Library

3. Library loan and photocopying permit

Title of thesis NARRATIVE AND POSTMODERNISM: POLITICS AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION

Candidate . . . . FRANCIS ANDREW MASON . . . . . .

Three copies of the above thesis are now formally submitted for the degree of

. . . DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY . . . . . Should the Senate of the University award me either this degree or another higher degree in respect of this thesis, I hereby agree that from the date of the award the thesis may be made available for inter-library loan or for photocopying and that the abstract may be made available for publication.

Signature . . . [redacted] . . . . . Date 11/10/92 . . .

REFERENCE ONLY
THIS THESIS MUST NOT
BE TAKEN OUT OF THE
LIBRARY

Narrative and Postmodernism:
Politics and Contemporary American Fiction

Francis Andrew Mason

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

October 1992

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON
LIBRARY
*

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON. ABSTRACT. FACULTY OF ARTS. ENGLISH. Doctor of Philosophy. NARRATIVE AND POSTMODERNISM: POLITICS AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FICTION, by Francis Andrew Mason.

The main issues that are covered in this study of American postmodernist fiction are its mapping of narrative, the political projects articulated by contemporary American writers, and the relationship between postmodernist fiction and postmodern culture. Narrative is not a commonly used term in discussions of postmodernist fiction, most criticism seeing postmodernism as a form characterised by an obsession with the aleatory play of language and an investigation of the fiction-making process. Nor are the political and cultural concerns of postmodernism adequately covered. The death of the 'real' in postmodernism is not usually seen to allow fiction the possibility of referentially engaging with the forms and processes of postmodern culture because no 'reality' exists for postmodernist fiction to refer to. This thesis questions these approaches to postmodernist fiction and offers an alternative approach to a group of novels that I call political metafiction. These novels include works by Pynchon, Gaddis, Coover, Reed, McElroy, Burroughs, Sukenick, and Barthelme, all of whom reconfigure narrative outside the linear realist model of narrative as a means to enact, address, and resist the operations of ideology in contemporary society. To ground the discussion of these texts there is a substantial discussion of narrative, focusing on the need to reconceptualise narrative as a process of arrangement and as a dynamic form, rather than as a functional structure. There is also a discussion of political metafiction's relationship to postmodern culture, which questions the view that postmodernist fiction cannot establish a critical distance from postmodern culture. I argue that the self-consciousness with which political metafiction maps its narratives prevents a replication of the fragmented space of postmodernity, allowing political metafiction to intervene in the production of cultural meanings instead of being defined by those which already exist. Detailed discussions of the novels of political metafiction follow, focusing on both the specific narrative forms they generate and the political projects they articulate as a means to reconfigure forms of identity and cultural practice in contemporary society. Particular attention is paid to Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*, novels which crystallise many of the issues with which political metafiction is engaged.

Contents

Preface 1

1. Re-Writing the Story: Narrative and Politics 9

Jameson's Politics of Narrative
The Dynamics of Narrative
Structuralist Theories of Narrative
Deconstructing Narrative
Ideology and the Text
Theories of Ideology
Narratives of Ideology
The Narratives of Political Metafiction
Political Metafiction and Referential Narratives
Political Metafiction and the Dynamics of Narrative

2. The Fictions of Postmodern Culture 87

Fiction and Culture
Theories of Postmodernity
Modernization and Postmodernization
Postmodernism and the Avant-garde

3. From Metafiction to Political Metafiction: Postmodernist Fiction in the 1960's 132

Cutting up Narratives: Burroughs and the Avant-garde
Metafiction and the Language of Narrative
Minimalism and Facsimile Art
The Maximalist Novels of Sorrentino and Barth
The Narrative Possibilities of Surfiction

4. Political Metafiction and Fiction of the 1970's 194

From Metafiction to Political Metafiction: The Fiction of Robert Coover
The Narrative Flows of Gaddis' *JR*
Narrative in the Information Age: Delillo's *Ratner's Star*
History and Conspiracy in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*
Montage and Analogue: McElroy's *Lookout Cartwright*

5. Chasing Rainbows: Pynchon and the Dynamics of Narrative 263

Aesthetics and Politics in Pynchon's Early Novels
Gravity's Rainbow: Narration, Language and Ideology
Ideology and Narrative in *Gravity's Rainbow*
Narrative Resistance: Pure Narrativity and the Dialogism of Genres
Coda: From Nixon's Rocket State to Reagan's Police State

6. Bibliography 321

Preface

Is it not all the more urgent, given the pressures of manipulation, to present the reader with a literature that gives him models for a creative truth of 'construction' rather than a passive truth of 'correspondence,' for confrontation and re-creation rather than reconciliation and adjustment... a Brechtian model rather than an Aristotelian one?[1]

The decision to focus on the role of narrative in postmodernist fiction might seem a curious project when so often it is the substitution of the aleatory play of language and discourse for narrative and plot that has been seen as the dominant form of such fiction. To focus on ideology, in the context of Baudrillard's view of postmodernity as a culture where ideology has failed, might seem even more curious, as indeed might the focus on the conjunction of narrative and ideology in the light of the critique of grand narratives that Lyotard proposes as the dominant mood of postmodernity. Lyotard's thesis on postmodern knowledge, however, forms an interesting point of departure for a study of narrative and ideology, primarily because the grand narratives Lyotard discusses, as the nexus for what Barthes calls myth, can be be seen to focus several of the issues this thesis will explore. This is not to suggest that Lyotard's grand narratives can be irreducibly aligned with the mapping of textual narratives. Lyotard's principal focus is the metanarratives science and philosophy create in order to construct "a set of pragmatic rules that constitute the social bond".[2] Steven Connor has discussed Lyotard's theory of postmodernism, describing Lyotard's analysis of two dominant grand narratives, one political "associated with the Enlightenment and embodied in the ideals of the French Revolution [which] is the narrative of the gradual emancipation of humanity from slavery and class oppression", the other "a philosophical narrative initiated and actualized in the work of Hegel... in which knowledge is a prime part of the gradual evolution through history of self-conscious mind out of the ignorant unselfconsciousness of

matter".[3] While these two narratives form the focus for Lyotard's analysis, there are other narratives which contribute to the creation of myths and stories that Western culture has configured in order to construct a past and future for itself, and thus to legitimate itself in the present. These grand narratives include modernisation, the beliefs in progress, science and Reason, and religious narratives of the transcendence of history.

Grand narratives are not simply myths, however, because they do not simply supply a set of cultural beliefs. Grand narratives create a *telos* on which are predicated future courses of action for culture, the *telos* supplying direction, motivation and purpose as the grand narrative moves towards completion or totality. Grand narratives map out and limit the future development of cultural and social possibilities, restricting perspectives so that only certain possibilities or lines of thought (those which fit the parameters created by the grand narrative) are available. A causal linear narrative predetermines future cultural practice, forms of identity and patterns of behaviour. Lyotard, however, sees a failure of grand narratives in postmodernity: "the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation".[4] Grand narratives have become stagnant and repetitive, unable to generate the future developments they have promised. In response, Lyotard proposes the concept of paralogy, a theoretical model developed from the model of narrative Lyotard discovers in Cashinahua forms of story-telling. Paralogy privileges language-games and the creation of new moves and new forms of knowledge through unexpected and paradoxical re-arrangements.

Lyotard's focus on language-games also develops from his adoption of the approach taken by Ihab Hassan in his criticism of postmodernist fiction.[5] In effect, Lyotard supplies cultural and theoretical frameworks for Hassan's view of postmodernist fiction as a form dominated by language-play, legitimating Hassan's approach in the process. The framework Lyotard supplies has proved to be so powerful that language-games are now seen as the paradigmatic form of

postmodernist fiction. Narrative becomes a term that is infrequently used in discussions of postmodernist fiction, the conflation of textual narratives and grand narratives meaning that narrative becomes associated with discredited ideas: totality, causality and ideology. Postmodernist fiction is viewed, above all, as the domain of the sign and of signifying practices. It investigates the power of language to disrupt 'our' views of 'reality', 'truth', and particularly the way in which the world is 'represented'.[6] Postmodernist fiction reveals 'reality' to be a fictional construct that is used to normalise or naturalise ideological forms of cultural practice. Narrative as the textual vehicle for ideology is rejected and postmodernist fiction is seen to revel in the play of language, the form which reveals the operations of ideology. Although these demystifying strategies of postmodernist fiction have often been addressed, too often the political and cultural concerns of postmodernism have been rejected. Postmodernist fiction is seen to celebrate language-play and and to ignore culture and politics, which are both fictions anyway. Critics of postmodernism have claimed that postmodernist fiction rejects political engagement simply because the creation of a political project that envisages an alternative society (with alternative forms of identity and social relations) is deemed to be the creation of just another totalising version of 'reality'.

Even those critics who have discussed the political dimension of postmodernist fiction have concentrated on postmodernism's self-conscious production of fictions through language and discourse.[7] They do not consider narrative. Because of the influence of Structuralist theories, narrative is perceived as a structure that maps 'reality', imposing an ideological representation of 'reality' that projects totalising and limiting norms of behaviour. While the concerns of these critics are obviously elsewhere, a discussion of postmodernist fiction's engagement with narrative and ideology seems necessary. The focus for this discussion will be a group of novels written in the 1960's and 1970's that I will call political metafiction. These novels include works by Thomas Pynchon, William Gaddis, Robert Coover, Ishmael Reed, Joseph McElroy, William Burroughs, Ronald Sukenick, and Donald Barthelme, all of whom address the

function and operation of ideology in society from a metafictional perspective but who also offer alternative forms of identity and cultural practice to those engendered by ideology. Their return to referentiality also entails a return to narrative. Political metafiction cannot be defined simply in terms of either the play of language or the investigation of the fiction-making process. Political metafiction returns to narrative for two reasons, firstly, to enact the forms of ideology in circulation in society (the vision of the failure of grand narratives that Lyotard sees is not shared by political metafiction) and, secondly, through the generation of digressive narratives, to map new cultural possibilities. Political metafiction generates an interplay between two forms of narrative, using the structural forms of narrative that critics theorise as totalising forms to referentially map ideology (and its creation of cultural parameters), and digressive proliferating stories to evade the parameters established by the referential narratives.

This issue will be the focus of chapter one in which several views of narrative will be offered. Instead of conceiving narrative solely in terms of structure, narrative will be defined as a process of arrangement, irreducible to any underlying structure or essence. In effect, the Formalist equation of the *fabula* (story) and *syuzhet* (plot) will be adopted. This model sees narrative as an arrangement, an ordering or a sequence of events, rather than an ordering principle that establishes causal or structural links between narrative components. The context of the specific textual movements of narrative is more important than generic patterns that narratives share. Disjuncture, transformation and digression become as important as connectivity and structure, the movement from one event to another, the transformations, juxtapositions and disruptions involved allowing narrative to be reformulated in terms of movement. A temporal dynamic replaces the stasis of structure and linear cause-and-effect relationships. Political metafiction recognises the multiform character of narrative, configuring its own narratives as protean forms irreducible to a model of narrative production because of the new arrangements of narrative continually made available. Political metafiction does not, however, abandon already existing models of narrative (genre, for example), but uses their mapping of parameters to enact the

parameters for identity and cultural practice that ideology and grand narratives generate in contemporary society. These narratives have a referential function but they do not replicate the cultural forms created by ideology. The self-consciousness with which political metafiction maps these referential narratives prevents their legitimation or replication of the cultural forms generated by ideology. The new arrangements of narrative that political metafiction maps (digressive stories, for example) in conjunction with these referential narratives also loop the novels of political metafiction away from an endorsement of ideological forms of identity and cultural practice.

Political metafiction's resistance to ideology and the cultural forms associated with postmodernity will be developed in chapter two. This chapter will discuss the ways in which postmodernity has been theorised as a culture of fragmentation, simulation, and commodification, which collapses all forms of cultural production into its sphere of influence, destroying critical distance and preventing literature from resisting recuperation. The view that political metafiction can be seen as a replication of postmodern cultural forms and processes will, however, be questioned. I will be arguing that there is an avant-garde principle at work in political metafiction's engagement with cultural issues, political metafiction attempting to resist ideology and to offer alternative perspectives on culture and society.

Chapter three is the first chapter entirely devoted to fiction. This chapter will discuss the different forms of postmodernist fiction that were generated in the 1960's: Burroughs' culturally focused experiments with language and narrative; the metafiction of, for example, Gass and Barth; and the eclectic minimalist fragments of Barthelme and Brautigan. I will focus on the new strategies engendered, directing attention to the new forms of narrative created by Burroughs (the cut-up) and Barth (the spiral-narrative). The novels considered will also be located in terms of both their influence on political metafiction of the 1970's and their relationship to postmodern culture. The final sections of the chapter will trace the development of novels allied to political metafiction, either because of their Epic

scope (Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* and Barth's *LETTERS*) or because of their reconfiguration of narrative as a means to offer new cultural possibilities (the novels of Ronald Sukenick). Chapter four will draw on these ideas and focus the discussion on political metafiction and its role in and relationship to the culture that engenders it. Besides tracing similarities between the novels, the discussion will also stress the different narrative and political strategies generated. While the importance of narrative and politics will always be foregrounded the discussion will also draw on the specific concerns of each writer: Coover's focus on history and his use of satire, Gaddis' investigation of the processes of late capitalism, Delillo's interest in systems and information, and Reed's focus on issues of race and his mapping of forms of resistance available for black culture in its challenge to ideology. The final writer to be considered in this chapter is Joseph McElroy, whose novel *Lookout Cartridge* will be considered in more detail, primarily because he offers a different perspective to the other writers. Instead of offering an overview of the processes that create the fragmentation that is experienced by the subject in postmodern culture, McElroy focuses on the effect of ideological and postmodern cultural forms on subjectivity as it is experienced by the affected consciousness.

The final chapter focuses on Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, because this novel forms the focus for a critical debate over the forms and significance of postmodernist fiction and because it forms a nexus for the cultural and political issues that political metafiction explores. Despite the historical frame of the novel, it locates itself as an investigation of contemporary culture, establishing a connection between the social forms that came into existence in 1945 (Truman's National Security state) and those of Nixon's America in the 1970's and suggesting that ideology persists into postmodern culture, which is not a site of freedom, but a site of cultural and ideological control. The discussion will focus on Pynchon's recognition that literature needs to be politically engaged and will not accede to Paul Coates' view that *Gravity's Rainbow* replicates a postmodern culture of stasis and simulation. Coates' view seems to misread the novel because it identifies Pynchon with the narrative voice, which seeks to establish itself as a source of

'truth' and 'reality' in the novel.[8] I will be arguing that to align writer and narrative voice in this way is not possible, primarily because Pynchon uses the narrative voice as the voice of ideology. To accept the narrative voice's view is to accept the ideological positioning of the text and to see it as an ideologically implicated text. In response I will argue that for this reason it becomes necessary to approach *Gravity's Rainbow* and political metafiction through an analysis of their narrative forms. A focus on narrative reveals the political and cultural concerns of these novels. I will be arguing therefore that political metafiction cannot be reduced to a set of linguistic or discursive tropes nor a reflection of pre-existent cultural meaning systems, but that it is in political metafiction that postmodernism finds a form of fiction that can offer itself as a site of political possibility and as a means by which political projects can be undertaken.

Notes

1. Ronald Sukenick, 'Writing on Writing', *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p.236.

2. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.21.

3. Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.30.

4. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.37.

5. Steven Connor and Susan Rubin Suleiman have both pointed out that Lyotard's view of postmodernity stems from Ihab Hassan's literary model of postmodernism, a narrative which Lyotard's model legitimates by grounding it as a cultural 'reality.' See Connor, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.28; and Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.184.

6. For discussions of postmodernist fiction that focus on the importance of language and language games, see Allen Thiher, *Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Charles Caramello, *Silverless Mirrors: Book, Self, and Postmodern American Fiction* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1983); Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987); and Alec McHoul and David Wills, *Writing Pynchon: Strategies in Fictional Analysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 1990).

7. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984); Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); and Charles Russell, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

8. See Paul Coates, *The Realist Fantasy: Fiction and Reality since 'Clarissa'* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp.208-17.

Chapter One:
Re-Writing The Story:
Narrative and Politics

Even the most innovative fictions embody at least *one* element of the classic literary art, whether that be heightened language, the semblance of narrative, credible detail, or developed characterizations; but it is highly unlikely, though not impossible, that a story containing all these elements will be unquestionably new.[1]

I.

Without the term 'narrative' contemporary criticism of culture and literature would be lost. Contemporary criticism has proposed narratives of postmodernism, narratives of colonialism, narratives of masculinity, narratives of cultural politics, and narratives of representation, all of which depend on a term that is rarely defined. The term 'narrative' constructs the areas mentioned as legitimate and unified fields of enquiry, even though the terms that perhaps should be used are 'logic' or 'cultural logic', terms that imply the structures of discourse for which 'narrative' is a shorthand. The vagueness of the term 'narrative' means that anyone who wants to offer a theory of narrative is immediately faced with apparently insuperable difficulties. Should the theorist adopt a Structural model of narrative, or use 'narrative' to refer to arrangements of discourse, or even as a way of representing history? This vagueness causes particular problems for the theorist of fictional narratives. No theory of narrative as yet adequately accounts for narrative on its own terms, the uses to which the term 'narrative' is put locating fictional narratives in frameworks they were never

meant to represent. Narrative is treated as a product of other processes of signification rather than a form able to produce its own meanings.

In this chapter I will challenge this view of narrative. I will be theorising narrative as a productive unit of meaning on its own terms and not as a product of other processes of signification, which determine a narrative's meanings for it. There are exceptions to the model I have described, most notably Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in which narrative provides a frame for discourses to interact and to create new meanings and frames of meaning. Even here, however, narrative is used as a means to renew or to reinvigorate language and its signifying practices. Didier Coste, in *Narrative as Communication*, also begins to theorise narrative as a system of meaning on its own terms, but ultimately subordinates it to another system of meaning. This system is the act of communication in which narrative becomes the frame through which messages are conveyed. While this is of interest to what I will be saying the difficulty I find in Coste's theory is that he simply uses narrative as a substitute for social and cultural context, his abstraction of communication from social and cultural configurations of meaning allowing him to see communication taking place both transhistorically and universally. For Coste, a narrative, as a complete unit, speaks its meaning across time, having the same role as the image in Eliot's concept of the 'objective correlative'. Narrative becomes the means by which one person can communicate authentically individual meanings to another person.

Overall, narrative is viewed as incapable of producing anything itself. It is either an aid to the production of meaning, or has its meanings determined by another system or process of signification. Unlike language, it is not discussed as the producer of meanings in a social or cultural context, but as a product of that social or cultural context. And where theorists do speak of narrative as a producer of meaning they usually reject it because the meanings it produces are ideological and turn instead to other forms of signification. This is the case, for example, with Julia Kristeva's rejection of realist narratives in her essay 'The Novel as Polylogue'. Kristeva is working, here, in a binary system of realist versus

experimental fiction which does not allow for the narrative production of meaning, because it is based on another binary opposition: the story-discourse opposition. This approach also needs to be questioned so that story is not simply aligned with realism and discourse with the language-games of experimental fiction, where the former is rejected because it is conflated with the linear cause-and-effect structures of realism and is again perceived to be imbued with ideology. Such divisions mean that discourse is privileged and the narrative elements are rejected in favour of semantic and rhetorical concerns. The view that postmodernist fiction rejects narrative leads to two connected conclusions: a focus on postmodernism's language-games and the belief that this involves the rejection of cultural and political configurations in favour of a focus on the text's status as writing.

I will be arguing, however, that much experimental fiction of the 1970's configures narrative in relation to cultural, political and ideological concerns. Narratives are used by experimental writers to dramatise and question the social processes that articulate ideology. I have called these texts political metafiction, not simply to signal their political concerns, but also in order to avoid the over-encoded phrase 'postmodernism' which contains associations with language and discourse and therefore seems to impose certain interpretative strategies. This is not to deny that these strategies are not still pertinent to the texts discussed, but they are not the only concerns. This thesis will still locate political metafiction in terms of the debates over postmodernist use of discourse and language, but will focus on narrative strategies. It is not only language that can produce new arrangements of experience and offer a means to articulate new desires and forms of subjectivity. Narrative also offers these possibilities, a situation discovered by writers of political metafiction who see narrative as a means to challenge ideology. However, the narrative configurations in political metafiction need to be perceived in a different way to the standard models of narrative in which narrative is a form that organises experience in terms of the already existing models of narrative constructed by cultural and ideological processes and meanings. Narrative needs to be conceived as being discontinuous and irreducible

to some underlying pattern, while the narratives of each of the experimental texts need to be addressed on their own terms and not simply seen in relation to taxonomic systems of postmodernist fiction or narrative.

Narrative in the experimental novels being studied is both a dramatisation of ideology and a means whereby it can be resisted, at least as far as the process of writing is concerned. However, an important point needs to be made at the outset, questioning the assumption that there is a simple relationship between ideology and literature, in which the ideological forms of society absolutely determine forms of literature and narrative. Peter Middleton comments on this in his discussion of Fredric Jameson's reading of Bob Perelman's 'China' in 'Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. Jameson, Middleton says, provides a symptomatic reading which focuses on the poem's "opacity, its resistance to interpretative reading", to which "Jameson responds by suggesting that this is a failure of coherence that is symptomatic of a schizophrenic postmodern condition". Middleton continues:

> ...such a conclusion reduces the writer's role to that of a pimple on the face of late capitalism, a minor irritant that speaks of the disorders below the surface. Political projects on which the poets are engaged are then no more than disorders determined by the body of alienated society. We are indeed back with Lukacs' repudiation of the argument that a fragmented society demands an aesthetics of fragmentation as no more than an acquiescence in the ideological inversions of the deep structure of a unifying capitalism that foments illusions.[2]

What political accounts of texts such as Jameson's fail to report is that texts may have their own political project and are not just reflections of ideology and cultural forms. This distinction between an aesthetics of reflection and textual political projects highlights two aspects of postmodernism's relationship with ideology. The first involves the question of the status of the text itself in terms of its ideological positioning while the second aspect involves the self-conscious dramatisation of ideology in the narrative configurations of the text. The approach taken here will focus on political metafiction's attempts to resist the siting of the text as an ideological form through its articulation of narrative and discursive strategies. These strategies are not a replication of the meanings and processes

of postmodern culture, but an attempt to resist postmodern culture's processes of fragmentation and co-option, something that will be discussed at length in chapter two. Political metafiction not only resists ideology's positioning of the text, but also challenges the operation and function of ideology in society and culture. Political metafiction configures narratives referentially to enact the social processes of ideology, but does so self-consciously. The narratives recognise their conjunction with ideology and act upon ideology to remould and question it parodically. Political metafiction uses narrative to disrupt ideological configurations so that, rather than acceding to an aesthetics of reflection, a textual political project can be mapped.

The configuration of narratives as a political project will be discussed in section II where I will be offering a provisional model of narrative which will develop the interplay between referentiality and metafictional strategies. This model is not intended as a model for all narratives, but as a means to interpret a specific group of novels - political metafiction - written in the 1960's and 1970's, for which previous theorisations of narrative and postmodernism cannot fully account. I shall argue that it is possible to view postmodernist narratives in terms of two axes. One of these is referential and static, seeking to tie narrative to ideology, while the other is refractive and dynamic, acting upon the referential level self-reflexively and parodically. The disjunctive and fragmented forms of postmodernist fiction that this interplay produces are therefore a result of its complex strategies of resistance rather than a reflection of cultural and social forms. This, however, is necessarily only a provisional model of postmodernist narrative for there are obviously postmodernist texts which do not correspond exactly with the formations presented, as is the case with metafictional texts by writers such as William Gass, Gilbert Sorrentino and Raymond Federman which privilege self-reflexivity and abandon referentiality. To show, however, that postmodernist fiction is not simply a form of metafiction and to show how postmodernist narratives involve both referentiality and fictionality, debates on narrative and postmodernism need to be addressed. This will establish the need for a new approach to narrative and postmodernism, but will also locate the

valuable elements of those theories which already deal with these two areas. This chapter will deal with the debates on narrative, while chapter two will cover the debates on postmodernism.

The focus on textual political projects, therefore, leads to a view of postmodernism in which narrative engagement with ideology will be privileged over the theory of interpretation in which ideology determines narrative. Narrative is the dominant form in the relationship between narrative and ideology and is capable of forming ideology as well as being the vehicle of it. Consequently, narrative is also a form in which ideology can be challenged and in a Bakhtinian way it is the site of contestation between ideological meanings and meanings which challenge ideology. Like language, narrative has a semantic content as well as having a formal basis and this thesis will attempt to trace the ways in which these two levels interact in recent American experimental fiction.

Jameson's Politics of Narrative

This opening analysis is a rather crude version of two things, firstly of the traditional linear narrative form that is frequently seen as the ideological form of narrative *par excellence*[3] and, secondly, of Lukacs' theory of the novel form. It does, however, exemplify the major problem facing an analysis of narrative in terms of ideology, the problem of how to conceive of narrative without reverting to a theory in which ideology determines textual production. Fortunately, Fredric Jameson, in his *The Political Unconscious* has addressed this difficulty and has set out the ground for the theorisation of the contiguity of narrative and ideology. Jameson questions this interpretative account of literature in order to "restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of

narrative, which I take to be (here using the shorthand of philosophical idealism) the central function or *instance* of the human mind."[4] Jameson uses history as the dominant principle in the production of narrative, but he does not mean history as a writing of past events (in the form of the chronicle, for example), but as a totality of events. History is a determinant of human activity, not simply in the persistence of historical practices, institutions and discourses in the present, but a totality of past, present and future incorporating the socialist utopia that is to come.

Whereas history as a totality opens up unthought of possibilities for human activity, ideology, for Jameson, articulates the power relations prevailing in society. In support of these power relations ideology limits the availability of possibilities, desires and thoughts. Ideology insists on the impossibility of transcending the contemporary experience of history and, therefore, the impossibility of transcending its own limits on human activity. Jameson challenges ideology with the totality of history in order that textual production is not simply reduced to a reflection of prevailing ideological conditions, but is able to dramatise the contradictions and overdeterminations of ideology which occur in the political unconscious of a text. The textual enactment of the historical class struggle only escapes the text's ideological constitution and resurfaces from the depths of a text if the encoded historical imperatives are recovered from the political unconscious. Ideology's presence in the text can only be surmounted if its narrative is allowed to take part in the single unbroken line of history in all its totality, rather than being interpreted in terms of the fracturing specificity that the immediate ideological modes of production generate. It is ideology which fragments narrative and text and blinds the reader to its wider, more visionary, configuration as it partakes in "the unity of a single great collective story". Jameson, does not, of course, mean that each and every textual narrative is a unified, closed totality. The opposite is often the case. Textual narratives are rent apart by the conflicts between the ideological axis and the axis of the political unconscious, the latter revealing the heterogeneous and plural arrangement of discourses that the former attempts to veil with a spurious and superficial unity

or closure. The ideological aspect of the text pretends to a totality that only history can maintain and thereby achieves its purpose as ideology by proposing the possibility of completion or fulfillment only under current capitalistic modes of production, the function of ideology being to "naturalize challenges to a state of affairs with which it is satisfied. It is not exploratory but repetitive".[5]

Ideology, for Jameson, exists in the cultural sphere. To exemplify this, he uses Althusser's notion of 'structural limitation' in which "the solution to a problem merely 'recognizes itself' because the problem is an artificial one designed to produce the solution sought".[6] Ideology is a structure which sets problems that already have their narratives configured, a configuration which Jameson understandably questions and which is something that will be questioned further, later in this chapter. Jameson's counter-argument, however, simply substitutes history for ideology so that narratives are again already constructed. In this integration of a theory of history with a theory of the text, Jameson refers to Althusser's theory of the 'absent cause', revising Althusser's declaration that "history is neither a subject nor a telos" (*PU*, 34) by saying that "history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but... as an absent cause it is inaccssible to us except in textual form, and... our approach to it and the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (*PU*, 35). Although Jameson does not see history as a master narrative he nevertheless sees it as a single narrative (similar to Lyotard's grand narratives), one that in its textual forms must be reconstructed no matter that the initial interpretations of a text produce it as a heterogeneous plurality (*PU*, 56).

