Se sorprendió que estuviera tan bien informado. "Ya sabe usted que soy adivino," bromeó él. Y agregó en serio:

"Esta mañana, cuando me trajeron, tuve la impresión de que ya había pasado por todo esto" (p. 174-175).

[He knew all about the details of the house: Pietro Crespi's suicide, Arcadio's arbitrary acts and his execution, the dauntlessness of José Arcadio Buendía underneath the chestnut tree. . . . From the moment in which she entered the room, Ursula felt inhibited by the maturity of her son, by his aura of command, by the glow of authority that radiated from his skin. She was surprised that he was so well informed. "You already knew that I was prescient," he joked. And he added in a serious tone, "This morning, when they brought me here, I had the impression that I had already been through all this before."]

The irony of Aureliano's words is that he has indeed "been through all this before," but only in the sense that his reminiscences on the afternoon before his execution are announced in the opening lines of the novel. His serene awareness that his execution is preordained signals his metafictional complicity with his "omniscient" author (in actuality, García Márquez undercuts the pretension to authorial omniscience with a pseudohistorical rhetoric of uncertainty concerning certain facts in the narration, just as Cervantes does in referring to the "lost manuscripts" which record don Quijote's adventures).

This interpretation might seem rather tenuous, given only the preceding passage, but in fact it is a technique García Márquez uses in several instances in *Cien Años de Soledad,* and in his more recent novel, *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* [*Chronicle of a Death Foretold*]. The death is indeed foretold, not by Santiago Nasar's prescient mother, who misreads his dream, but by the author himself in the opening lines of the novel: "El día en que lo iban a matar, Santiago Nasar se levantó a las 5.30 . . ." [On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at 5:30. . .].

A comically physical "intervention" on the author's part occurs

late in the novel, as the final Aureliano begins to decipher the cryptic manuscripts left by the ancient gypsy, Melquíades:

> Divertidos por la impunidad de sus travesuras, cuatro niños entraron otra mañana en el cuarto, mientras Aureliano estaba en la cocina, dispuestos a destruir los pergaminos. Pero tan pronto como se apoderaron de sus pliegos amarillentos, una fuerza angélica los levantó del suelo, y los mantuvo suspendidos en el aire, hasta que regresó Aureliano y les arrebató los pergaminos. Desde entonces no volvieron a molestarlo (p. 404).
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> [Amused by the impunity of their mischief, four children entered the room one morning while Aureliano was in the kitchen, preparing to destroy the parchments. But as soon as they seized hold of the yellowed sheets, an angelic force lifted them off the ground and held them suspended in the air, until Aureliano returned and took the parchments away from them. From then on they did not bother him.]

As in the *Quijote,* when don Quijote and Sancho learn about their author through Sansón Carrasco (II. 2), this passage effects a vertiginous transgression of the narrative frame which customarily separates an author from his characters. The "angelic force" prevents the children from destroying the manuscripts because, as is revealed in the novel's stunning, virtuosic conclusion, the parchments are the very "history" of the Buendía family which we are reading, and their destruction would presumably terminate the novel itself.

In this respect, Melquíades is a kind of surrogate author figure, and in much the same way that Cide Hamete Benengeli functions as a vehicle for many of Cervantes' most ostentatious metafictional games and transgressions (as in the truncation of the action in I. 8), Melquíades is a key to understanding the metafictional structure of the novel as a whole. At one point in the penultimate Aureliano's[3] assiduous, impacable decipherment of Melquíades' parchments, the

final Jose Arcadio asks him how he can have such extensive knowledge of matters beyond his personal experience, and Aureliano replies crypticly, "Todo se sabe (p. 407)" [Everything is known], signalling a metafictional complicity with the author, whose static, panoramic perspective on the text "reveals" all events within the time frame of the novel.

In another instance of temporal displacement, Melquíades reads certain portions of his manuscripts aloud to Arcadio, and although he never fully comprehends their meaning, he finds the episode mysteriously compelling just before his death:

> Años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, Arcadio había de acordarse del temblor con que Melquíades le hizo escuchar varias páginas de su escritura impenetrable, que por supuesto no entendió, pero que al ser leídas en voz alta parecían encíclicas cantadas (p. 126).
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> [Years later, facing the firing squad, Arcadio was to remember the trembling with which Melquíades made him listen to various pages of his impenetrable writing, which of course he didn't understand, but which upon being read aloud seemed like encyclicals being chanted.]

Significantly, the beginning of this sentence is rhetorically identical to the opening lines of the novel, and like that passage (and several others that I have noted) it is García Márquez's playful signature as a self-conscious novelist, an emblem of the plotting author who writes the fate of his characters in the same textual movement in which pretends to record their actual history (ironically, we learn in the final chapter that Melquíades' "chanted encyclicals" are actually the "prophesy" of Arcadio's death). As we shall see with *The Sot-Weed Factor,* Barth fashions a similar image of himself as author, an overly clever spinner of plot lines

who manipulates his characters and yet brings them into a metafictional awareness of their own encoded, textual nature.

The brilliance and audacity of García Márquez is that he not only wryly and obliquely signals his activity as a fictional artificer, but constructs the novel as a whole according to a mind-teasing metafictional frame structure which is revealed in the final chapter when the penultimate Aureliano finally manages to decipher Melquíades' parchments:

> Aureliano no había sido más lúcido en ningún acto de su vida . . . porque entonces sabía que en los pergaminos de Melquíades estaba escrito su destino . . . y no tuvo serenidad para sacarlas a la luz, sino que allí mismo, de pie, sin la menor dificultad, como si hubieran estado escritos en castellano bajo el resplandor deslumbrante, empezó a descifrarlos en voz alta. Era la historia de la familia escrita por Melquíades hasta en sus detalles mas triviales, con cien años de anticipación (p. 446).
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> [Aureliano had never been more lucid in any act in his life . . . because then he knew that his destiny was written in Melquíades' parchments . . . and he didn't have the calmness to bring them out into the light, but right there, standing, without the slightest difficulty, as if they had been written in Spanish beneath a dazzling resplendence, he began to decipher them aloud. It was the history of the family, written by Melquíades down to the most trivial details, one hundred years ahead of time.]

The frame structure in this passage suggests a deceptively simple paradox. While it resembles the Chinese box schemes which frequently govern metafictional tale cycles (stories within stories within stories) it is actually like a Möbius strip, or the cosmological snake which eats its own tail. On the one hand, the novel frames and contains the parchments, but since Melquíades' manuscripts are identical to the contents of the novel, they actually frame eachother, like two face to face mirrors, with each mirror reflecting an infinite regression of frames within frames.

In fact, this very image is evoked on the final page of the novel:

> Macondo era ya un pavoroso remolino de polvo y escombros centrifugado por la cólera del huracán bíblico, cuando Aureliano saltó once páginas para no perder el tiempo en hechos demasiado conocidos, y empezó a descifrar el instante que estaba viviendo, descifrándolo a medida que lo vivía, profetizándose a sí mismo en el acto de descifrar la última página de los pergaminos, como si estuviera viendo en un espejo hablado (p. 447).
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> [Macondo was already a fearful whirlwind of dust and rubble being spun about by the wrath of the biblical hurricane, when Aureliano jumped ahead eleven pages so as not to lose time on facts too well known, and began to decipher the moment he was living, deciphering it as he lived it, prophesying himself in the act of deciphering the last page of the parchments, as if he were looking into a talking mirror.]

The vertiginous moment in which Aureliano is reading his own present is a kind of textual epiphany, an ontological Pandora's box which invalidates all of the novel's frames (how can the novel frame Aureliano, if the text he is reading is that very frame?, etcetera). Moreover, it consolidates a metafictional aesthetic which we have seen alluded to rhetorically throughout the novel--García Márquez's awareness that his novel, as a static structure of written words, operates in a kind of "absolute present" (Marco 53).

In this sense, Aureliano's encounter with his own fictionality not only lays bare the pseudohistorical rhetoric which is self-consciously maintained throughout the novel as a formal ruse, but radically negates the very idea of historical narrative, even as it extends a parody of its structure and conventions. As I stated with regard to its opening, the entire novel reads at a certain level like a parody of the bible, where the beginning and the end of the book coincide with the beginning and end of time and of the world

itself. In a conclusion suggestive of *Revelation,* the world of Macondo is consumed in the apocalyptic fury unleashed by Aureliano's decipherment of Melquíades manuscripts:

> Entonces dio otro salto para anticiparse a las predicciones y averiguar la fecha y las circunstancias de su muerte. Sin embargo, antes de llegar al verso final ya había comprendido que no saldría jamás de ese cuarto, pues estaba previsto que la ciudad de los espejos (o los espejismos) sería arrasada por el viento y desterrada de la memoria de los hombres en el instante en que Aureliano Babilonia acabara de descifrar los pergaminos. . . (pp. 447-448).
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> [Then he jumped ahead again to anticipate the predictions and ascertain the date and circumstances of his death. However, before arriving at the final verse, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, since it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the moment in which Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments. . . .]

García Márquez's pretension that Melquíades' manuscripts are the actual history of the Buendía family is a metafictional ruse which recalls Cervantes' playful insistence that don Quijote's history is transcribed from ancient arabic parchments. In both instances it is clear that they are calling attention in an ironic and oblique way to their own powers of invention as novelists. Another way this is signalled and thematized is in the phrase, "ciudad de los espejos (o espejismos)" [city of mirrors (or mirages)], an image which recalls the crucial moment at which Aureliano begins to read his own present in Melquíades manuscripts, dissolving the frame of the novel and that of the parchments within an ambiguous ontological space. In fact, there are numerous passages throughout the novel in which García Márquez rhetorically suggests that traditional framing devices are arbitrary conventions, and that their transgression in a self-conscious novel engender a kind of fantastic

reality for its characters:

> Era como si Dios hubiera resuelto poner a prueba toda capacidad de asombro, y mantuviera a los habitantes de Macondo en un permanente vaivén entre el alborozo y el desencanto, la duda y la revelación, hasta el extremo de que ya nadie podía saber a ciencia cierta dónde estaban los límites de la realidad. Era un intricado frangollo de verdades y espejismos, que convulsionó de impaciencia al espectro de José Arcadio Buendía bajo el castaño y lo obligó a caminar por toda la casa aun a pleno día (p. 268).
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> [It was as if God had decided to put to the test every capacity for surprise and was keeping the inhabitants of Macondo in a permanent alternation between excitement and disappointment, doubt and revelation, to such an extreme that no one knew for certain where the limits of reality lay. It was an intricate stew of truths and mirages, that impatiently convulsed the ghost of Jose Arcadio Buendía under the chestnut tree and compelled him to wander all through the house even in broad daylight.]

This is the kind of passage which has given impetus to the label "magic realism," so frequently attached to García Márquez's fiction. Certainly, a novel in which the ghost of a dead patriarch roams nonchalantly through the house of his descendants (not to mention that a young girl is assumed directly into heaven, or that a chimerical beast with angel's wings inexplicably falls to earth) is suggestive of a strange and fantastic reality, and some critics have concluded that it is inspired by the chaotic, volatile political and social climate of García Marquez's native Colombia.[4]

I do not call into question the usefulness of this sociohistorical perspective on literature, but it is important to note that all of García Márquez's fantastic and chimerical dislocations refer also to their own structure as layers of novelistic artifice. Not only is Macondo, the nostalgic recreation of García Márquez's childhood village in Colombia, "un intricado frangollo de verdades y espejismos" [an intricate stew of truths and mirages], but also the

novel itself.[5] It is but a brief extension of this wry metafictional subtext to see this passage as a thematization of the author's God-like powers of manipulation in altering the textual and fictional reality of his characters.

In fact, García Márquez's skill in maintaining (to paraphrase Christopher Ricks' praise of Sterne) a "genuine bifocal gaze" operates as exquisitely at the structural linguistic level as at the level of rhetorical *double entente.* In an essay entitled, "García Márquez's *Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada* as Metafiction," Jorge Olivares discusses the ways in which that novel elaborates a subtextual, allegorical gloss on poststructuralist theories of reading and writing. According to Olivares, García Márquez thematizes the death of the author in Santiago's murder and Angela Vicario's rape. As an analogue for textual inscription, the rape casts Angela in the "role" of the text, and she vicariously kills her author when her brothers stab Santiago to death:

> The sexual suggestiveness of the description is noteworthy because, since Pedro and Pablo Vicario function as Angela's "vicarios" (her "vicars", her deputies), it is she who in effect stabs Santiago to death. In other words, Angela "vicariously" penetrates Santiago, not with one but with two "cuchillos rectos." A violent *pen* etration involving more than one metaphoric pen(is), Santiago's execution can be seen as a triple inscription, as a congress of violence, sex, and writing. A text no longer in need of its author, Angela eliminates Santiago; she in a sense writes him off (p. 490).