Jameson's account of narrative offers many useful components for a study of narrative and ideology, including his demonstration that the two are contiguous in the mimetic desire of a text and his analysis of the means by which ideology can be questioned by narrative. However, there are also difficulties with Jameson's account. Jameson's identification of narrative with history limits his analysis of specific textual narratives which are subsumed into historical processes

rather than analysed on their own terms. More importantly for my own study of narrative there is a difficulty with the way in which he views the intersection of narrative and ideology. While I agree with Jameson's articulation of Althusser's notions of 'structural limitation' and 'strategies of containment' into his account of narrative, he does not, however, develop them as far as possible, preferring to refer back to some notion of the 'Real' (and implicitly a rather literal form of mimesis) than to take on board Althusser's theory of 'structural limitation' on its own terms. One of the most important aspects of Althusser's theory of ideology is that the notion of structural causality is not an empirical reality, but an ideological construct and one that has a similarity to the construction of narratives. In Althusser's theory, discussed above, a structure (a structure in which ideology already organises the future possibilities for desire, knowledge and experience) produces a problem solely in order to resolve it on its own terms and therefore becomes involved in the construction of narratives: *narratives that are already mapped out*. When ideology enters this perspective, as a structure of limitation or containment, the similarities between the making of narratives and the making of ideology become clear.

Although I do not want to go into too much detail here as I will be discussing this issue further in Section II, it seems necessary to say that this is a construction that postmodernist novelists are aware of in their construction of narratives and that, consequently, in postmodernist fiction a variety of strategies are produced whereby the ideological function of narrative can be escaped. In metafiction, this involves either a self-reflexive or parodic fiction-making process (John Barth), or in more modernist forms of metafiction (William Gass, for example) an anti-narrative impulse. In political metafiction, more complex arrangements of narrative are available, involving the self-conscious dramatisation of ideology in narrative forms, as well as a use of disjuncture whereby the linear and apparently seamless cause-and-effect scheme of traditional narrative forms is made discontinuous in order to provide new narrative models.

Jameson's account of ideology and narrative is problematic, in the main,

because it depends too much on the role that history plays within a text, rather than upon the specificities of textual narratives. History has a narrative that exists in time and which is also transformative, but textual narratives do not. History is diachronic, but textual narratives are synchronic, simply being synchronic snapshots of history at a particular moment as it is enacted in the discourses and genres, as it partakes of the residual and anticipatory modes of production, and as it refers to the absent cause of future Utopian history. History is the only narrative for Jameson. Fictional narratives simply represent history. As the previous citation from Middleton has shown, Jameson's theory of interpretation is, indeed, very close to Lukacs' aesthetics of reflection, but rather than reflecting the mode of production that prevails at the time of the text's production, Jameson's account makes the mode of production plural and appends to this the non-present mode of production (the absent centre that is the totality of history).

Jameson's theory allows historical contradictions and tensions to be reflected in a text or narrative, but this is still a synchronic reading of the text. The text reflects the contradictions of history (past, present and future) and seems incapable of challenging ideology on its own terms by its own production of diachronic or temporal narratives (a possibility with which political metafiction engages, as will be argued later). While I agree that some forms of narrative are made synchronic and static, this stasis occurs primarily through closure. Alan Singer points out that closure makes narrative spatial, producing a "synechdochic causality" that effectively denies the dynamic of the plot, reducing the incremental force of narrative episodes to the status of a prologue to the cathartic denouement.[7] In such a situation, narrative clearly becomes reflexive and affective, mimetically feeding off the experiences (social and personal) of the reader and unable to escape cultural forms that pre-exist and apparently construct it; such as the autonomous bourgeois subject capable of being affected by catharsis. However, if the open-ended aspects of plot are examined (even when a narrative is apparently 'closed') the mimetic impulse becomes part of an interactive relationship with a narrative's fictional status. In postmodernism, and in political metafiction in particular, mimesis is presented as a limit to narrative,

and is self-consciously articulated as the ideological reflexive level of a text which attempts to impose stasis through the replication of the parameters created by ideology, such as ideological forms of subjectivity. As a response to this I will be stressing the diachronic and temporal aspects of a text (the narrative) in political metafiction which offer alternative forms of narrative to the spatial and static reflexive axis of a text and which challenge the ideological positioning of narrative.

The Dynamics of Narrative

The major issue that has been encountered in the theorisation of narrative is how it is to be characterised, whether it is a form that can cover both history and fiction as Hayden White suggests[8] or, in terms of fiction, whether it can be configured as a system such as Jameson proposes; and if this is the case, whether all narratives are explained by such a system.[9] Until recently those theorists who have seen narrative as an effective configuration have tended to theorise it in terms of structure. This is a key problematic in the interpretation of narrative as it has led to a binary positioning in which narrative is either accepted as a structure, or rejected for precisely the same reason. It is interpretative frameworks, therefore, which have frequently led to the questioning of the effectivity of narrative as a cultural form of meaning rather than any fault of narrative itself.[10]

Such a position can be seen in Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* which, for all its insights, presents a configuration in which the superimposition of the three principles of Piaget's theory of structure (wholeness, self-regulation, transformation) on to narrative mean that narrative and structure are aligned: "The events in a true narrative... 'come on the scene as already ordered', in

Piaget's phrase. Unlike a random agglomeration of events, they manifest a discernible organization." As such: "narrative will not admit events or other kind of phenomena that do not 'belong to it and preserve its laws' [Piaget]. Of course certain events or existents that are not *immediately* relevant may be brought in. But at some point their relevance must emerge, otherwise we object that the narrative is 'ill-formed.'"[11] It is not narrative which organises, but another structural causality. Narrative is an expression of this organising or meta-principle, which pre-exists it. Nevertheless, narrative is a form of expression that does not necessarily rely on, or reflect, this pre-existing reality. In some ways it escapes this pre-existing reality and becomes a shaping agency itself, albeit one that is strongly reliant on some part of the pre-existing order for its own existence. Narrative is paradoxical as it both breaks free from and is dependent on another form of causality. It needs a *telos*, or motivation with which to organise its structure. Narrative, in this form, is a process that is, in effect, already shaped: it only needs a *telos* and its form is already mapped out.

It is this apparent contiguity of structure and narrative that has led to a portrayal of narrative as ideologically encoded, particularly in forms such as classic realism. Classic realism has reference to an external reality as its starting point (providing its *telos*), but fabricates a structure based upon already existing literary genre codes and, in so doing, maps out 'reality', rather than 'reflecting' it. Such a formulation of narrative, however, is one that does not allow for the diachronic or dynamic aspects of narrative. Each new arrangement must align itself with the existing structure by centering on the *telos*. The diachronic is collapsed into the synchronic preventing the creation of new narrative configurations outside the existing structural model. This process is parodied by William Burroughs in *The Place of Dead Roads* in which Burroughs uses the Western to motivate a series of scenarios (gunfight, bar-room brawl, the building of a frontier town), each of which develops its own narrative dynamic and creates new narrative possibilities out of the Western clichés. The frontier town that is built is not a typical frontier town, but the centre for a campaign against religion. The reconfiguring of the frontier town allows adventures to occur which take the

narrative outside the Western, as the campaign becomes an assault on the contemporary rise of Christian fundamentalism that incorporates anachronistic scenes and technology from the contemporary world. However, the narrative is also limited by the genre-form. The adventures of the characters must constantly refer back to the Western so that Burroughs can articulate his vison of the similarity between the Western's ideology and the values of Christian fundamentalism, both forms being seen to represent the State's expansion of its power. The diachronic narratives of the citizen's adventures are unable to fully break out of the synchronic structural model of the Western, despite the addition of a contemporary frame. Despite the difficulties of breaking free of a structural frame, the creation of new forms of narrative which do not accede to structural centering can be presented as admitting to the subversive possibilities of narrative.

The abundant overspill of narrative outside structures is developed by the novelist Michel Butor in an essay called 'The Novel as Research'. Butor writes that:

> narrative is a phenomenon which extends considerably beyond the scope of literature; it is one of the essential constituents of our understanding of reality. From the time we begin to understand language until our death, we are perpetually surrounded by narratives

He further elucidates this when he says of different narrative forms: "Each of these forms links us to a particular segment of reality".[12] Narrative is something that enables a comprehension of reality; indeed it forms a basis for cultural experience. However, fictional narratives do not necessarily refer to reality mimetically, but rather allow the individual contact with, or comprehension of, a "particular segment of reality". The production of narrative based upon such fragmentary perception acts as an enabling or liberating device for the individual, freeing him or her from the constraints of reality and cultural meaning. In other words, constructing narratives (whether linearly or cyclically ordered or disjunct) allows the individual subject to break free from the ideological forms of identity and behaviour to which he or she is subject (this may be in a narrative parallel to ideological reality, or it could be a narrative which extends beyond the confines

that ideology maps out, as perhaps in fantasy).[13]

A clear connection with Butor's theory of narrative can be found in the definition that Paul Ricoeur proposes in his *Time And Narrative*. In the 'Preface' to the first volume he writes: "I see in the plots we invent the privileged means by which we re-configure our confused, unformed, and at the limit mute temporal experience."[14] Narrative is a shaping agency which can articulate the experience of time, a process in which language fails. For Ricoeur, language cannot articulate time, as he then goes on to show in his discussion of Augustine's attempts to write time in his *Confessions*.[15] In the preface to this first chapter Ricoeur gives a more concrete definition of the intersection of time and narrative when he writes:

> The world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world. Or, as will often be repeated in the course of this study: time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience.[16]

Narrative is a means by which phenomena or experience can be understood (can "become human time" when time is made human in the form of narrative) and again, narrative is placed within a mimetic framework. It is these two forms (understanding and mimesis) that these general theories of the conceptualisation of narrative have in common. Ricoeur, however, recognises the potential systematising tendency here and so develops his theory by focusing on narrative as a process, mapping a version of narrative with reference to Aristotle's theory of *muthos* (emplotment). Ricoeur proposes that narrative is an organisation of events only in the first instance and only in "the active sense of organising events into a system".[17] Narrative does not necessarily refer to a pre-existing system, but can produce its own system of understanding in its organisation of temporal phenomena.

Narrative, therefore, can be a means of offering possibilities outside ideology. It does not have to organise, systematise or provide understanding for already 'lived experience'. Narrative can be the means by which new 'experiences' can be expressed or, indeed, a way in which new 'experiences' can be created or

mapped out, going beyond the structures of containment that ideological narratives present. This is the case with William Burroughs' fiction which foregrounds the rapid narrative juxtaposition and displacement of stories without attempting to provide any connectivity. The lack of development of a single narrative strand in *The Naked Lunch*, exemplifies this process and also amounts to a rejection of 'plot' in its usual formulation as linear realist narrative.

David Seed also sees the rejection of 'plot' - formulated as realist cause-and-effect linear narrative - in postmodernist fiction. Here 'plot', which in its most general sense simply refers to an arrangement of events or actions, is used in the sense of "narrative sequence".[18] When Seymour Chatman writes that "narrative in its usual definition is a causal chain of events" he also means the plot axis of narrative, as the structures of discourse do not have to be causal.[19] They can, for example, include non-sequiturs, as long as these are given a causality at the temporal story level of narrative. Nevertheless, as both Seed and Chatman imply, a sequence does not necessarily have to be causal: it can go beyond the "usual definition". The connectivity can be an arbitrary configuration of episodes, connected only by their occupation of the same textual space. No linear, causal, progressive or purposive connection needs to be traced. This offers an interesting focus for the analysis of narrative in terms of plot in which sequence can be temporal (even disjunctively temporal) rather than causal. The definition of plot perhaps needs to be placed more within the framework of the Formalist definitions of plot and story, and removed from the story-discourse binary opposition. Plot is not a set of paradigmatic functions in the Proppian and Structuralist models, but the way in which the functions or events of a story (which are simply the chronicle of events) are configured or arranged. Plot offers a potential for variety in textual activity and does not impose an already organised pattern.

Ricoeur's theory of emplotment also presents narrative as a form that can create textual variety. Emplotment organises the flux of time. No other form of organising principle or structure is needed to underpin the narrative. Emplotment

configures time in terms of a beginning (past), middle (present) and end (future). Even an open-ended text beginning *in media res* can experience beginning (because narrative emplotment configures the text as a connected sequence through which the beginning can be extrapolated) and can reach closure through a similar extrapolation into the text's future. Emplotment, for Ricoeur is a unifying process, but it is also an open-ended one, for each present moment allows understanding of past moments through narrative continuity, but this present moment is itself only temporary and provisional and is only made sense of when a future moment is reached. Narrative thus becomes endless and open-ended, and is never a closed totality. What is important about Ricoeur's theory, however, is that it foregrounds the temporal aspects of narrative as opposed to the achronic tendencies in most other narrative theories.[20] Emplotment, as a configuring principle, provides a framework for the study of narrative, but does not impose a system on it. It points, rather, to the temporality of narratives in which story provides the focus. Plot is no longer conceived as a linear cause-and-effect sequence, but highlights the internal temporality of narrative. Emplotment focuses on the sequential arrangement of narratives in which the displacement of events is foregrounded.

Structuralist Theories of Narrative

Despite the questions over Structuralist narratology's systematising tendency, however, there are useful insights available and some account of these is needed in order to draw out the points of interest as they relate to the approach to narrative that will be proposed. The basis of Structuralist narratology is the conception of narrative as a synchronic unity which is organised as a structural unity in the inter-relation of units; for example, the binary opposition of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. Such is the case with Vladimir Propp's

theory of a universal narrative which forms the basis for Structural Analysis of narratives, his ideas having been developed and expanded by Barthes, Todorov, Greimas and Eco. For Propp, the syntagmatic axis is the most important as far as narrative is concerned. The syntagmatic axis is formed by a set of events, whose number of functions is limited, but which, in a sense, set out the parameters of the folk-tale before it begins.[21] Propp, however, does point out that the limits placed on a narrative do not mean that it is always a closed totality. He points out that closure does not necessarily have to occur in a narrative, allowing a folktale to remain open-ended, a configuration that Structuralism, in its major forms, tends not to develop, setting boundaries for a text in the form of structural closure.

Nevertheless, as Terence Hawkes has pointed out, Propp's theory forms the basis for subsequent Structural Analyses of narrative.[22] It determines, as in A.J. Greimas' theory of a grammar of narrative, many of the Structuralist theories of narrative. Greimas, for example, introduces the binary operations of narrative into Structuralism by reducing the number of paradigmatic functions from seven to six, because he sees that each function presupposes the other: the *subject* (the hero) necessarily implying an *object* (the sought for person or thing), for example. Similarly, Greimas reduced the number of functions at the syntagmatic level, again organising them into binary oppositions; seeing in prohibition its necessary corollary, violation, for example. In the syntagmatic functions one event presupposes another and the narrative is mapped out in advance. These syntagmatic functions also form another binary opposition which is mapped in Barthes' 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives': that of kernel and satellite.[23] A kernel event is one which has a major function in a narrative and cannot be excluded without changing the ensuing development of the plot in some way. A satellite, on the other hand, is one that is not crucial to the development of the narrative and can be excluded without disturbing the progress of the narrative. The kernels are decisive functions while satellites are the 'filling-out' of the gaps in between.

The workings of such a narrative poetics can be seen in Umberto Eco's 'Narrative Structures in Fleming', an essay that reveals the salient issues of such analyses, but also draws attention to their limitations. Eco draws attention to a whole set of binary oppositions at the paradigmatic level - based on Greimas' binary structure - oppositions which allow Fleming's James Bond novels to function as a structure. For example, Bond is involved in a set of paradigmatic oppositions: Bond - M (the receiver and the sender), Bond - Villain (hero - villain), Bond - Woman (subject - object). However, these are not the only paradigmatic formulae in the text as they extend into areas involving the construction of cultural meanings: Woman - Villain, Duty - Sacrifice, Cupidity - Ideals, Love - Death, Chance - Planning, Excess - Moderation, Perversion - Innocence, and so on.[24] It can be seen already how some of these paradigmatic formulae also provide functions at the syntagmatic level of the novels. Love - Death, for example, already implies Bond's involvement with a woman and her subsequent death.

Eco calls these pairs 'simple' elements, elements that are ubiquitous to Fleming's fiction, although he then goes on to show how complex these relationships are. For example, the Bond-M opposition also involves a relationship of dominance. M also represents omniscience and distance as opposed to Bond's partial vision and involvement and, while M represents method and planning, Bond represents improvisation and spontaneity. This particular paradigmatic pairing also generates the syntagmatic structure of narrative. M and Bond each represent certain narrative functions that involve plot production. While M exemplifies the non-narrative function, his omniscience, distance and methodical qualities potentially contributing to narrative stasis (the prevention of narrative), Bond represents the narrative act itself by his involvement in events (his involvement in their production), his improvisation (narrative variation beyond the plot's kernel events), and his partial vision (setting out a revelation to which the narrative is directed). Without Bond there obviously could be no narrative, representing as he does the dynamic production of narrative at the horizontal syntagmatic level, while M represents the prevention of narrative at the static

vertical and paradigmatic level.

This conclusion, however, is not reached by Eco, who is more concerned with the ways in which Fleming's Bond stories enact the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. The tension between Bond and M that Eco's analysis hints at, however, seems to be a crucial aspect of the basic narrative unit that Eco delineates, particularly as it can be seen to introduce the element of politics. It is in M that the ideological construction of 'reality' is invested, M acting as an arbiter of what is right and wrong. Bond follows the paradigmatic orders of M, reading the world in terms of the conservative ideology that M projects, but finding, as Eco notes, that the world does not entirely fit M's vision. Bond, however, fulfils his mission at M's insistence and is recuperated into what Eco calls the static "Manichaean" ideology of M and Fleming. One of the revealing subtexts of Eco's essay, therefore, is the potential discovery that it is the syntagmatic axis of narrative action which threatens the fixed paradigmatic axis of ideology and of political stasis, a concept that informs political metafiction's use of dynamic narratives to challenge ideology.

A similar problem occurs in Eco's discussion of the syntagmatic axis of narrative which he sees as being constituted by nine invariable units (or 'moves' as he terms them) which are necessary for the narrative structure to unfold satisfactorily. The difficulty with Eco's system begins, however, when he notes that: "Occurring alongside the sequence of fundamental moves are numerous side issues which enrich the narrative by unforeseen events, without, however, altering the basic scheme."[25] There are gaps that Eco does not find sufficiently interesting to examine, these gaps being the satellite events which allow each Bond novel to be differentiated from any other Bond novel. What Eco prefers to discuss are the kernel events which form a structure around Ian Fleming's novels. The events which potentially threaten the narrative as a structure are ignored, even though these events are the disjunctive occurrences in a text which produce a text as narrative rather than as chronology. Eco, however, refers to them as

"vicarious", as "deviations" or as "curious" and yet while they are allegedly unnecessary to narrative structure they actually form the substance of any narrative.[26] It is these unnecessary, curious, digressive deviations which will form the basis of the model of narrative proposed later, for it is these deviations that seem to disconnect narrative from ideological stasis and which form its heteroglot configuration. It is these narrative forms that challenge 'plot' in its traditional definition: plot as linear, cause-and-effect, directed to a point of closure that accedes to an artificial ideological unity. Richard Brautigan's *A Confederate General From Big Sur*, for example, gestures toward a closure in which a transcendentalist epiphanic moment occurs in which Nature and the individual are joined, communion with Nature suggesting that 'all is well with the world'. However, the actual ending resists this closure, offering a series of deviating episodes following the statement "A seagull flew over us," a form of 'closure' which means that the epiphanic unity is constantly deferred.[27]

The limitations of Structural narratology stem from its view that there is a universal narrative of key events. Such a view, however, seems to indicate that there is no possibility for new narrative configurations, as these must accede to the already existing forms or structures. A system is uncovered which cannot be challenged, a view that does not fully explain the vicarious 'digressions' or new configurations which are engendered in narrative. Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada* illustrates this aspect. The plot seems to direct the black characters to the goal of escaping slavery by travelling to Canada, their linear flight matched by a linear narrative trajectory. The trajectory of their flight to this goal, however, is predictable and can be pre-empted by the white Southern authorities. Nor is Canada the place of liberation it seems. The racism in Canada is equal to that in the American South and, indeed, slaves who escaped to Canada were frequently returned to slavery. The linear narrative and the linear flight, therefore, seem to lead not to freedom, but back to oppression, Reed also using the linear narrative to enact ideology in contemporary society. Ideology not only allows but also creates desires for, and the belief in the possibility of, escape because these desires divert the oppressed away from a challenge to existing power structures,

but also because a belief that escape from these power structures has been achieved prevents recognition that the subject is still within them. The dream of escape to Canada represents, for Reed, an ideological fiction, the linear escape only leading back to oppression. Reed prefers a "scrapbook approach" in *Flight to Canada*, creating a plot-line that bifurcates into a series of digressions.[28] Narrative is mapped as a series of diversions, or satellite events, which constantly avoid the linear, goal-orientated plot that mimics the return to the existing power structures of America in which Afro-Americans continue to be oppressed.

Deconstructing Narrative

Post-Structuralism rejects narrative for two reasons. Firstly, narrative is associated with the methodologies of Structuralism in which narrative appears to be a system unable to find new arrangements.[29] Secondly, this alignment of narrative and system seems also to identify narrative with ideology. The lack of new arrangements mean that narrative can only replicate existing social forms and cannot disrupt them or offer new alternatives. While for Structuralism narrative is an "autonomous level of plot structure underlying actual linguistic manifestations",[30] Post-Structuralism reconfigures narrative so that it "cannot be considered apart from language".[31] Narrative becomes a deployment of internally constructed rhetorical tropes that foreground themselves as language. For Post-Structuralist writers, narrative is merely a representational device which bourgeois humanist society deploys in order to construct a form of subjectivity that fulfils its needs. This is particularly the case with realism which, in Colin MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, is conflated with narrative. As a result, both narrative and realism are presented as means by which ideological processes are replicated in a text. Narrative (conceived as realism) is

therefore an ideological structure paralleling social formations of identity and consciousness. It is a fiction that needs to be questioned so that the individual subject can be liberated and the free play of meaning in language - which narrative as ideology limits - is allowed to prevail. As Julia Kristeva writes:

> Therefore, we are no longer talking... about *narrative* (the fulfilment of a request, the exchange of information, the isolation of an ego amenable to transference, imagining, and symbolising). In the narrative, the speaking subject constitutes itself as the subject of a family, clan, or state group; it has been shown that the syntactically normative sentence develops within the context of prosaic and, later, historic narration. The simultaneous appearance of *narrative* genre and *sentence* limits the signifying process to an attitude of request and communication.[32]

Narrative binds the subject to a collective whole, which, in itself, is not a negative proposition, except that such a process has only ever been configured under systems of dominance as, for example, the existing status quo of bourgeois capitalist society, in which the community and its cultural forms are subjected to bourgeois ideology.[33] Kristeva proposes, as a challenge to such a situation, the power of language:

> *Language possesses a transfinite element*... it is the expanse beyond the sentence limits that, preserved, open up on a sundered continuity where a precise interval (the sentence) holds the value of meaning and signification - but their true power is built up only on the basis of the numerated, phrased infinity of a polylogical 'discourse' of a multiplied, stratified, and heteronomous subject of enunciation.[34]

Language opens up society, and with it the subject, to the play of heterogeneous desires. By so doing, language challenges the ordering principles of narrative and the sentence-unit, which in their linear construction and apparent unity construct the ideological desires of both society and the subject: desires for progress, social cohesion and individual free will, for example. However, these ideologically generated desires are shown to be incompatible and radically disjunct, producing tension and fracture rather than the apparent unity they are intended to effect. Social cohesion means that free will is impossible (because the subject is bound to the collective) and produces a static society which cannot progress. Free will prevents social cohesion because the desire for individuality fragments society which becomes atomistic and unable to progress as a whole. Progress curtails free

will, for society must develop at any cost and the subject must subordinate him/herself to this process, while progress also prevents social cohesion because social roles and practices are in a constant state of flux. Narrative attempts to rationalise these conflicting processes and in so doing it also creates an edifice which contains all three while asserting that they all absolutely prevail. Narrative makes stasis of progress, atomism of social cohesion and social control of free will. In other words, because it is a (fictional, ideological) representation, narrative is negation, yet it perpetuates the initial ideological desires that it actually reverses. It is through language that narrative as representation is shattered. Language opens up the free play of desires and signification in which the subject is able to escape the limits of representation, Derrida writing that: "the authority of representation constrains us, imposing itself on our thought through a whole dense, enigmatic, and heavily stratified history. It programs us and precedes us."[35]

The Post-Structuralist strategy focuses on the gaps within narrative that Eco dismisses, the gaps that language opens up. Language reveals narrative for what it is, a fiction of order. Language and discourse expose the ideological siting of the text and transgress ideology's containing strategies. An analysis of a classic realist text, therefore, focuses on the ideological (or symbolic) meanings that a text presents as natural and shows them to be constructed fictions, allowing the free play of meaning to be opened up in a textual analysis that goes beyond the purely ideological. Roland Barthes' *S/Z* attempts such a task, starting from a Structuralist approach to Balzac's short story 'Sarrasine' and ending with Post-Structuralist textual analysis. Barthes' project in *S/Z* is to analyse 'Sarrasine', by breaking it up into textual signifiers or *lexias* (what Barthes calls "contiguous fragments" which form discreet "units of reading")[36] and then to read these lexias in terms of the five interpretative codes that Barthes distinguishes: the hermeneutic, the semic (or signifying) code, the symbolic, the proairetic (the code of actions), and the 'cultural' or reference code (which relates to the narrative voice and the means by which narrative voice establishes a cultural and ideological context for the story).

Although the analysis is ostensibly Structuralist, Barthes begins *S/Z* by setting out the distinction between *readerly* (*lisible*) and *writerly* (*scriptible*) that characterises his later, more obviously, Post-Structuralist writings. The readerly is basically the discourse of the realist narrative which is subsequently displaced by the writerly discourse of experimental fiction that challenges narrative and its ideological representations.[37] At one point Barthes writes that "what we call 'real' (in the theory of the realistic text) is never more than the code of representation (of signification): it is never a code of execution: *the novelistic real is not operable*. To identify... the real with the operable would be to subvert the novel at the limit of its genre." (*S/Z*, 80) This is a subversion that Barthes is unwilling to propose in *S/Z*, drawing back from the collapse of the readerly into the writerly, preferring to retain the distinction. When he later compares Balzac with a typical writerly text, Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, he writes that the writerly text "constitutes writing in all its power as a game. Classic writing does not go so far: it is quickly winded, closes down, and signs its final code quite soon... Flaubert, however... working with an irony impregnated with uncertainty, achieves a salutary discomfort of writing: he does not stop the play of codes..." (*S/Z* p.140).

It is in Barthes' 'Textual Analysis of Poe's "Valdemar"' that the theory of textual analysis is proposed and in which the Structural Analysis of *S/Z* is questioned. It is also in 'Textual Analysis of Poe's "Valdemar"' that Barthes challenges the notion of narrative and traditional views of it, seeing it as simply another form of representation that is at the mercy of the play of language, rather than a distinct and useful form in the analysis of texts:

> Narrative is immediately subsumed... under the notion of 'text', space, process of meanings at work, in short, 'signifiance'... which is observed not as a finished, closed product, but as a production in progress, 'plugged in' to other texts, other codes (this is the intertextual), and thereby articulated with society and history in ways which are not determinist but citational.[38]

Narrative is collapsed into textuality and is theorised as discursive and non-mimetic. Narrative is articulated "*with* society and history" and is, therefore, not

the transcendent universal form of Propp's theory, able to speak *about* society and history. Narrative, as textuality, is no longer a separate and distinct form with a content (society and history), but takes part in the same processes as society and history in the form of textuality, which is the configuration that collapses form into content. In other words, narrative is no longer a separate form of representation which speaks about society and history, but is exposed as an ideological construct which figures society and history through language.

Despite the non-mimetic function of intertextuality, Post-Structuralist criticism can still tend to see texts in terms of mimesis, particularly in relation to postmodernist fiction. Charles Caramello summarises Barthes' approach to textuality, writing that "the 'Text' does not *refer to* an external world, but is the inscription *of* that world", and adopts Barthes' position in his description of postmodernist texts as "silverless mirrors".[39] Postmodernist fiction insists on its own fictionality and, although Caramello stresses its internal self-reflexivity, assumes a position in which the distance between the discourses of the text and cultural discourses is collapsed. Caramello and Barthes implicitly oppose mimesis to plot, proposing that in the abandonment of the latter a more 'real' view of life is produced. Two types of representation are suggested. The first is 'false' (plot as it is allied with system) while the other is more authentic: the mimesis of society and consciousness as they are constructed out of discourse. Such a view articulates an interesting account of mimesis and experimental fiction that will be developed in section II where narrative will be viewed as a mediation between the two terms in its articulation of referential and fictional levels, rather than as a mediation between 'reality' and the reader.

Mimesis remains an important question for any socially and culturally based analysis of narrative, but such a question is better addressed through the Bakhtinian notion of refraction than an aesthetic of reflection. In Bakhtin's theory of the novel, social 'reality' is neither reflected nor constructed through narrative, but refracted through the interplay of discourses (meant here as specific language systems such as legal, bureaucratic, scientific, or vernacular discourses) in which

the values and beliefs of each discourse compete for dominance, but are affected and transformed by their textual encounters. In the concluding section of 'Discourse in the Novel' Bakhtin writes:

> What *is* present in the novel is an artistic *system* of language, or more accurately a system of *images* of language, and the real task of stylistic analysis consists in uncovering all the available orchestrating languages in the composition of the novel, grasping the precise degree of distancing that separates each language from its most immediate semantic instantiation in the work as a whole, and the varying angles of refraction of intentions within it, understanding their dialogic interrelationships and - finally - if there *is* direct authorial discourse, determining the heteroglot background outside the work that dialogizes it.[40]

Although Bakhtin privileges discourse, he does not dismiss the importance of story. The interaction between discourses is neither the only aspect of the novel, nor does it dispense with the attributes usually associated with story such as events and their articulation through juxtaposition and metonymy. Events still occur in the novel for Bakhtin, but they are less important than discourse, genre and rhetoric. Discourses are foregrounded by the process of juxtaposition and engage in the struggle for dominance through the displacement of other discourses.

To claim Bakhtin for a study of narrative in which the storied element is given equal weight there must, however, be a re-reading of Bakhtin. This can be achieved if Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia is deployed in relation to story. Heteroglossia as a concept is, for Bakhtin, solely concerned with the use of language and discourse and is the fundamental condition regulating the operation and production of meaning in any given utterance. Heteroglossia produces meaning in an utterance under two conditions, as the utterance is constituted by the rules of the language system within which it is framed, and as the utterance is constituted within the context within which it is uttered. An utterance does not just make sense (or find meaning) within the language system, but also requires a situation to create or connote meaning. A statement such as "life is good" needs a context beyond the language system for it to signify as a fully connotative phrase. In the context of a death bed utterance, for example, it connotes

something rather different to a context in which the speaker has just achieved some form of success. In the former case the meaning might be governed by signification of regret or pathos, while in the latter case the meaning might be governed by its temporary aspect, as a transient response that will soon be dissipated with the first reversal of fortune. The same is the case with heteroglossia in the novel, for again the statement "life is good" would be governed by the context of utterance, as well as by the frame of the discourse (language system) within which it is uttered, a discourse which also finds a contextualising heteroglossia as it is brought into contact with other discourses:

> Summing up the characteristics of a novelistic hybrid, we can say... the novelistic hybrid is *an artistically organised system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language.[41]

Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia supplies a theory of discourse that is entirely different to the Post-Structuralist approach. In Post-Structuralism context does not have any influence on language. The signifying patterns set up by the language system (particularly in the form of intertextuality) subvert the context of a discursive statement, exploding the cultural, historical, social and political contexts of an utterance and empowering the "citational" scene of the utterance.

To re-read Bakhtin in terms of story the concept of heteroglossia needs to be brought into conjunction with the Formalist notion of *syuzhet*, or plot. This involves a bifurcation beyond the story-discourse opposition. In the story-discourse opposition, story is the chronological events and discourse its expression in narrative and language. The *fabula-syuzhet* division involves a sub-division of story solely in terms of narrative where the *fabula* is the substance of a story (its chronology) and *syuzhet* is the plot (or the way in which a story is narratively arranged). If heteroglossia is deployed in relation to narrative in terms of this plot level, then the subversive aspect of discursive heteroglossia can be retained (and with it the political, cultural and social constitution of narrative) and the Proppian view of the universal narrative or the Structuralist view of narrative as a system or totality can be transformed. Just as heteroglossia supplies contexts for

discourses to challenge a monologic system of discourse, so too can narratives challenge system. This can involve a parody or transformation of the laws of genres or, like *Flight to Canada* it can involve the introduction of narrative digressions to question the linear goal-orientated narrative that is also configured. Even so, Bakhtin still sees the novel as a system of discourses that form some form of unity, and this aspect needs to be re-examined in the light of postmodernist fiction which challenges the notion of unity. For in this case, in the heteroglossia of narrative-as-story, it is fragmentation and stratification that is produced, rather than system or unity.

It is this question of totality and fragmentation with which this thesis is particularly concerned, and the role of narrative forms a way of negotiating between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. I do not want to reject narrative in the same way that Post-Structuralism has, but I do not want to retain the Structuralist notion of totality. The focus will be on the way in which a text's narratives open out the possibilities of the text rather than close them down. I want to challenge the binaries with which Post-Structuralism is still implicitly involved: the binaries between Struturalist narrative (totality, closure, unity) and Post-Structuralist textuality (open-endedness, plurality and difference). As well as bringing narrative into conjunction with the Post-Structuralist strategies that open out the text to new possibilities the Bakhtinian concepts of refraction and heteroglossia will be applied in relation to the empowerment of story, a process that will be discussed in section II.

Ideology and the Text

Although the novels of political metafiction cannot be described as 'political novels' in the traditional sense (with the possible exception of *The Public Burning*) they do deal with the effect of ideology, power and cultural and social form on identity, selfhood and individuality as it takes place within society, whether it is the forms of ideology in circulation in American society or a more general theory of systematisation as Tony Tanner has discussed.[42] They consciously deal with the question of the determination of individual actions and power relations but they also self-reflexively question their own status as texts with reference to the issue of ideology - although ideology is rarely expressed in such theoretical terms.[43] The issue of ideology becomes of crucial importance in this context and needs to be addressed both in relation to the ideological status of text and narrative and in relation to the question of the ideological (or anti-ideological) projects that might take place within postmodernist fiction, particularly with reference to what I have called political metafiction.

It has already been seen how criticism has used ideology in relation to written texts, in the discussion of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*. However, the Lukacsian based theory present in this work is not the only theory of literature and ideology, although it is one of the more conventional forms of theorising ideology. Jameson's theory also owes something to the work of Pierre Macherey, particularly Macherey's collaboration with Etienne Balibar in the writing of the essay 'On Literature As An Ideological Form'. For Balibar and Macherey, texts are not mechanically determined either by history or by ideology, although the material fact of their production may well be, as part of the commodity exchange. By this they mean that the text as a physical object is produced in terms of the dominant economic formation, whereas the 'content' - the literary text as text - is engaged in a different sphere, one of mutual exchange between history and the text. A literary text does not initially appear as a passive receptacle for the dominant ideology of society. They view literature as a means by which ideological contradictions can be resolved. They comment on this as

follows:

> ...in itself the text... is materially incomplete, disparate and diffuse from being the outcome of the conflicting contradictory effect of superimposing real processes which cannot be abolished in it except in an imaginary way. To be more explicit: literature is produced finally through the effect of one or more ideological contradictions precisely because these contradictions cannot be solved within ideology.[44]

A text is made disjunct and incomplete because it is asked to solve ideological contradictions, but is incapable of presenting the unity demanded of it by ideology. It presents instead a reflection of history and the irreconcilable contradictions of ideology. The text can only provide an 'imaginary' solution, not a material solution to ideological contradictions.[45] Though it creates contradictions (in its reflection of the fissures of history), ideology can also make the text presentable again, and in so doing can use the text to perpetuate itself. This does not mean that the text is absolutely determined by ideology. The text is open to a reading process which will expose the very contradictions which ideology attempts to conceal, but because the text is separate from the material domain of social relations, the revelation of contradictions cannot have material effect in the resistance to ideology.

Balibar and Macherey, however, question a text's political effectiveness in their view that the ideological function of literature overcomes these problems of fissure and contradiction "in its ensemble":

> it induces by the literary effect the production of 'new' discourses which always reproduce (under constantly varied forms) the same ideology (with its contradictions). It enables individuals to appropriate ideology and make themselves its 'free' bearers and even its 'free' creators.[46]

The text no longer represents ideological contradictions in aesthetic forms, but represents 'real' ideological contradictions and therefore can have material effect as ideology. Texts do not just reproduce ideology as a controlling device, but reproduce its contradictions and create readers as ideological subjects. While texts can reveal contradictions in ideology these only take place aesthetically. Ideology, itself, is reproduced materially. The opening of a text to fissures and

contradictions seems to allow readers to appropriate ideology for themselves, but the effect is not the possibility of resistance or liberation. Readers construct themselves as ideological subjects of their own 'free' will, believing they are constructing positions of resistance.

The theory of ideology and literature that Balibar and Macherey propose is one which is partly a re-reading of the critical model proposed by Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production*. This book is concerned above all with placing the literary text within the historical conditions of its production, which Balibar and Macherey, in 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', locate literature in an empirical and mechanical framework. They also re-read Macherey's account of the text as a form of resolution of ideological contradictions in which Macherey regards the text as an artificially imposed solution of ideological effects, effects concealed by the use of formal devices and resolutions. Balibar and Macherey discern instead fissures which expose ideological contradictions in their re-interpretation of Macherey's earlier position.[47]

The return to the idea of reflection, however, marks a departure from one of the more interesting aspects of Macherey's earlier work. In *A Theory of Literary Production* Macherey puts forward the proposition that while texts are determined by their historical conditions of production, it is equally possible for a writer to develop an ideological project which can extend and develop the already existing cultural ideas and beliefs that form ideology. The writer recognises a lack in ideology which points to an inadequacy in the cultural forms of his or her society. Society appears to be lacking in either order or purpose and in danger of imminent collapse. The writer then consciously provides what he or she believes to be a solution to this imminent social deficiency although it is not expressed in the text as a conscious political stance. Nevertheless, it underpins the text as a motive force for the narrative. Macherey discusses this aspect of texts most cogently in his discussion of Jules Verne where he comments that the theme of the conquest of nature "is immediately elaborated by means of specific themes... which are the real themes of the work".[48] A text is neither a reflection of the

dominant ideology, nor is it an attempt to resolve ideological contradictions, but an attempt to provide a new set of discourses and a new purpose for what seems to be a radically disordered culture. This new strategy also produces contradictions, however, primarily because no single idea developed by an individual (in the case of Verne, the ideology of the conquest of nature) can organise the contradictions of existing ideology.

Each new discourse adds to the contradictions of ideology and cultural meanings, a concept of interest to the question of ideology and narrative in relation to postmodernist writers' questioning of ideology. Macherey suggests that the lack in dominant ideology leads to projects designed to create new ideological and cultural paradigms and beliefs in order to renew society (without, however, changing, the existing power relations). The recognition of a lack in ideology, however, can also lead to the possibility of strategies of resistance. The creation of political projects therefore seems to offer the means to create anti-ideological strategies in postmodernist fiction which challenges postmodern culture's recuperation of resistance that Jameson analyses and also challenge society's power structures. Postmodernist writers, however do not construct a strategy identical to the one that Macherey sets out for Jules Verne, because they are not concerned with the renewal of ideology. They do not propose any extrapolations of ideology precisely because there is a distrust of *dominant* ideology. Indeed, many of them do not propose any new system of ideas at all and, contrary to the projects Macherey outlines, they do not see dominant ideology as contradictory and in danger of collapse, but see it as acting systematically to control both society and the individual subject. The dominant ideology is only contradictory in its *effects*, in its generation of fragmented identities. Nevertheless, the fictional and narrative strategies of these postmodernist writers do entail some form of political project, even if in some cases it is only negative, in the form of an anti-ideological project and, therefore, primarily parodic. Such is the case with Gaddis' *JR* and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* in which the conscious use of fictionalising processes questions ideology's creation of parameters for identity and cultural practice.

There is, however, a difficulty for writers of political metafiction in discerning which cultural processes are ideological and whether their strategies offer forms of resistance. Although Macherey's theory suggests that a gap in ideology occurs through which it becomes possible to recognise ideology, the fluid space of postmodern culture suggests that there are no gaps; any gap that opens up is soon filled by another discourse or simulation. It becomes difficult to not only locate ideology, but also to detect who is in control of it. This leads to a major difficulty. Opposition to a force that cannot be perceived generates problems in the creation of a counter-ideology, something which Charles Russell points out in his discussion of ideology and discourse in postmodernist fiction.[49] Russell argues that if it is impossible to ascertain which group or which agencies are in control then it is difficult to know how it is possible to mount a concrete challenge, for the strategy decided on may itself be complicit. The fiction of William S. Burroughs articulates this problem, Burroughs directing his narrative strategies toward oppositionalism in its most extreme form. Burroughs finds in his novels, however, that all attempts to oppose social control seem to have been pre-empted and that each stance is already complicit at the moment it is assumed. To locate oneself in a static subject position is to allow social control to isolate and fix identity and subjectivity. Burroughs therefore generates a negative oppositionalism in the form of constantly changing political positions. This is mirrored in the creation of narratives which constantly overturn static subject positions and which, due to their dynamic and motive force, perpetually loop outside ideological forms of cultural meaning, parodying the static reflexive axis of narrative which is used to enact ideology. For example, *The Place of Dead Roads* locates itself in terms of the Western, but does not accede to the values that the Western traditionally embodies: the family-based community, domination of the Indian 'other', the triumph of the law, and the expansion of the State. Burroughs uses narrative cut-ups to create a text in which all possible Western scenarios and events are articulated, without any one of them achieving more than a momentary dominance. Each scenario incorporates an aspect of the ideology embodied in the Western, but Burroughs constantly displaces the narrative focus so that as soon as one scenario has run its course and been exhausted, another

takes its place. No fixed position is ever created and the scenarios become an exercise in style rather than acquiescing to any overall ideology constructed by the Western.

Theories of Ideology

The definition of ideology is as problematic as political metafiction's responses to it. In his recent book, *Ideology: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton devotes a chapter to the question of how ideology is to be delineated. At the end of the first chapter Eagleton sets out several different definitions of ideology. The first definition is "the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs, and values in social life" which is the most general sense in which ideology can be viewed. This formulation is roughly similar to the concept of 'culture' by which is meant the systems of "signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society" and which, therefore, form the framework in which meaning is created and through which lived experience is expressed. Another definition focuses on the way social groups express, promote and legitimate their beliefs, values and interests. This definition begins to take account of the specifically political elements in the conventional Marxist definitions of ideology: "Ideology can here be seen as a discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power overall."[50] This definition owes something to Gramsci's theory of ideology in which particular social groups - or more properly, social classes - challenge each other over the establishment of hegemony for their own ideology.

A development of this definition articulates the concept of ideology confined to "the activities of a dominant social power". This definition does not include the legitimation of the interests of the dominant social power through "distortion or dissimulation" which is the means by which the next form of

ideology is defined. In this case, the dominant power takes control of the signifying practices and symbolic processes of the first definition. There is one other definition, according to Eagleton, "which retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole... The most celebrated instance of this sense of ideology is Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities."[51] The dominant social power does not consciously seek to promote its own interests, instead it is the economic forms on which society is based that determines the production of ideology, which may conflict with the ideology that a dominant power attempts to articulate. Indeed, in this formulation it is uncertain whether there is a dominant social power at all, for any would-be dominant social power would consciously attempt to impose its value and belief systems but would not be able to conclusively succeed.

In the main, ideology is conceived as the realm of thoughts and ideas in circulation in society, which present themselves as true, universal, and real, but which, in actuality, encode the power dynamics of a particular culture or the interests of the dominant power group. Ideology is articulated in concrete signifying and symbolic systems such as language, popular myth and belief, or codes of values, extending into cultural activity. This does not, however, mean that ideology can be viewed as an external system imposed on culture. Ideology, when it is imposed from above becomes obvious as ideological repression, as in (state) censorship. Such external impositions tend to expose ideology as ideology and are not an effective means by which control is established at a cultural level because ideology becomes more tangible in this situation. The imposition of ideology through censorship by the *state* on *civil society* (Althusser) does not seem an adequate account of society. However, while Althusser at certain points sees external imposition of ideology as crucial (as in the role of education) the interpellation of subjects involves a creative self-oppression.[52] In the functioning of ideology through 'interpellation' the subject apparently becomes the author of ideological statements or practices as if s/he had originated them him- or herself. Eagleton, commenting on Althusser's remark that "*all ideology hails or interpellates*

concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject",[53] writes that "society... appears to single us out as uniquely valuable and address us by name. It fosters the illusion that it could not get on without us."[54] Ideology is both false and real. It is a necessary illusion which makes the subject feel both useful and important and which creates a society in which the subject can live out this belief in experience. In other words, the 'individual' is never constituted as an 'individual', only ever as a 'subject' (subject to ideology), because the condition of ideology is all that has ever been known. And yet the 'subject' believes that s/he is still an individual (similar to the grammatical subject, 'I', who enounces him- or herself in discourse).

Terry Eagleton, however, has pointed out that Althusser's concept of interpellation as a misrecognition of the self is based in a misreading of Lacan's theory of the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic'.[55] Althusser locates this misrecognition in the mirror stage of the imaginary order where Lacan pointed to the entry into the 'symbolic' order of language as the construction of the subject as a subject: divided, desiring and in a state of lack. The 'imaginary' corresponds to the construction of the ego which is lost on entry into the 'symbolic'. As Slavoj Zizek writes: "The basic feature of the Lacanian subject is, of course, its alienation in the signifier: as soon as the subject is caught in the radically external signifying network he is mortified, dismembered, divided."[56] The 'symbolic' order of the signifier creates dismemberment, but also represses it into the unconscious. Similarly, ideology can be seen to create sites for resistance, but then repress them, or channel them into pathways it has created so that the subject believes that his/her desires for resistance are achieved.

A contrary view of ideology is supplied in the theory of false consciousness which is created in the subject's unconscious perceptions and thoughts about society and the individual's position within it. These thoughts are externally supplied to the individual by various processes (media representations, education, literature, et cetera) and are 'false' because they do not give the subject the 'true' picture of his or her own position in society or what the subject could achieve in

a free or 'natural' state. What is implicitly at issue in the false consciousness arguments, however, is not what is true and what is false, but what is desirable, so that what is desired is projected as a 'true' condition. For those in power it is desirable for there to be power relations based on dominance, whereas for those without power it is desirable that there is equality. The issue of what is true and false is something of a red herring although, as Eagleton notes, all ideology involves some form of value or belief system which may be false but has 'real' concrete effects: "there are no such [lived] relations which do not tacitly involve a set of beliefs and assumptions, and these beliefs and assumptions may themselves be open to judgements of truth and falsehood."[57]

The images and representations set up by dominant ideology are not necessarily false but they do set out desires, goals, narratives and a purpose for action or behaviour, ideals to be matched or shortcomings to be avoided. Ideology therefore maps out desires and ambitions, especially desires for success on social terms, but it also provides solace (in the form of film and television) due to the disappointment at what is actually delivered by society. This is one of the elements of ideology that Jules Lefort analyses in his account of the 'social imaginary' as summarised by John B. Thompson: "The task of ideology is to conceal, within the social space... the divisions and mutations entailed by the development of capitalism."[58] To achieve this, ideology produces a representation of society as a unity. It describes a society which is an imaginary community where 'real' divisions are portrayed as 'natural', where the particular is disguised in the universal and the historical is disguised as atemporal essence.

This notion has a certain relevance as a concealment of divisions in society, but capitalism also points to its own divisions and is dependent on a knowledge of gaps in its structure. Capitalism does not just state that divisions between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, are a 'natural' division. Such an inert system would seem to have little chance of survival. Capitalism supplies itself with a dynamic by highlighting the gaps between rich and poor and powerful and powerless making a virtue of power asymmetries by articulating power as a desire.

It introduces desire into the system and provides, as an object or goal for this desire, material improvement (in terms of status) on an individual level. This fragmentation and division is universalised as diversity and plurality (in the discourses of capitalism) and has the effect of making the subject feel that s/he has personal freedom and is not controlled.

Ideology is also a process of universalisation in which a society based on power relations announces that it is the only system capable of maintaining itself as a credible system. An effect of this is the way that ideology channels and represses desires, effecting in this way what Jameson calls 'strategies of containment' which forestall the ability to think outside existing social forms. Althusser writes of this:

> Marx never believed that an ideology might be dissipated by a knowledge of it: for the knowledge of this ideology, as the knowledge of its conditions of possibility, of its structure, of its specific logic and of its practical role, within a given society, is simultaneously knowledge of its necessity.[59]

The powerless may recognise the control exercised over them, but this does not have material effect for the powerless. The desires, values and goals of the dominant ideology are all that are available, although as Gina Marchetti notes, "those outside of power have difficulty accepting the dominant ideology without question." Ideology must allow some access to its narratives and discourses, particularly in mass media texts (in order to make a profit). The provision of a place for resistance results in contradictions, but these are "then usually controlled or simply left in the realm of the impossible, in the domain of entertainment and fantasy."[60] Desires for resistance are articulated but society does not allow the means for them to be effected, unlike the desires for social conformity.

Similarly, in consumer capitalism, desires and goals are channelled in terms of culture. With the attenuation of 'individuality' in the work-place (through automation and through the loss of decision-making powers for white collar workers), 'individuality' through consumption is offered as a replacement (possession and image become symbols of power). Attenuation of 'individuality'

in the face of automation leads to a crisis in identity as the subject feels threatened as an individual subject rather than threatened ideologically. The attenuation of the subject's control over his or her life is perceived as an individual failing, rather than the effect of the system of domination in society. In other words, the subject is creatively involved in his or her own powerlessness, albeit within designated structures with already determined goals: what can be called narratives of ideology. The construction of a self-image or identity involves the subject apparently creating their own narrative as a possible future (with their own desires, aspirations and goals). This involves rejection of parts of society, a rejection that can be apparently non-conformist. However, this must take place within existing social forms, so that the subject is actually finding an 'escape' route already created for him or her, while believing they have created the narrative themselves.

Narratives of Ideology

These are some aspects of ideology, many of which will form the focus for the study of ideology and narrative, not least the mapping of desires, and the interpellation of the subject in which self-interest as an individual is created, and is then lived out in the processes that society makes available. This is one of the aspects of ideology and control that writers of political metafiction specifically adopt. They suggest that it is possible to think and desire outside ideology, but that the means to effect desires are limited or contained by the possibilities available. To live in contemporary America is to live ideologically. There may be a recognition and desire for other forms of social practices, but it is impossible to live except according to the existing ideas and values of society. This means continual compromise in the face of larger social and cultural forces which are generated through the control of forms of representation, particularly the mass

media. These help to create and support the belief that the subject's best interests are best served under existing social relations, although they do not enforce them. Ideology therefore is a combination of desire and belief, but also involves already created narratives of control which are difficult to avoid because they form the means by which it is possible to live in society. Distinct roles, identities and practices (or narratives) are mapped for the subject within which the subject is allowed creative involvement and the exercise of desire, but within the limited parameters of the ideas and thoughts in circulation in society.

The study of narratives of ideology has mainly been generated by feminist critiques of patriarchal society and its creation of roles for women. Rosalind Coward, for example, in 'The True Story of How I Became My Own Person', has analysed the narratives that patriarchy sets out for women, involving the production of roles, desires and goals. In a discussion of novels by women which deal with attempts to discover knowledge and identity, Coward develops an argument which focuses on the importance of narrative for the production of ideological subject positions. She shows how, in the nineteenth century, the novel had a central role in the production of such narratives for women, narratives that directed women toward marriage, closure ending the narrative and producing both narrative silence and the silencing of desire: "Marriage was the point where the narrative was resolved and often concluded. *How* that point was reached, of course, was all-important and varied enormously between writers. For Jane Austen, the movement toward marriage was invariably also a movement towards an intellectual apprehension of social values."[61] Such narratives promote an ideology that dismisses the need for women to develop their own forms of knowledge and identity. The narratives stress that women will find what they need in partriarchal society. The end of narrative in marriage is the end of the heroine's capacity to generate choices and identity, which are subsequently decided for her.

Coward, however, notes that narrative has become a potentially liberatory act for women, as long as it is not subsumed by ideology. If this latter case occurs,

women find themselves unable to act or speak independently, for they live in narratives created by men: narratives of motherhood, companionship, and caring, the stereotypical 'Angel of the Home' of the nineteenth century. In such narratives women have been reduced to certain essences and roles which pre-exist them socially. The narratives entail acts and goals already set out, in which women can only 'succeed' by living out the roles as if they were an end in themselves. Men, on the other hand, have unachieved goals to direct themselves toward in the public sphere. In a sense, women have already achieved their goals in the act of marriage; subsequently they can only succeed by more perfectly fulfilling their roles. Coward sees this situation as one in which women's desires are silenced in the loss of narrative. It is the ideology of patriarchy that decides their desires and, indeed, it is this ideology which decides that women desire to be married in the first place. In opposition to this she proposes the possibility of using narrative as a means by which women can take control of their own desires, in the form of confessional narratives. In this form women can set out their own desires and use narrative to challenge the expectations of ideology, thereby challenging the narratives that women find in actuality. The confessional narrative seems to have the advantage of not obeying traditional narrative forms and, therefore, allows women to create narratives and to express desires in actuality as well as in a representational form. However, she notes that such narratives have themselves become stereotypical and are in danger of simply confirming actual narratives rather than creating new ones:

> Within the novel, the 'confession' has appeared overdetermined by traditions specific to the novel. In particular it has been influenced by the importance of narrative which organises a series of events or experiences as significant and progressing towards a meaningful conclusion. This space of time, or narrative, is one in which the central character or characters undergo a series of experiences which radically affect their lives or transform their attitudes. The effect of this structure is to create a distinct ideology of knowledge and indeed life - that experience brings knowledge and possibly wisdom.[62]

Coward questions confessional narratives not because they present 'false' desires, but because they have become enmeshed in already existing ideological forms of narrative. These ideological narratives organise women's experience in terms of

an ending, which will provide closure for their desires, silencing them, and implicitly confining women to a role which they themselves have not created. Coward suggests that confessional narratives (as well as narratives in general) need to be open-ended in order to open up narrative to new possibilities and to prevent narrative from being reduced to the static set of behavioural patterns implied by genres such as the romance which re-encode women as a dominated 'other'.

Such a thesis points to the existence of narratives outside discursive texts, although partly dependent upon them. In this case, these narratives do not solely serve the ruling social group, but men as a whole, and point to the existence of narratives which pre-exist the subject across society. They exist as cultural forms which encode subjectivity as a practice rather than as a set of thoughts, ideas and values, although these are also involved. Narratives in the cultural sphere are created, narratives of identity and independence, focused on the consumption of images and commodities as a means to establish 'individuality'. Ideology constructs a social and cultural imaginary through which desires are articulated in which subject positions are situated "where the future appears as a narration of possibilities as well as limits".[63]

II.

The Narratives of Political Metafiction

In this section the aspects of narrative and ideology that have been described will be drawn together to offer an approach to the narratives mapped by political metafiction. Two forms of narrative configuration will be proposed. There is a referential narrative form that enacts ideology's mapping of desire within the parameters of existing cultural ideas, values and meanings and which uses culturally determined forms of narrative. The other form is a dynamics of narrative which is configured to resist the ideological siting of the text. It also maps new possibilities that "project new fictions to live by", so that the narratives of political metafiction do not replicate ideology's mapping of culture.[64] While narrative operates as a means of organising phenomena and has a mimetic function these are not its only operations. The organising principle and mimetic function of narratives are used in political metafiction as a means of dramatising ideology's organisation of cultural life. The self-consciousness with which this ideological configuration is mapped, however, positions political metafiction in terms of its attempts to resist rather than to replicate ideology. Alan Singer argues that narrative discourse is a subversive element in the novel, for it "links the understanding of the form of the novel to our understanding of the novel. This is what makes the novel genre a rich reflection on human action to which ideology, after all, always consequentially devolves."[65] In the shift from narrative discourse to narrative as story the radical reappraisal of the role, function and usage of narrative in the contemporary experimental American fiction can be perceived as a means of questioning the ideological subtext of narrative. Political metafiction's configuration of narrative does not only involve a reappraisal of narrative's aesthetic functions, but also involves narrative's articulation within social, cultural, and political systems of signification.

Obviously there are exceptions to this general principle. The fictions of

William Gass involve a use of narrative as a self-reflexive aesthetic or linguistic construct which is used to create a mythic world abstracted from a particular social and cultural world. For example, *Omensetter's Luck* is placed in a mythic middle America of the turn of the century, much like that represented in Hollywood period films such as *The Strawberry Blonde*, although this extends only as far as the spatial setting. The novel goes beyond the genre in its linguistic, narrative, and psychological aspects. Nevertheless, in hinting at a reference to other types of genre, the novel foregrounds its dependence on the parodic use of signs from various kinds of language-systems. Similarly, the novels of Joseph McElroy occupy a space in which experimental use of narrative overlaps a strategy in which there is a reworking of ideological narratives.