As I remarked in the first chapter (p. 20), some of Barth's stories resonate with this theme of the author's death, the paradoxical absence yet ubiquity of authorial voice which is characteristic of postmodernist and poststructuralist writing. A

similar kind of textual liberation is effected in the allegorical subtext of the final pages of *Cien Años de Soledad.* As the reader of his own history, Aureliano represents an extraordinary conjunction of author, text, and reader. He ceases to be a passive reader the moment he begins to decipher the manuscripts, authoring the text (himself) through an inverted structural hierarchy which undermines the very concept of textual "authority." A moment of pure equilibrium is attained when he skips ahead in his reading to his own present, where an impossible conjunction of "text" and "world" dissolves the contextual boundaries of both into a self-referential play of signifiers.

More important than a structural linguistic reading of the novel's conclusion, however, is a recognition of the overarching metafictional frame structure which it exposes, a scheme which is cleverly alluded to throughout the novel and which illuminates García Márquez's basic aesthetic as a novelist. In another scene framing the activity of a reader, Aureliano Segundo and Ursula discuss the verisimilitude of an author's narration:

> Aureliano Segundo estaba abstraído en la lectura de un libro. Aunque carecía de pastas y el título no aparecía por ninguna parte, el niño gozaba con la historia de una mujer que se sentaba a la mesa y sólo comía granos de arroz que prendía con alfileres, y con la historia del pescador que le pidió prestado a su vecino un plomo para su red y el pescado con que lo recompensó más tarde tenía un diamante en el estómago, y con la lámpara que satisfacía los deseos y las alfombras que volaban. Asombrado, le preguntó a Ursula si todo aquello era verdad, y ella le contestó que sí, que muchos años antes los gitanos llevaban a Macondo las lámparas maravillosas y las esteras voladoras.
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> "Lo que pasa," suspiró, "es que el mundo se va acabando poco a poco y ya no vienen esas cosas" (p. 230).

> [Aureliano Segundo was absorbed in reading a book. Although it had no cover and the title did not appear anywhere, the child was enjoying the story of a woman

who sat at a table and ate nothing but kernels of rice that she picked up with a pin, and the story of the fisherman who asked to borrow a weight for his net from his neighbor and the fish with which he later repaid him had a diamond in its stomach, and the one about the lamp that fulfilled wishes and about flying carpets. Surprised, he asked Ursula if all that was true, and she replied yes, that many years ago the gypsies brought magic lamps and flying mats to Macondo.

"What's happening," she sighed, "is that the world is slowly coming to an end and those things don't come here any more."]

Ursula's reply and the variegated mythical fabric of Aureliano Segundo's book illustrate together a basic tension which structures the novel as a whole. On the one hand, *Cien Años de Soledad* is an intertextual compendium of fabulatory elements from all of García Márquez's previous fiction, replete as well with veiled references to other Latin American novelists of his generation (Gallagher 463). Yet it is also a structurally hermetic text, a fable of mythic origins which ends by consuming itself (the final lines proclaim that everything in the parchments--i.e., the novel itself--is "irrepetible desde siempre y para siempre" [unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more]).

In this respect, it is a masterful synthesis of what Barth, in his celebrated twin essays, has termed the "literature of exhaustion" and the "literature of replenishment." In the former essay, he cites Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges as exemplars for a form of late modernism which stems from a sense of exhausted possibilities, a largely self-referential literature obssessed with the entropic dispersal of its own creative resources (this is an appropriate characterization, incidentally, of Barth's own stories in *Lost in the Funhouse*). However, as he emphasizes in both essays, literature replenishes itself in precisely this way, through parodic

imitation and an extreme self-consciousness with respect to tradition.

Indeed, the narrative and stylistic extravagance of both *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor* should be understood in the same context as Cervantes' innovations in *Don Quijote*-- as strategies for utilizing and overcoming the sense of generic exhaustion and ossification which marks the novel's extensive prehistory. As Barth remarks in a conversation with John Hawkes, "We remember Beckett: 'that silence out of which the universe is made.' Plot and perhaps over-ingeniousness are a shore against that silence Beckett speaks of (p. 15, *Anything Can Happen*)."[6]

"Plot and perhaps over-ingeniousness" are extravagantly and hilariously deployed in *The Sot-Weed Factor,* an energetic parody of such seventeenth century comic novelists as Fielding and Defoe, and a baldly abusive portrayal of an actual historical figure, the Maryland poet Ebenezer Cooke. As Barth confesses in his introduction to the novel, he takes enormous liberties in his portrayal of Cooke and his mock-epic poem about the comic tribulations of a New World tobacco trader (a "sotweed factor"), attributing the bawdy misadventures of the poem's narrator and protagonist to the poet himself:

> Toward the end of my literary apprentice days, I conceived the ambitious, Boccaccio-like project of writing one hundred tales about my marshy home county at all periods of its recorded history; in the course of my researches, I came across Ebenezer Cooke's "Sot-Weed Factor" poem and drafted a few tales based on the premise that its misfortunate narrator was the poet himself, whom I imagined arriving in the colony with the innocence, though perhaps not the programmatic optimism, of Voltaire's Candide (p. v).

Barth thus abandons from the outset a "verisimilitous" representation of this historical period, even though his novel is crammed with actual personages and place names. In much the same way that García Márquez does in *Cien Años de Soledad,* with its interspersal of such actual historical names and places as Sir Francis Drake and Riohacha in the fabulatory stew of the narrative as a whole, Barth thematizes the metafictional tension between technical artifice and worldly referent by openly and self-consciously weaving the illusion of historical verisimilitude. As he admits in an essay entitled, "Historical Fiction, Fictitious History, and Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs, or, About Aboutness," the historical data in *The Sot-Weed Factor* is employed in the construction of novelistic artifice, rather than an actual history of Ebenezer Cooke's ordeals in late seventeenth-century Maryland:

> The fact is, I am about to publish a novel called *LETTERS* that happens to involve the Chesapeake Bay area and to some extent its history . . . and twenty years ago I published a novel called *The Sot-Weed Factor,* set mainly in Colonial Maryland. Both are more or less "historical" fiction, and for both I did a respectable amount of homework on the historical periods involved. But it was a novelist's homework, not a historian's, and novelists are the opposite of icebergs: Eight-ninths of what I once knew about this region's history, and have since forgotten, is in plain view on the surface of those two novels, where it serves its fictive purposes without making the author any sort of authority. Since *The Sot-Weed Factor* isn't finally "about" Colonial Maryland at all . . . I'm already uncertain which of their historical details are real and which I dreamed up (pp. 180-181, *The Friday Book*).

Much of *The Sot-Weed Factor* is in fact about the author's own activity in writing the novel. In this sense it is an example of metafiction in the classic mold of *Tristram Shandy,* and indeed Barth consciously and masterfully imitates the convoluted,

ironically self-referential style of Sterne and eighteenth-century novelists generally, a reminder that there flourished an earlier novelistic tradition more skeptical than the nineteenth-century realists of the novel's ability to create a verisimilitous sense of character and historical occurrence. Although Barth uses an omniscient, third person narrator who doesn't signal his self-consciousness as systematically or overtly as Tristram does in Sterne's novel, there are passages in which Barth wryly and obliquely refers to the parodic function of his narrative:

> By age eighteen he had reached his full height and ungainliness; he was a nervous, clumsy youth who, though by this time he far excelled his sister in imaginativeness, was much her inferior in physical beauty, for though as twins they shared nearly identical features, Nature saw fit, by subtle alterations, to turn Anna into a lovely young woman and Ebenezer into a goggling scarecrow, just as a clever author may, by delicate adjustments, parody a beautiful style (p. 8).

This self-conscious deprecation of his own powers as a novelist is a theme which is announced quite early in Barth's fiction,[7] and which informs his aesthetic sensibility as a whole. In *The Sot-Weed Factor,* Barth weds this tone with a systematic parody of the rhetoric of historical fiction in a a sprawling narrative framework which subtly exposes the artifice of its own construction. As I noted in the first chapter, the textual profusion and repetition of proper names and historical events which Cristopher Norris recognizes in some of Karl Marx's writings, suggests in *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor* as well a fictive basis for "the absurd contingencies of historical happening (Norris 89)."

In Barth's novel the parodic approximation of historical occurrence through an overactive construction of plot is overtly thematized by the manner in which various characters switch identities, and by their implication in a kind of grand conspiratorial scheme, the plot itself, which is spun by an author who "knows" more than any of his individual characters. At one point Harvey Russecks, one of several dozen or more of the novel's minor characters, voices a praise of convoluted, extended narrative:

> "No pleasure pleasures me as doth a well-spun tale, be't sad or merry, shallow or deep! If the subject's privy business, or unpleasant, who cares a fig? The road to Heaven's beset with thistles, and methinks there's many a cow-pat on't. As for length, fie, fie!" He raised a horny finger. "A bad tale's long though it want but an eyeblink for the telling, and a good tale short though it take from St. Swithin's to Michaelmas to have done with't. Ha! And the plot is tangled, d'ye say? Is't more knotful or bewildered than the skein o' life, that a good tale tangles the better to unsnarl?" (pp. 588-589)

Although this mildly self-referential praise of narrative complication hardly eradicates the framing device which separates Barth from his characters, or flattens them into the discursive and linguistic weave of the novel itself, it refers to a metafictional strategy which is deployed with remarkable virtuosity throughout *The Sot-Weed Factor*-- the generation of a remarkably dense and tangled plot as a self-conscious and parodic approximation of history's recursive and "absurd" form, as well as a reiteration of history in the form of novelistic discourse.

As the bewildered protagonist of Barth's comic extravaganza, Ebenezer Cooke is in a position similar to the reader's, for this energetic and ambitious framework suggests that plot can serve as

a kind of metafictional code in which the novel's characters can "read" their inscription in a textual network of signification. Ebenezer's best friend and tutor, Henry Burlingame, continuously and treacherously shifts his identity, while the poet's treasured "innocence" is sacrificed to Barth's ingenious plot, a series of comic tribulations not unlike Jose Arcadio Buendía's alchemical miscalculations or don Quijote's disastrous forays into knight errantry.

Indeed, ridiculous and satirical elements are drawn out to hyperbolic exaggeration in a novelistic discourse whose very excess calls attention to the artificiality of its construction. This is particularly evident in some of the hilarious interpolated tales which constitute the journal of Henry Burlingame's obscure, long-lost grandfather. Consider the following passage, which describes the elder Burlingame's triumph in an eating contest with a corpulent Indian, after which he is to enjoy the sexual favors of Pokatawertussan:

> The while this wondrous feast was being eat, Wepenter did pownd & stryke Burlingame upon the backe & bellie, to settle his stomacke, and Attonces aides did likewise him smite. After that each course was done, they did both ope there mouths wide, and Wepenter thrust his finger downe Burlingames crawe, & Attonce his owne likewise . . . so that they did vomitt what was eat, and cleare the holds for more. The Salvages did leap and daunce the while, and Pokatawertussan twist & wrythe for verie lust upon the rugg, at two such manlie men.
>
> When at last this Attonce did get him selfe to his redd berries, w^{ch} was the final dish, that the Salvages had prepar'd, and he did put one in his mawe, and drop out two therefrom, for want of room, his lieutenant smote him one last blow on the gutt, whereat Attonce did let flie a tooling fart and dy'd upon the instant where he sat. And was too stuff'd, to fall over (p. 564).

Bawdy, scatalogical humor is employed throughout the novel as a

sort of counterpoint to Ebenezer's pious reverence for cultured verse and his naive faith in the virtue of Maryland's raucous inhabitants, but as I have noted, it also functions similarly to the rhetorically hyperbolic prose of *Cien Años de Soledad,* where the mythic elements are foregrounded as novelistic artifice. As in *Don Quijote,* the interpolated tales in *The Sot-Weed Factor* have an even more artificial, framed quality than the prose which surrounds it, and as chapters in the lost journal of Burlingame's grandfather, they recall the common metafictional ploy of the "found manuscript" which is employed so skillfully by Cervantes and García Márquez.

That Burlingame's journal ultimately illuminates and unites disparate elements of the novel's plot is an self-conscious emblem of the author's art in weaving fiction. A curious juxtaposition with relation to Burlingame's journal is the fact that on its reverse side is a record of the villain John Coode's illegal activities and conspiracies against Lord Baltimore, governor of the province. As Inger Christensen points out in *The Meaning of Metafiction,* Burlingame is in many ways a mirror image of Coode (whom he often impersonates), and ultimately they both symbolize Barth's activity as an author in constructing his novel: "Alan Holder shows how Burlingame is not concerned with questions of good or evil in the ferocious contest between warring parties in Maryland: His chief concern . . . is to match Coode's ceaseless energy in staging a plot (p. 61)."

By the novel's serpentine, ostentatiously orchestrated finale, we

have the impression from Burlingame himself that both Baltimore and Coode are mere fictions in an elaborate plot, and Ebenezer's reply elucidates quite directly a Barthian metafictional aesthetic:

> Henry shrugged . . . "albeit 'tis hard for me to think such famous wights are pure and total fictions, to this hour I've not laid eyes on either Baltimore or Coode. It may be they are all that rumor swears: devils and demigods, whichever's which; or it may be they're simple clotpolls like ourselves, that have been legend'd out of reasonable dimension; or it may be they're naught but the rumors and tales themselves."
>
> "If that last is so," Ebenezer said, "Heav'n knows 'twere a potent life enough! When I reflect on the weight and power of such fictions beside my own poor shade of a self, that hath been so much disguised and counterfeited, methinks they have tenfold my substance! (pp. 705-706)

As Barth intimates in this passage, a character's existence in a work of fiction is given substance and reinforced by his reiteration in purely fictive terms. Paradoxically, Coode and Baltimore are more "real" than Burlingame and Ebenezer, because they have been transcribed in more purely textual and fictive terms in the discursive weave of the novel itself. The very fact that their identities are subject to continual, chaotic shifts and reversals is indicative of Barth's activity as an author in quite literally writing them into existence in his novel. Barth's revelation of the purely textual and fictive nature of his characters is sometimes so abrupt as to seem like a literal whisking away of the integuments of narrative artifice to reveal their underlying structure. Consider the following passage from the title story of *Lost in the Funhouse:*

> She still sat forward; Ambrose pushed his glasses back onto the bridge of his nose with his left hand, which he then negligently let fall to the seat cushion immediately behind her. He even permitted the single hair, gold, on the second joint of his thumb to brush the fabric of her skirt. Should she have sat back at that instant, his hand would have been caught under her.

> Plush upholstery prickles uncomfortably through gabardine slacks in the July sun. The function of the *beginning* of a story is to introduce the principal characters, establish their initial relationships, set the scene for the main action, expose the background of the situation if necessary, plant motifs and foreshadowings where appropriate, and initiate the first complication or whatever of the "rising action" (pp. 76-77).

Stylistically, this could be characterized as a passage of realistic description which through an abrupt transition slips into metafictional self-commentary. But in fact, an extreme self-consciousness with regard to technique is already signalled in the first paragraph, where the "negligence" of Ambrose's gestures is anything but nonchalant or casual. The story as a whole is a technical *tour de force* and an exemplary display of Barth's fundamental narrative aesthetic, insofar as what appears to occur within a "realistic" context of worldly reference, Ambrose's trip to an amusement park funhouse, is also a metaphor and metafictional springboard for a self-referential exploration of narrative technique. In other words, Barth's metafiction displays the admirable qualities of rhetorical balance and "bifocal attention" which are so virtuosically handled in *Don Quijote* and *Tristram Shandy.*

A metafictional ploy which Barth appears to borrow from both Cervantes and Sterne is a reference within the narrative frame of the novel itself to its structuring according to chapters:

> Only Captain Cairn remained calm. "'Twere folly to wait for their tortures," he declared soberly. "We're all dead men at the end of the chapter, why should we suffer ten times o'er for their heathen pleasure?" (p. 540)

The conventionality of their situation is in a sense

self-evident--their capture by Indians is the kind of catastrophe so storied throughout the provinces that they have been conditioned to think of it in terms of fiction. Yet in highlighting the framed quality of the narrative, as well as its material dimensions as chapters in a book, Captain Cairn's remarks also trace Barth's hand in authoring the text. In fact, one measure of the sophistication of Barth's metafictional sensibilities is his persistent recognition of how the frame structures of conventional, popular stories are themselves conducive to a self-conscious illumination of narrative technique and artifice.

As I commented with respect to *Cien Años de Soledad,* García Márquez's novel is a masterpiece of literature of exhaustion *and* replenishment, a book in which the elements of formal and stylistic decadence are used to extend a host of literary traditions indefinitely against their own entropic demise. *The Sot-Weed Factor* exemplifies this same dual movement through a form of narrative superabundance which is prompted by an awareness of its own provisional basis in literary parody. To put it differently, all narrative presupposes continuity (Marco 30), and self-conscious fiction blanches before the contemplation of its own demise, an idea thematized in the words of Ebenezer as he prepares to drown:

> When he and Anna chose their deaths [in play], drowning--along with burning, slow crushing, and similar protracted agonies--was disqualified at once, and the news that anyone had actually suffered from such an end would thrill them to the point of dizziness. But in his heart the fact of death and all these sensuous anticipations were to Ebenezer like the facts of life and the facts of history and geography, which, owing to his education and natural proclivities, he looked at always from the *storyteller's* point of view: notionally he admitted its finality; vicariously he sported with its horror; but never, never could he really

> embrace either. That lives are stories, he assumed; that stories end, he allowed--how else could one begin another? But that the teller himself must live a particular tale and die---Unthinkable! Unthinkable! (pp. 270-271)

In a sense, all of Barth's fiction is a variation on Scheherazade, the doomed storyteller whose narration indefinitely forestalls her death (*Chimera* is merely his most overt appropriation of the frame-structure of the famous arabic tale cycle). As a novel which disposes enormous narrative energy in the complication and ultimate resolution of a labyrinthine plot and which simultaneously traces the dissipation of its own resources (which at bottom are merely the parodic reiteration of well-heeled literary conventions), *The Sot-Weed Factor* conforms to a structural trajectory in many ways very similar to *Cien Años de Soledad.* Barth's novel does not exactly end by consuming itself, but it does collapse in the epilogue into a kind of formal resignation in which the parodic, pseusohistorical rhetoric which structures the discursive weave of the novel as a whole is openly flaunted. In a passage whose rhetorical mastery and self-conscious irony is comparable to the closing of the first part of *Don Quijote* (see page 14 of the first chapter), Barth "apologizes to his readers":

> Lest it be objected by a certain stodgy variety of squint-minded antiquarians that he has in this lengthy history played more fast and loose with Clio, the chronicler's muse, than ever Captain John Smith dared, the Author here posits in advance, by way of surety, three blue-chip replies arranged in order of decreasing relevancy. In the first place be it remembered, as Burlingame himself observed, that we all invent our pasts, more or less, as we go along, at the dictates of Whim and Interest; the happenings of former times are a clay in the present moment that will-we, nill-we, the lot of us must sculpt. Thus Being does make Positivists of us all. Moreover, this Clio was already a scarred and crafty trollop when the Author found her; it wants a nice-honed casuist, with her sort, to separate seducer from seduced. But if, despite all, he is convicted at the Public Bar of having forced what slender

> virtue the strumpet may make claim to, then the Author joins with pleasure the most engaging company imaginable, his fellow fornicators, whose ranks include the noblest in poetry, prose, and politics; condemnation at such a bar, in short, on such a charge, does honor to artist and artifact alike, of the same order of magnitude as election to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* or suppression by the Watch and Ward (p. 743).

Barth's characterization of the historical muse as a strumpet is a hilariously bawdy justification of his extremely liberal and abusive appropriation of Ebenezer Cooke, his epoch, and the rhetorical modes of eighteenth-century literature. Barth's shrewd recognition that history is structured according to historical *texts,* and is thus bound to a fictional treatment,[8] informs his confident parody of historical fiction in *The Sot-Weed Factor,* and as in *Cien Años de Soledad,* the novel ends with a self-conscious declaration of the author's creative autonomy. Together, these two novels demonstrate the extraodinary narrative resources which can be generated by a pseudohistorical rhetoric of generic and stylistic parody, strategies first deployed systematically in *Don Quijote.*

Chapter 4

Serious Play: Fiction-Making Games in Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* and Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association*

As I mentioned in the first chapter, one way of understanding metafictional framebreaking is as a kind of ludic conflation of literary conventions, a textual game in which the rules are arbitrarily modified in order to explore the parameters of the novel as a genre, an impulse consistent with metafiction's basic dual concern--the generation of a fictional illusion and the simultaneous examination of the artificial conventions which support that illusion (Waugh 6, 36, 42). Although the generic parameters of the novel are, as Bakhtin argues, remarkably elastic, many of the most "playful" metafictional novels elicit the question of whether they are in fact "anti-novels." In his introduction to *Rayuela,* Andrés Amorós discusses the possibility that it engages itself in an avante-garde polemic against the novel's identity as a genre, citing a note by Cortázar's vaguely surrogate author, Morelli:

> En unas notas sueltas, apunta Morelli la posibilidad de incorporar al relato las contradicciones internas, al modo del Zen: "A cambio del bastonazo en la cabeza, una novela absolutamente antinovelesca, con el escándalo y el choque consiguiente, y quizá con una apertura para los más avisados."
>
> ¿Anti-novela? ¿Nueva novela? En otro lugar parece contradecirse, Morelli; en realidad, precisa con ejemplar claridad: "Provocar, asumir un texto desaliñado, desanudado, incongruente, minuciosamente antinovelístico (aunque no antinovelesco)" (79).
>
> No es puro juego de palabras. Lo que rechaza es *cierto tipo* de novela, de trucos narrativos convencionales, no la novela. Si no fuera así, ¿para qué

escribir otra novela más? (pp. 47-48).

> [In some loose jottings, Morelli notes the possibility of incorporating internal contradictions into the story, in the manner of Zen: "In contrast to a blow to the head, a novel absolutely antinovelistic, with the consequent shock and scandal, and perhaps an opening for the more judicious."
> Anti-novel? New novel? Elsewhere Morelli seems to contradict himself; in actuality, he ascertains with exemplary clarity: "To provoke, to assume a text that is disordered, untied, incongruent, minutely antinovelistic (but not antinovelish)" (79).
> This isn't pure wordplay. What he rejects is a *certain kind* of novel, with its conventional narrative ploys, not the novel itself. If this weren't the case, why write just another novel?]

The formal and stylistic innovations of *Rayuela* transgress the canonical boundaries of the "traditional" novel, while affirming and regenerating its basic aesthetic of generic all-inclusiveness. As its name implies, the novel is committed to "novelty," and from *Don Quijote* on it is clear that a literary form which can incorporate genres and stylistic registers as diverse as chivalric romance, picaresque fiction, and arabic tale cycles is never really in danger of exhausting its own resources, even if the *theme* of formal decadence and the sense of writing in the gray shadow of an exhausted tradition are at the heart of the novel's image of itself as a genre.

The most obvious technical innovation which Cortázar deploys in *Rayuela* is the inclusion of additional chapters which are to be read in conjunction with chapters from the first two sections according to a "tablero de dirección" [table of instructions] at the front of the novel. Although it indicates an apparently random ordering of the chapters, it is actually a kind of recursive loop which modifies our reading of the conventionally ordered narrative in the first two sections. In his discussion of this ludic perspectivalism in the

novel's overall structure, Amorós cites Carlos Fuentes' remark that "esta segunda lectura abre la puerta a una tercera y, sospechamos, al infinito de la verdadera lectura (p. 23)" [this second reading opens the door to a third and, we suspect, to a veritable infinity of readings].

Indeed, the "ending" of the novel is a textual joke which encapsulates the idea of an infinite reading. The final chapter on Cortázar's table of instructions is #131, yet #131 refers us to #58, which in turn sends us back to #131, and so on *ad infinitum.* [1] Thus, *Rayuela* is a novel which thematizes and enacts a literature of replenishment to a remarkable extreme, an encyclopedic narrative whose open-ended structure, in sharp contrast with the hermetic density of *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor,* encourages the reader to participate in creating structure and meaning in the text. As a semantically and structurally indeterminate text which inscribes itself in a network of supplementary and deferred meaning, *Rayuela* exhibits remarkable affinities with some of the main characteristics of deconstruction.[2] Horacio Oliveira, who serves as a comic mouthpiece for Cortázar's aesthetic principles throughout the novel, expresses this affinity in passages such as the following:

> "A mí en realidad no me puede suceder ni medio," pensaba Oliveira. "No me va a caer jamás una maceta en el coco." ¿Por qué entonces la inquietud, si no era la manida atracción de los contrarios, la nostalgia de la vocación y la acción? Un análisis de la inquietud, en la medida de lo posible, aludía siempre a una descolocación, a una excentración con respecto a una especie de orden que Oliveira era incapaz de precisar (p. 584).

> ["Nothing ever really happens to me," thought Oleivera. "A flowerpot is

never going to fall on my noggin." Then why the unrest, if it was not the stale attraction of opposites, the nostalgia for vocation and action? An analysis of this unrest, as far as is possible, would always allude to a dislocation, to an excentration with regard to a kind of order that Oliveira was incapable of defining.]

Much of the linguistic playfulness in the novel hinges on this sense of "dislocation" and "excentration," which is a veritable analogue for the way in which Cortázar's language functions at the level of the sign--deferring meaning in a "writerly" network of textual allusion which calls attention to its own rhetorical artifice and highlights the effects of difference, dispersal, and absence. Of course, this metacommentary on the structural linguistic function of the text does not render Cortázar's novel a strictly self-referential meditation on its own processes of inscription and signification, for in most respects it appears to be a conventionally structured narrative. Nevertheless, like Sterne in *Tristram Shandy,* Cortázar has the artistic balance and critical acumen to fashion the story apparently "external" to the structure of the text into a running allegory on his own techniques and activity as a novelist.