The issue of narrative, however, has infrequently been addressed in studies of postmodernist fiction, which may well be a problem of its definition as much as anything. The usual approach is to see postmodernism as a form that is concerned with self-reflexivity and with language-games. Charles Caramello, for example, argues that postmodern fiction is an investigation of its own status as Text, while Allen Thiher argues that it is informed by recent deconstructuve theories of language, and Jerzy Kutnik sees contemporary experimental fiction focusing on the performative aspect of its use of language.[66] Indeed, one of the difficulties of approaching a study of narrative strategies in experimental post-War American fiction is that narrative is frequently collapsed into postmodernism in the studies of such fiction. For example, despite the theoretical subtleties and the range of reference that Patricia Waugh brings to her book *Metafiction* she interprets the narrative strategies of experimental fiction predominantly in terms of the postmodernist characteristic of fictionality. Her analysis sees metafictional narratives in various ways, covering self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, the breaking of frames, language games, and in terms of parody and pastiche. These aspects, however, do not actively produce narratives that might intervene within contemporary representations of history and subjectivity.[67] This is not necessarily a failing as, of course, her frame of reference is one far different to the project proposed in this thesis, but at some point there needs to be a study

of use of narrative in recent experimental fiction. This is partially determined by the need for a more rigorous examination of the formal level of such texts, but such an approach is also forced upon the reader due to the 'return' to referentiality of much experimental fiction in the 1970's. This is not to say that there was a universal return to forms of realism, but that the experimental writers of the period were increasingly aware of their cultural, social and political context. Their fictions at least attempt to become more referential, within the frame of *political* reference using more complex forms of narrative fiction in which realism and referentiality are played off against self-reflexivity and fictionality of form.

What I am proposing is not a model that covers all narratives. It is in political metafiction that the theory of narrative and politics that is proposed takes place. These texts are ones which, at least in part, demonstrate a concern with history and with cultural and social referentiality in terms of form. They also have political concerns, particularly with the impingement by systems (ideological, informational, scientific, cultural, etc.) on the 'individual'. The effect of ideology in the construction of identity is a particular concern, specifically as ideology maps and limits subjectivity in the construction of desires and the mapping of possible narratives. Frequently, this socialisation is associated with the construction of systems of reality which are viewed as ideological; as dramatised in the use and parody of genre. However, these texts are not solely referential but retain the parodic, self-reflexive and self-conscious fictionality that most critics see in postmodernist or metafictional texts.

The reading experience involved in these texts is an experience of a conflict between these two forms of the narrative. These texts resist the ideological construction of reality with which the referential configurations are engaged through the metafictional narratives that are mapped. The self-conscious use of language and narrative forms does not mean that political metafiction rejects referentiality, but rather that there is an attempt to negotiate new relationships with it. New forms of referentiality are delineated, even if this means attempting to create 'authentic' or more 'real' forms of expression. William

Burroughs' interest in telepathy and Reichian sexual psychology can be seen as examples of how 'authentic' forms of communication are proposed and brought into contact with narrative and linguistic strategies. As such, the relationship between fictionality and mimetic referentiality needs to further analysed.

Ronald Sukenick concerns himself with these very problems. In a series of sketches called 'Writing on Writing', Sukenick distinguishes between two types of fiction, one mimetic and one non-mimetic. Instead of taking the usual view of this distinction Sukenick proposes that it is mimetic fiction which is too bound up with its own processes of "let's pretend" games which produce "second-hand, platonic 'imitations' of 'reality'". On the other hand the non-mimetic's admission of its fictionality frees it to take "its part in a serious dialogue with experience". Sukenick does not mean that non-mimetic texts reflect experience, but that they interpret, question and renegotiate relationships with it. He proposes that "language has a reality of its own and that it is a source of knowledge in itself, both in its accumulated wisdom and in its exploration of possibility in the irreal space of fiction."[68] Sukenick is opposing the view that texts refer to a pre-existent empirical reality, by which he means the empirical reality of sense-perception, although he sees texts which claim such mimetic principles as being those which appeal to some dominant form to organise this experience. In other words, they also reflect ideology.

What is most important in Sukenick's proposal is the implicit distinction between varieties of referentiality: there is mimetic 'imitation' and non-mimetic dialogue. Both are referential, but in very different ways, for the latter refers to what is pre-existent, but it does so critically, by questioning or challenging it, and then goes beyond it. Reference to pre-existent constructions of 'reality' is implicitly necessary for the new axis to take shape. Difference needs to be established, whether this is within the text itself, or by comparison between texts. Nevertheless, Sukenick still assumes a binary opposition between mimetic and non-mimetic fiction in which language generates mimetic representation and therefore seems to replicate existing ideological processes. It is narrative that

seems to supply the non-mimetic axis, able to map dynamic forms which allow the articulation of new desires and subject-positions, a feature of Sukenick's fiction that will be analysed in chapter three.

The return to referentiality is also accompanied by the reintroduction of plot as an important narrative dynamic in experimental fiction of the 1970's, as Andreas Huyssen and Linda Hutcheon have pointed out.[69] The plotted, diachronic, and temporal aspects become as important as the rhetorical tropes or forms of discourse which postmodernism foregrounds. While it would be difficult to argue that plot is a major concern of writers such as William Gass, Donald Barthelme, or Gilbert Sorrentino, the question of plot does inform the novels of Joseph McElroy, Robert Coover, William Burroughs, Ronald Sukenick, Thomas Pynchon, William Gaddis and John Barth amongst others. This is not to say that these novelists simply adopt the forms of the linear realist narrative, but rather that their fiction self-consciously reintroduces plot as a narrative device. These writers do not, therefore, adopt the presuppositions and ideological baggage that plot or story usually carries with it, but use story to question these very formations, using story critically, rather than simply assuming it as a matrix that produces cultural meaning.

It is this concern with narrative and renewed interest in plot and story in certain postmodernist texts that will form the focus of this section. Although Sukenick excludes plot as a focal point for texts, he is nevertheless concerned with narrative and its ability to produce dynamic forms within a temporal sphere. In 'Twelve Digressions Toward a Study of Composition' he quotes a question posed by Gertrude Stein: "'Is there anything that is not narrative?'", with which he is in accord. Developing this, he writes:

> Stein suggests that while poetry is concerned with 'what', prose is concerned with 'how'. I would take this to mean that while poetry concerns itself with image, fiction concerns itself with process... A metaphor need have location only in space, but narrative must have location in time as well. Space plus time equals movement: things in the process of happening... The essential story that fiction tells is that of motion and stasis.[70]

For example, the transformations of identity, space and time in *Out* are not simply attributable to the power of language and its ability to articulate anything that it wants to, but nor are they reducible to the functions of plot. Rather the transformations foreground the ability of narrative to renew the possibilities of fiction, and to establish a more concrete involvement with social and cultural structures. Sukenick, like Burroughs, identifies plot with the rigid linearity of realism in which the configurations of narrative are already delimited. Burroughs, for example, writes:

> When people speak of clarity in writing they generally mean plot, continuity, beginning middle and end, adherence to a 'logical' sequence. But things don't happen in logical sequence and people don't think in logical sequence... I think it is possible to create multilevel events and characters that a reader could comprehend with his entire being.[71]

Similarly, in his fiction, Burroughs makes the representation, articulation or enunciation of events or episodes the only regulating feature of his narratives. The act of organising experience and consciousness into a connected sequence produces a form which sites the text as an ideological form. This kind of narrative is ideological because the rules of connectivity exist before the individual and do not take account of the specificity of individual experience. Burroughs substitutes fragments of narrative and episodes for "logical sequence" and in so doing multiplies the number and levels of narratives available and the paths that can be traced across them. *Cities of the Red Night*, for example, begins with a linear narrative, following Clem Snide's travels in his dual investigation of virus B-23 and the control machines created by the Cities of the Red Night. However, his investigation lead him into control, rather than to any revelation or mastery of ideology, a process that Burroughs enacts in the configuration of a linear narrative sequence. To avoid this siting of narrative by ideology, Burroughs inititally intrudes into the linear plot analeptic episodes describing a pirates' colony and the ancient civilization of the Cities of the Red Night. The effect of these interruptions is cumulative so that toward the end of the novel the linear plot disappears and is replaced by a series of episodes in which the characters leap from century to century and from place to place without any 'logical' sequence being articulated.

Stanley Elkin also considers the function of plot. He does not, like Burroughs, reject plot, but in a story called 'Plot' (a story, however, which is also part-essay) reformulates narrative plotting outside traditional forms. He begins by proposing a plot and a style (realism), but finds that the two are incongruous, because the realist methodology cannot take account of all the variations available to the plot and produces only contradictions through false resolutions. He changes the style to a stream of consciousness form, but finds that this is incompatible with the events of the narrative. He proposes the possibility that this is the fault of the plot, but concludes that this is not the case, that although plot is everywhere, in fiction it must be moulded to its content, "plot is simply the unity between what the character desires and how it seeks to satisfy those desires".[72] In other words, plot is an abstraction with neither rules nor grammar. It is a form of arrangement articulated only in conjunction with character, desire, or event. In other words, it is dependent on a context. It cannot be reduced to a grammar of syntagmatic or paradigmatic rules, nor can it be reduced to genre (realism or stream of consciousness). It is open-ended, and open to variations.

In a sense, the narrative forms mapped out in postmodernism corrrelate with the kind of story tradition that Benjamin delineates in 'The Storyteller'. Here Benjamin discusses how the rise of the novel marks the introduction of non-narrative forms into fiction. Several oppositions between the tradition of story and the novel are set out, starting respectively with their oral and written aspects. But the differences go beyond this. The story has, as a starting point, escape from death. It is based in the production of integration, but is always in a state of flux, and therefore endless. The novel, on the other hand, moves towards death - closure - and is based in diffusity and interconnection (reflecting already existing oppositions and differences), is fixed, and goal-orientated. The novel tends to impose system on narrative, whereas in the story tradition narrative is produced on its own terms. This difference is also expressed in the basic medium of the forms, for while the story focuses on narrative, the novel is an informational medium which disseminates information prescriptively. The novel appears to describe, but actually involves the theorisation of 'the meaning of life', based in

the ideology of the 'reality' principle.[73]

While it is not possible to classify all novels in these terms, the distinction is interesting in relation to postmodernism, and particularly political metafiction, which can be viewed as forms which attempt to relocate the novel in the story telling tradition which produced it. Political metafiction configures stories as digressions within the frame of the novel form, aware of their fictional quality, but also aware that they pose a means by which the ideological form of the linear novel form can be escaped. Indeed, it is possible to argue that this is a key postmodernist form, occuring in numerous texts. *The Naked Lunch*, for example, is a series of stories, while Barth's *The Sotweed Factor* and *The Tidewater Tales* introduce story digressions into 'linear' narratives, thereby questioning the 'linear' narrative's ideological presumptions. Similarly, Ishmael Reed writes history as a story in *Mumbo Jumbo*, and Stanley Elkin's *The Dick Gibson Show* uses the concatenation of fragments of stories and voices in order to construct the cultural and ideological space of America, while also questioning this spatiality. Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is a key novel in these terms (and will be discussed in detail in chapter five for this reason), divided between the informational matrix of the various narrative voices (the narrative axis which purports to know the meaning of the novel, and of life) and the attempt to produce a storied level outside the ideological values they espouse. It is this interplay between story or narrative and system or ideology that engenders the textual configurations of political metafiction.

What is at issue here is the relationship between narrative and its discursive or configuring arrangements and the referential and self-reflexive forms of political metafiction. Alan Wilde maps a similar model in his analysis of 'midfiction' in which realism and self-reflexivity are played off against each other. For Wilde, however, the realist level of the text involves a humanistic affirmative embrace of society, despite society's "refractory and contingent" nature.[74] The referential configuration of narratives in the model I am proposing, however, cannot be reduced to realism and nor is its enactment of ideological processes

affirmative. Wilde's model, however, is a useful corrective to the view of postmodernism as a self-reflexive form, engaged in aleatory language-games and in the analysis of its status as writing. This is particularly the case with political metafiction whose re-introduction of referentiality and reconfiguring of narrative offers a complexity of form that cannot be reduced to metafictional self-reflexivity. Discursive and linguistic 'play' is present, but it is one amongst many other textual configurations, juxtaposed with discursive dialogism and the dialogism of genres. There is also a play between referentiality and fictionality in which parody and pastiche are both present. The traditional form of plot (linear cause-and-effect) is mapped referentially, but is balanced by the forms of plot delineated by Elkin and Ricoeur in which temporal displacement of narrative is the informing principle. The configuration of narratives in political metafiction therefore is a process involving the mapping of multiple narratives within the text. The first aspect of these narratives I shall focus on is the referential configuration of narrative after which I shall discuss the metafictional and dynamic configurations of narrative which play off the referential level.

Political Metafiction and Referential Narratives

Referential narratives do not refer mimetically to some pre-existent 'reality'. There are several forms of referential narrative, one of which constructs paradigms that are fixed throughout a narrative. One aspect of this type of narrative involves what Todorov has called ideological narratives. Ideological narratives take two forms according to Todorov: the equilibrium/disequilibrium model of narrative, and the idea of the dominant that Todorov adopts from Jakobson. For Todorov, however, these are not narratives engaged in a political

sphere, but narratives which have a dominant *telos* or logic. As examples of this he cites the theme of death in Constant's *Adolphe* and social games in Laclos' *les Liaisons dangereuses*, themes which determine the shape of the narratives that unfold.[75] In an earlier essay, 'The Grammar of Narrative', Todorov discusses the question of equilibrium and disequilibrium in relation to *The Decameron*. He writes:

> An "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical.[76]

The two types of narrative describe two situations, one of stasis and one of transformation (dynamic), although both conclude with a return to some form of static condition. The dominant here is the transformation from dynamic disequilibrium to the static state of equilibrium, although Todorov is obviously implying that this equilibrium can be threatened again. The dominant of such a narrative form is cyclical progression and might be used to define the traditional narrative form. The dominant for Todorov, however, is not always fixed around this process of dis/equilibrium, but takes other forms. For example, Todorov says of Henry James that it is death which is "that absolute and absent cause which determines the movement of the narrative".[77] For Todorov the dominant is that which sets the narrative in motion and which regulates its movement.

Postmodernist writers do not accede to Todorov's ideological narratives. They suggest that equilibrium and system can be equated with ideology and power systems. In the return to equilibrium these narratives referentially map the perpetuation of the social status quo in which ideological institutions or practices seem to be static and unchanging. They return to existing cultural paradigms rather than using narrative to create new cultural possibilities. They also suggest that unity occurs in the closure of the narrative, a unity aligned with existing culture which is presented as an organic unity rather than a space of division and alienation. Postmodernism, and particularly political metafiction, in its self-conscious and parodic use of fictional forms, investigates this inscription of

ideological values in narrative. Writers of political metafiction explore the conjunction of ideology and narrative by articulating Todorov's ideological narratives referentially. The narrative movement back to equilibrium is self-consciously articulated to expose it as an ideological form.

Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge* (which will be discussed at length in chapter four) adopts the ideological narrative in the form of the imitation by Cartwright (the major character) of the quest narrative, as he attempts to discover the reason for the destruction of an avant-garde film he has directed. McElroy is conscious of the fictional form he is using, although Cartwright is only partially aware (as he is only partially aware of everything that occurs around him) of this unconscious utilisation of the quest genre. This quest narrative is permeated with ideological values and meanings which suggest that the discovery of knowledge will supply meaning and liberation to the quester's life. The meanings and freedom discovered, however, are already created by ideology and the 'real' knowledge that the quester discovers is his or her place in society. Although the quest presupposes discovery and closure, McElroy parodies it to show how such an Epic structure is no longer relevant for the individual. Cartwright discovers that it is only organised groups who can achieve knowledge and he, as hero, is unable to effect the state of equilibrium that he desires and concomitantly unable to achieve the fulfilment he expects to achieve from such an occurrence. At the end of the novel he is left instead with an ironic knowledge of his own lack of knowledge which he suspects is a superficially closed state of fulfilment (or equilibrium).

Ideological narratives intervene to set the text in its 'right and proper order'. They act as a regulating device, rather than a creatively organisational principle. Narrative is subordinated to a dominant and replicates its structures of meaning. This form of narrative resets narrative back to its *telos*. Postmodernist writing questions the resetting of narratives as is the case in Barth's 'Bellerophoniad' where the repetition of "reset" can either refer to the looping of narrative back to its motivating device, but can also refer to the resetting of the

narrative into a new form (by escaping the conditions of the initial narrative's motivation). The resetting of narratives, therefore, involves a motivation towards closure. The narrative is severely limited by the effect of closure, which undercuts the narrative variations previously set out. For example, in the recent science-fiction phenomenon of cyberpunk, the new directions and forms arrayed by the narratives are subsumed in a traditional form of self-discovery as closure. The key cyberpunk novel, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, supplants the variation made available by the liberation of Neuromancer, an Artificial Intelligence - in which it is pointed out that such a situation provides a capacity for the unexpected - by generating a narrative subordinated to the needs of its closure in which Case, the main character, realises his own independence, in a mimicry of the existentialist hero. Richard Kadrey's *Metrophage* successfully parodies the closures of melodrama, revenge and Apocalyptic genres, but also ends in the existentialist closure of Jonny Qabbala's self-liberation through self-discovery, a closure unprepared for in the previously repetitive narrative of unconnected set-pieces. While Cyberpunk's new spatial settings create new narrative possibilities, its traditional forms of closure suggest that they are limited in their ability to offer new narrative and cultural possibilities.

Alternatively, the referential level of political metafiction mimics narratives which produce 'reality' effects. The mimetic or referential impulse becomes important and attempts to impose synchronic (or achronic) stasis on the narrative. By this I mean that the narrative veers toward correspondences and to the construction of a cultural paradigm for the text, as Barthes sees in the reference code of narrative in *S/Z*. Gerald Graff makes some interesting points concerning the 'reality principle' although, curiously, he does so in the context of a discussion in which he accuses postmodernist fictionality of acceding to the 'reality principle'. He writes that the 'reality principle' involves both the construction of a 'reality' and a repression of the recognition that it is a construction so that "by taking for granted the existence of a stable world 'out there', objective thought presupposes a reality that is essentially unchangeable. By acknowledging the reality principle we reconcile ourselves to the established order as if it were an eternal law of

nature."[78] However, Graff criticises the self-conscious fictionality of postmodernist writers for, although they question the 'reality principle', their project is aesthetic rather than political and their depoliticised strategies involve a replication of ideology's representation of contemporary culture as a depoliticised space. Fictionality becomes a reflection of ideology rather than a means of questioning constructions of 'reality'.

While some metafictional strategies do, perhaps, gesture to such a situation, political metafiction is very aware of cultural concerns, the 'reality principle' that Graff describes forming an important focus for their questioning of ideology. In political metafiction, while the referential narratives set out correspondences with existing culture, the metafictional or dynamic narratives parody them, thereby questioning the ways in which ideological and cultural fields of meaning are articulated, either as pre-existents or as constructions. The referential narrative strands create cultural correspondences that apparently replicate existing cultural (and ideological) processes or create paradigms that fulfil the needs of ideology. In the replication or construction of ideological processes, the narrative assumes already constructed cultural forms in order to naturalise its fictional strategies. In political metafiction, however, such naturalising processes are questioned, as in Sukenick's *Out* in which the identity of characters cannot be identified with a referential pre-existent. One of Sukenick's terrorist characters, for example, is called President Nixon, but the assumption that this character connotes complicity or treachery cannot be made, because of the sudden and unmotivated transformations of identity, in which Nixon becomes Tommy, while Sukenick consciously parodies such a conclusion when President Nixon says that "President Nixon is just long for Nixie".[79] Political metafiction embraces experimental and self-consciously fictional forms in order to challenge the idea of a pre-existing 'reality', to show that it isn't fixed, natural and immutable, but fluctuating, cultural, and, above all, ideological. This is partly effected by the abandoning of the regulating force of the spatial representational location of a narrative, and the embracing of temporal narratives as well as fantasy forms (Philip Dick's analogue worlds, for example), which alter

the spatial location, or prevent it from regulating the frame of the narrative.

The intervention of the reality principle, along with Todorov's 'ideological narrative' of the dominant can be characterised as what Seymour Chatman calls "story-space" and, more specically, as "focus of spatial attention". This involves the siting of a narrative within already existing frames. These can be mimetic (descriptive), social, metaphoric, or comparative and produce relations that connote a pre-existing cultural paradigm.[80] The story-space, therefore, maps ideological relations and cultural signifying systems and seems to position the text and its production of meanings as a replication of these systems. This aspect of narrative is synchronic and static, projecting a pre-existent framework into which the narrative can be slotted, as is the case with genre. Delillo's *Players*, for example, maps its narratives in terms a story-space which replicates cultural processes. The main spaces of the novel are a Wall Street exchange where a terrorist attack takes place and the televison which Lyle Wynant constantly watches in order to see acts of violence. An 'exchange' between Wall Street and a culture of random violence is established, focused around the image, in which the pursuit of money is seen itself as a form of violence. Although Delillo distances himself from the culture he maps, the narrative cannot break out of the nexus of image and money, Wynant's narrative of random motion generated by the culture of random images, random violence and flows of capital enacted in the story-space. These seem to be so dominant that they are inescapable and the novel seems to admit to the triumph of the values it challenges.

The final element of my analysis of referential narratives involves the storied element, which is dependent on either already existing ideological forms of narrative (genre), or on the creation of paradigms of desire, or on *goal-orientated* narratives. Genres such as the *bildungsroman* (and other narratives of self-discovery which involve the quest for knowledge or identity) end in re-integration into the existing social order projected by the narrative.[81] Similarly, the linear realist narrative and melodrama articulate the ideologies of natural justice, progress and individual purpose. Narratives which involve the creation of

paradigms of desire are most obvious in terms of the representation of women, which construct desires for marriage and motherhood as if they were natural rather than ideological, and configure narratives in order to fulfil these desires, as Rosalind Coward has argued. The *bildungsroman* creates paradigms of desire in a similar way, desires of the individual for control of their own identity and destiny, but subsumes these into a narrative in which the final re-integration into society negates the earlier search for self-knowledge. The discovery of individual purpose involves a discovery that the individual is only valuable in already existing bourgeois society.

The goal-orientated narrative combines these two and is similar to ideological narratives of closure. The two types of narrative are similar because they both hold out the possibility of an ending, although in goal-orientated narratives the initially premissed ending may be subsumed by a more muted resolution: the 'loose ends' may not be synthesised into a totality, but the promise of resolution remains. For example, the picaresque narrative is governed by the directing the story and action towards the goal of ending - through the metaphor of journey - and their potential achievement. Alasdair MacIntyre, in his book *After Virtue*, a book primarily concerned with ethics, makes an interesting comment on narrative in the light of this:

> There is no present which is not informed by some image of some future and an image of the future which always presents itself in the form of a *telos* - or a variety of ends or goals - towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present. Unpredictability and teleology co-exist as part of our life; like characters in a fictional narrative we do not know what will happen next, but nonetheless our lives have a certain form which projects itself towards our future.[82]

If the individual is not self-autonomous but constructed as an ideological subject, however, it is not the individual which sets out desires, but ideology. Desire becomes directed toward ideologically legitimated goals and thereby ensures predictability, a process mentioned in the discussion of *Flight to Canada* above. The individual is creatively and complicitously involved in this process. All that is needed are legitimated goals and the subject will create the narrative through

which they are to be achieved, or at least direct themselves toward their possible achievement. The goal-orientated narrative of ideology therefore overcomes the problems of static forms of ideology by introducing a temporal dynamic. The ideological goal-orientated narrative is also an endless process which need never lead to closure as new goals can be created to take account of any new desires: society never has to justify its *telos*. Whether the goals are achieved or not is unimportant as long as their validity is accepted, and as long as the subject is creating the narrative him- or herself this seems likely. Such a principle is enacted in fictional narratives when the *telos* interrupts into the narrative as a regulating device and so imposes stasis. Political metafiction questions this *telos* by use of digression and story-inserts which fracture cause-and-effect narratives, as is the case with Ronald Sukenick's *98.6*. In the first section of the novel, the narrative does not follow chronological time in which cause produces effect over time, but arranges time disjunctively according to other criteria. The narrative 'sequence' begins on July 14, moves to May 4 in the next chapter, July 14 again, to September 4, 27 April and so on, arranging the narrative events in terms of juxtaposition rather than connectivity, a strategy that demands an interpretation of events and their narrative arrangement.

This first form of narrative configuration in political metafiction works referentially. Rather than being an unconscious replication of ideology, it is self-consciously articulated by the writers to enact ideology, particularly the containing strategies of ideology which suggest that it is impossible to offer viable alternatives to a society based on domination. Ideology articulates the contemporary culture of postmodernity as a site of plurality, which the referential configurations mimic not in their multiple forms, but by looping back to already constructed social and cultural positions, as is the case with Delillo's *Players*. Even as the referential narratives are articulated, however, they are questioned. The self-conscious construction of these narratives implies a distancing or defamiliarising procedure on the part of the writers. To writers of political metafiction this is simply parody, a strategy that does not seem adequate. They, therefore, configure other forms of narrative which create multiple narrative

strands, foregrounding the 'narrativity' and metafictional strategies of the text.[83] Before going into details of this second form of narrative configuration, a brief example might clarify the effect of the interplay between the two types of narrative.

Stanley Elkin's *A Bad Man* (1967) operates as an intersection of these two narrative levels. It is a parody of the novels of Franz Kafka (merging *The Trial* and *The Castle*). The first level (the referential narrative) is the use of Kafka as narrative determinant or motivation, merging the two novels in the form of the labyrinthine setting of a prison: adopting the legal influences from *The Trial* and a spatial milieu similar to that of *The Castle*. The second level (the fictional) derives partly from the use of texts as a referential focus, but also in their re-contextualising in 1960's America and partly in the shift of focus from the labyrinthine systems and forms of Law to their effect on the individual. Kafka's characters (K. and Josef K.) focus not on the social or cultural relevance of the process in which they are involved (its concrete effects), but hold to the bourgeois principle of whether the process is just or fair. In a sense, Kafka's narratives map out the loss of control of the individual in the bourgeois system (also demonstrated in Kafka's manipulation of the bourgeois realist form to create fantastic or expressionist effects), but also accept that these criteria are still important for, if unrecognised by, social ideology. In other words, Kafka's novels point to a political undercurrent in which the culture of individualism which has produced social ideology has lost control of it.

However, whereas Kafka's characters fix themselves as stable (innocent) identities, unwilling to either undergo self-examination or to recognise the loss of self and identity evident in the labyrinthine forms around them, Feldman of *A Bad Man* does not just say he is innocent and leave development of identity at that (in stasis, as in the static narrative and story space presented by Kafka), but undergoes self-examination as well as analysis of the political implications of the prison system and its ideological sub-text. New narratives are set out, refraining from the Expressionism of Kafka whose externalised systems are metaphors for

individual consciousness. The narratives themselves enact the placing of the individual in society, rather than miming the desires found in Kafka's novels, desires of an alienated consciousness for a means to withdraw from society in order to discover a 'real' identity within. *A Bad Man* gestures towards its point of reference (Kafka's novels), which can partly be seen as indicative of static narrative form, in a potential acquiescence to Kafka's acceptance of the loss of selfhood and identity. However, it supplants this narrative and cultural construction in its own production of narrative, finding a context for its narrative production, by allowing the narrative to investigate the social constitution of the individual.

A Bad Man also alludes to Hollywood prison melodramas in which the convicted hero is finally revealed to be innocent and in which the authorities (prison officials) who persecute him are revealed to be wrong. Indeed, *A Bad Man* maintains the question of innocence and guilt within this genre framework, but does so without the final revelation of innocence. One of the key elements of *A Bad Man* is the narrative insistence that Feldman re-examine his behaviour. The impulse derives from the Warden's branding of Feldman as "a bad man", even though the offence for which he is committed to jail is a technicality rather than a crime. The Warden is clear in his conclusion that Feldman has acted both illegally and immorally (through his whole life's conduct), although the novel questions whether the conflation of these two as a judicial procedure is an adequate categorization of behaviour. Feldman refuses to accede to the Warden's demands that he 'restore' self-righteousness to himself, even though this refusal allows the Warden to persist in his assumption that Feldman is 'a bad man', and thus legitimate the Warden's authority. Even when Feldman does acquiesce and meditates on his life and activities, the resulting 'self-renewal' has no effect on the Warden who believes Feldman to be feigning self-knowledge, or to be imposing his own principles on the Warden's requests.[84] That the Warden, embodying Kafka's all-knowing legal system, has an omniscient access to both Feldman's history, memory, and mind seem to imply that he is right, although the similarity between Kafka's legal system and the distant and arbitrary power that the Warden

holds provides an intertextual allusion which undermines the Warden's claim to legitimacy.