For instance, in one of the most hilariously chaotic chapters in the novel (#36, which closes the first section, set in Paris), Horacio falls in with a Parisian street urchin and is arrested for public drunkenness and exposure, and yet the entire chapter is structured around Horacio's mental refrain of the "kibbutz del deseo" [the kibbutz of desire]. The chaotically orchestrated closing of the chapter is a stream-of-consciousness coalescence of such elements as "Heraclitus the Obscure" (who apparently liked to bury himself in shit), two homosexuals peering through a kaleidoscope,

and mental imagery associated with the game of the *rayuela* (similar to hopscotch):

> Todo estaba tan bien, todo llegaba a su hora, la rayuela y el calidoscopio, el pequeño pederasta mirando y mirando, oh Jo, no veo nada, más luz, más luz, Jo. Tumbado en el banco, Horacio saludó al Oscuro, la cabeza del Oscuro asomando en la pirámide de bosta . . . y por los mocos y el semen y el olor de Emmanuèle y la bosta del Oscuro se entraría al camino que llevaba al Kibbutz del deseo, no ya subir al Cielo . . . sino caminar con pasos de hombre por una tierra de hombres hacia el kibbutz allá lejos pero en el mismo plano, como el Cielo estaba en el mismo plano que la Tierra en la acera roñosa de los juegos, y un día quizá se entraría en el mundo donde decir Cielo no sería un repasador manchado de grasa, y un día alguien vería la verdadera figura del mundo, pretty as can be, y tal vez, empujando la piedra, acabaría por entrar en el kibbutz (pp. 368-369).
>
> [Everything was so perfect, everything happening right on time, *rayuela* and the kaleidoscope, the smaller fairy looking and looking, oh Jo, I don't see anything, more light, more light, Jo. Collapsed on the bench, Horacio greeted the Obscure one, the head of the Obscure one sticking up through the pyramid of manure . . . and through the snot and the semen and the odor of Emmanuèle and the shit of the Obscure one you would come onto the road leading to the kibbutz of desire, no longer rising up to heaven . . . but walk along with the pace of a man through a land of men towards the kibbutz far off there but on the same plane, just as Heaven was on the same plane as the Earth on the dirty sidewalk where you played the game, and one day perhaps you would enter that world where speaking of Heaven did not mean a greasy kitchen rag, pretty as can be, and perhaps, pushing the stone along, you would end up entering the kibbutz.]

The "kibbutz" is a vague, inaccessible object of desire, and like the heaven represented in the *rayuela,* it is "attainable" only as a kind of ubiquitous referent which the text circles in a peripheral ceremony or game. In poststructuralist terms, we could consider the "kibbutz of desire" as a "real" or authentic object of experience which the novelist tries to confine and present in language, though in contrast to a realist author, who would assume a relatively stable correspondence between the signifier and its worldly referent, Cortázar highlights the disruptive textual effects of difference and the arbitrary nature of the sign, submitting his

discourse to a self-referential free play of signifiers (metaphorized in the idea of the *rayuela*). This is not to say that worldly referents are excluded from Cortázar's language, for beneath the frenetic activity of the narrator is a story whose "origin" is recognizably external to the text, but which is introduced into the discursive weave of the novel through "a linguistic sleight of hand"[3] in which the various narrative elements reflect and play off eachother, mimicking at the narrative level a deconstructive dislocation of sign and referent, as the description whirls vertiginously to an arbitrary resolution in the notion of the "kibbutz."

The disruptive and disorienting effects of Cortázar's mode of novelistic deconstruction illuminate the contrast between modernist innovations in the structuring of novelistic artifice and the recognizably *postmodernist* aesthetic exemplified in *Rayuela* (a contrast particularly evident in the passage just cited). As Alter notes in *Partial Magic,* the kind of self-conscious narration present in Joyce's *Ulysses,* while participating in a stream-of-consciousness orchestration of seemingly disparate and peripheral mental impressions which exhibit connections with the fictional artifice which structure them, ultimately is merely a highly aesthetic framework for the reconstitution of a stable reality independent of the text: "In Joyce, Faulkner, Proust, and Virginia Woolf, the stuff of reality . . . threatens to crumble into emptiness, and so the play of consciousness becomes a sustained act of desperate courage . . . creating form and substance where

perhaps there would be nothing (p. 142)."

By contrast, Cortázar's language in *Rayuela* openly and systematically thematizes and activates the deconstructive subsuming of worldly referents into a textual play of signifiers, translating the reputed stability of an external or objective reality into a discursive field of continually shifting signs. Nevertheless, the self-referentiality of the text manages to direct itself to structural "openings" in which coherent narrative elements may reconstitute themselves in a sort of textual mimicry of a reality external to the text itself (Foucault describes this process in a passage I cited on page eighteen of the first chapter). This poststructuralist and postmodernist inversion of the structural hierarchy of sign and referent, such that the signs themselves, referring to themselves, generate meaning and the illusion of a world external to the text, is quite overtly declared in the following passage:

> Puede ser que haya otro mundo dentro de éste, pero no lo encontraremos recortando su silueta en el tumulto fabuloso de los días y las vidas, no lo encontraremos ni en la atrofia ni en la hipertrofia. Ese mundo no existe, hay que crearlo como el fénix. Ese mundo existe en éste, pero como el agua existe en el oxígeno y el hidrógeno. . . . Digamos que el mundo es una figura, hay que leerla. Por leerla entendamos generarla (p. 540).
>
> [Perhaps there is another world inside this one, but we will not find it cutting out its silhouette from the fabulous tumult of days and lives, we will not find it in either atrophy or hypertrophy. That world does not exist, one has to create it like the phoenix. That world exists in this one, but the way water exists in oxygen and hydrogen. . . . Let us say that the world is a figure, it has to be read. By read let us understand generated.]

The textual reiteration of worldly referents functions both at the level of the sign, as my analysis thus far has emphasized, but

also at the narrative level, through the activity of metafictional frame-breaking. By referring to the "world [that] exists in this one," Cortázar's highlights the material and structural properties of his novel as a whole, a textual world which appears to encase a real one. Underscoring the essentially arbitrary nature of fictional constructs, Cortázar dissolves his discourse into a variegated but continuous intertextual weave, a "transgression" which ultimately problematizes the ontological status of his characters. As in *Don Quijote* and *Cien Años de Soledad,* where characters confront their existence as fictive, textually inscribed entities through a transgression of the narrative frames which in realist fiction formally maintain the ontological separation of the author and his fictional characters, Horacio at one juncture hints at his status as a character in Cortázar's novel:

> Ustedes, che, a lo mejor son ese coagulante de que hablábamos hace un rato. Me da por pensar que nuestra relación es casi química, un hecho fuera de nosotros mismos. Una especie de dibujo que se va haciendo (p. 439).
>
> [You people, well, you're probably that coagulant we were talking about a while back. It makes me think that our relationship is almost chemical, something outside of ourselves. A sort of sketch that is being done.]

Again, Cortázar invokes the idea of a figure, and as in *Tristram Shandy,* we are given a sense of the characters as broadly sketched etchings in the textual fabric of the novel. Yet Cortázar's insistence on the textual qualities of a fictional character go much further than a self-conscious acknowledgement of the novel's status as a structure of words. The notion of the world as a figure, as a form of textual inscription, does not merely imply that it is

reiterated in terms of a novelistic discourse, but that our experience of reading and actively interpreting a text offers an analogue for a perspectival experience of reality and being in general,[4] an idea which was perhaps first authoritatively formulated in portions of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Nachlass* (his notes, posthumously published as *The Will to Power*). Jean Granier recognizes this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy in an essay entitled, "Nietzsche's Conception of Chaos":

> One of the principal themes in Nietzschean thought is "the *interpretive* character of all that happens. No event exists in itself. Everything that happens consists of a group of phenomena that are gathered and *selected* by an interpretive being [Kröner]." For Nietzsche, these phenomena are not masks attached to a thing in itself, some lesser beings, or nothingness, or facts; their being belongs to an interpretive process. . . . Being *is* text (p. 135, *The New Nietzsche*).

The idea that reality in its rawest form is a continuously shifting, essentially perspectival matrix of sense-impressions which attains a fixed form only after it has been structured through an act of the interpretive imagination, is variously and repeatedly adumbrated in *Rayuela,* and helps to account for its indeterminate, open-ended structure.[5] Cortázar, in a manner similar to Sterne's in *Tristram Shandy,* solicits his reader's participation in structuring the text from a loosely ordered portfolio of episodes and impressions, and in generating meaning in the interpretive spaces left by his ludic, deconstructive textual ploys. Just as the world itself is a figure, intelligible only through an act of interpretation, the world of Cortázar's novel is a kaleidoscopic dance of shifting impressions and freely interacting signs until it is read, and "by

read, let us understand generated."

This profoundly creative and interactive role of the reader in his encounter with the text is a theme which is brilliantly elaborated in Cortázar's "Continuidad de los parques" [Continuity of Parks], a very short metafictional exercise which thematizes the reader's participation in "liberating" the text, hinging on the idea of a character that "comes to life" and prepares to murder the reader of the novel from which he has just sprung. The idea derives its elegance and its complexity from the fact that the action occurs both inside and outside the novel, but is perfectly unified; hence, the title of the story. The metafictional structure of the story as a whole is revealed in the final sentences, as the killer, having entered the plantation house, goes into a room in which a man is reading a novel:

> El mayordomo no estaría a esa hora, y no estaba. Subió los tres peldaños del porche y entró. Desde la sangre galopando en sus oídos le llegaban las palabras de la mujer: primero una sala azul, después una galería, una escalera alfombrada. En lo alto, dos puertas. Nadie en la primera habitación, nadie en la segunda. La puerta del salón, y entonces el puñal en la mano, la luz de los ventanales, el alto respaldo de un sillón de terciopelo verde, la cabeza del hombre en el sillón leyendo una novela (p. 12, *Ceremonias*).
>
> [The steward would not be there at that hour, and he wasn't there. He climbed the three steps of the porch and entered the house. From the blood galloping in his ears came the woman's words: first a blue parlor, then a gallery, a carpeted staircase. At the top, two doors. Nobody in the first room, no one in the second. The parlor door, and then the dagger in his hand, the light in the high windows, the high back of a green velvet chair, the head of the man in the chair reading a novel.]

In terms of its structure, a narrative which consumes itself when a character reads the very text which frames him as a fiction,

as well as its allegorical subtext on the liberation of purely textual forces when fictive constructs and framing devices are dissolved, "Continuidad de los parques" anticipates the elaborate metafictional paradox activated in the chaotic yet virtuosically orchestrated ending of *Cien Años de Soledad.* An emblem of Cortázar's calculated loss of narrative control is the sentence, "El mayordomo no estaría a esa hora, y no estaba" [The steward would not be there at that hour, and he wasn't there]. The "steward" in a traditional realist story could be construed as those narrative conventions and constructs which assure the reader that the text has been thoroughly "written" by the author, that its overall meaning has been encoded in a fixed structural matrix which can be "read" with an antiseptic lack of interference with the semantic content of the text, as well as the rhetorical security of an omniscient narrator who walks the reader through the various scenes while continually interposing himself between the reader and the world of the fictional characters.

With this "steward" absent from the narrative, Cortázar's enframed reader unwittingly activates an intertextual transgression of ontological frames, and with his conventional set of assumptions about reading (signalled by the naive way in which he gives himself over to the novel's illusionism), he is "imperiled" in his encounter with, and within, the metafictional superstructure of Cortázar's story. For those who would quarrel with my interpretation, and question whether the "allegorical subtext" of Cortázar's story can be so particular on the topic of a textually

interactive reading, I would indicate a passage in *Rayuela* such as the following, a selection from "Morelli's" notebooks:

> En alguna parte Morelli procuraba justificar sus incoherencias narrativas, sosteniendo que la vida de los otros, tal como nos llega en la llamada realidad, no es cine sino fotografía, es decir que no podemos aprehender la acción sino tan sólo sus fragmentos eleáticamente recortados. . . . Morelli pensaba que la vivencia de esas fotos, que procuraba presentar con toda la acuidad posible, debía poner al lector en condiciones de aventurarse, de participar casi en el destino de sus personajes (p. 646).
>
> [At one point Morelli tried to justify his narrative incoherencies, maintaining that the life of others, such as it comes to us in so-called reality, is not a movie but still photography, that is to say, that we cannot grasp the action, only a few of its eleatically recorded fragments. . . . Morelli thought that the existence of those pictures, which tried to present all that with the most acuity possible, must have placed the reader in conditions ripe for taking a chance, for participating, almost, in the destiny of characters.]