However, the interruption into the narrative present of digressive sequences from Feldman's past undercuts the account that the Warden seeks to inpose on Feldman. The digressions, although occasioned by the Warden's desire for self-examination, have little relevance to the narrative present of Feldman's prison-life. Indeed, they interrupt into the monotony of the prison narrative and provide the variation that is otherwise only available at the level of discourse. They also seem to contradict the Warden's 'naming' of Feldman, for they seem to show that Feldman is not inherently or naturally bad, but that the wrongfulness that the Warden sees is forced upon him by the society and environment in which he has been raised. Indeed, his ensnaring in the corrupt world he previously occupied and his relationship with wife and son are viewed as pathetic rather than immoral. The arrangement of narratives in *A Bad Man* serves to question the dominant values that are encoded in the Kafkaesque and prison melodrama frameworks, both of which seek to impose certain ideological representations on the text: the individual's inability to change anything in the case of Kafka, and the legitimation of state justice and morality in the case of the crime melodrama. The ambiguous ending of the novel in which Feldman is possibly beaten to death (in mimicry of Kafka) does not perpetuate the representations of helplessness and of the desire for the reinstatement of the Romantic illusion of individuality in a bureaucratic world. Rather, the ending is an act of defiance, even if it is a silent act, taking place in Feldman's thoughts, over which the Warden believes he has control. The novel further questions the system in which Feldman's narrative is located in its discursive figuring of the Warden as, successively, a Fascist, an Old Testament Messianic revenger, as Torquemada, and as a McCarthy figure. Such analogies point to an America not governed by plurality, democracy, freedom, and free-expression, but by hierarchy, arbitrary authority, repression, and censorship.[85]

Political Metafiction and the Dynamics of Narrative

This previous example demonstrates some of the possibilities configured by narrative at the second level, although it might be suggested that these possibilities are discourse-based as opposed to the story level of the first axis. However, the sedimentation of the text cannot be made solely in terms of story and discourse. Narrative is a constellation of factors in which story, discourse, 'mimesis', and fictionality interact in various ways. Although the two types of narrative configuration cannot be categorised in terms of the story-discourse opposition, the referential narratives can perhaps be characterised in terms of systematisation (in a narrative impetus to organisation and ordering) while the dynamic and metafictional configurations involve parody, an awareness of fiction-making, a tendency to disjuncture, and an urge to variation. As these narrative processes depend primarily on their context, they cannot be categorised in quite the same way as the referential level. This is not to say that the two tendencies of narrative are mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is the interaction, conflict, and contradictions between the two forms of narratives which allow the possibility of the signifying process of narrative to occur. While such interactions are implicit in most narratives (although perhaps stabilized by other textual processes) in political metafiction they become vital concerns, allied as they are to a political context. An example of this naturalization process occurs in *Bleak House*, which is split into two narrative voices and two narrative forms. The omniscient third person narrator constructs a tragic narrative, while the first person narration of Esther Summerson works within the framework of romance. A contradictory narrative is produced, in which the public/ objective and private/ personal are opposed, and in which the unity of the novel is threatened with disjuncture. However, they are interwoven in the episode involving the death of Lady Dedlock, Esther's mother, which has the effect of producing a melodramatic frame for the novel in which the two aspects are balanced, thus stabilizing the

novel, allowing it to be resolved, and repairing the radically split society dramatised in both the two narratives and in the story-space, and setting it in order again.[86] This cannot be said for a novel such as *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, which intercuts genres and their spatial frames but without either balancing them or supplying a privileged genre form. Genres from both fiction and film (War novel/film - Vietnam and World War Two - spy thriller, western, film noir, existentialist novel, the Epic, the Quest, and detective fiction, amongst others) are intermixed and set out narrative motivations, but are either superseded or remain latent within the overall macro-narrative. No single genre can establish a dominance and, with it, a single linear momentum or a single closure. The possibilities for closure are potentially endless in such a situation, so that the narrative does not accede to the forms of closure that cyberpunk configures for itself.

In a sense, this aspect of narrative has affinities with Bakhtin's dialogism of discourse. Indeed, it is possible to argue that dialogism can be transferred from the discourse level of a text to the story level, in this case producing a dialogism of genre. This seems especially pertinent to contemporary fiction, and Thomas Pynchon's fiction in particular. As Charles Russell notes, discourse is viewed as being potentially complicitous by those contemporary experimental writers who are concerned with the questions of ideological and cultural meaning. He points out that while the demystifying, disruptive and aleatory use of language "displays a critical response not only to society, but to the very medium of literature which is a medium of society", which gestures toward "more personal and vital expression" he also notes that there is also the corollary of "a resigned sense of linguistic restriction and individual creative inconsequence".[87] As such, the production of cultural and ideological formations seems to be inscribed into discourse and to pre-empt the play of discourse and language for the postmodernist writer.

The mapping of this aspect occurs at the beginning of *The Crying of Lot 49* where Oedipa Maas is discursively placed within three ideological reality-

frames: "Oedipa stood in the middle of the room, stared at by the greenish dead eye of the TV tube, spoke the name of God, tried to feel as drunk as possible. But this did not work."[88] The three pre-existing reality-frames are television (the world of images), God (or religion and its mysteries and truths) and drink (or hallucinatory reality, perhaps also linked to drugs). These three existing realities are all empty systems of meaning for Oedipa, and none of them seem to work. Oedipa's identity is constituted by empty meanings, although it is uncertain whether they are empty of ideological power or inadequate in providing liberation or escape from Oedipa's kitsch life. Discourse and forms of reality mingle together, but no single discourse or reality is dominant. There is apparently no monologic system for these discourses to confront and to refract with: they simply find meeting points in empty utterances (the empty mouthing of God, for example). Language seems hollow, empty of effect and meaning. It is simply a means to fill the silences of the apparently empty spaces of culture and self.

Shortly after, however, Oedipa is placed within a fourth reality-frame which unifies these three reality-frames and gives them cultural meaning. This is the reality of shopping which supplies day to day purpose and brings together television through advertising, drink and drugs through the analogy of their habitual nature (addiction) and mystery through the offer of new experiences with each new product. Oedipa concludes, however, that shopping produces days that are "more or less identical, or all pointing the same way".[89] Shopping, however, is framed in the postmodern terms of Frederic Jameson as the world of consumer commodities, in which the individual is also a commodity. However, contra Jameson, this does not produce a breakdown in signification but, rather, a cause and effect narrative which points Oedipa to a particular end. The conflicting discourses produce neither dialogism nor the mapping of new possibilities, but map out a clearly defined narrative which, rather than being a means by which ideology can be challenged, conspire to control identity and consciousness. They are only apparently empty of meaning, but actually have a concrete effect through their cultural intersection with the social subject. The discourses seem to be permeated with ideology, controlling identity, desires and actions deterministically.

By coincidence, Oedipa is given the means by which such a narrative can be escaped by the receipt of a letter, the letter in which she is named as executrix of Pierce Inverarity's will. This seems to promise variation and possibility, or at least a change from the one-directional and one-dimensional life and identity she initially has. The subsequent discovery of the Tristero, however, has a paradoxical effect, for it seems to confirm that Oedipa's one-directional life is experienced on a grand scale across the United States, but it does supply the variation of reality-frames that Oedipa desires. This variation, however, is enacted in the novel not by discourse but by a proliferation of narrative forms. Discourse provides a linear plot, a monologic system which is not challenged by discourse, but, rather, by narrative. *The Crying of Lot 49* proliferates its narrative forms through the Quest, through Oedipa's attempt to escape this goal-orientated linearity in her picaresque wanderings, through Beat narrative (The Paranoids), narratives of crime (the parody of the Chandleresque detective novel, as well as the Perry Mason and Mafia narratives), Jacobean tragedy (as enacted in the death of Randolph Driblette's, director of *The Courier's Tragedy*) and through Medieval Romance (in which Oedipa figures herself as a trapped Rapunzel figure constructing a narrative in dreams in which she finds freedom).

However, each of these narratives is a genre form, with its own dominant codes and systems, and narrative system seems to be imposed despite the attempts of the novel to escape such systematization. However, it does point to a situation in which a dialogism of narrative is available to fiction, one in which the linearity of narrative which constructs static cultural meanings and fixed social identities can be challenged. In terms of metafictional strategies, the constant leaping from genre to genre implies that their ideological values are recognised, leading to the rejection of each genre by the narrative. The narrative cannot supply itself with its own temporal dynamic except through the disjunctive move from one static (synchronic) system to another, leading to fragmentation and schizophrenia. Stasis, paradoxically, occurs because the narrative cannot break out of this cycle of continual re-enactments of cultural and ideological fixity. Such a situation perhaps occurs in *The Place of Dead Roads*, in the movement from one Western scenario

to another. The displacement of systems or scenarios suggests that no alternative set of values or forms of identity can be found and that only those which already exist must be used. This also seems to suggest that postmodern culture is indeed the site of possibility that ideology maps, although this is ultimately parodied by Oedipa's experience of its emptiness.

Nevertheless, this dialogism of narratives seems a promising narrative strategy, at least in the questioning of already existing ideological and cultural signifying practices. With the expansion of this narrative dialogism to include other narrative forms (the story-insert, repetition, fantasy, the configuring of history as myth or fiction - or vice versa - digression, the chronotope, conspiracy theory narratives, and metonymic juxtaposition) and with the focus directed toward the temporal and dynamic character of narrative, the second level of narrative provides an interesting model in the conflict between ideology or social control and (individual) freedom. Other examples of dialogic narratives occur in *Gravity's Rainbow*, as well as in the fictions of Burroughs and Coover, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, Delillo's *Ratner's Star*, and Barth's *LETTERS*.

Such a narrativizing process is refractive rather than referential, but is strongly influenced by its intersection with the referential level of narrative. The process of interaction and refraction means that political metafiction is able to create its own political projects. It does not reflect ideology as it might if only one narrative form were present, the referential narratives being unable to break free of the processes they enact and the metafictional level articulated in terms of Graff's depoliticized aesthetic. Internal reference, as well as reference to cultural systems, is needed in postmodernist fiction because it is necessary for what is being questioned, challenged, or discarded to be present, at least in allusion, for the political project's difference to be established. Political metafiction needs to contrast the referential forms of narrative in order to foreground its metafictional forms. The second level of narrative primarily has a diachronic or temporal dynamic and it needs to have static forms of narrative to set it off, in terms of comparison and narrative motion, even if this means that the static frames of

reference can be mistaken for textual dominants. And again, the temporal and discontinuous second level needs the impression of continuity for its discontinuities to be foregrounded as political rather than aesthetic. For example, a radically discontinuous novel, such as Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch* can be (and was initially) read as an aesthetic project even though its reference to linear forms of narrative, their ideological shape, and to ideology in general, became clearer as Burroughs' tetralogy developed.

It is through open-endedness that the temporal dynamic is established, although an opposition between closed and open-ended texts cannot be automatically assumed, for recent deconstructive criticism has shown how apparently closed texts remain unresolved. Open-endedness is a key characteristic of the second level of narrative, open to endlessness, possibility, and the opening of desire. While closure returns a narrative to its (ideological and cultural) starting point, open-endedness allows the narrative to continually escape such a return to ideological constitution. A possible connection to linguistic theory is available here, in which it can be argued that narrative is more in alignment with what Ricoeur calls Benveniste's "dialogism of the sentence" (the syntagmatic, horizontal levels of discourse that Ricoeur privileges) than with the spatial paradigmatic scheme of Saussure.[90]

In terms of the opening of narrative to desire, it is possible to argue that it is the entry of desire into narrative and away from ideology, that allows open-endedness to take place. This is not, however, to assume that desire is a transhistorical form that threatens ideology and system with latent disruption, as in some accounts of desire and textuality. Desire can be regulated by both ideology and narrative. As Jay Clayton notes, closure can artificially close off the play of desire, although narrative also involves the desire for closure. Desire is constituted by cultural and ideological meaning systems and narratives and plays on desire for fixity and stability.[91] Clayton also comments on the ability of desire to disrupt this structure. Desire "is what happens to need when it enters history, language, culture, and society. Desire names the way in which individuals

transform their needs under the pressure of the particular social conditions of their time and place."[92] Desire is double-edged. It affiliates itself with pre-existing cultural formations and allows transformation outside of this framework in renewed anti-ideological cultural production. While I do not agree with Clayton's alignment of narrative with ideology, the potential for repressed desires to enter into culture and cultural production through narrative and discourse offers a means of resistance to ideology. The irruption of desire into narrative allows closure to be forestalled and prevents pre-existent narratives of desire from imposing stasis on narrative. Clayton's theory, however, assumes that repressed desires function as displacements, rather than as condensations (metonymically rather than metaphorically) which cannot be assumed. For example, Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch* involves both desire as metonymy in the displacements between chapters, and desire as metaphor in the repetitious and pornographic 'carnival' scenes. However, Burroughs clearly equates the latter with ideological control, in which the eruption of desire finds itself within an ideological framework involving desires of power and dominance, rather than desires for freedom (for example, the hospital break-out in the 'Benway' chapter).[93] It is in the temporal relations, which seem able to prevent repetition and spatial fixing, that escape from control through desire occurs.

The final aspect of my analysis of the ways in which narrative maps out meanings within this temporal open-ended frame is the chronotope's challenge to the spatiality of story-space. Bakhtin describes the chronotope as an intersection of time and space which acts to shape narrative. The chronotope has no fixed form and varies, depending on its context. The spatial setting of a novel frequently determines the form of time mapped out and with it the signifying system of a novel. In Gothic novels, the spatial frame of the castle develops a temporality rooted in a narrative archaeology of the past, whereas in Balzac and Stendhal the salon-space produces a temporality of dialogue. These are spatial settings which focus or limit temporality and which also establish systems of correspondence and spatial connotation which are strongly dependent on pre-existing cultural significations. Bakhtin, however, notes that there are genres in which temporality

is freed from such spatial constraints as in the lack of a specific setting in the Ancient Greek Romance which produces "adventure-time", a constant narrative motion in which the process, displacement, and juxtaposition of events develops the narrative's signifying field. The interchangeability of space that leads to this freeing of temporality assumes a static world-view, in which cultural values are fixed, and which determine temporal signification. The picaresque novel locates itself in a temporality of encounter in the spatial frame of the road, but this is a temporality which establishes its own signifying field, as in the digression and inserted story.

The chronotope establishes the possibility of "the representability of events" and therefore assumes a referential or reflexive function.[94] However, as Bakhtin notes, these spatial frames contain ideological and cultural systems of value and meaning. They do not simply set out a field of narrative possibility in terms of a reader's expectations of the events that can occur, they also set out ideological values for the reader. In the examples that Bakhtin gives narrative is primarily reducible to its spatial figuration, from which a novel's temporality can be extrapolated. It is, however, possible to sharpen the focus of the chronotope by suggesting that as a dynamic narrative form it can question the spatial setting of a novel, and the spatial setting's orientation towards fixed systems of value and towards ideological formations. The temporal axis can be used to control the spatial (ideological and cultural) field of meaning by producing new spatial settings or by transforming them. Temporality can question or escape the initial spatial and ideological values through the plot and its events. The last third of Burroughs' *Cities of the Red Night* is a case in point. After the novel has carefully set out a spatial (and potentially mimetic) setting, the narrative suddenly transforms itself, cutting rapidly between spatial and temporal frames, in order to escape the cultural and ideological space and meanings which it seems to be confirming.

The chronotope makes possible the avoidance of stasis located in the frame of story-space. By this I mean that the story-space tends to intervene into

narrative to regulate its ideological output, whereas a focus on temporal relations (which do not have to involve the spatial transformation of Burroughs) can pre-empt this regulation. And in political metafiction, there is an awareness of these two frames as, for example, in William Gaddis' *JR*. Gaddis, like Delillo in *Players*, uses a spatial setting which continually tries to locate itself in both Wall Street and Corporate board-rooms, and in their capitalist ideologies. Gaddis, however, uses temporal shifts to allow the narrative to escape the story-space that *Players* loops toward, *JR* thereby undermining and questioning the ideological values that could otherwise be imposed.

The chronotope is a form that is particularly effective in the configuration of narratives in political metafiction. Its basis in the temporal dynamics of narrative prevents political metafiction looping back to the spatialised cultural forms of postmodernity, characterised by what Jameson calls the "continual present". The use of the chronotope and the other forms of dynamic narratives that have been outlined (dialogism of genre, the focus on stories and accelerated digressive narratives) means that political metafiction is not a replication of the fragmentation experienced in contemporary culture (which the referential narratives suggest), but a means by which the loops back to political metafiction's cultural ground can be resisted. This is not to suggest that political metafiction withdraws from cultural and political engagement, however. Its referential configuration of narratives not only locates it within the spatial and static forms of contemporary culture but also signals its engagement with that culture. The use of temporal narrative forms, however, complements the referential function of these former narratives by focusing on the text's status as fiction. As a result, the referential narratives are also revealed to be fictional forms rather than replications of the circulation of ideology within culture. These aspects, however, need to be dealt with more fully. While this chapter has offered a theoretical account of political metafiction, the texts themselves need to be considered in detail in order both to concretize the political concerns of the text and to position them in terms of their specific cultural location. This latter aspect will be discussed in the next chapter, while the detailed analyses of the texts of political

metafiction which will be discussed in chapters three, four and five.

Notes

1. Richard Kostelanetz, 'Twenty-Five Fictional Hypotheses', in *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow, 1975), p.284.

2. Peter Middleton, 'Language Poetry and Linguistic Activism', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990),p.246.

3. Such is the view, for example, of Catherine Belsey who comments on classic realism as a form of ideology in *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), p.117.

4. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p.13. Hereafter cited in the text as *PU* with page number.

5. J.A. Berthoud, 'Narrative and Ideology: A Critique of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*', in *Narrative: From Mallory to Motion Pictures*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), p.103.

6. Berthoud, 'Narrative and Ideology', p.103.

7. Alan Singer, 'The Dis-position of the Subject: Agency and Form in the Ideology of the Novel', *Novel*, 22: 1 (1988), p.11.

8. See Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp.1-25.

9. Gérard Genette occupies a central position in this debate, opening his *Narrative Discourse* by offering three versions of narrative: as a narrative statement or discourse, as a succession of events, or as the narrating act. He privileges the former and refrains from configuring narrative as a structure by focusing on narrative and rhetorical strategies, but at the same time persists in breaking narrative into workable units or functions. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), pp.25-7.

10. Such a situation has been challenged in recent years by critics such as Didier Coste who sees narrative as a form of communication rather than a structure; Paul Ricoeur who has emphasised the processive aspects of narrative's ability to organise; and Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires who have focused on micro-narratives without subsuming these into a larger structure. See Didier Coste, *Narrative as Communication* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988); and Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

11. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.21-2.

12. Michel Butor, 'The Novel as Research', in *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977), p.48.

13. So, in Butor's novel, *Passing Time*, Jacques Revel, finds that, in constructing a narrative in the form of a diary that continually rereads itself, he is able to understand his apparently random existence as a clerk in exile in Bleston. Revel is always aware, however, that the narrative he is producing is one that he is imposing upon his experiences, reading his life as a map transposed on to the fiction about Bleston that he has read in J.C. Hamilton's *The Bleston Murder*. While the diary form finds an organisational principle beyond the linear narrative, the novel liberates itself from system and is narratively and diachronically fragmentary.

14. Ricoeur, *Time And Narrative*, I, p.xi.

15. Ricoeur, 'The Aporias of the Experience of Time: Book II of Augustine's *Confessions*', *Time and Narrative*, I, pp.5-30.

16. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I, p.3.

17. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I, p.33.

18. David Seed, 'In Pursuit of the Receding Plot: Some American Postmodernists', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), p.40.

19. Seymour Chatman, 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)', in *On Narrative*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.125.

20. Ricoeur devotes a chapter to this achronic tendency in Volume II. See Ricoeur, 'The Semiotic Constraints on Narrativity', *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), II, pp.29-60.

21. See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Lawrence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp.25-65.

22. Hawkes comments: "one character may be involved in several spheres of action, and several characters may be involved in the same sphere of action. But the important thing to notice is that the *number* of spheres of action occuring in the fairy-tale is finite: we are dealing with discernible and repeated *structures* which, if they are characteristic of so deeply rooted a form of narrative expression may... have implications for *all* narrative." Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen, 1977), p.69.

23. Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', in *Image/Music/Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp.79-124.

24. Umberto Eco, 'Narrative Structures in Fleming', in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p.147.

25. Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p.157.

26. Indeed, structuralist narratology is founded on a hidden subtext of discontinuity, for it is the discontinuities within a narrative which create continuity. If only kernel events

were present then a narrative would have no evident continuity. It is the apparently vicarious and disjunctive satellite events which provide continuity and which generate narratives rather than chronologies. Structuralism, however, does not draw attention to their importance except to say, as Eco does, that these events are what enrich a narrative.

27. Richard Brautigan, *A Confederate General From Big Sur* (London: Picador, 1973), pp.115-6.

28. W.C. Bamberger, 'The Waxing and Waning of Cab Calloway', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 4: 2 (1984), p.205.

29. It is this alignment of narrative and system that leads, for example, to the approach taken by Alec McHoul and David Wills in their rejection of narrative as a means to approach *Gravity's Rainbow*. They reject narrative as a structuring principle because it does not seem to account for the variables created by Pynchon. This, however, is not the fault of narrative, but of the inability to theorise narrative except as a structure. See McHoul and Wills, *Writing Pynchon: Strategies in Fictional Analysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp.24-33.

30. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.205.

31. Cohan and Shires, *Telling Stories*, p.20.

32. Julia Kristeva, 'The Novel as Polylogue', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.174.

33. Jay Clayton makes a similar point in his discussion of Leo Bersani's Lacanian reading of narrative. Discussing Bersani's *The Forms of Violence* and *A Future for Asyntax* Clayton notes that Bersani "maintains that there is a 'complicity' among the organizing structures of narrative, realism, and unified personality". Clayton, 'Narrative and Theories of Desire', *Critical Inquiry* 16: 1 (1989), p.43.

34. Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p.173.

35. Jacques Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research* 49: 2 (1982), p.304.

36. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p.13.

37. For a discussion of the difference between work (readerly) and text (writerly), see Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image/Music/Text*, pp.158-9.

38. Roland Barthes, 'Textual Analysis of Poe's "Valdemar"', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p.135.

39. Charles Caramello, *Silverless Mirrors: Book, Self and Postmodern American Fiction* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1983), p.11.

40. M.M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.416.

41. Bakhtin, p.361.

42. See Tony Tanner, *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Cape, 1976).

43. Indeed, the rather vague view of social control as 'the System' in this fiction owes something to Adorno's theory of ideology, as transmitted through the writings of Herbert Marcuse, whose books were quite widely read amongst the counter-culture of the late 1960's and early 1970's. See Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp.10-11, pp.331-333 and *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), in which Adorno writes: "Indifference to freedom, to the concept and to the thing itself, is caused by the integration of society, which happens to the subject as if it were irresistable" (p.216). For Marcuse's contribution to this issue, see *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Ark, 1986).

44. Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', trans. Ian McLeod, John Whitehead and Ann Wordsworth, in Young, *Untying the Text*, p.88.

45. An idea that Terry Eagleton also proposes. See Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1978), p.88.

46. Balibar and Macherey, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', p.96.

47. Their conclusions are also similar to those of Georg Lukacs except that they see all texts as equally affected by, and interacting with, ideology. Lukacs, on the other hand, distinguishes between realist texts (which are able to achieve an objective view of ideology and 'reality') and experimental texts (which are entirely determined by ideology because they are too concerned with reflecting 'reality' in all its disjunctures and contradictions). See Lukacs, 'The Ideology of Modernism', in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin, 1963), pp.17-46.

48. Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.162.

49. Charles Russell, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.246.

50. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p.29.

51. Eagleton, *Ideology*, p.30.

52. See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), pp.1-60.

53. Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, p.47.

54. Eagleton, *Ideology*, pp.142-3.

55. Eagleton, *Ideology*, p.142.

56. Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p.173.

57. Eagleton, *Ideology*, p.21.

58. John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), p.26.

59. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979), p.230.

60. Gina Marchetti, 'Action-Adventure as Ideology', in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p.183.

61. Rosalind Coward, 'The True Story of How I Became My Own Person', in *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London: Paladin, 1984), p.176.

62. Coward, *Female Desire*, p.183.

63. Stanley Aronowitz, 'Working Class Culture in the Electronic Age', in Angus and Jhally, *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, p.137.

64. Patricia Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p.20.

65. Alan Singer, 'The Dis-Position of the Subject', p.16.

66. See Charles Caramello, *Silverless Mirrors*; Allen Thiher, *Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Jerzy Kutnik, *The Novel as Performance: The Fiction of Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

67. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984).

68. Ronald Sukenick, *In Form: Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p.237.

69. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.174; Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p.xii.

70. Sukenick, *In Form*, p.9.

71. William S. Burroughs, 'Journey through space-time', *The Job* (London: Calder, 1984), p.35.

72. Stanley Elkin, 'Plot', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), p.73.

73. Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov',in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) pp.83-109.

74. Alan Wilde, *Middle Grounds: Studies in Contemporary American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), pp.22-23.

75. Todorov, 'The Two Principles of Narrative', in *Genres in Discourse*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.36-8.

76. Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Grammar of Narrative', in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p.111.

77. Tzvetan Todorov: 'The Secret of Narrative', in *The Poetics of Prose*, p.165.

78. Gerald Graff, 'The Politics of Anti-Realism', in *Literature Against Itself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.64.

79. Ronald Sukenick, *Out* (Chicago: Swallow, 1973), p.5.

80. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp.96-102.

81. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p.88.

82. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp.200-1.

83. It is these doubled narrative configurations that have led to the radically different responses to some postmodernist texts. *Gravity's Rainbow* is a key text here, interpreted by Tom LeClair as a text underpinned by systems-narratives and by Alec McHoul and David Wills as one that foregrounds itself as writing. See Tom LeClair, *The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp.36-68; and McHoul and Wills, *Writing Pynchon*, pp.23-66.

84. When Feldman obliges the Warden's request to make a profit for the Prison shop by embarking on a sales drive, Feldman is put in solitary confinement for exploiting the other prisoners and for imposing his pre-prison life as owner of a store on to his current context.

85. Stanley Elkin, *A Bad Man* (New York: Dutton, 1984), pp.211-14.

86. As Virginia Blain comments: "Esther's is the 'inner' voice, his [the omniscient narrator's] the 'outer' voice; hers is the subjective voice, his the objective; hers is personal, his impersonal. Each of these qualities can of course be seen as glosses on the basic premise that one voice is feminine and one is masculine." Virginia Blain, 'Double Vision and the Double Standard in *Bleak House*: A Feminist Perspective', *Literature and History*, 11: 1 (1985), p.32.

87. Charles Russell, 'Individual Voice in the Collective Discourse: Literary Innovation in Postmodern American Fiction', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), p.34.

88. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Bantam, 1967), p.1.

89. Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, p.2.

90. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I, p.78.

91. Clayton, 'Narrative and Theories of Desire', p.35.

92. Clayton, p.50.

93. William Burroughs, *The Naked Lunch* (London: Corgi, 1968), pp.39-63.

94. M.M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.250.

Chapter Two:
The Fictions of
Postmodern Culture

"The end of the mechanical age," said Mrs Davis, "is in my judgement an actuality straining to be a metaphor. One must wish it luck, I suppose."[1]

Fiction and Culture

The previous chapter developed a theory of narrative practice in contemporary experimental fiction. This chapter will discuss the specific cultural location of the novels analysed in the ensuing chapters, in particular the cultural dynamic of postmodernity. The main focus of the chapter will be to offer a challenge to the assumption that there are paradigms of postmodernity which can be used to define contemporary experimental fiction. The discussion will question the view that the texts which I have called political metafiction are located within the discourses of postmodern culture. It will be argued that they establish a critical distance between themselves and this culture and establish strategies which resist the the text's permeation by postmodern culture. This is perhaps the key issue, as it focuses on the question of whether postmodernist fiction is a reflexive product of the discourses of postmodern culture or whether it situates itself as a site of resistance to, or as an intervention into, culture and its ideological configurations.