As I emphasized in relation to Cervantes and Sterne, the metafictional impulse to abandon realistic portraiture in favor of more artificial representation of character simultaneously foregrounds a character's flatness as a linguistic abstraction on the page and emphasizes the depth of true personality which is necessarily excluded from its purely textual embodiment in a work of fiction. Morelli's conviction that in life itself "we cannot grasp the action, only a few eleatically recorded fragments . . ." suggests that the metafictional deconstruction of character into its purely textual basis is actually the most stringent kind of "realism" possible, at least in the sense of verisimilitude. In contrast to a realist text, in which the reader is confined to a passive, voyeuristic perspective on a narrative whose plot is dissimulated as a continuous stream of action, Cortázar/Morelli emphasizes the empty semantic and descriptive spaces left in the interstices of

novelistic artifice which allow the reader a hand in generating the illusion of genuine character, while self-consciously recognizing the essentially arbitrary and artificial nature of its construction.[6]

In emphasizing the poststructuralist and deconstructive tendencies of Cortázar's writing, I have tried to show how *Rayuela* paradoxically draws on its own qualities of self-referentiality and interiority in "opening" the text, or rather, to recall Foucault's formulation, in guiding the text to its own structural openings, a self-reflexive "exterior deployment" which parodically mimicks the conventional narration of character and plot. While the playful Möbius structure of the book's "final" chapters is one of the more overt indications of *Rayuela*'s aesthetic of ludic liberation from realist conventions in the novel, the more apparently conventional ending of the novel's first two sections elaborates the same aesthetic in its rhetorical undercutting of any traditional sense of chronology and tapering of plot. At the insane asylum where Horacio, Traveler, and Talita are "employed" (there is little in their behavior to distinguish them from the patients), Horacio leans precariously out of his third-story bedroom window, savoring the inexplicable ordering of emotions suddenly reflected in the *rayuela* chalked on the sidewalk below:

> Era así, la armonía duraba increíblemente, no había palabras para contestar a la bondad de esos dos ahí abajo, mirándolo y hablándole desde la rayuela, porque Talita estaba parada sin darse cuenta en la casilla tres, y Traveler tenía un pie metido en la seis, de manera que lo único que él podía hacer era mover un poco la mano derecha en un saludo tímido y quedarse mirando a la Maga, a Manú, diciéndose que al fin y al cabo algún encuentro había, aunque no pudiera durar más que ese instante terriblemente dulce en el que lo mejor sin lugar a dudas hubiera sido inclinarse apenas hacia afuera y dejarse ir, paf se acabó (p. 509).

> [That's the way it was, the harmony lasted incredibly long, there were no words that could answer the goodness of those two down there below, looking at him and talking to him from the *rayuela,* because Talita had stopped in square three without realizing it, and Traveler had one foot in six, so that the only thing left to do was to move his right hand a little in a timid salute and stay there looking a La Maga, at Manú, telling himself that there was some meeting after all, even though it might only last just for that terribly sweet instant in which the best thing without any doubt at all would be to lean over just a little bit farther out and let himself go, paff the end.]

Many critics have seen in seen in this ambiguous conclusion the suggestion that Horacio commits suicide, but as Amorós relates in his introduction, Cortázar has emphatically denied any such nihilistic interpretation of Horacio's character and the novel itself:

> Cortázar niega tajantemente este tipo de interpretaciones: "Yo creo que es un libro profundamente optimista, porque Oliveira, a pesar de su carácter broncoso . . . su mediocridad mental, su incapacidad de ir más allá de ciertos límites, es un hombre que se golpea contra la pared, la pared del amor, la pared de la vida cotidiana, la pared de los sistemas filosóficos, la pared de la política. Se golpea la cabeza contra todo eso porque es un optimista en el fondo, porque él cree que un día, ya no para él pero para otros, algún día esa pared va a caer y del otro lado está el kibbutz del deseo, está el hombre verdadero, ese proyecto humano que él imagina y que no se ha realizado hasta este momento." (pp. 36-37)
>
> [Cortázar sharply denies this kind of interpretation: "I think it is a profoundly optimistic book, because Oliveira, in spite of his boorish character . . . his mental mediocrity, his inability to move beyond certain limits, is a man who throws himself against the wall, the wall of love, the wall of daily life, the wall of philosophical systems, the political wall. He beats his head against all that because he is at bottom an optimist, because he believes that some day, no longer for him but for others, some day that wall is going to fall and on the other side is the kibbutz of desire, and the authentic man, that human project which he imagines and which hasn't been realized until this moment."]

As Amorós adroitly remarks, the phrase "del otro lado" [from the other side] is a key to Cortázar's narrative strategies. As the title of the book's first section, it suggests of the novel's overarching structure what Cortázar's deconstructive method of confronting and activating semantic alterity implies at the discursive and

structural linguistic level--that the ludic aesthetic which permeates the novel at all strata is not a nihilistic negation of order, structure, or form, but an essentially idealistic quest for a transcendent identity which lies beyond the confines of present language systems.[7]

With this perspective in mind, we should read the closing episode of the novel's second section not as an image of Horacio's desperation and desire for some "final exit" from his chaotic mental frustration, but as a textual opening which brings to fruition the language games which have generated the narrative itself. The novel "closes" at this point, not as in a realist mode, by tapering its narrative rhetoric, but through a kind of textual disappearing act, a moment of recursive harmony which brings the reader to the limits of novelistic discourse, because the experience of "the other side" lies beyond the novel's expressive means.

As we have seen, Cortázar does not deploy the *rayuela* in his novel as a mere metaphor for its ludic aesthetic sensibility and unconventional structure, but as a model for generating a narrative framework sensitive to its own indeterminacy, expansive style, and creative complicity with its readers. In a similar manner, Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.,* structures and indeed creates itself according to the idea of a game which is part of the novel's subject matter. I might add that this structural inversion and conflation of the novel's subject matter and form, with its complex and ostentatious array of framing devices, typifies the metafictional novel's tendency to

analyze the processes and artifice of its own construction. As we shall see, Coover's rendering of Henry Waugh's fictional baseball league (the fiction within a larger fiction) moves beyond a metaphorical reflection on his own narrative technique, into an exposure of the very codes and aesthetic principles which structure and generate the novel as a whole. Consider the following passage, an allusion to Henry's baseball league as kind of holographic framing of the novel itself:

> The smart thing would be to baby Damon through the remaining fifteen or twenty innings he needed, pitching him against weaker teams, using him in one-inning relief stints in which, according to the rules, he would pitch as an Ace, so as to make sure he made that all-important leap next year, without which no great career was possible. Otherwise, pitching him regularly, the bottom could suddenly fall out. It had before with other bright young Rookies, many times. So why shouldn't Bancroft do it, why shouldn't he baby him? Because Barney Bancroft didn't know what Henry knew. He didn't know about the different charts (p. 39).

We find in this passage the familiar metafictional ruse, deployed for memorable comic effect in *Don Quijote* and *Cien Años de Soledad,* of "allowing" the novel's characters to glimpse their fictional and textual existence from a perspective outside the text itself--as it were, from the point of view of the author or reader. Also, as in *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Sot-Weed Factor,* the text or plot is referred to as a kind of metalinguistic code (Henry's "different charts" are the probability tables which, in conjunction with the rolling of the dice, determine the outcome of all of the league's games, as well as biographical statistics which help to flesh out the personalities of the players).

As I mentioned on pages six and seven of the first chapter, the

idea of a metalanguage, a text which encodes and determines another text but is itself hermetically impervious to any influence outside of its own discursive circle, is inevitably deconstructed by the novel's profound entrenchment in *polyglossia* and dialogic self-criticism. Nevertheless, the *allegorical* suggestion that from the perspective of the characters themselves fictional encoding resembles a metalinguistic code does not imply that fictional texts are totalizing and self-contained repositories of transcendental meaning, for the kind of framing schemes employed in *Cien Años de Soledad* and *The Universal Baseball Association* suggest that all texts are *inter* textually and *con* textually encoded in the metafictional novel within an overarching frame structure. What is viewed as a rigid and deterministic code from one perspective (the "destiny" of the UBA's characters inscribed in Henry's official league records) can reveal itself as the creative activity of a fictional artificer within a different narrative frame (that of Coover's novel).

Indeed, a basic tension which extends through the novel manifests itself in Henry's struggle between the conflicting aesthetic impulses of a probabilistic determination of his fictional world and a kind of authorial determinism (a conflict settled in *Rayuela* unequivocally upon the side of indeterminacy and play). Because of his total emotional absorption within his fictional creation, Henry wants to "intervene" in the destiny of his characters, yet he realizes that this type of willful determinism has its own drawbacks and limitations:

> And could Henry sit idly by and watch the kid get powdered, lose hope of becoming an Ace? He had to. Oh, sure, he was free to throw away the dice, run the game by whim, but then what would be the point of it? Who would Damon Rutherford really be then? Nobody, an empty name, a play actor. Even though he'd set his own rules, his own limits, and though he could change them whenever he wished, nevertheless he and his players were committed to the turns of the mindless and unpredictable--one might even say, irresponsible--dice. That was how it was. He had to accept it, or quit the game altogether (p. 40).

The "irresponsibility" of the dice reveals itself when Damon Rutherford, an incredibly talented young pitcher, is struck instantly dead by a beanball in his first outing after a perfect game. It seems quite improbable that such a tragicomic irony could result from the throw of the dice, and indeed with Damon at the plate Henry dismisses the event, albeit nervously, as such a remote possibility that even with the statistically rare "Extraordinary Occurrences Chart" in play, he continues the game. Parodoxically, afterwards it strikes Henry as inevitable that he should roll triple ones and kill one of the greatest Aces in UBA history:

> The dice felt sticky in his hands. He got a plastic cup out of the cupboard. A glass fell and broke. He put the dice in the cup, shook it. Cold hollow rattle. Casey stretched. The sun beat down, or maybe it was just the lamp--anyway it threw a withering glare off the papers on the table, made Henry squint his eyes, and he felt somehow he was up to something sinister. That's it, he chided himself, pile it on, you'll feel like a fool when nothing--he listened to the rattle, to the roar, held his breath, pitched the dice down on the table.
>
> He knew even before he looked: 1-1-1.
>
> Damon Rutherford was dead (p. 73).

The oxymoronic sense of statistical determinism in Henry's method of generating his fictional baseball league has a broad theoretical parallel with quantum mechanics, in which probabilistic wave functions determine quantum numbers and account for the

stability of the atom with much more accuracy than the mechanical determinism of classical physics. In fact, Coover's aesthetic of authorial indeterminacy can be viewed in terms of a larger cultural movement against "classical" methodology generally, that mechanistic, determistic world-view and rationalist discourse of the industrial age which by the turn of the century had begun to exhibit signs of bankrupcy and formal exhaustion. As Waugh notes, the emergence of metafiction should be viewed in the context of a general movement towards cultural self-consciousness and skepticism with regard to the validity of the world-view and language systems (including mathematical models) of classical science and literary realism:

> The present increased awareness of 'meta' levels of discourse and experience is partly a consequence of an increased social and cultural self-consciousness. Beyond this, however, it also reflects a greater awareness within contemporary culture of the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everday 'reality'. The simple notion that language passively reflects a coherent, meaningful and 'objective' world is no longer tenable. Language is an independent, self-contained system which generates its own 'meanings'. Its relationship to the phenomenal world is highly complex, problematic and regulated by convention (p. 3).

If Henry were framed in any kind of realistic context within Coover's novel the wild improbability of Damon's death would strike the reader as absurd and unbelievable, but as a metafictional commentary on Coover's aesthetic as a novelist, the episode sheds light on the structural "codes" which organize the entire novel and generate its self-critical discourse. Henry's confusion between the lamp in his apartment and the sun over the ballpark may seem on the surface to be only a mildly self-referential convention which

highlights the ontological bifurcation of fictional discourse into the self-aware sign and its referent, yet Coover's ingenious method of framing a fiction-making game within the larger "game" of the novel itself makes the formal and rhetorical structure of his metafictional discourse more complexly layered. On the one hand, Henry's awareness of the artificiality of the UBA is perfectly plausible in a realistic context, but the way in which Coover frames this situation in the novel makes it clear that we are looking at an image of the self-conscious author, and the effect is like holding a mirror up to narrative art, but within a fictional framework which includes the mirror.

There is a parallel with this construction in the closing episode of *Cien Años de Soledad,* where García Márquez brings the text of the novel face to face with its own image and converts his novelistic discourse into a commentary on a commentary on a commentary of itself, in a endlessly regressive cycle of self-reflection which paralyzes narrative movement and dissolves the novel's framing devices into a kind of funhouse room-of-mirrors relativism. Yet whereas García Márquez was sealing the hermetic world of his novel through a kind of metafictional self-destruction device, Coover does not employ such a rigid construction in *The Universal Baseball Association,* and maintains in his portrait of Henry and the UBA the appearance of worldly referentiality.

Nevertheless, as in *Rayuela,* whose self-reflexive narrative generates the illusion of extra-textual reference through a structural network of intertextual allusion and deferral, Coover's

novel turns its inside out by crossweaving narrative frames and showing how fictional self-consciousness operates at all levels of novelistic discourse. In other words, one of Coover's most powerful themes is expressed in his understanding that language in the metafictional novel is not simply bifurcated into two opposing frames of awareness, a "worldly referent camp" and a self-referential plane of discourse, but is governed at all discursive levels by a self-conscious dialectic which relativizes the novel's contextual frames and encodes itself through a kind of ubiquitous indeterminacy. Henry expresses this aesthetic as he ruminates on signs that the UBA is beginning to disintegrate from the disruptive shock waves generated by the Damon Rutherford catastrophe:

> Waiting for the bus, he saw that storefront across the street--Thornton's. Well, that's right, Barney surely had the right to bring up a replacement for Damon. Injuries were one thing, but a dead ballplayer was another. Unprecedented, but the Association was bound to approve it. So why not Thornton Shadwell? The thought cheered him some, and then on the bus, he had other ideas. First of all, that the circuit wasn't closed, his or any other: there were patterns, but they were shifting and ambiguous and you had a lot of room inside them (p. 143).