Discourses of postmodernism suggest that the attempt to resist incorporation by postmodern culture is an impossible project. Fredric Jameson outlines a theory of postmodernity in which texts are co-opted into the culture they desire to escape. He theorises a Lukacsian form of reflexivity which is implicitly a new form of 'realism', more 'real' than previous forms (if a culture of simulation allows such a thing) because the distance between culture and text has collapsed.[2] The economy of cultural production either restricts cultural products

to a replication of what already exists or it recuperates any new variants. In a culture of pastiche, where rearrangement of old forms is the dominant principle, critical distance is erased. The attempt to create new variations and arrangements through the re-use of these forms is a re-use of material that has already entered postmodern culture's system of meanings. Jameson, therefore, announces that critical distance has been abolished in the space of postmodernism:

> We are submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our new postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically... incapable of distantiation; meanwhile, it has already been observed how the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonizing those very pre-capitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious) which offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity... even overtly political interventions like those of *The Clash*, are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part...[3]

This seems to point to the impossibility of resisting power and ideology in postmodern culture, something which Jameson reaffirms in his recent book on postmodernism. He reinforces his argument by suggesting that pastiche is no longer simply a referencing of old forms and styles. Instead pastiche involves a referencing of old forms and styles which persist, and are even strengthened, in contemporary culture. Texts, therefore, no longer have the option of reflecting on past literary or cultural forms, at a distance, in order to rearrange them, a strategy that offered the possibilities of creativity and critical distance (in however limited a form), for the writer. The loss of the ability to step back from culture means that texts replicate its recycling of past forms and social identities rather than the writer being able to select the forms he or she wishes to use. Jameson cites the film *Something Wild* as an example of this reconfiguration of pastiche noting its references to the 1950's rebel/villain stereotype. The citation is neither a reference to history, nor a reference to the films of the 1950's, but a citation of the continued existence of this figure in the stereotypical identities, discourses and cultural productions of contemporary society.[4]

The relationship between fiction and cultural forms outlined in the previous chapter needs to be further considered in the context of this position. If

Jameson's position is adopted the view that political metafiction resists ideology is problematised. And it is not only Jameson who sees a lack of distance between text and culture in postmodernity. Discussions of literary postmodernism often conflate theoretical, cultural, and literary forms by rendering postmodernism as an *epistème*. Such a position constructs postmodernism as a discourse or set of discontinuous discourses which elides the distinction between text and culture. Steven Connor has discussed how this position is adopted by Linda Hutcheon in her discussion of 'historiographic metafiction' in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. Connor shows how, for Hutcheon, "the real world [has] turned into literature - into a matter of texts, representations, discourses. The link between text and world is reforged by postmodernism, not by an effacement of the text in the interests of a return to the real, but by an intensification of textuality such that it becomes coextensive with the real."[5] The elision of text and culture presents an economy in which the radically discontinuous character of postmodernism is erased. A continuity - that seems to gainsay the discontinuous forms of postmodernism that are described - is established in the slippery surfaces of text and culture which sees the two as identical. Texts become repositories of cultural values unable to establish a distance between themselves and the values they convey. The possibility of fiction constructing a critical perspective is radically problematised, if not impossible, if such a matrix is conceded.[6] Such a view, however, assumes too uncritical a position on the part of postmodernist writers and assumes that their positions and strategies can only be generated by available cultural discourses. While, in many respects, this seems self-evident, such an approach does not consider how discourses are mediated by ideological concerns and denies the view that texts are interventions into the cultural sphere, rather than products of it. Edmund J. Smyth, in his 'Introduction' to *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction* challenges just such an approach, noting that those commentators who "suggest that the plural nature of social discourse is, in a sense, reflected in the aleatory forms of postmodernist fiction" are guilty of a reductive reflectionist perspective. Smyth directs his attention to Jameson and Brian McHale, but his comments have wider implications. Smyth argues that while critics claim to challenge "totalizing perspectives" their reflectionist

strategies actually reproduce them as they resort to describing postmodernism as a period characterised by certain dominant structures.[7] Even if these dominants are plurality, discontinuity, and indeterminacy (descriptions which seem to resist the principle of totality), they are nevertheless paradigms which create postmodernism (and its discourses) as a static systemic totality. Postmodernist fiction becomes part of this totality, its variations and contexts ignored in the desire to find a consistency between texts as well as between text and culture.

The slippage between postmodernity and postmodernist fiction is also something that Charles Jencks queries particularly in his discussion of Ihab Hassan's elision of the two terms, an elision that has been adopted by subsequent critics of postmodernist fiction as well as in theoretical discourses.[8] Jencks distinguishes between 'the postmodern' (which Jencks sees as late Modern), the Post-Modern, (a cultural definition), and Post-Modernism (a series of styles).[9] What Jencks, therefore, questions is Hassan's use of 'postmodern' as an elision between a cultural logic and a series of styles, a distinction also made by Crook, Pakulski and Waters in their book *Postmodernization*:

> 'Modernism' is (just about) a precise enough term to denote a style or school, but 'postmodernism' is not. Despite its popularity, the term is unhelpful because it straddles two types of distinction. When used (as it often is) to designate a field (cultural postmodernity), it implies that fields can be defined by dominant themes in the same way as styles. When used to designate a style, it is too imprecise.[10]

The difference between cultural postmodernity and postmodernism as a set of literary, architectural, and artistic styles or practices is not adequate because no one set of characteristics is available to categorise both areas. Not only that, but the debates on postmodernism seem to show that there is no typical postmodernist aesthetic practice. Indeed, if the postmodern covers both cultural postmodernity and postmodernist 'styles', texts which are designated postmodern should all have the same aesthetic features. One 'postmodern' text would fit exactly the same pattern with no need to interpret texts in terms of their differences and discontinuities or, indeed, in terms of their specific historical contexts. Every 'postmodern' text would demonstrate a 'postmodern' paradigm.

Even if postmodern texts are defined in terms of discontinuity, such a position would homogenise difference as sameness.

Jencks questions Hassan's use of 'postmodern' as an analytic term because it presents the 'postmodern' as a theoretical and ahistorical category, but Hassan uses it to construct a cultural logic. Such an elision does not seem possible after Hassan has stated that postmodernism is not an historical period but a theoretical definition of affinities which can cover pre-War writers such as Kafka as well as contemporary writers such as Thomas Pynchon. Nevertheless, Hassan goes on to talk of a "postmodern era" and a "postmodern self" as if he had not made this statement.[11] What seems particularly problematic to Jencks is the way in which the 'postmodern' becomes simply a continuation of the Modern and yet is also a distinct historical cultural period that defines the production of texts. What Jencks offers as an alternative is a third term, 'Post-Modernism', which he sees as a set of styles or practices which, while being generated out of Post-Modern culture, are not necessarily determined products that replicate cultural, social and ideological processes. For Jencks, Post-Modernism is a site of possibility rather than a site of repression and, although its practices are generated by the cultural principle of plurality, this is an enabling, rather than a fragmenting, form of production.

There are several elements within Jencks' argument which are highly suggestive. One of the most interesting aspects of Jencks' account is his resistance to the temptation of seeing postmodern culture in simple binary terms, as either a nightmarish hell of complicity and repression or as a site of liberation from power and oppressive grand narratives; the former a position offered by Jameson, the latter adopted by Lyotard. Postmodern culture is not just a disabling sphere, reducing cultural practices to a replication of its cultural conditions. If this were the case, subjectivity would be more aptly expressed in terms of automata rather than Jameson's schizophrenics, while textual production would all be of the pastiche type (slippery, depthless, self-reflexive and parodic) that Jameson analyses, a scenario which could not explain the persistence of realism in the form of the K-Mart realism of the 1980's. However, while the plurality engendered by

postmodern culture does not just lead to fragmentation of subjectivity and schizophrenia, nor is it simply an enabling configuration as Lyotard claims in his theorisation of the failure of grand narratives. It may be the case that grand narratives fade away as theoretical positions, but this does not mean that their effectivity as political discourses in the service of power relations also fades. Society and culture cannot be reduced to aesthetic categories in the way that Lyotard desires, as Steven Connor has noted: "Lyotard sees the whole realm of the social under postmodernity as intrinsically aesthetic - organized in terms of narrative, linguistic and libidinal structure, rather than in terms of power."[12] However, while postmodern culture is not a site of libidinal play, it can allow the possibility for resistance. If, as Jencks argues, a gap between culture and practice can be assumed then the plurality that characterises postmodernism can allow other gaps to be opened, enabling new cultural positions, new processes of identification, and new fictional strategies to be configured. This is not to suggest that ideology and power have disappeared and that these new positions cannot be co-opted, but that a space for resistance is available. Critical distance can be established even if it is always within culture.

The whole process of seeing culture mirrored in literary texts is one that is fraught with problems. It paradoxically gives literature a special status in relation to its cultural production, implying that a fictional text is a condensation of cultural discourses. Texts can therefore be read not as constructs of cultural forms, but as documents that have a special access to the 'reality' of postmodern culture. Such an approach is suggested by Patricia Waugh in her recent book on postmodernism. Although Waugh challenges Baudrillard's theory of postmodernity as a culture in which "the information age has utterly dissolved identity through reflections to maskings to complete absence", she admits that literature itself may simply be a simulation of Baudrillard's culture of simulation:

> Simulation replaces imagination and human beings are left with no capacity to reshape their world even in their own heads. They act like characters in Robert Coover's novel *Gerald's Party*, as dense points of transmission for all the cop and thriller and porn movies which construct their desires and which churn out incessantly throughout this text in an orgy of hedonistic sensationalism. It may

> be that Coover is using the parodic mode of the postmodern to offer a critique of postmodernity from within its own codes, but again one is left with the claustrophobic sense that there can be no real opposition to it because no place outside.[13]

Waugh, however, is concerned by the problems encountered in approaches which see literature determined by cultural forms and which do not account for the status of fiction as an artefact. However, her view of *Gerald's Party* as a replication of cultural texts (cop, thriller, and porn movies) does not express the full range of the text and leaves the text open to the type of reading she questions. As Tom LeClair has noted, *Gerald's Party* also involves a history of theatre and generates a self-conscious fictional form based on this principle.[14] Coover establishes a structure which acts as a creative force in the novel. The history of theatre is used to configure scenes by reference, for example, to the catharsis of Greek tragedy or by the use of themes from Jacobean tragedy as well as using specific theatrical forms (vaudeville, musical, absurdist drama) to generate and structure the events in others. Although this arrangement of materials can be seen to represent the simulations of postmodern culture similar to Waugh's view of the text as an intersection for "cop and thriller and porn movies", the self-consciousness of the fictional strategies does not allow the novel to be reduced to such terms. It is not the simulations of postmodern hyperreality that produce the text, but the fictive structures that Coover puts in place. The former view threatens to make of postmodernist fiction another form of realism rather than a radical experimental form that offers the means to generate a political challenge to ideology and power relations. This is not to suggest that *Gerald's Party* is articulated in political terms, although its parodic fictional strategy does have a satiric form in which the tightly structured aesthetic form is created in opposition to the products of contemporary culture. These are presented as negative and corrupt, whereas Coover's textual structure is created in order to offer fiction an alternative to a mimicry of postmodernity, while also perhaps allowing a means to organise and create new possibilities for identity and behaviour.

Another question that arises from a consideration of the relationship

between text and culture concerns the question whether texts written in the 1960's and 1970's can be located so completely in terms of postmodern culture. *Gerald's Party*, published in 1985, locates itself in terms of cultural forms theorised as postmodern, but whether the historical and cultural antecedents of the postmodern culture theorised in the 1980's extend far enough to incorporate the 1960's and 1970's is problematic, despite Hassan's talk of a "postmodern era" in his discussion of texts from this period. It can be argued that the culture of the 1960's and 1970's is characterised by what Crook, Pakulski and Waters call "modernizing" and "postmodernizing" tendecies.[15] From this perspective, culture is defined by the intersection of State and Corporate power and the articulation of ideology through the apparently postmodern expansion of media, image, information, and commodities. It might be argued, therefore, that Guy Debord's analysis of a society of coercion and repression is more pertinent than Baudrillard's view that power and ideology are dissolved in the reality created by simulation. Here, Debord's view that:

> The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the *total occupation* of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world. Modern economic production extends its dictatorship extensively and intensively,[16]

is more important that Baudrillard's America which:

> indulges in a kind of promotional hype. America has a sort of mythical power throughout the world, a power based on the advertising image. It is this way... that an entire society becomes stabilized beneath a perfusion of advertising.[17]

The Spectacle's ideological image of a stable society is replaced by an experiential stability where ideology and power have disappeared, subsumed into the hyperreal space of the television screen and the advertising image. The image does not articulate power. It has become the main form of power itself, controlling those who have power rather than being controlled by them.

This is not to suggest that contemporary culture can be characterised by the disappearance of ideology and power, more to question the view that defines postmodernist fiction in terms of postmodern culture, a view suggested in a recent

collection of fiction and essays, *Storming the Reality Studios*. This collection, edited by Larry McCaffery, focuses on the interrelation between cyberpunk and the cultural discourses of technology, virtual reality, and the simulation of the image on (T.V.) screens. Interesting as the book is, it draws attention to the limits of criticism which figures contemporary experimental writing as a re-enactment of postmodern culture. Its underlying assumption is that it is in cyberpunk that postmodern culture is most 'realistically' described. In order to legitimise cyberpunk as a worthy area of study, however, the book offers 'classic' postmodernist texts not simply as fore-runners, but as exemplary cyberpunk novels. *Gravity's Rainbow*, for example, is described as "the best cyberpunk ever written by a guy who didn't even know he was writing it".[18] A paradoxical approach is offered. The intersection of postmodern cultural processes and the formal experiments of earlier postmodernist fiction is made not as a literary history, but as a means to write cultural history. Earlier postmodernist fictions are assumed, therefore, to have been written under the same cultural conditions because they share similar features to cyberpunk. However, the application of the same theories to fiction written in the 1960's and 1970's is problematised if the intersection between cyberpunk and postmodern culture is so strong. Aspects of postmodern culture are not entirely absent from this period, however, and there are clearly intersections between 1980's postmodern culture and the culture of the 1960's and 1970's which generated political metafiction. General theories of postmodernism are not, however, sufficient to account for this fiction. A discussion of postmodernity and its relationship to literature must also deal with political metafiction's cultural specificity. A discussion of postmodern culture cannot just deal with recent theories of postmodern culture as they seem to apply to 1980's America, but also needs an exploration of how far they need to be modified in the context of the culture that generated political metafiction.

Theories of Postmodernity

Many theories of postmodernity have so far been proposed, focusing on a range of areas which, however, are frequently interconnected: schizophrenia (Jameson, Deleuze and Guattari), solipsistic narcissism in the face of the dominance of the television image (Kroker and Cook), nostalgia and pastiche (Jameson), an influx of commodities and the commodification of the sign (Jameson and Eagleton), the collapse of grand narratives (Lyotard), crisis narratives (Herron), the precession of simulacra (Baudrillard), the saturation of space by information (Baudrillard and Jencks), and the collapse of time into a permanent present (Harvey). To approach the question of postmodernity I will begin once more with Fredric Jameson, whose seminal essay on postmodernism (published in 1984 and recently expanded to a book length study) incorporates many of the features which other theorists of postmodernity have developed.

Whereas Lyotard sees postmodernism as a new theoretical perspective which offers a critique of modernity, Jameson sees postmodernity as a specifically cultural form. For Jameson postmodernity is:

> an explosion: a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life - from economic value and state power to practices and the very structure of the psyche itself - can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and as yet untheorized sense.[19]

Postmodernity is an all pervasive (global or multinational) cultural movement which creates a society that no longer accedes to the base-superstructure model of economic and cultural production. A single cultural sphere that does not admit to any gaps in its economy is created. As a result of these processes there is a shift in capitalism's economic structures from production to consumption so that a society is created in which "the production, exchange, marketing and consumption of cultural forms... including advertising, TV and the mass media generally [are] a central focus and expression of economic activity".[20] In this new development people do not only produce, but consume, something that Jameson, and other commentators, have linked to new experiences of time in

postmodernity. A linear model of time which moves chronologically toward fulfilment (mirrored in the assembly of a product which gradually moves toward completion) is replaced by a model of time in which fulfillment is demanded at every moment. David Harvey, for example, theorises the postmodern experience of time in terms of "instanteneity" which produces a 'throwaway' society in which "ephemerality and instantaneous communicability" are valued.[21] The effect of this is to create subjectivity as an accelerated experience as well as to create a culture of commodity disposibility. Experiences are constructed, for example, through television's appetite for newer and more exciting images in which history is made into entertainment and in which the proliferation of images, despite their orgasmic plentitude, prevents fulfillment or satisfaction on the part of the viewer because resolution is never provided.

Society becomes dominated by the transience of experience and the consumption of commodities, a culture of waste, exhaustion, and junk. Things are used up and discarded in a consumerist frenzy for newer and better experiences and commodities. An illusory progress is engendered, one style replacing another, one technological development generating another. Jameson, however, points out that this progress is not a 'real' progress, for new-ness is impossible in such a cultural scene. Only limited innovation is possible and culture finds that it cannot keep pace with the demand for change it has set in motion. It has to recycle old ideas, commodities and styles in a rearranged form, leading to a pastiche culture in which surface style replaces substantial and material change. Production is replaced by reproduction (or replication) and it is service industries and advertising which become the 'producers', their aim being the production of consumers. The commodities that are advertised are no longer just material objects, but images and styles. Jameson also points to two other aspects of commodification in postmodernity, aspects that Terry Eagleton also recognises: the influx of commodities in consumer society, and the commodification of the artwork and the sign. With the former, the subject becomes indivisible from the commodities that saturate society. The desire for commodities becomes the determining principle for the subject who is unable to find any private space or

desire outside the nexus of these commodities. The subject's desire for commodities is a desire for what s/he is not, creating subjectivity as alterity, a lack of authenticity which both Eagleton and Jameson mourn. The subject as a desiring consciousness becomes invisible in the same way that for Baudrillard and Virilio information makes invisible the postmodern body that it intercuts.

The commodification of the artwork is situated in the commodification of the sign, a process mirrored in the creation of images and styles as commodities. Commodification is nothing new to postmodernity, Eagleton and Jameson noting, in the manner of Adorno and Horkheimer, that the modern artwork came into existence with mass commodity culture. What is different about the postmodern artwork is the lack of critical distance between itself and society, a collapse which the modernist artefact resisted, fetishizing itself in order to resist the commodity-as-exchange. Jameson comments that an artwork such as Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* foregrounds commodity fetishism, ironically commenting on its own status as both art and commodity, but unable to retain any distance between the two. Eagleton sees postmodern culture dissolving the same boundaries, postmodern art joyfully taking its place in the system of art-as-commodity.[22] The commodification of the sign, on the other hand, is generated in advertising and marketing. Images, style, the sign, and representation become commodities themselves and are no longer used to promote material products. The products that are sold are images or lifestyles, specifically images of consumer lifestyles. The result is a simulation of self in the image. Subjectivity is constructed not by concrete ideological institutions and practices (the family, responsibility to the state, individual enterprise) but by styles and images, a construction of self through the consumption of the commodified image. Desires are created by the image and directed by the discontinuities of the image-style economy, which are random surfaces where depth is replaced by the 'inauthenticity' of the simulacra.[23] For Jameson, the random surfaces of style and image demolish ideology. Without depth and distance, ideology cannot be hidden and so cannot be said to exist as it has usually been theorised. The transformation of cultural practices, however, does not bring liberation, but creates more insidious forms of

control. The subject is no longer alienated, but is, instead, fragmented by the multiplicity of surfaces of late capitalism.

The disappearance of the base, however, does not mean the disappearance of ideology. Norman K. Denzin, for example, argues that in the bureaucratic world of controlled consumption everyday life has replaced economics as a cultural determinant: "A diverse hegemonic cultural politics stressing consumption now becomes the chief carrier of state ideology. This system of taken-for-granted beliefs (what-goes-without-saying) embodies the traditional patriarchal myths of western culture involving love, beauty, youth, sexuality, intimacy, romance, marriage, and family."[24] Guy Debord's analysis of the 1960's offers a similar view. For Debord, the primacy of the image means simply that capitalism mediates the image, not that the image is cut loose from ideology. Ideology is still a concrete social reality in the form of the image which in its focus for cultural meanings also offers itself as a site of resistance in the contestation of these meanings. Debord also suggests that even a society constructed on cultural reproduction needs ideology to reproduce itself so that it can control the production within that society. Fragmented subjects need some social and cultural practices to make them useful citizens. A society based on fragmentation, in which subjects recognise their oppression but are unable to escape it, on the other hand, would create a resentful population, whose usefulness would be limited by their desires for escape and social change. Social control still exists even if the subtleties of ideology are no longer as obvious, Neville Wakefield commenting, in relation to the base-superstructure model, that "in the post-advertising world... consciousness is not simply 'realised' but actually *produced* in the act of consumption."[25]

Jameson establishes the intersection of culture and literature in his theorisation of a culture of permanent presence. This is created by the fragmented culture of simulation and the collapse of the apparently progressive base-superstructure model. The results of this process are a disappearance of the sense of history and the waning of affect in subjectivity. Using Lacan's theory of the

breakdown in the chain of signifiers, Jameson characterises subjectivity in terms of schizophrenia. By this he means that a schizophrenic cannot comprehend language as a temporal chain of sentences and therefore cannot have an understanding of the past or future. Nor can the schizophrenic understand the relations between signifiers, discovering only "a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers", a process which means that the experience of contemporary culture is presented as the only experience available. Schizophrenia becomes an experience of a perpetual present in which no continuity of subjectivity can be maintained. What is generated is a subjectivity that is subject to random and aimless behaviour with no sense of narrative, existing in a flux of mediated or simulated experiences without a sense of an authentic inner selfhood. At a wider level, this leads to a culture characterised by re-enactment and re-arrangement, a culture of parody or pastiche.[26] Old forms are simply reconstructed and the possibility of originality is frustrated. Texts are many voiced (intertextual) and parasitic, using old cultural forms because all experiences have seemingly been expressed. Texts, therefore, are no longer productive units, but simply replicate culture's economy of reproduction. The lack of awareness of a future also points to a loss of the utopian imperative that Jameson describes in *The Political Unconscious*. Texts constantly loop back to the present, unable to articulate a vision except in terms of contemporary cultural practices. This situation, allied with the lack of critical distance that Jameson sees in postmodernity, means that art can no longer be avant-garde, with the transformative aspects that are corollaries of this cultural form.

Jameson's importance lies in the fact that many of these aspects have been articulated, developed or challenged by other theorists of postmodernity, particularly schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari going so far as to announce that:

> the relationship of schizophrenia to capitalism went far beyond problems of modes of living, environment, ideology, etc., and it should be examined at the deepest level of one and the same economy, one and the same production process. Our society produces schizos the same way that it produces Prell shampoo or Ford cars, the only difference being that the schizos are not saleable.[27]

Other theorists, however, have developed schizophrenia as a metaphor in different ways, specifically schizophrenia in its clinical sense of a consciousness that 'hears' many voices. Like the telepaths in David Cronenberg's *Scanners*, the schizophrenic's 'identity' is drowned by these voices. Subjectivity is 'muted' and constituted by the many voices of postmodern culture. Baudrillard, for example, sees the saturation of information in contemporary culture preventing the construction of an 'authentic' self.[28]

Nevertheless, there have been other views of subjectivity in postmodernity, focusing on obsessional and solipsistic, or narcissistic consciousness. Adam Parfrey's collection of essays, *Apocalypse Culture*, for example, signals this other view of postmodern subjectivity, the documents focusing on obsessional and paranoid consciousness rather than schizophrenia. The documents range across pornography, Reichian psychology, necrophilia, Conspiracy Theory, psychopathic monomania, aesthetic and religious terrorism, and obsessions with the body.[29] What is presented in this collection is a series of texts in which consciousness is governed by apocalyptic preoccupations. A society cut loose from grand narratives generates paranoid and solipsistic narratives as a means to explain events or to map out patterns of behaviour in a world of flux. The creation of these alternative subjectivities involves the desire for 'authentic' subjectivities which allow 'true' desires to be engendered. However, the obsessions and random behaviour that are generated also result from the cultural forms created by consumerism in which everything and everybody is made into an object to be consumed. A pathology of consumption overpowers the experience of everyday life which becomes an act of continual and obsessive consumption of images and narratives. Frank Dexter describes this process when he discusses the ideological creation of individuality in contemporary culture: "We can even imagine ourselves as this sort of creature [the individual], according to the scripted fantasies provided. Everyone can take consolation at the same time from their own inability to depart from the norms of their social milieu and from the illusion that this is a freely chosen conformity."[30] Dexter sees a situation in which a culture industry and the circulation of ideology in society combine to create images and narratives which

construct conformity but allow a space for individuality. However, such a move also creates an obsessive narcissism. There is a need to prove individuality, a need that is supplied by obsessive behaviour. What is created, however, is a subjectivity locked in internal paralysis, replicating culture's obsessions (obsessive consumption) while claiming a subjective autonomy for these obsessional desires. Consciousness becomes solipsistic, constantly re-centering on obsession, leading to an inability to act and presenting the appearance of desultory and aimless behaviour.

In a sense, such a Neo-Hegelian view is generated by Jameson's theorisation of postmodernity as a culture which has lost touch with its base of production, the base having entered the superstructure as just another self-supporting logic. Arthur Kroker develops such a notion in *The Possessed Individual* when he writes that:

> the possessed individual [is] itself an object of consumption. No longer the production machine of primitive capitalism driven onwards by use value, but now the consumption machine of designer capitalism, the point where the subject is itself actually consumed by the laws of abuse values, seduced and disciplined in an indifferent game of chance and probability. And not an ideologically constituted self either, but a rhetorical subject, that is, possessed individualism as the exhausted sign of the disappearance of ideology into the language of rhetoric as the war machine.[31]

A combination of rhetoric taken from Foucault, Virilio and Baudrillard finds in Kroker's account a curious subjectivity where individuality and control meet. The 'individual' is both possessed by the power of technology which channels its desires, but also possessed by a maniacal and individual energy. Agency is both questioned and affirmed. This subjectivity is a product of the end of ideology for Kroker, in which the individual becomes a figure of speech (a rhetorical stroke) emptied of inner self, but at the same time possessed by a plenitude of desires and obsessions. Subjectivity is 'filled' by a solipsistic self-analysis and a narcissistic desire for individuality.[32] Control of the subject no longer occurs because of the 'loss' of two factors which Kroker sees as necessary for the persistence of ideology: the concept of an authentic self which can be alienated from its 'real' desires, and ideology as an external force acting on subjectivity in the service of

a dominant class. With the collapse of distinctions between subject and society there are no longer separate spheres of ideology and authentic self. However, Kroker argues a curious position in terms of the control of subjectivity, appealing to ideology as false consciousness, rather than a process necessarily tied to social and cultural practices. What is forgotten in Kroker's account are the recent theories of ideology which describe a construction of identity and subjectivity in ideology where consciousness of identity does not pre-exist the ideological moment. Because culture and society are so imbued with ideology, there is never an originary moment in which ideology does not exist. Subjectivity is not acted upon by ideology, but constructed through it. Kroker looks to a before-and-after scenario for subjectivity (authentic versus ideological) which, however, has been radically questioned by recent theories of ideology and social control.

This discussion suggests that the postmodern subject seems to fluctuate between two forms of consciousness: narcissism and schizophrenic inertia. Schizophrenia is induced by culture's saturation by information, in which the public and private spheres collapse into each other. The flow of information through the televison screen, in particular, allows the public sphere access to the private, preventing the creation of a private space. Subjectivity is assailed and constructed by a constant flow of information generated by a plurality of value systems and ideologically constructed cultural meanings. However, the loss of selfhood in the schizophrenic access to the many voices of contemporary culture provokes the desire to escape into an authentic space for subjectivity in solipsism. There is a desire for a subjectivity which can focus the self as well as explain the decentred complexities of contemporary culture. Accounts of postmodern subjectivity tend to divide around this opposition of decentred schizophrenia and centering narcissism (many-voiced as opposed to one dimensional subjectivity).

These tendencies are also attributed to postmodernist fiction. Postmodernist fiction is represented either in terms of schizophrenia (in the use of pastiche), or in terms of narcissism (in its focus on its own status as fiction). To view contemporary fiction on these terms, however, is to see it as a form devoid

of cultural or political involvement. To see pastiche as a dominant form in a text is to see the text overpowered by cultural forms, the writer unable to establish strategies that can challenge the simulations and fragmentation of postmodernity. Narcissism, on the other hand, involves a withdrawal from cultural engagement as the text considers its own modes of production. These two positions, however, cannot be assumed and seem to rely on a position which begins its approach to fiction by focusing on cultural concerns rather than on the texts themselves, a position questioned by Patricia Waugh's focus on the text as an artefact, a position described above. The text's specific configurations need to be analysed so that political metafiction's concerns with cultural and political issues are not reduced to the miming of paradigmatic cultural processes in which postmodern culture's recuperation of resistance is also assigned to texts.

It is possible, for example, to read Don Delillo's novels, on these terms, as a replication of the loss of identity in contemporary society's flows of information. *Players*, for example, can be read as a mapping of schizophrenic cultural forms as Lyle Wynant is overpowered and fragmented as an identity by a culture of images and violence. His response is to attempt to discover a new identity in a secret life of violence that his discovery of a terrorist network entails. However, this creates him as one of the television images that so fascinate him. His attempt to become an active agent actually creates him as a passive object of consumption, rather than the passive consumer he had previously been. *Americana* is occupied with similar concerns, mapping David Bell's attempts to sustain his identity by fleeing the explosion of images he experiences in his job at a New York television station. His flight across America, however, mimics the beat narratives which have been recuperated by the media as a representation of 'authentic' American desires, dreams, and experiences, which is then created as an image for the purpose of selling commodities. Bell, in mimicking this image, becomes an image himself. The loss of identity in schizophrenic fragmentation is not the only feature of Delillo's novels, however. *Running Dog*, for example, offers an answer to the fragmentation of culture in Glen Selvy's linear flight across America as he not only seeks to escape his employers' control but also seeks to avoid the chaos

created by a culture of images, a culture typified by the conflicts engendered by the desire to own a pornographic film that apparently involves Hitler. His flight is an attempt to re-construct his identity by refocusing experience narcissistically on the self. However, it is a flight that can be predicted, as he homes in on the base where he was trained by the army as a professional assassin. One of his employers is aware of this training, recognises what Selvy is doing and has him picked off. These concerns with cultural processes have led Patrick O' Donnell to see *Running Dog* and *White Noise* as novels which write Baudrillard's hyperreal space of postmodernity in terms of the paranoia created by its lack of depth and by the subject's desire for a meaning beneath its unyielding surfaces: "Yes, everything is connected; yes, we are part of plots and systems of capital and informational exchange over which we have no control; no, there is nothing we can do about it, at least not in the usual sense of political engagement or resistance."[33] O' Donnell sees a similar situation in Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*, "where the mirroring of human cognitive processes in technology (and vice versa) is so complete that it is impossible to tell where the mind ends and the machine begins", a process that is mirrored in the text's invasion by the technological discourses of postmodernity. These texts involve, for O' Donnell, an irruption of cultural paranoia into textual production which drain their ability to engage with culture in an effective way. On these terms, these texts involve a replication of postmodern forms of subjectivity in postmodernity rather than the textual forms of pastiche and narcissistic self-reflexivity. The writers, in a sense, duplicate their fragmented experience of postmodern forms of cultural production in the texts they write. As a result, their fictive strategies do not resist but accomodate the forms of postmodern culture.

The view that these novels use paranoia to shape their empty formless spaces (and thereby mimic the creation of subjectivity in terms of a paranoia that shapes the empty formless space of postmodernity) is, however, to deny their attempts to intervene into culture. To see them as the empty vessels of postmodernity is equally problematic. One of the recognitions that these novels offer is that the fluxes of information are not empty, but always mediated by

ideology, and that the entry of information's fluxes into consciousness means that ideology also mediates subjectivity. The culture that is negotiated is not the formless space of postmodernity, but one that is shaped by the circulation of ideology within it. The media image, therefore, cannot help but be ideological. Delillo's novels do seem to admit to the difficulty of escaping this media dominated culture - in Bell's mimicry of beat narratives, Selvy's narcissistic flight, and Wynant's desire to escape the loss of self by entry into a culture of secret violences - but their textual strategies are not a collapse into postmodern culture. Like McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*, which defies the apparently all-embracing informational networks of society in its reconfiguration of subjectivity, Delillo's novels offer an analysis of contemporary experience and while none of Delillo's characters find new forms to speak their experience, the texts themselves are an attempt to speak through the ideologically mediated flux of information rather than to be spoken by it. They offer a vision that does not otherwise seem to be available in the cultural sphere, whose circulation of information contains, and is contained by, the circulation of ideology.

Alternatively, narcissism can be described in terms of paranoia where the creation of consciousness involves the centering of the world on the self. Paranoia is a self-centering form of consciousness in which the subject places him- or herself at the centre of a world of flux, the object of a system or conspiracy which not only locates the subject as a meaningful agent, but also supplies the flux of society and culture with a structure that produces both comprehension and causality for the paranoid. The future, which would otherwise be a space of uncertainty for the subject, becomes governable if not predictable. Such a situation is proposed by Jerry Herron who comments on the way in which a culture of pastiche, in which uncertainty is created and historical or cultural causality lost, has created crisis narratives.[34] With the collapse of grand narratives a schizophrenic and undirected culture comes into place, but it is not the positive constellation that Lyotard presents. There is a fascination and horror at the abnegation of a self which is further enmeshed in surveillance and control with little chance for the liberation and escape that Lyotard proposes. The aimless

culture does not provide liberation but creates an apparent need for social structure and ideology. There is a desire for the restoration of continuity, but in the new culture this is only possible through narratives of paranoia.

At a cultural or social level this is particularly important and it is here that crisis narratives are most evident. The lack of a discernible pattern in society engenders the desire for some regulating structure that will create continuity, although this is only a mimicry or simulation of old forms of continuity. It is in crisis narratives that a simulated continuity is created, a crisis narrative being the artificial creation of a "profound dilemma" which needs resolving. The creation of such dilemmas - the products of paranoia - has the effect of reconstructing authority which is perceived to be necessary for the resolution of the problems that have been created. Such a logic is limiting but also self-perpetuating, the resolution of one dilemma causing the creation of another dilemma to be resolved. A simulation of causality is constructed from the arbitrary and unplanned generation of new dilemmas. The experience of a schizophrenic and potentially apocalyptic social paradigm provokes a systematising matrix that does not liberate, but produces further control. Grand narratives are created on an *ad hoc* basis, but can generate a logic which either revivifies existing processes of systematisation or creates new forms of systematisation which then develop a logic of their own. Crisis narratives re-invest ideology as a legitimating force, suggesting that the State's authority is necessary to protect the subject from the social and cultural effects of the crises that the State has created.

Paranoia, however, when used in postmodernist fiction is not simply an attempt to reconstruct subjectivity - a figuration that would denote a deterministically reflexive construction of fiction. It connotes ideological control, but also signifies a recognition of an ideological crisis. Paranoia is a name for the realisation that the subject is not naturalised as a self-willed individual, but constituted as an ideologically created subjectivity. Paranoia becomes a form of knowing that creates an awareness of the way in which desires are channelled into already constructed narratives of control by the circulation of ideology in society.

Paranoia is articulated as a form of resistance in political metafiction, resistance to a society where identity is constructed as a linear autonomous individuality able to master the flux of images and information. The subject is created as if s/he controlled the media, able to impose a linear order, the desires to follow this path apparently denying the possibility that it could be ideology that has created the desires for linear experience. Paranoia, as re-centering loops of consciousness, provides an alinear subjectivity that cannot be co-opted, a form of subjectivity that will be discussed more fully in relation to the strategies proposed by Donald Barthelme (chapter three) and Joseph McElroy (chapter four). Both Barthelme and McElroy reject ideological forms of subjectivity which create desires in terms of individuality, autonomy and an inner self. They replace them with the facsimile identity (Barthelme) and analogue or montage identity (McElroy) which show an awareness of the subject's involvement in culture, but allow subjectivity a means to avoid being constructed by the circulation of the ideas and values of society in the avoidance of the linear desires and experiences ideology generates. Identity is reconceived not in terms of a single identity that has only ideologically created desires and experiences available to it, but in terms of multiple identities which offer other perspectives.

Modernization and Postmodernization

The interconnection of schizophrenia and paranoia (or fragmentation and systematisation) that Herron sees in crisis narratives corresponds interestingly with the account given by Crook, Pakulski and Waters in their discussion of the postmodernization of society. This account proposes that postmodernization is an intersection of modern (systematisation) and postmodern (plural and fragmented) forms of production, whether economic, social, or cultural. Their account has a particular relevance for the period of the late 1960's and 1970's in which it can be argued that modern forms of society were gradually affected by postmodern forms of social organisation. Crook, Pakulski and Waters argue that such an intersection created tensions and crises in which both systematisation and

fragmentation (a negative plurality) were evident, not only at the levels of culture and society, but as these processes affected the subject.

Crook, Pakulski and Waters argue that the postmodernization of society is an incremental process rather than a radical break with modernity, a position that sees continuities between the 1960's and 1980's. While several of the factors discussed in the previous section are relevant for the culture of the 1960's and 1970's, they exist in less exaggerated a form and are co-existent with modernizing tendencies in this period. The basic thesis of Crook, Pakulski and Waters is that the process of postmodernization involves the attenuation of modern forms of social organization: the disappearance of the State from the lifeworld, which they adapt from Habermas; the attenuation of the power of Corporations in the economic sphere; and the failure of 'Big Science' (what Lyotard would call grand-narratives) in its creation of social identity. The process of postmodernization involves the gradual increment of hypercommodification (where consumption is of cultural meanings rather than products and services), hyperdifferentiation (the increasing variety of cultural meanings and styles available) and hyper-rationalisation (the decentralisation of production where production is contracted out to smaller companies and the controlling Corporation only has nominal power). The consequence of these three aspects of postmodernization is a re-enactment of "the dilemma of a profusion of choice and an erosion of authority" that was feared in the early twentieth century. This repetition is not, however, a 'real' crisis in social organisation.[35] Crook, Pakulski and Waters argue that the postmodernizing process also makes solutions available in the simulation of unity and meaning in media images. Cultural meaning is created so that while the changes in society are initially experienced as fragmentation, they are ultimately experienced as plurality.

Despite the interesting thesis that is offered by Crook, Pakulski and Waters there are problematic elements in their account, the most obvious being their literal view of State and Corporate involvement in culture and society. Their thesis does not take account of ideology and the implicit power structures within

society that produce social control. Their view of State and Corporate involvement in society and culture focuses around the question of interventionism and non-interventionism. For Crook, Pakulski and Waters, if the State is non-interventionist then State control of the lifeworld is non-existent. If the State does not issue policies or generate initiatives on domestic issues (Johnson's Great Society) or refrains from setting up agencies to monitor social, cultural, and economic practices (bureaucracy) then the State does not control the lives of its citizens, who are then liberated from the State's power. Even on the surface, this seems to be an optimistic view of the State's involvement in contemporary society, as Alex Callinicos has pointed out in relation to the State's economic initiatives generated in response to the stock market crash of 1988.[36] Callinicos describes how the Federal Reserve stepped in after the crash, lowering interest rates and pumping money into the banking system, a move that pre-empted a further decline, indicating that, even on this most literal of levels, the State is still intervening in society.

Problematically, ideology is not considered by Crook, Pakulski and Waters, despite their focus on postmodernization as the consumption of cultural meanings. They configure postmodernization in terms of the collapse of the centralising culture industry that Adorno and Horkheimer describe and see this collapse creating a plurality of cultural meanings which are liberatory rather than authoritarian. This, however, assumes that ideology is a monolithic propaganda machine, an intentionalist approach where meanings, values and beliefs are consciously constructed by an agency and then disseminated. Ideology, however, generates values, meanings and beliefs without having to be controlled by some central agency. It pervades culture and while it is generated by economic and social practices it also sustains and creates them, an interactive process which means that it is not a static configuration, but one that is able to adapt and change. The media images that are offered in their plurality in Crook, Pakulski and Waters' account are therefore always pervaded with ideological meanings even though they have not been generated by a central controlling agency.

Despite these reservations, however, *Postmodernization* offers some interesting insights into the period of the late 1960's and 1970's. One of the key issues which Crook, Pakulski and Waters focus on is the intersection of modernizing and postmodernizing principles in this period. They describe a society ruptured by monocentric organisation and complex differentiation. The former is a system of social organisation characteristic of modernity and involves the imposition of State and economic systems on society (Fordism and Corporate intervention). The latter, on the other hand, is typical of the postmodernizing principles that Crook Pakulski and Waters conceive as increasingly evident from the early 1970's and involves the fragmentation of the cultural experience of the subject. They conclude from this that postmodernization is a continuation of modernization, involving, however, a collapse of modern rationalisation in which: "postmodernizing change becomes multidirectional and unpredictable. Postmodernization erodes the boundaries of a specificially social-structural domain and promotes the effectivity of cultural processes."[37] Like Jameson, they locate the impulse to the transformation of society in the cultural sphere and focus on the retreat of the State from the life-world of culture which, as a result, inundates society as a whole. They note, like David Harvey, that it was during the 1970's that the break between modernization and postmodernization took place, at which point rigid models of labour and economic organization began to be overtaken by the decentralising tendency of "flexible accumulation", as Harvey terms the process.[38] In both these accounts, flexibility of finance, information and employment replace Corporate rationalisation, a transformation created by the crisis in the American economy that took place in the mid 1970's. This crisis can be attributed to the failure of rationalised Corporate structures which did not allow the American economy to adapt to the pressures placed on it by the Arab oil embargo of 1973 and by the competition that America faced from the rapidly growing Japanese and German economies. The boom that America had experienced until this point had, according to Harvey and Crook, Pakulski and Waters, produced a culture of indulgence based on an unsustainable sense of economic security, in which flexibility of design and production had been lost in the over-bureaucratisation of the Corporations, a crisis exacerbated by a saturated

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON LIBRARY

home-market.

Until this period, however, both accounts are agreed that the social structure of the United States was one dominated by principles of Corporate rationalisation. Such a structure is based on several aspects including labour specialisation, centralised organisation, and the interventionist policies of the State in the economic sphere (in the use of defence contracts to create what is commonly known as the military-industrial complex). This period can be characterised as one of systematisation: "The formation of the corporate state involves a shift in power away from representative bodies and its concentration in the bureaucratized executive. Its corollary is the extension of the depth and scope of state intervention. The corporate state becomes preoccupied with economic planning, central management and the overall co-ordination of social activities."[39] Nevertheless, the increasing power of information and the media introduce an apparent plurality, but a plurality that is actually experienced as fragmentation. Crook, Pakulski and Waters see the influx of information as a liberatory move, although they also suggest that access to information was used for the purpose of retaining power in the early 1970's. Crook, Pakulski and Waters initially suggest that the commodification of information and its creation of cultural meanings can lead to a society of 'information rich' and 'information poor'.[40] This description is mirrored in Charles Jencks' vision of a postmodern society in which class relations are transformed by the new production processes based on information. The influx of information produces a paraclass in which the proletariat is replaced by a "cognitariat" that incorporates both middle and working class. This is not necessarily the end of class relations, however, for Jencks then goes on to divide this new paraclass into "cognicrats" and "cogniproles", qualifying this further, however, by noting that such is the ambiguity of this paraclass that roles are constantly shifting and that "internal divisions are always changing relative to each other".[41] While each of these accounts indicates a retention of power relations, they ultimately see the primacy of information as part of a decentralising process which threatens the economic system that Corporate capital has put in place.

Such a view of the power of information is, however, questionable. It assumes that information will not only allow access to the centres of power, but that when information and knowledge have 'escaped' from Corporate or State control they will be immediately drained of their interested (ideological) meanings. This, however, sees information in terms of property rather than in terms of cultural or ideological meanings and seems unduly optimistic. As Steven Connor has noted, access to information is by no means guaranteed and even if there is access, the sheer volume of information means that it is difficult to discover useful knowledge.[42] Indeed, this is one of the common perceptions of information during this period. Information is perceived to be part of power relations and not a means to resist them, Guy Debord seeing information and the media, in terms of ideology, as a means by which power structures are maintained. Similarly, Philip K. Dick, in *Simulacra*, presents a future dystopian America controlled by Corporations (the President an android puppet under the control of a mysterious committee) in which access to information is a determinant of class and status. Those who have access to knowledge are part of an elite, those who do not are marginalised outcasts who have no opportunity to 'improve' themselves.

The concern with the power of Corporations is also evident in the cultural deabtes of the period of the 1960's and early 1970's. The rise of Corporate power can be traced to the pre-War cartels established in Germany, but it was during the Second World War that the modern Corporate structure began to develop. It was during this period that Corporations and State were integrated in order to facilitate the war effort. This process was given renewed impetus during the Cold War when the State began to rely on Corporations for developments in defence and space technology. The Corporations, which had previously been the basis of economic production, now began to enter into the political and ideological experience of the United States, a process that was achieved in the 1950's and varied little until the change in social organisation in the 1970's.[43] The intersection of State and Corporations generated configurations which took control of the cultural and ideological life of society. The first of these

configurations, which has already been mentioned, is the influx of commodities and services into the cultural sphere. The influx of commodities changed the experience of the social subject who came to be dominated by interactions with products and images rather than with other human beings. This change of experience, however, was not confined to the cultural sphere, for boundaries between spheres (cultural, economic, social and political) collapsed with the new power of the Corporations, a configuration that has been discussed by Peter Carroll and David Noble:

> Job opportunities moved into large private and public corporations, and success in these jobs demanded a more flexible and compromising personality. These social pressures to create an 'other-directed' personality were reinforced by economic pressures to consume what the machines produced. To learn to be a good consumer, the individual had to be sensitive to his neighbors. To keep up with the Joneses was to keep up with whatever new consumer product brought status. Because advertising was constantly redefining which product was most prestigious, the consumer had to be able to respond flexibly to shifting styles.[44]

The change in work habits also involved a change in the construction of social and cultural roles, producing a collapse of the public and private spheres. The private sphere of the home was no longer an escape from the work-place. The same desires for status existed in the private sphere, created by the desire to consume. There was also a transformation in the experience of labour within the Corporations themselves. Alienation was extended from the working class to the middle class who became processors of information "organized along industrial lines".[45] As a result, managers became clerks rather than decision-making power-brokers.

The experience of this loss of power produced alienation from work. Middle class men had little control over their own lives, trapped by the environment in which they worked. The development of alienation was pre-empted by the development of a new ideological form which suggested that individual power could be restored, in the cultural sphere, through consumerism where control over products and the commodity market replaced power over people. For example, a 1950's advertisement for a Ford Thunderbird made the

claim that "What a mink coat does to perk up a lady, a Thunderbird does for a male."[46] Such a configuration of discourses points to two things. Firstly, it indicates Corporate awareness that the consumption of products was being used as a means to gain a feeling of control and power. Secondly, such an advertisment also articulates the feminisation of men in consumerism, the Thunderbird having the same role as a fur coat for a woman. Men are figured as feminised objects rather than acting subjects, but figure themselves as masters of the cultural sphere and therefore masters of their own desires.[47] However, the new experience of Corporate capitalism in the social and cultural spheres is one where the intersection of ideology and desire becomes evident. The perceived systematisation of society also contributes to the loss of masculinity. Rationalisation of everyday life leads to the mechanisation of the American male who is figured socially as part of information systems rather than an acting agent. It might be suggested that a response to this situation was created in the counter-culture's return-to-nature ethic of the 1960's which was an attempt to restore the transcendentalist self-reliant male, a position offered, for example, by a writer such as Ronald Sukenick.[48]

There is also another important process affecting cultural production besides the apparent centralisation of power and experience, and that is the expansion of American corporate power into new spaces. Jameson discusses how Corporations colonise Nature and the Unconscious, but there is also a more literal territorial aspect to their growth. Besides making available new pools of labour, the decolonisation of Africa and Asia opened up new markets for the Corporations, to add to the markets in Latin America which American companies exploited more fully than before. The Corporations were not only involved in economic expansion, however. Their new role as part of what is called the military-industrial complex led to contacts with the military and with State security services. Such an involvement pointed to a society in which the Corporations not only dominated the economic life of the citizen, but also signalled that they had become creators of political initiatives and policies on a global scale. Rather than a fragmentation of social forces in cultural pluralism the new social and cultural

forms, that the intersection of State and Corporation entails, generate new ideological configurations. These act through the construction of identity ('other directed') and social activity (consumerism). However, the intersection between State and Corporations suggests that control of the subject is systematic rather than based solely in cultural movements.

The importance of this for counter-cultural politics as well as for postmodernist writers of this period can be seen in the way that social control, on a national and global scale, is represented as a system. The State has difficulty presenting itself as the protector of the individual and guarantor of individual rights in opposition to the machinations of the powerful. It is identified too closely with the interests of the powerful for this to seem possible. As a result, the cultural and social experience of the subject appears to be one in which the subject is simply a functional unit in a rationalised state machine. This machine-system is perceived as a static structure which will not (or cannot) change and therefore cannot adapt to the subject. Instead, the subject must adapt to the Corporate and State system. William Burroughs depicts this position and refers to the State-Corporate complex in terms of the suppression of individuality and its inablity to transform itself: "Vested interest of power and/or money is perhaps the most potent factor standing in the way of freedom for the individual. New discoveries and products are suppressed because they threaten the vested interests."[49] The behaviour of both the subject and of society as a whole is pre-determined by such a system, in which the subject is provided with a role to act out and thereby becomes a cog in the machine.

This changing recognition of the ideological constitution of the subject and his/her social activity is of great importance to the cultural landscape of the fiction produced in the 1960's and 1970's. This period undergoes a crisis in ideology and the life of Corporate America is rejected by the counter-culture. Carroll and Noble refer to this process in their discussion of the counter-culture's rejection of conventional values such as "militant masculinity, competitiveness and aggressiveness, emphasis on bodily cleanliness and self-discipline in order to

channel energy into economic achievement".[50] The 'necessity' of service to the State was also rejected, most obviously in the burning of draft cards. As Andreas Huyssen puts it, in his contextualision of postmodernist art, "the promise of unlimited abundance, political stability, and new technological frontiers of the Kennedy years was shattered fast, and social conflict emerged dominant in the civil rights movement, in the urban riots, and in the anti-war movement."[51] Such acts were a challenge to ideology and were perceived as such by the government, particularly in the Nixon years when the response was an attempt to reassert the State's control over the circulation of ideas and desires in culture and society, in the use of force to break up student protests. Such a response was not simply an attempt to restore law and order, but also an attempt to restore the State's control of the ideological sphere of society by eradicating and silencing the threats to its claims to legitimacy. The contest, therefore, was as much about who controlled cultural meaning as it was about Vietnam. The result, however, was a failure of the counter-culture, a movement premissed on its recognition of the ideology of the State, but which failed against other forms of ideology. In other words, the counter-culture's recognition of ideology was not enough to prevent the persistence of existing ideology in the aftermath of the 1968 protests. The victory of Nixon in the 1968 and 1972 elections seemed to show that ideology was still strong enough to ensure that a right wing Republican was elected and to ensure the failure of the counter-culture and the New Left which led to a fragmentation of opposition in the face of the re-legitimation of ideology and its cultural meanings.

Despite Baudrillard's claim that ideology disappears in postmodernity, this period is clearly still one in which ideology and power circulate in society, but articulated in the cultural sphere through postmodern forms such as the expansion of the media, information and the commodity. In this situation, *The Crying of Lot 49* is not a simulation of a postmodern culture conceived in these latter terms, but a consideration of the operations of ideology through them. Oedipa's experience of emptiness, discussed in chapter one, is not an experience of hyperreality or the loss of grand narratives, but an experience of the loss of identity, as desires are

mapped by the flows of ideology and information that so fill the culture she inhabits. It could also be suggested that the period in question involves a conflict between the ideologies of modernity (centralisation and systematisation) and postmodernization (pluralism) which, both Huyssen and Crook, Pakulski and Waters imply, ended with the triumph of a postmodern culture. Huyssen, however, does not see this as a liberating development. Instead of ideology being invested in social relations generated by the State he sees the triumph of ideology in a culture dominated by the media. This leads him to contrast the modernist and postmodernist avant-garde, correlating the latter with the counter-cultural protests of this period, saying that while "the earlier avant-garde was confronted with the culture industry in its stage of inception... postmodernism had to face a technologically and economically fully developed media culture which had mastered the high art of integrating, diffusing, and marketing even the most serious challenges."[52]

Postmodernism and the Avant-garde

This discussion of society and culture in the 1960's and 1970's is not constituted as a means to interpret postmodernist fiction in terms of a reflection aesthetic. I do not intend to interpret postmodernist fiction as a reflection of a Corporate and information society in which economic processes and established cultural ideas and meanings act as determinants of fiction. My focus will be on the possibility of resistance in such a culture and particularly on the way in which experimental fiction responds to this culture and not how it reflects it. The concern here is with the question of whether a postmodernist avant-garde can be generated, indeed, whether it is possible for an avant-garde to exist in a culture which seems to collapse difference and subversion into itself.

Patricia Waugh comments interestingly on this situation, noting that the difficulties for contemporary writers in their relation to social and cultural life stem from the lack of a clearly defined avant-garde 'movement': "The existence

of an unprecedented cultural pluralism has meant that post-modernist writers are not confronted with the same clear-cut oppositions as modernist writers were."[53] She goes on to say that a literary innovation cannot validate itself as a dominant form without a sense of community amongst innovative writers. Waugh continues her discussion by commenting that modernism articulated personal autonomy by expressing opposition to social institutions, noting that this led to alienation at the individual level. For postmodernism, however, such a response is not as easy: "The power structures of *contemporary* society are, however, more diverse and more effectively concealed or mystified, creating greater problems for the post-modernist novelist in identifying and then representing the object of 'opposition.'"[54] In a sense, writers of metafiction retreat from this world of observable, but incomprehensible, social phenomena, into a world where Wittgensteinian examinations of language are the only form of knowledge that is available or which can be given a form of expression. Waugh continues:

> Metafictional writers have found a solution to this by turning inwards to their own medium of expression, in order to examine the relationship between fictional form and social reality. They have come to focus on the notion that 'everyday' language endorses and sustains such power structures through a continuous process of naturalization whereby forms of oppression are constructed in apparently 'innocent' representations. The literary-fictional equivalent of this 'everyday' language of 'common sense' is the language of the traditional novel: the conventions of realism. Metafiction sets up an opposition, not to ostensibly 'objective' facts in the 'real' world, but to the language of the realistic novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality.[55]

While this recognition is important it does not fully account for the developments of narrative and textual configurations in experimental fiction of the 1970's. Writers of political metafiction tend to be aware of the limitations of metafictional challenges to ideology, aware that ideology cannot be so easily dismissed, but that a need for more concrete and complex engagements with social, cultural and political problematics is created. Although metafictionists may be aware that ideas and ideology are fictions, this does not necessarily mean that they have no social effect, nor that they are automatically de-legitimated on a universal social scale. In the same way, Lyotard's critique of grand narratives does not make them disappear, his position offering a methodological approach rather

than a cultural analysis.

What is at issue is the question whether the strategies of political metafiction form an avant-garde which can effectively challenge ideology and power relations in contemporary society. Waugh, like Jameson, believes that the text cannot maintain a distance from culture and that its attempts to create strategies of resistance have an indeterminate effect. Eagleton offers a more negative view arguing that postmodernist strategies are actually complicitous and even that they are intended to support consumer capital.[56] There are, however, several theorists who have offered views which align postmodernism with the avant-garde. Susan Rubin Suleiman has argued, for example, that postmodernism can be classed as an avant-garde form because it places new emphasis on the artwork's status:

> If postmodernist practice in the arts has provoked controversy and debate, it is because of what it 'does' (or does not do), not because of what it 'is.' In other words, it is as an object 'to be read,' an intervention in the sense of an action or a statement requiring a response, rather than as an object of descriptive poetics, that postmodernism, whether in literature or in the other arts, strikes me as significant today.[57]

It is the performative element of postmodernism that Suleiman focuses on, arguing that this performativity demands a response or interpretation. The text's cultural status as art or commodity, therefore, is peripheral in relation to what it 'does'. This position offers an alternative perspective on the strategies of Don Delillo's novels, discussed above. Rather than replicating the disappearance of identity in the random flows of information (*Players*), or images (*Americana*, *Running Dog*), or in an overwhelming apocalyptic culture (*White Noise*), Delillo's creation of texts demands a response by the reader, reflecting or recognising their place in contemporary society. Delillo's texts, therefore, are affirmative because they involve a recognition of the negative processes of culture rather than a "complicity with the market, with mass culture, capitalism, commercialism". Critical distance is created, but not as a withdrawal into marginality. The text mobilises its resistance within the ideological and institutional frameworks of contemporary society and acts as an intervention.

This position is also adopted by Charles Russell who supplements Waugh's view by saying that another difficulty occurs for experimental writers in their uncertainty over what is or is not ideological or complictous.[58] He comments that contemporary novelists are frequently uncertain whether their textual and narrative strategies are complicitous or not. Because social control and ideology do not seem to function as if they were identifiable external forces that can be rejected or evaded, alternative social and cultural practices or visions become ambiguous as strategies of resistance. Such a position gestures toward the difficulties created in contemporary society by the apparent lack of a dominant class. If there is no obvious ruling group whose interests are specifically served by ideology, there is no distinct 'enemy' to attack. The writers, therefore, do not know which textual, discursive or narrative strategies are radical and which complicitous because of the apparently neutral aspect of cultural formations. The writers could as easily be articulating ideology as challenging it in their creation of new forms and in the use of parody.