In a manner similar to Cortázar's in *Rayuela,* Coover champions the idea that the novel should embrace structural indeterminacy, recognizing that while this constricts the author's vaunted autonomy in imposing his creative will on the raw materials of the imagination, it actually engenders a more verisimilitous, if more openly artificial sense of the characters as inscrutably complex and autonomous entities, and removes the reader from his bloodlessly

voyeuristic perspective on the text. Coover's "probabilistic" narrative techniques are characteristically metafictional insofar as they foreground the artifice involved in conferring a sense of autonomy and individuality on fictional character, actively polemicizing and controverting the realist pretension to a perfectly "objective" vantage on the text (characterization in the realist mode is actually the most subjective, authoritarian, and deterministic conceivable).

The notion that the all of the determinants of plot and characterization in the novel are generated according to distribution functions and statistical tables designed to produce a kind of bounded indeterminacy is represented in the character of Fenn McCaffree, the UBA's crypticly detached chancellor, who spends most of his time at television monitors surveying the league and tabulating data:

> "You see, Woody, it's one thing to say that each of these players and each of these teams is interested in maximizing its expected utility, and another to know--even for *them* to know--what that utility really is."
>
> "How's that, Fenn?" Went right by him. Conversations with Fenn McCaffree these days got pretty one-sided. He was forever yakking about distribution functions, the canonical form of M, compound decision problems, relations of dominance; like Fenn had somehow forgot the game was baseball (p. 146).

As the "chancellor" of Henry's league, Fenn is an intermediary and surrogate for Henry himself, just as Henry is a broad caricature of Coover in his role as author, a metafictional convention which recalls the surrogate author figures of Hamete Benengeli in *Don Quijote* and Melquíades in *Cien Años de Soledad.* And like

Aureliano in the final chapters of García Márquez's novel, Fenn appears to transcend the league's contextual frames, entering into a metafictional complicity with Henry, whose authorial perspective on the UBA reveals the artificial and essentially arbitrary codes which generate its very existence.

Nevertheless, while it is a rendering of his metafictional awareness of the fact that he is merely a fiction inscribed in the "text" of the UBA, Fenn's basically "paranoid" connection with Henry's statistical methodology is also emblematic of Coover's postmodern aesthetic sensibility. As an absent author who operates the secret controls in his funhouse creation,[8] "giving over" his creative authority to the whimsical indeterminacy of language games, and in his manipulation of a text whose information functions in excess of system[9] (represented by Fenn's paranoid surveillance of every aspect of the UBA's operations, doomed to failure since he is a part of the system he is trying to understand and control), Coover shows a basic affinity with many of his recogizably postmodernist contemporaries, such as Thomas Pynchon and Donald Barthelme. As Patrick O'Donnell notes in an article on Don Delillo's *Running Dog,* paranoia (in a formalized sense of the word) is one of the basic paradigms which permeates and characterizes postmodernist culture:

> In the 1960s, during the height of the Vietnam war, the disease of preference amongst liberals and radicals of every stripe was paranoia. . . . Subsequently assimilated into the cultural mainstream in the post-Vietnam era, paranoia has become a social bond, a way for the American body politic to assert its fragile and fictive unity over against [sic] the various forms of disintegration and indeterminacy it is experiencing in an era of late capitalism.

> Conspiracies, real and imagined, abound, their nets so far-flung as to create a kind of hermeneutic comfort for the common reader: "everything is connected"; "it all makes sense." Alignments seem to shift from day to day, contexts change, but one of the more strident factors of present-day American life is that there are always more connections than one expected. . . . The old networks dissolve, creating some disorientation, but new connections are welcomed for the ease with which they can be assimilated into, confirm, and expand rapidly growing systems of communication and exchange (p. 56, *The Centennial Review, Volume XXXIV No. 1*).

Parodoxically, the systemic, totalizing impulse of paranoia becomes a way of coping with and understanding a fragmented matrix of conflicting codes and language systems, a strategy represented and reiterated at various levels in Coover's novel--for instance, in Fenn's attempt to understand the statistical methodology of his creator, in Henry's attempt to adapt to the stifling and dehumanizing, bureaucratic mechanism of his job as an accountant (his boss's name is Zifferblatt, German for "clockface"), and in Coover's whole conception of history as a fictive net masking itself as a monolithic, intelligible continuity.[10] In place of the systematic unity, totalized meaning, and structural determinism of traditional realist and modernist texts, Coover deploys a game of chance, playfully suggesting not only that narrative indeterminacy and textual heterogeneity activate a metafictional awareness of frame structures, but that the frames which structure our understanding of history and extratextual reality are themselves shifting conventions, the arbitrarily defined interstices of competing language systems.

In this respect, the final chapter, in which Henry abandons the dice in order to replay Damon Rutherford's final game exactly as it originally unfolded (but with players several generations younger),

is not merely a metafictional dramatization of a self-aware character's nightmarish experience when confined within a perfectly deterministic narration, but an allegory on our present cultural impasse in the dying "wake" of modernity and our inability to think outside of its brittle modes of representation. As the players begin to adopt their predetermined roles, they gradually slip into an attitude of tragic fatalism. For instance, Paul Trench ruminates on the absurdity of his situation, which has him slated to impersonate Damon Rutherford's catcher, Royce Ingram:

> Beyond each game, he sees another, and yet another, in endless and hopeless succession. He hits a ground ball to third, is thrown out. Or he beats the throw. What difference, in the terror of eternity, does it make? He stares at the sky, beyond which is more sky, overwhelming in its enormity. He, Paul Trench, is utterly absorbed in it, entirely disappears, is Paul Trench no longer, is nothing at all: so why does he even walk up there. . . . Each day: the dread. And when, after being distracted by the excitement of a game, he returns at night to the dread, it is worse than ever, compounded with shame and regret. He wants to quit--but what does he mean, "quit"? The game? Life? Could you separate them? (p. 238)

The fact that this grim ritual is to be acted out once a year (it is already "Damonsday CLVII") makes it an alarming image of the endless reiteration of a kind of tragic inevitability in certain forms of modern discourse, a totalizing structuralism which ossifies the living present within a monolithic vision of history and paralyzes any metaconscious inquiry into the arbitrary and self-delimiting interstices of posmodernist discourse. Moreover, its presence in the structurally indeterminate and ludic framework of Coover's novel underscores the potential of novelistic dialogism, heteroglossia and metafictional frame transgression in activating a

formal and systematic deconstruction of the old methodology. In keeping with the metafictional novel's tradition of formal self-criticism, technical self-awareness, and generic elasticity, *Rayuela* and *The Universal Baseball Association* both draw upon the expansive structural possibilities opened by a ludic aesthetic sensibility in radically critiquing and appropriating brittle forms of discourse, much as *Don Quijote* had at the very dawn of the modern age.

Notes

Chapter One

1. I am borrowing and echoing the familiar poststructuralist coinage (as in Derrida's *The Ear of the Other*), but there is also an intended resonance with Bakhtin's concept of "other-languagedness" [*inojazycie*].

2. There are many excellent examples of novelistic poems and books from the Middle Ages which are framed-narrative tale cycles (Boccaccio's *Decameron,* Don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor,* Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor,* etc.), but a framed narrative such as Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* never overtly flaunts its own narrative artifice. Even where the description of the story-telling characters is highly rhetorical and artificial (as much of Chaucer's poetry is) the ontological and narrative frames separating the characters from their stories and their own author (Chaucer) are never deliberately or overtly transgressed. Nevertheless, as complex narrative frameworks encompassing several levels of fictionality and narrative rhetoric, they should be considered as important precursors to the novel and its metafictional tendencies.

3. The "effacement of presence" is signified in the *sous rature* ("under erasure") practice of writing and then crossing out a key word, such as *Being,* and retaining both the word and the mark of its "erasure." A textual ploy which Derrida adapts from Heidegger, it signifies the trace of an absence, the necessity of writing a concept enmeshed in the myth of self-presence and logocentrism while simultaneously negating its mythical origin, etc. In terms of Beckett's disembodied "voices," one could say that the text "speaks," signifies the trace of authorial voice, but effaces its origin in an actual author by stripping itself of the antecedent pronoun.

4. The "transcendental signified" is a entity, such as *Being,* which preconditions and is presupposed by all language, but is itself independent of any particular signifier. It is "ontotheological" insofar as it merges the idea of Being (onto) with that of God (theo) and the logos (-logy), respectively, into a mythical structure of self-presence, omnipresence, and the embodiment of truth in the word (the essence of "logos"). A deconstruction of this concept would hinge upon the arbitrary nature of *both* sign and referent, demonstrating that the notion of a signified meaning "beyond" language is merely another metaphoric extension of the logocentric privileging of oral discourse over writing.

5. Both of these consequences of intertextuality are described in a similar manner by Derrida in *Of Grammatology.* Of the transgression of the category "work" or "book", he writes: "The idea of the book is the idea of a totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier; this totality of the signifier cannot be a totality, unless a totality constituted by the signified preexists it, supervises its inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality. The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing. It is the encyclopedic protection of theology and logocentrism against the disruption of writing, against its aphoristic energy, and, as I shall specify later, against difference in general. If I distinguish the text from the book, I shall say that the destruction of the book, as it is now under way in all domains,

denudes the surface of the text (p. 18)." And though he does not refer to the "death of the author" in contemporary writing, Derrida does allude to a similar relationship between writing and death: "But however important it might be, and were it in fact universal or called upon to become so, that particular model which is phonetic writing *does not exist*. . . . Even before speaking, as I shall do further on, of a radical and a priori infidelity, one can already remark its massive phenomena in mathematical script or in punctuation, in *spacing* in general, which it is difficult to consider as simple accessories of writing. That a speech supposedly alive can lend itself to spacing in its own writing is what relates it originarily to its own death (p. 39)."

6. "Endlessly variegated, though basically undifferentiated . . ." refers to Foucault's notion of "repetition" as a discursive mode which extends itself indefinitely, paradoxically duplicating itself in an undifferentiated, acategorical though assymetrical manner. In "Language to Infinity," Foucault states that "Writing, in Western culture, automatically dictates that we place ourselves in the virtual space of self-representation and reduplication; since writing refers not to a thing but to speech, a work of language only advances more deeply into the intangible density of the mirror, calls forth the possible and impossible infinity, ceaselessly strives after speech, maintains it beyond the death which condemns it, and frees a murmuring stream . . . (p. 56)." In "Theatrum Philosophicum" he describes repetition's abandonment to the dissolution of categories: "At a stroke we risk being surrounded not by a marvellous multiplicity of differences, but by equivalences, ambiguities. . . . To think within the context of categories is to know the truth so that it can be distinguished from the false; to think 'acategorically' is to confront a black stupidity (pp. 188-189)." Foucault thus describes a type of discourse characterized by the double movement of replication and difference, acategorization and stupefaction, recursion and infinite extension.

Chapter Two

1. This dual quality in metafiction of disorientation and a laying bare of artifice is encapsulated in Victor Shklovsky's notion of "defamiliarization." Lee Lemon and Marion Reis explain this concept in *Russian Formalist Criticism* in the following manner: "When reading ordinary prose, we are likely to feel that something is wrong if we find ourselves noticing the individual words as words. The purpose of art, according to Shklovsky, is to force us to notice. Since perception is usually too automatic, art develops a variety of techniques to impede perception or, at least, to call attention to themselves. Thus *'Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important'*. . . . According to Shklovsky, the chief technique for promoting such perception is 'defamiliarization.' It is not so much a device as a result obtainable by any number of devices. A novel point of view, as Shklovsky points out, can make a reader perceive by making the familiar seem strange. Wordplay, deliberately roughened rhythm, or figures of speech can all have the same effect (pp. 4-5)." The systematic deployment of this technique in *Tristram Shandy* led Shklovsky to the surprising conclusion that it is "the most typical novel in world literature," meaning, I suppose, that the process of defamiliarization is characteristic of the novel (just as, for Bakhtin, the novel is inherently dialogic).

2. There is an intriguing, if oblique, parallel between the static, painterly quality of this scene in *Don Quijote* and the final shot in Federico Fellini's *Fellini Satyricon*. As the camera pulls back from Encolpius and his companions, their faces gradually merge with identical images in a fresco painting on a partially destroyed wall. This final

poetic image is suggestive of the fractured distance over which we perceive the characters of the Satyricon (a Roman "novel" which is extant only in fragments). As Cervantes does with the battle scene between don Quijote and the Biscayan, Fellini exposes the framed quality of his cinematic narrative in his remove to a critical and self-conscious distance from its characters (Fellini is well known for his "metacinematic" films, especially "$8^1/_2$").

3. In actuality, the number of narrators implied by Cervantes is indeterminate, for his references to them are rather ambiguous. John Jay Allen, in a footnote to his Cátedra edition of the novel, places the number of narrators at only two (Cervantes and Hamete Benengeli), presuming that the "second author" mentioned at the end of I. 8 is a reference to Cervantes himself.

4. Other instances of a Chinese box frame structure can be discerned in the various interpolated tales, which are fictions with the larger fiction of the novel itself. In fact, at one point in the captive's tale there are as many as five contextual frames enclosing eachother in concentric fashion (Zoraida and her father are conversing in Arabic, and their dialogue is translated and related by the captive, whose tale is in turn rendered in Hamete Benengeli's chronicle and translated by the Toledan morisco for the "second author," and finally related by Cervantes in his novel). Although the frames in this structure are not transgressed, it nevertheless indicates the sophistication of Cervantes' narrative technique, his acute awareness of the importance of framing devices in structuring the readers perception of a tale.

5. Cervantes actually offers the reader several variants of don Quijote's former name in the course of the novel. For instance in I. 5, Cervantes has a minor character refer to him as "Señor Quijana," to which Allen (the editor) appends the following footnote: "Quejana, según 'conjeturas verosímiles,' y Quijada según 'los autores,' don Quijote dirá más adelante que desciende 'en línea recta de varón' de Gutierre Quijada (I, 49), pero en su lecho de muerte se llamará Alonso Quijano (p. 125)." [Quejana, according to "plausible conjectures," and Quijada according to "the authors," don Quijote will say later on that he descends "in a direct male line" from Gutierre Quijada (I. 49), but on his deathbed he will call himself Alonso Quijano.]

This raises the question of what may be termed "the problematics of the personal name," which Foucault discusses in the following terms: "Obviously not a pure and simple reference, the proper name (and the author's name as well) has other than indicative functions. It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description. . . . The proper name and the name of an author oscillate between the poles of description and designation, and, granting that they are linked to what they name, they are not totally determined either by their descriptive or designative functions (p. 121)." John Barth describes a similar duplicity of the proper name in "Ambrose his Mark," a story in Lost in the Funhouse: "As toward one's face, one's body, one's self, one feels complexly toward the name he's called by, which too one had no hand in choosing. It was to be my fate to wonder at that moniker, relish and revile it, ignore it, stare it out of countenance into hieroglyph and gibber, and come finally if not to embrace at least to accept it with the cold neutrality of self-recognition, whose expression is a thin-lipped smile. Vanity frets about his name, Pride vaunts it, Knowledge wretches at its sound, Understanding sighs; all live outside it, knowing full well that I and my sign are neither one nor quite two (p. 34)."

My point is that Cervantes highlights a textual duplicity by playing on don Quijote's various names. Couched in the chivalric rhetoric of historically indeterminate names or multiple titles of nobility, the multiplicity of personal names suggest don Quijote's

complexity as a character, but also his essentially arbitrary fictive identity.

6. Walter Kaufmann describes Nietzsche's references to don Quijote in a footnote in his book, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist:* "Nietzsche loved Don Quixote and tended to identify with him. He censured Cervantes for having made his hero look ridiculous. . . . Nietzsche protests: 'Yes, he does not even spare his hero the dreadful illumination about his own state at the end of his life. . . .' In another note he again refers to Don Quixote's 'horrible end' and comments: 'Mankind is ever threatened by this ignominious *denial of oneself* at the *end* of one's striving (p. 71).'" It would appear that Nietzsche subscribed to the Romantic conception of don Quijote as a tragic figure, and objects to his "ignominious" end on the grounds that it is too demeaning and a senseless repudiation of his stoic "quixotism," rather than any sense that the metafictional duality which has bifurcated don Quijote's personality throughout is inexplicably settled on the side of a realistic "disillusionment."

7. There is a remarkable image in the "novela del curioso impertinente" [story of the ill-advised curiosity] which suggests this complex dual movement within the experience of *desengaño:* "También alabó este segundo soneto Anselmo como había hecho el primero, y desta manera iba añadiendo eslabón a eslabón a la cadena con que se enlazaba y trababa su deshonra, pues cuando más Lotario le deshonraba, entonces le decía que estaba más honrado. Y con esto, todos los escalones que Camila bajaba hacia el centro de su menosprecio, los subía, en la opinión de su marido, hacia la cumbre de la virtud y de su buena fama (pp. 416-417)." [Anselmo praised this sonnet as he had the first, and in this manner he continued to add link on link to the chain that he was forging for his own dishonor, for the more Lotario dishonored him, the more he convinced himself of his spotless honor. And likewise, the deeper Camila sank in her gradual descent into infamy, the higher she rose in her husband's estimation toward the topmost pinnacles of virtue and renown.] The image is quintessentially baroque in its its contrapuntal play on the multiple senses of *desengaño.* Anselmo is sinking deeper and deeper into illusions, but this is also the artifice in which he depicts Camila as the pinnacle of virtue; and conversely, Camila is thoroughly disillusioned, but continues to weave the artifice of her husband's deception by pretending to be virtuous. The sum effect is a contrapuntal pattern of crossweavings between truth and illusion, which can be related to another baroque keyword which figures prominently in the story--*el laberinto* [the labyrinth].

8. Foucault offers a powerful framework for understanding this historical shift in the autonomy of the author in his essay "What is an Author?": ". . . the 'author-function' is not universal or constant in all discourse. Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call 'literary' (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author. Their anonymity was ignored because their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity (p. 125)." This is precisely what we observe in the *Quijote,* where Cervantes adopts the brittle rhetoric of the *caballerías* as ancient, "true histories," though the authenticity of his work clearly resides in the narrative and rhetorical invention of its author.

Chapter Three

1. The chapter begins as follows: "Años después, en su lecho de agonía, Aureliano

Segundo había de recordar la lluviosa tarde de junio en que entró en el dormitorio a conocer a su primer hijo. Aunque era lánguido y llorón, sin ningún rasgo de un Buendía, no tuvo que pensar dos veces para ponerle nombre. 'Se llamará José Arcadio,' dijo (p. 228)." [Years later, on his deathbed, Aureliano Segundo would remember the rainy afternoon in June when he went into the bedroom to meet his first son. Although he was languid and weepy, with no mark of a Buendía, he did not have to think twice about naming him. "We'll call him José Arcadio," he said.]

In addition to the temporal/textual displacement suggested by the rhetoric of the opening sentence, the fact that they name him José Arcadio, "without having to think twice," is a metafictional signal that the characters themselves understand the text's structuring according to a recursive language of excess and repetition. In his introduction to the novel, Joaquín Marco explains the function of the repetition of proper names in the following manner: "Como indica Graciela Maturo, 'la historia de los Buendía funciona, sí, a nivel de la narración, como expresión esquematizada del desarrollo de la humanidad a lo largo del tiempo, y más restrictamente, como historia del Pueblo Elegido desde su Alianza fundacional hasta el Final profetizado. No obstante tal interpretación, el clan Buendía, que algunos críticos han reconstruido trabajosamente indagando sus derivaciones, variantes y repeticiones, será objeto de una consideración no-cronológica y por lo tanto no-genealógica.' La estructura se organiza así en un *presente absoluto* en el que los personajes se organizan en relaciones binarias o ternarias (p. 53)." [As Graciela Maturo points out, "the history of the Buendía family functions at the level of the narration, to be certain, as a schematic expression of humanity's development over the course of time, and in a more restricted sense, as the history of the Chosen People since their foundational alliance until their prophesied end. Notwithstanding this interpretation, the Buendía clan, which some critics have reconstructed, laboriously investigating its derivations, variants and repetitions, could be the object of a non-chronological, and therefore, non-genealogical study." In this manner, the structure organizes itself in an *absolute present* in which the characters organize themselves in binary or ternary relations.] As Maturo and Marco recognize, the "history" of the Buendía family at a certain level reveals its fundamental anachronism, a level which I recognize as a metafictional perspective on the static, "spatial" qualities of the text as a whole.

2. There is a passage in the final pages of the novel which explicitly describes this metafictional vantage on the text as a static whole. At one point in Aureliano's decipherment of Melquíades parchments, he discovers that the events they describe are organized according to an unusual scheme: "La protección final, que Aureliano empezaba a vislumbrar cuando se dejó confundir por el amor de Amaranta Ursula, radicaba en que Melquíades no había ordenado los hechos en el tiempo convencional de los hombres, sino que concentró un siglo de episodios cotidianos, de modo que todos coexistieran en un instante (p. 446)." [The final protection, which Aureliano had begun to glimpse when he let himself be confused by the love of Amaranta Ursula, was based on the fact that Melquíades hadn't put events in the order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they all coexisted in one instant.]

In view of the novel's systematic concern with the artifice of its own construction, the metafictional *double entente* of this passage is unmistakable. The illusion of narrative action is sometimes so convincing that we may forget that the novel is ultimately a static structure of written words, a reality which Aureliano's encounter with his purely textual and fictive existence underscores.

3. The final Aureliano, the offspring of Aureliano and Amaranta Ursula's incestuous

affair, meets a gruesome end just before Aureliano's decipherment of Melquíades parchments causes the novel to literally consume itself: "Y entonces vio al niño. Era un pellejo hinchado y reseco, que todas las hormigas del mundo iban arrastrando trabajosamente hacia sus madrigueras por el sendero de piedras del jardín. Aureliano no pudo moverse. No porque lo hubiera paralizado el estupor, sino porque en aquel instante prodigioso se le revelaron las claves definitivas de Melquíades, y vio el epígrafe de los pergaminos perfectamente ordenado en el tiempo y el espacio de los hombres: *El primero de la estirpe está amarrado en un árbol y al último se lo están comiendo las hormigas* (p. 446)." [And then he saw the child. It was a dry and bloated bag of skin that all the ants in the world were laboriously dragging toward their holes along the stone path in the garden. Aureliano couldn't move. Not because he was paralyzed with horror but because at that prodigious moment Melquíades' final keys were revealed to him, and he saw the epigraph of the parchments perfectly placed in the order of man's time and space: *The first of the line is tied to a tree and the last is being eaten by ants.*] The structure of the prophesy mirrors that of the novel as a whole--an hermetic, self-consuming cycle. Also, the incestuous nature of the final Aureliano's parentage suggests a closed genetic system which, like the novel itself, generates its own destruction.

4. I am thinking in particular of D. P. Gallagher, who comments on this dimension of García Márquez's fiction in his essay on Latin American literature in *Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies:* "Very often interpreters and critics of Latin American writing merely assert that most Spanish American novelists at some point or other draw on fantasy in their writing, but they do not usually ask themselves why. The influence of surrealism is sometimes offered as a crucial factor. Yet, barring Asturias, fantasy as deployed by Spanish American novelists does not on the whole have surrealist roots any more than that of say, Kafka, does. . . . At one point in *Cien años* a strike in an American banana plantation is violently crushed, and the corpses of the strikers are whisked away by train, never to be seen again. Worse, it is subsequently asserted in school textbooks not only that the strike never took place but indeed that the banana plantation never existed. Here at last, then, we have a context in which the presence of fantasy in Spanish American fiction can be understood. For where governments and foreign companies can cavalierly change reality, who can say what is real any longer? And is not the reality of Colombia more fantastic than any fairy-tale? The novel's descriptions of the interminable Colombian civil wars leave no doubt that it is (pp. 463-464)."

Although I have chosen not to focus on the sociohistorical factors which have conspired to give rise to the metafictional novel, I think Gallagher's insight into the cultural atmosphere of García Márquez's native Colombia does much to elucidate his technical achievements as a self-conscious novelist. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that American metafiction of the sixties and seventies was largely inspired by the atmosphere of avant-gardism which permeated its cultural scene. As Barth notes in the introduction to *Lost in the Funhouse,* "The High Sixties, like the Roaring Twenties, was a time of more than usual ferment in American social, political, and artistic life. Our unpopular war in Vietnam, political assassinations, race riots, the hippie counterculture, pop art, mass poetry readings, street theater, vigorous avant-gardism in all the arts, together with dire predictions not only of the death of the novel but of the moribundity of the print medium in the electronic global village--those flavored the air we breathed then, along with occasional tear gas and other contaminants. One may sniff traces of that air in the *Funhouse* ("Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice"). I myself found it more invigorating than disturbing (pp. vii-viii)."

Given the "magic realism" of García Márquez's metafiction, it seems plausible that

the cultural preconditions for a fantastic reality in fiction existed in the American sixties and seventies as well.

5. There is an intriguing parallel between the rhetoric of this phrase and that of a similar passage in the first part of *Don Quijote:* "Admirado quedó el canónigo de oír la mezcla que don Quijote hacía de verdades y mentiras. . . (pp. 569-570)." [The canon was astonished at hearing the hodgepodge of truths and lies that don Quijote uttered. . . .] Ironically, don Quijote's "hodgepodge of truths and lies" points to the fundamental duplicity at the core of Cervantes' metafictional technique, his appropriation of a rhetoric of chivalric "history" in an openly fictive text.

6. What I have identified as an essentially modernist and postmodernist tendency to prolong discourse against a kind of impingent void can be seen as a more fundamental characteristic of narrative art generally. As Joaquín Marco remarks in his introduction to *Cien Años de Soledad,* García Márquez's incessant struggle against the death of his own novelistic discourse can be viewed in the context of a classic narrative paradigm, the legend of Scheherazade: "Se lucha también [la novela de García Márquez] contra la muerte, a través de la imaginación, en una conocida muestra de literatura tradicional y popular, *Las mil y una noches.* Ante la posibilidad de su ejecución, Shahrazad hila un cuento cada noche. La narración, supone, pues, continuidad y vida (p. 30)."

[{García Márquez's novel} struggles also against death, by means of the imagination, in a familiar display of traditional and popular literature, *The Thousand and One Nights.* Before the possibility of her execution, Scheherazade spins a tale each night. Narrative art presupposes, then, continuity and life.]

In light of Marco's insight, it isn't surprising that Barth, who appears concerned with the intertextual continuity and self-referentiality of novelistic discourse in all of his works, should choose the legend of Scheherazade as the guiding theme and frame-structure of his own *Chimera.*

7. For instance, consider these passages from the opening pages of his first novel, *The Floating Opera:* "To someone like myself, whose literary activities have been confined since 1920 mainly to legal briefs and *Inquiry*-writing, the hardest thing about the task at hand--*viz.,* the explanation of a day in 1937 when I changed my mind--is getting into it. . . . For example, I've got this book started now, and though we're probably a good way from the story yet, at least we're headed toward it, and I for one have learned to content myself with that. . . . To carry the 'meandering stream' conceit a bit further, if I may: it has always seemed to me, in the novels that I've read now and then, that those authors are asking a great deal of their readers who start their stories furiously, in the middle of things, rather than backing or sidling slowly into them. Such a plunge into someone else's life and world, like a plunge into the Choptank River in mid-March, has, it seems to me, little of pleasure in it. No, come along with me, reader, and don't fear for your weak heart. . . . Good heavens, how does one write a novel!" (pp. 1-2)

Several characteristics of this passage recall Sterne's self-conscious rhetoric in *Tristram Shandy.* Like Tristram, Barth's narrator prefers a gradual introduction into the novel's action (even if it is merely a pretext for meandering digressions on narrative technique), a rhetorical familiarity with the reader, and an ironic deprecation of his own powers as a novelist.

8. Barth encapsulates his understanding of the textual complicity between history and fiction in a superbly ironic reference to "Motteux's *Don Quixote*" (p. 16). Cervantes' novel may indeed have been pirated under a translator or publisher's name in the late

sixteenth century, but at least one effect of Barth's reference is to underscore his own imposture as Ebenezer Cooke's "chronicler." Also, the very mention of *Don Quijote,* a work in which literary imposture and parody is elaborated to an unprecedented degree, reinforces the irony of Barth's reference.

Chapter Four

1. The basic figure evoked in this structure is that of a Möbius strip. As the title of the section containing these two chapters suggests, they illuminate eachother "de otros lados" [from other sides], just as the two sides of a strip of paper run into a single infinite loop in the Möbius strip.

Barth employs the same figure in the actual material structure of his "Frame-story" in *Lost in the Funhouse,* and comments on it in the introduction: "The reader may skip all these [prefatory] frames and go directly to the first story . . . called 'Frame-Tale.' It happens to be, I believe, the shortest short story in the English language (ten words); on the other hand, it's endless (p. vii)." (When assembled as a Möbius strip, the story reads, "Once upon a time there was a story that began Once upon a time. . . and so on *ad infinitum.*)

2. As Amorós notes in the introduction, one of Cortázar's most persistent aesthetic principles is the rendering of description and perception in general in terms of "figures," and it is announced as early as his first novel: "Es una intuición que aparece ya en *Los premios:* 'Allí tuve por primera vez una intuicón que me sigue persiguiendo, de la que se habla en *Rayuela* y que yo quisiera poder desarrollar ahora en un libro. Es la noción de lo que yo llamo las figuras. . . . Pienso que todos nosotros componemos figuras. Por ejemplo, en este momento podemos estar formando parte de una estructura que se continúa quizás a doscientos metros de aquí, donde a lo mejor hay otras tantas personas que no nos conocen como nosotros no las conocemos. Siento coninuamente la posibilidad de ligazones, de circuitos que se cierran y que nos interrelacionan al margen de toda explicación racional y de toda relación humana (p. 67)." [It is an intuition which already appears in *Los premios:* "There I had for the first time an intuition which continues to pursue me, one which is discussed in *Rayuela* and which I would now like to develop in a book. It's the notion of what I call figures. . . . I think that we all compose figures. For example, at this moment we may be forming part of a structure that continues perhaps two hundred meters from here, where perhaps there are as many people who don't know us as people we don't know. I continually feel the possibility of bonds, of circuits that close up and interrelate us at the margin of all rational explanation and all human relations."]

Although Amorós never cites a relation between Cortázar's discursive methods and deconstruction, I think that there is a striking parallel in this passage with Derrida's notion of writing as a network of signification in which signs refer continually to yet other signs, casting an expansive and regressive net whose margins and interstices open the possibility of semantic dispersal and alterity.

3. I am paraphrasing an article by Thomas Carmichael entitled, "John Barth's *Letters:* History, Representation and Postmodernism," in which he applies Barthesian ideas about the linguistic structure of historical discourse to Barth's "historical" fiction: "In his 1967 essay 'The Discourse of History,' Roland Barthes reminds us that the process of historiographic signification is 'essentially an ideological elaboration, or, to be more specific, an *imaginary* elaboration' in which the historian endeavors 'to fill the void of pure series. . . . Hence, we arrive at that paradox which governs the entire pertinence

of historical discourse (in relation to other types of discourse): fact never has any but a linguistic existence (as the term of discourse), yet everything happens as if this linguistic existence were merely a pure and simple 'copy' of another existence, situated in an extra-textual field, the 'real" (138). For Barthes, of course, the 'real' enters the field of discourse as a linguistic sleight of hand, or what he famously terms the 'reality effect' (p. 65, *Mosaic* 21/4)." As Carmichael recognizes in his citation of Barthes' poststructuralist conception of historical discourse, Barth's "historical" fiction is really a form of pseudohistory which reiterates the patterns of historical contingency within a purely textual field of representation.

4. Waugh expresses this idea in *Metafiction* under the heading of "The linguistic universe: reality as construct" (I cited this passage in a slightly different context on page twenty of the first chapter): "Frame analysis and play theory are areas of contemporary social investigation which illumine the practice of metafiction and show the sensitivity of its response to cultural change. They are each, however, aspects of a broader shift in thought and practice whereby reality has increasingly come to be seen as a construct. Hegel, in fact, suggested that history be contemplated as a work of art, for in retrospect it 'reads' like a novel: its end is known. Metafiction suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world-model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design (pp. 48-49)."

As we saw in the third chapter, the structuring of history according to "interrelating plots" is abundantly evident in *The Sot-Weed Factor,* and is explicitly thematized in the elaborate conspiracies and counter-conspiracies of Burlingame, Coode, and Baltimore.

5. This notion of the fictive nature of being is brilliantly and concretely expressed in a scene early in the novel, in which Horacio, addressing la Maga, "sketches" her face by closing his eyes and tracing with his finger: "Toco tu boca, con un dedo toco el borde de tu boca, voy dibujándola como si saliera de mi mano, como si por primera vez tu boca se entreabriera, y me basta cerrar los ojos para deshacerlo todo y recomenzar, hago nacer cada vez la boca que deseo, la boca que mi mano elige y te dibuja en la cara, una boca elegida entre todas, con soberana libertad elegida por mí para dibujarla con mi mano en tu cara, y que por un azar que no busco comprender coincide exactamente con tu boca que sonríe por debajo de la que mi mano te dibuja (p. 160)." [I touch your mouth, I touch the edge of your mouth with my finger, I am drawing it as if it were something my hand was sketching, as if for the first time your mouth opened a little, and all I have to do is close my eyes to erase it and start all over again, every time I can make the mouth I want appear, the mouth which my hand chooses and sketches on your face, and which by some chance that I do not seek to understand coincides exactly with your mouth which smiles beneath the one my hand is sketching on you.]

6. Amorós cites in his introduction Cortázar's explicit declaration of this aesthetic valoration of textual indeterminacy and the reader's participation: "Antes, había elogiado la indeterminación en el arte; ahora pretende, a la vez, *abrir* la obra y hacer participar activamente a un lector que no se desconcierte por los meandros de la reflexión.

Ese libro abierto es lo que ambiciona Cortázar: 'todo eso que tú has pensado me llena de contento, es como una especie de recompensa para mí porque el hecho de dejar el libro abierto y encontrar en tu caso tantas posibles opciones es exactamente lo que yo busco con mis lectores' (pp. 42-43)."

[Before, he had lauded indeterminacy in art; now he seeks at once to *open* the work

and to make a reader who isn't disconcerted by the meandering reflections actively participate.

That open book is what Cortázar aspires to: "all of that which you have thought fills me with contentment, its like a kind of recompense for me, because the act of leaving the book open and finding in your case so many possible options is exactly what I look for in my readers."]

7. William Kerrigan has commented very insightfully on the relation between deconstruction (and other forms of modern theory) and a variety of transcendental idealism which operates according to the Miltonic paradigm of a lost paradise. In an essay entitled, "Milton's place in intellectual history," he describes Milton's impact on contemporary philosophy: "There are three paradises by the time we have arrived at the concluding Expulsion: Eden, the lost paradise; the eschatological 'Paradise' (12.464) toward which Christ leads us; and in between the 'paradise within' (12.587), the interior soul of mortal man cultivated by Christian virtues. At the Expulsion, man bears within him a symbol born of paradise lost and pointed toward paradise regained. In Romantic idealism . . . the two paradises on either side of the interior one reappear in the naïve oneness prior to systematic thought and the sophisticated oneness regained at its completion. The break characteristic of twentieth-century philosophy occurs when the two framing paradises drop away, leaving us only a paradise within, the symbol of a home that reason never had and can never hope to find. There is just wandering, just discourse or *écriture*.

Exile then becomes the sole condition of thought. Alienation or homelessness, the philosophical afterlife of Milton's summary symbol, is among the pervasive signs of modern culture. We find it in Marxism, in Freudian ideas such as 'displacement' and the 'uncanny' (*unheimlich,* 'un-homely'), in Derrida's 'deferral', 'difference', and '*différance*', and conspicuously in early Heidegger, the ponderous magician of philosophical symbolism who preached alienation with an almost Gnostic intensity (pp. 265-266)."

8. I am paraphrasing the end of Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse," where the bewildered protagonist, lost in a literal funhouse, demonstrates that he has also lost his way in the funhouse of Barth's metafictional labyrinth, and vows to become such an author himself: "He envisions a truly astonishing funhouse, incredibly complex yet utterly controlled from a great central switchboard like the console of a pipe organ. Nobody had enough imagination. He could design such a place himself, wiring and all, and he's only thirteen years old. He would be its operator: panel lights would show what was up in every cranny of its cunning of its multifarious vastness; a switch-flick would ease this fellow's way, complicate that's, to balance things out; if anyone seemed lost or frightened, all the operator had to do was.

He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator--though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed (p. 97)."

The image of the author as a "secret operator" is quintessentially postmodernist in its suggestion of a form of discourse from which he is "absent," yet which everywhere carries the traces of his activity as a metafictional artificer. (The image of the switchboard has a parallel in Fenn's television monitors, and not coincidentally, both *Lost in the Funhouse* and *The Universal Baseball Association* were published in 1968, a pivotal year for "experimental," postmodernist writing.)

9. Malcolm Bradbury sees this as a primary characteristic of Thomas Pynchon's work.

In a chapter on postmodernism in his book, *The Modern American Novel,* he comments on the structure of Pynchon's *V.* : "Stencil and Profane are effectively the two compositional principles of the book, the pattern-maker and the man of contingency, the constructive and the deconstructive. They hunt the lettered sign and seek in some fashion to construct or elude the world, but their quest is less a discovery of meaning than a loss of meanings, or rather a disorderly and chaotic excess of them, for the book proceeds by proliferating data in excess of possible system (p. 176)."

10. In several passages in *The Universal Baseball Association,* Coover exhibits affinities with the parodic pseudohistoricism of García Márquez and Barth. At one point the narrator puzzles over the historical revisionism of a book on the "Damonsday" tragedy: "Book he's been reading lately. *The Doubter.* One of the flood of centennial Bancroft biographies out this year. Author tries to show that Barney Bancroft, not Rutherford or Casey or Hardy's own progenitor Royce Ingram, was actually the central figure, the heart and point of the Parable of the Duel, as they call it now. Rutherford and Casey seem to be giants, this guy claims, but are really only subhuman masks, predesigned roles, while Bancroft is the only one wholly rounded and thus truly human participant in that incredible drama. . . . Funny how you can play that game so many ways. . . . Can't even be sure about the simple *facts.* Some writers even argue that Rutherford and Casey never existed--nothing more than another of the ancient myths of the sun, symbolized as a victim slaughtered by the monster or force of darkness. History: in the end, you can never prove a thing (pp. 223-224)."

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