Postmodernism's relationship with institutional and cultural frameworks has been the concern of Hal Foster as well as of Charles Russell. Both theorists discuss how experimental art and literature encounter difficulties in mobilising opposition because of the way in which they are recuperated, either into an institutional framework or because they must use already existing discourses, discourses that are ideologically constituted. Nevertheless, they each see strategies of resistance in postmodernist production. Foster suggests, for example, that postmodernism is an advance on the modernist avant-garde: "The import of this repositioning is suggested by the (military) metaphorics of both terms: *avant-garde* connotes revolutionary transgression of social and cultural lines; *resistance* suggests immanent struggle within or behind them."[59] The avant-garde is a failure for Foster because its strategies did not, and could never, lead to the wholesale transformation of society, but only resulted in the creation of a fragmented society which exacerbated the experience of alienation without changing social relations. Because postmodernism does not attempt the wholesale transformation of society it has more chance of success. For Foster, art's ability to generate a revolutionary

social practice is an impossible task. The adoption of postmodernist strategies of resistance, however, in which representations and cultural meanings are challenged from within, creates the possibility that cultural meanings can be transformed and that a gradual transformation of cultural and social practices and relations can take place. Russell offers a similar strategy except that he makes more of the demythologising, denaturalising and defamiliarising tendencies in postmodernist writing. He suggests that one strategy is that taken by the Factualists in the novels of William Burroughs. This is a strategy which allows writers to "disrupt and expose and force people to recognize themselves for what they are". It therefore avoids the problem that Burroughs discovers in his recognition that "to struggle against social control means to battle against one's prior identification with it; and even more distressing is that actively to oppose the enemy condemns one to being defined by them - for as long as one is fixed on fighting the opposition, one is not free of it."[60]

While all these responses to the question of postmodernism and the avant-garde are of interest and offer several insights into the issue, it is Andreas Huyssen who offers the clearest perspective on the cultural problematic facing a postmodernist avant-garde. Huyssen has suggested that postmodernism is a significant attempt to return to the ethics and aesthetics of the radical avant-garde, particularly in its concern with the future:

> In the United States, however, the sense of the future, which had asserted itself so powerfully in the 1960's, is still alive today in the postmodernist scene, even though its breathing space is shrinking fast as a result of recent economic and political changes. There also seems to be a major shift of postmodernist interest from the earlier two-pronged concern with popular culture and with experimental art and literature, to a new focus on cultural theory, a shift which certainly reflects the academic institutionalization of postmodernism.[61]

Huyssen is referring to both theoretical and artistic versions of postmodernism here, the main focus of his discussion being postmodernism as a cultural strategy. Nevertheless his analysis has relevance to the processes and reception that postmodernist fiction has undergone. What he is directing attention to, in part, is the way in which postmodernism's political engagement with cultural and

ideological representations has been drained from it by its recuperation into the very institutions it challenges. Postmodernist art has been recuperated by the academy, for example, as a paradigm of its culture, rather than as a site of resistance and contestation.

Such a paradigmatic reading can, for example, be found in Tony Tanner's interpretation of John Barth's *Chimera*. Although Tanner does not directly refer to configurations of postmodernity, preferring instead to articulate the concerns of Barth's story in terms of "our ongoing contemporaneity", he implicitly makes use of postmodern ideas.[62] In his discussion of *Chimera*, Tanner refers to Bellerophon's realisation that he is an imitation hero:

> As Bellerophon realises near the end: 'I saw the chimera of my life. By imitating perfectly the Pattern of Mythic Heroes, I'd become, not a mythic hero, but a perfect Reset...it's hardly to be imagined that those patterns we call 'Perseus', 'Medusa', 'Pegasus'... are aware of their existence, any more than their lettered counterparts on the page.' One problem being explored here is that of excessive self-consciousness, and the over-abundance of *schema* and models...But we are reading and encountering stories, forms, patterns all the time, so how can we *be* the original story of our life and not a simple telling of one gone before, and how can a writer *tell* an original story rather than merely repeat one that has already been told?[63]

Tanner's interpretation focuses on the self consciousness of Barth's "Hero" and sees the use of "Reset" as a noun describing the hero's unconscious imitation and repetition of existing models of behaviour. However, in interpreting "Reset" solely as an index of repetition and imitation Tanner overlooks its specific narrative function. At this point his interpretation owes more to theories of postmodernism which foreground pastiche and rearrangement, than to the specificity of the text. "Reset" functions narratively in the 'Bellerophoniad' section of *Chimera* as an indicator of both self-censorship and the return of narratives to their already existing forms. In the example that Tanner cites, "Reset" is a verb as well as a noun, forming an imperative which relocates the narrative in its old forms, the ellipses that follow perhaps referring to the unarticulated narrative that could have been created. "Reset" indicates that the speaker or narrator has discovered that the preceding story, description, or train of thought has led to either a dead-

end which needs to be closed off or to a situation in which the speaker/narrator will reveal something that is too personal about him/herself. It acts as a return to the old forms of narrative and meaning, even though this too may lead to stalemate or to the dangers of self-revelation. It functions as a mark of stalemate, dishonesty, self deception, or artifice (foregrounding the fictionality of the text), or a return to the old narrative with which it is familiar. The narrative is either regulated or 'reset' to its old forms.

Tanner's interpretation, however, offers an interesting perspective on the relationship between "stories, forms, patterns" and their users, pointing to postmodernist fiction's concerns with the narratives that exist in society and which determine the subject's social practices. He does, however, ignore the contextual meanings of "Reset" in his focus on its configuration in terms of the cultural dominant of 'contemporeneity'. Not only is this a problematic strategy as regards narrative, but equally problematic is its assumption that a text has an unmediated reference to a cultural dominant, particularly as postmodernist texts such as Barth's show critical awareness of their relationship to their cultural ground. Barth, for example, parodies the process by which narratives are reset to their earlier forms. He configures narrative as a spiral loop in which the resetting of narratives does not involve repetition but sets the narrative into a new form which loops away from the old forms. Instead of circling back to its old forms, the narrative almost completes the circle only to veer off into a new spiral. Barth's strategy, like much postmodernist fiction, is not to replicate culture, but to generate new arrangements and alternatives. His project is to find ways out of the exhaustion of literary and cultural forms.

Political metafiction is similarly concerned with developing strategies and possibilities that offer options within - rather than co-option into - the stagnant or entropic culture that surrounds them. The accounts of postmodernism that see it as a parasitic form feeding off culture, as well as accounts which focus on metafictional concerns alone, are inadequate for political metafiction. Huyssen touches on this when he mentions the way in which postmodernist fiction entered

a sterile backwater in its reiteration of metafictional strategies. These strategies question representation but do not create new possibilities. Indeed, his analysis is close to my own in that he suggests that it is through a return to story and history that this dead-end was avoided.[64] Political metafiction is situated in a culture of shifting ideologies and ideological crisis, but a culture which allows a space to open up for strategies of resistance. There can be a liberation from old ideas and literary or textual forms, a dynamic supplied by metafiction. Metafiction's challenge to plot and narrative as ideological forms have the paradoxical effect of liberating narrative for political metafiction, rather than establishing its emptiness or redundancy. The investigation and critique of narrative in metafiction actually leads to a recognition of its multiform character, as opposed to the apparently one-dimensional ideological frame of the realist narrative. Metafiction leads to an awareness that the realist cause-and-effect and mimetic narrative is not the only narrative available, while also showing that ideology uses narrative, rather than being an essential characteristic.

Out of this, political metafiction generates a challenge to both ideology and the postmodern forms that articulate it, reconfiguring narratives so that they do not acquiesce to the ideological forms of the cause-and-effect narrative, but nor do they replicate the fragmented forms of postmodern culture. New strategies are created which resist ideologically constituted cultural meanings and offer more complex political projects while still retaining the metafictional critiques of ideological representation. As will be discussed in the ensuing chapters, there is a move towards a more referential fiction which keeps in sight the cultural ground of postmodernist fiction, but which uses a variety of narrative and discursive practices to resist a complete recuperation into consumer culture. In its articulation of these strategies this fiction offérs critiques of ideology and social control while also offering, in varying degrees, new perspectives on identity. It also attempts to create forms which allow the diversity of voices and experiences to be expressed, as is the case in Stanley Elkin's *The Dick Gibson Show* which configures a narrative based in the telling of stories as a response to the referential narrative's configuration of an homogenising mass media. Political

metafiction, therefore, positions itself in terms of Jencks' postmodernism (as a set of styles and practices) which opens up possibilities for resistance rather than being positioned in terms of a postmodern culture of co-optation.

Notes

1. Donald Barthelme, 'At The End of the Mechanical Age', *Sixty Stories* (London: Minerva, 1991), p.275.

2. Jameson refers to the literary productions of postmodernity as "peculiar forms of realism (or at least the mimesis of reality)..." Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), p.88.

3. Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p.87.

4. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp.279-96.

5. Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.127.

6. This view is presented, for example, by Ihab Hassan, who periodises postmodernism in relation to modernism not simply as a set of styles, but as characteristic discourses which are intercut, or even identical, with culture and society. See Ihab Hassan, 'The Culture of Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2: 3 (1985), pp.119-131.

7. Edmund J. Smyth, 'Introduction', *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction* (London: Batsford, 1991), pp.12-13.

8. Similarly, Susan Rubin Suleiman has noted how Lyotard has credited Hassan as the source of his use of the term 'postmodern.' The recognition that theories of postmodernist fiction have provided the source for many theories of postmodern culture has rarely been made, however. This may well be because such a recognition would problematise both the culture-creates-text economy as well as the idea of the postmodern *epistème* of interwoven discourses, implying firstly that postmodernist texts do not simply replicate postmodern cultural and social discourse and, secondly, that a distance between the two exists. Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.184.

9. Charles Jencks, *What is Post-Modernism?*, third edition (London: Academy Editions, 1989), pp.7-10.

10. Stephen Crook, Jan Pakulski, Malcolm Waters, *Postmodernization: Change in Advanced Society* (London: Sage, 1992), p.64.

11. Hassan, 'The Culture of Postmodernism', pp.122-4. For a discussion of Hassan's taxonomic difficulties, see Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, pp.109-114. Connor notes how Hassan sees both Modernism and Postmodernism as literatures of silence and unmaking at the same time as setting up a binary structure of differences in which Modernism has "the mark of discredit" hovering over it, as Hassan privileges Postmodernist play, participation, and process over Modernist hierarchy, totalization and synthesis. Connor comments on how Modernism, which was previously an index of resistance for Hassan and the generating power behind Postmodernism, has become "the

name for the purblind logocentric past, expressive as it is of a totalitarian will to absolute power".

12. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.42.

13. Patricia Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p.129.

14. Tom LeClair, *The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p.112.

15. See Crook, Pakulski, Waters, *Postmodernization*, pp.26-41.

16. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* ([Exeter?]: Rebel Press, 1987), section 42.

17. Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), p.116.

18. Richard Kadrey and Larry McCaffery, 'Cyberpunk 101: A Schematic Guide to *Storming the Reality Studio*', in *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Fiction*, ed. Larry McCaffery (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1991), p.21.

19. Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p.87.

20. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.46.

21. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p.188.

22. See Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p.60; and Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), pp.67-8.

23. A process Baudrillard also describes. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), pp.10-13, pp.53-58.

24. Norman K. Denzin, *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (London: Sage, 1991), pp.14-15.

25. Neville Wakefield, *Postmodernism: The Twilight of the Real* (London: Pluto Press, 1990), p.4.

26. Terry Caesar has also pointed to postmodernity's obsession with parody, suggesting that it is the most dominant process in contemporary media culture determining the production of literary texts, Caesar's view implying a reflexive relationship between the two. See Terry Caesar, '"Impervious to Criticism": Contemporary Parody and Trash', *Sub-Stance*, 64 (1991), pp.67-79.

27. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), p.245.

28. Jean Baudrillard, 'The Ecstasy of Communication', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Verso, 1985), pp.131-2.

29. *Apocalypse Culture*, ed. Adam Parfrey, revised edition (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1990).

30. Frank Dexter, 'Seriality Kills', *Here and Now*, 12 (1992), p.30.

31. Arthur Kroker, *The Possessed Individual: Technology and Postmodernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), p.6.

32. Arthur Kroker and David Cook describe this as subjectivity created as alterity, the product of television in which viewers are reduced to inert voyeurs, empty of consciousness except in the images which filter across their brains: "The TV self... gets everything there is to get from the simulacrum of the media: a market identity as a consumer in the society of the spectacle...; a traumatized serial being (television blasts away everything which cannot be reduced to the technological limitations of 'good visuals' or, as Sartre has said, to 'otherness')". Kroker and Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*, second edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.274.

33. Patrick O' Donnell, 'Engendering Paranoia in Contemporary Narrative', *Boundary 2*, 19: 1 (1992), p.193.

34. Jerry Herron, 'The Gentrification of Desire and Posthistorical Pastiche', *Sub-Stance*, 52 (1987), pp.45-58.

35. Crook, Pakulski, Waters, *Postmodernization*, p.73.

36. Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), pp.138-9.

37. Crook, Pakulski and Waters, *Postmodernization*, p.220.

38. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, pp.189-97.

39. Crook, Pakulski, Waters, *Postmodernization*, p.83.

40. Crook, Pakulski, Waters, *Postmodernization*, p.175.

41. Jencks, *What is Post-Modernism?*, p.44.

42. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, p.33.

43. See Crook, Pakulski, Waters, *Postmodernization*, pp.83-6.

44. Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, *The Free and the Unfree: A New History of the United States* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p.374.

45. Crook, Pakulski and Waters, *Postmodernization*, p.174.

46. Cited in George Tindall Brown, *America, A Narrative History*, 2 Vols. (New York: Norton, 1988), II, p.1280.

47. It is no surprise, then, that many films of the 1950's and early 1960's articulate satirical narratives that are concerned with the threats posed by women bosses in the work-place or by the power exercised by wives, powerlessness being displaced away from the social processes which create loss of control and on to the power perceived to be taken on by women, something largely unsubstantiated by the actual experience of women in this period.

48. Similarly, in the 1980's, the attraction of Syvester Stallone's Rambo and Rocky can be attributed to identification with the masculine liberation they embody. However, as images, they exist in the domain of ideological fantasy. Mimicry of their actions founders in actuality because of the violence and illegality involved in such aggressive masculinity. Neverthless, Debbie Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer convincingly argue that it is through acts such as serial killings that masculinity and identity are asserted over the frustrations encountered by the failure of life to live up to the dream of social success. See Cameron and Frazer, *The Lust to Kill* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), pp.155-62.

49. William Burroughs, 'Prisoners of the earth come out', *The Job* (London: Calder, 1984), p.60.

50. Carroll and Noble, *The Free and Unfree*, p.373.

51. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.164.

52. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p.168.

53. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), p.10.

54. Waugh, *Metafiction*, p.11.

55. Waugh, *Metafiction*, p.12.

56. Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', pp.60-73.

57. Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, p.186.

58. Charles Russell, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.236-70.

59. Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), p.149.

60. Russell, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries*, pp.254-5.

61. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p.168.

62. Tony Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.176.

63. Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men*, pp.189-90.

64. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, p.174.

Chapter Three: From Metafiction to Political Metafiction: Postmodernist Fiction in the 1960's

It seems strange to have to talk about innovation in fiction, but the American novel until the end of the sixties was so static that we have not yet fully understood how parochial and narrow the accepted literary norm for fiction had become.[1]

Despite its change of focus between the 1960's and 1970's, much fiction of the 1970's owes its direction and context to both the aesthetic and cultural influences of the late 1960's. While some writers developed new textual forms in the 1970's, many of the writers at work in the 1960's continued to persist with or develop the same kinds of fiction in the 1970's, a continuity most evident in the self-referential metafictions of John Barth, Gilbert Sorrentino and Harry Mathews. Nevertheless, a strand of fiction develops in the 1970's aligning metafictional concerns with cultural and political reference. This referential configuration of 1970's political metafiction had already been engendered in 'mainstream' experimental fiction, in novels by writers such as William Burroughs, Joseph Heller, and Ken Kesey. This fiction intersects with the metafictional forms of postmodernist experimentation found in the work of Gass, Barth and Coover (as theorised, for example, by Ihab Hassan, Alan Thiher, Charles Caramello, and Brian McHale)[2] and produces a form of fiction that locates itself within a cultural rather than purely literary domain. The aim of this chapter is to trace these developments and to place the political metafiction of Burroughs, Barthelme and Sukenick in the context of the other fictional experiments that occurred in the 1960's. The experiments range across the metafiction of Robert Coover, the modernist experiments of William Gass, John Barth's postmodernist literature of exhaustion, the surfictional novels of Sorrentino and Sukenick, and the experiments undertaken by Harry Mathews and the OULIPO group, who developed the aesthetic practices created by Raymond Roussel. Political

metafiction, somewhat parasitically, feeds off all these different forms. It uses the defamiliarising tendencies found in metafiction, adopts the new narrative forms created in Sukenick's surfictional novels (while avoiding the limits of surfiction that are found in Sorrentino's self-obsessed fictions), and feeds off both the narrative experiments found in Barth's short fiction and the structural experiments used in Mathews' fiction as well as in Barth's *LETTERS*. All of these forms intersect with Burroughs' configuration of narrative as a cultural (rather than a purely literary) form, adopting Burroughs' referential focus on cultural issues and his attempts to discover a means of achieving freedom in contemporary society.

These are not the only influences at work in political metafiction. Minimalism and maximalism - forms originated by modernism - are also present. The Epic novels of 1970's political metafiction clearly owe something to William Gaddis' *The Recognitions* which, itself, is a continuity from a novel such as *Ulysses*. Despite this encyclopaedic impulse, they also demonstrate a tendency to minimalist fragmentation (typical of metafiction) within this maximalist frame which also owes something to the writings of, for example, Donald Barthelme and Richard Brautigan. Obviously not all these fictions are directly influenced by such a confluence, but an intersection between minimalist and maximalist forms is clearly at work in these novels. As a result, many of the 'Epic' or encyclopaedic novels of the 1970's (which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter) are characterised by fragmentation and disjuncture. In order to locate the influences on political metafiction as well as to uncover the political projects of some 1960's fiction, this chapter will explore the various kinds of experimentation generated in this decade, beginning with a discussion of the differences between the 'mainstream' experiments of Burroughs and the metafictional texts of Gass and Barth. There will then be a consideration of the minimalist and maximalist tendencies that emerge in political metafiction. The concluding section will cover the development of 1960's forms into the 1970's (in Sorrentino's metafiction, Barth's structural experimentation, and Sukenick's narrative experiments), focusing on this fiction's attempts to prevent the 'death' or 'exhaustion' of the

novel and its narrative forms.

There is another conceptual component that occurs in the fiction considered here involving the question of how contemporary experimental fiction is to be described in terms of modernism and postmodernism. The minimalist strategies of many of these writers develop from the modernist avant-garde of, for example, Dadaism and Surrealism.[3] The cut-up and fold-in techniques of Burroughs can be seen as a modernist attempt to liberate language from stagnant and exhausted discourse, a counter-move to Barth's view that all forms of language and narrative have been exhausted by modernism and can only be renewed by a re-arrangement of these old forms.[4] This is precisely the problematic that exercises Ihab Hassan (see chapter two) but which Hassan is unable to resolve. John Mepham has interestingly commented on this question, pointing to postmodernism as "a return to ironic mimesis after a time of avant-garde minimalist non-mimetic art". Postmodernism becomes a way of "reviving a relation to past styles which avoids both total rejection and simple repetition", whereas Mepham sees in the writings of Gass, Barth, and the short stories of Coover the anti-mimetic strategies that he calls "hermetic or decadent late modernist" writing.[5]

Cutting up Narratives: Burroughs and the Avant-garde

The relationship between the avant-garde and post-War experimental fiction is one that is particularly pertinent to the fiction of William Burroughs, a nexus which also entails an exploration of the matrix of postmodern culture and postmodernist fiction. Nicholas Zurbrugg has written cogently on this, using Baudrillard as a marker to signal the sophistication of Burroughs' approach to culture:

> Baudrillard's more sober speculations consider the ways in which the mass media's 'bombardment of signs' dissolve all meaning. Burroughs similarly observes: 'If you're absolutely bombarded *with*

> *images* from passing trucks and cars and television and newspapers, you become blunted and this makes a permanent haze in front of your eyes, you can't see anything.'[6]

Zurbrugg develops his discussion to question the superficiality of Baudrillard's analysis, criticising Baudrillard's use of, and reliance on, mass media and mass culture (the dominant vehicles of ideology in postmodernity) to reach his conclusions that ideology has collapsed in contemporary society. For Zurbrugg, Baudrillard is so enmeshed in the discourses of postmodern culture he has theorised that he is unable to see that his theoretical position is a product of the ideological forms (the mass media and mass culture) that he analyses. Burroughs, on the other hand, offers a strategy of resistance which allows him to discover that there are responses which do not have to be made complicit. Zurbrugg notes that Burroughs decides that instead of resisting postmodern culture on its own terms, a conceptual revolution in discourse and textual strategies is demanded, a strategy which will allow the creation of positions of resistance within contemporary culture. Burroughs develops cut-up and montage techniques which re-configure the novel form and prevent it from becoming a redundant force. The creation of these new textual forms allows the possibility of developing new forms of perception, knowledge and subjectivity that the traditional novel does not allow. The linear novel cannot be transformed because it is aligned too closely with the perpetuation of ideology (in its representation of socially adjusted 'individuals' and in its representation of a society of conflict as a unity of many groups). Zurbrugg does not simply see Burroughs as an avant-garde writer who abandons old textual and narrative forms, but argues that his fiction is an intersection between 'mainstream' experiments and the avant-garde. The strategies created by this intersection align radical experimentation, in the arrangement of language and discourse, with a re-configuration of narrative. Burroughs' novels do not only involve avant-garde or metafictional attempts to create new forms of writing (in order to prevent the 'exhaustion' of literature), but involve a return to narrative and referentiality that is characteristic of political metafiction.

Burroughs' re-arrangements of language and narrative stem from his distrust of both of them in their traditional forms. For Burroughs, the linear

sentence and linear novel impose an order on thoughts, experiences and events changing their nature and moulding them to fit existing social forms of identity. It is particularly in language that Burroughs sees the basis of cultural and social control. At the beginning of *Nova Express* the voice of "The Regulator" announces that "To speak is to lie - To live is to collaborate".[7] The act of speech is an act of control. Discourse transmits ideology and the necessity of using language seems to imply that ideology is inescapable. Nevertheless, the status of the Regulator creates ambiguities. Regulation seems to imply that the statement is made by a voice of authority and, as such, would seem to be an ideological attempt to naturalise control by pointing to the impossibility of resisting those who have power. Regulation is also used by Burroughs as a response to systematisation and control, regulation returning the body (in the case of drugs) and consciousness (in the case of control) to its 'normal' or 'natural' free condition. In this case the Regulator could be a figure who represents resistance to ideology, bemoaning the fact that opposition seems impossible. His statement - and his apparent authority - suggest a nihilistic view of the control of the subject, a position that is, arguably, ideological itself.

Burroughs repeats this view of language in *The Job*, but offers means of challenging the ideological values that language articulates: "The word of course is one of the most powerful instruments of control as exercised by the newspaper and images as well, there are both words and images in newspapers... Now if you start cutting these up and rearranging them you are breaking down the control system."[8] In the latter part of his early tetralogy (*The Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded*, and *Nova Express*) Burroughs makes extensive use of the cut-up. *The Naked Lunch* (1959) offers a cut-up of a different variety: the fracturing of the narrative cut-up, in which episodes are interchanged and juxtaposed to each other. Burroughs offers a renewal of narrative as a means by which the power of words and images can be escaped. He attempts to create narrative forms that articulate the dynamic temporal experience of 'everyday life' and thereby map this 'experience' in ways that allow the stasis imposed by word, image and traditional narrative to be escaped. Burroughs rejects narratives of the

"logical sequence", by which he means the linear realist novel.[9] He suggests that the traditional linear realist narrative acts ideologically because it establishes parameters for individual actions in its representation of which desires are acceptable or 'normal' and how much freedom society will allow. In this case, it is possible that Burroughs feels a personal threat, in the form of "logical sequences", because of his homosexuality, which cannot be assimilated into the traditional narrative as a legitimate desire and is consequently excluded from it. It is into the experimental novel that these repressed desires, fears and psychoses spill over, for it is here that new arrangements of narrative can occur which can challenge ideological forms of the linear narrative.

The linear naturalistic narrative is questioned at the beginning of *The Naked Lunch* in the untitled first chapter, which begins with a first person narrator 'linearly' describing the details of his addiction. In such a linear narrative the police are always, indeed already, on his trail. The first words of the novel are "I can feel the heat closing in, feel them out there making their moves, setting up their devil doll stool pigeons".[10] The narrator is already being monitored, subject to authority and control even before the narrative has begun, and therefore subject to a deterministic logic in which events are pre-figured. The chapter develops with the narrator's flight across America to Mexico and finally to Tangiers, constantly being tailed by the police who are "coming in on my frequency" (*NL*, 24-5). It is the narrative of "logical sequence" that is the frequency that they are coming in on and it is only with the breakdown of the naturalistic linear narrative that freedom becomes possible. As the chapter progresses the connective order is increasingly transgressed, as is the case with introduction of The Vigilante who, after a fix, is tried and convicted but who at one and the same moment is imprisoned and then suddenly free, without any explanation as to why. Naturalism is also violated with the description of the Buyer who assimilates the District Supervisor into his own body. Ultimately, the chapter presents the exhaustion of the naturalistic linear narrative, by recounting what are apparently all the details of the addict's life, leaving the reader with a feeling that there is actually nothing left to tell.

The main body of *The Naked Lunch*, however, configures narrative as a cumulative fragmentation through the displacement of episodes. This generates a multiplication of narratives, and a concomitant multiplication of perspectives, which act as an alternative to the systematisation of experience in contemporary culture. This episodic narrative of disjuncture has affinities with the dominance of story that Benjamin sets out in 'The Story-Teller'. There is no master-narrative to connect the text into a cause and effect sequence. Instead, narratives proliferate and there are very few constants to connect them together. Because organisation is perceived as a form of control in the text, *The Naked Lunch* is arranged in fragmented (or as Burroughs puts it, "permutated") episodes. At the point when authority or system appears the episode breaks off and a new one is begun. As control or the agents of control (commerce and the police, for example) become evident in each chapter the section ends and the narrative begins anew at a different temporal location, in a different place and with different characters. The narrative spurns any ordering principle by rejecting the elements of itself which enact ideology, control or power (closure and equilibrium) and by spurning a linear continuity which would imply the imposition of system on narrative. The narrative highlights its own dynamic qualities by quickly shifting focus establishing narrative in terms of a dynamic disequilibrium. This process is evident throughout *The Naked Lunch*, nearly every chapter ending with an intervention of authority, a process Burroughs uses to enact the systematisation of narrative. 'The Black Meat' ends with the Dream police intervening in an attempt to stabilise the anarchy of the unconscious and, although they are swept away, the alternative seems to be worse, for it involves the Mugwumps' appropriation of other peoples' bodies as a source of food, a situation the narrative avoids by transforming itself. Similarly, 'The Hospital' is, towards the end, affected by "mutterings of control" (*NL*, 86), but the narrative re-positions itself before these hints can be systematised. Burroughs privileges metonymies of narrative, configuring *The Naked Lunch* as a set of unconnected episodes and stories in order to create a narrative dynamic that, to Burroughs, more accurately maps experience. This strategy is of particular importance to political metafiction. When narrative diegesis tends toward a representation of the

inescapability of ideology narrative fragmentation occurs. New stories are begun and the text moves into a new narrative strand. In *Gravity's Rainbow* this process occurs when Slothrop becomes aware of the forces that control him. At these points in the novel, the narrative changes direction. The narrative either moves to a new location or introduces new characters or scenarios, creating new stories and narrative possibilities that are neither connected with nor anticipated by the narratives which precede them. The same process occurs in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* and even in William Gaddis' *JR*, whose narrative constantly shifts focus in order to disrupt the flows of the controlling master-narrative describing JR Corp's extension of its power.

Nevertheless, there are some constant factors in *The Naked Lunch*, particularly in the use of repeated phrases, such as "No Glot - Clom Fliday" and "No good - no bueno", and characters re-appear, such as A.J., the Sailor, Lee, and Carl. These repetitions have led Michael Bliss to see a structure of cross reference in the novel, particularly in its discursive repetitions.[11] These stem from Burroughs' distrust of language in *The Naked Lunch*, the repetitions of language suggesting stasis and system. Burroughs opposes linguistic stagnation with rapid narrative changes, the effect of which is to develop a momentum that challenges stasis and system at the discursive level. Burroughs, however, presents the metonymies of narrative ambiguously. Frequently the excessive qualities of the rapid transformation of events find as a response the intervention of authority at the diegetic level. This is especially the case when resistance to control is depicted. The forces of control intervene to normalise or stabilise the narrative and to curtail a threat to the existence of the system. For example, 'Benway' descibes the transfer of the unnamed narrator to Freeland to observe the work of Dr. Benway as he introduces control systems there. Benway is described as a "manipulator and co-ordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control" and his project is to introduce "an arbitrary and intricate bureaucracy so that the subject cannot contact his enemy directly" (*NL*, 39-40). This he does, but chance intervenes and a riot occurs at Benway's Reconditioning Center which, in its depiction, expands beyond the

naturalistic plane hitherto dominant. As the spatial boundaries collapse the inmates break out of Freeland and are transferred improbably to Paris, the Greater Amazon Basin, New York and to the United Nations Headquarters. The mechanics of control break down but at the end of the chapter there is intervention from the authorities to normalise the situation: "the Chamber of Commerce striving in vain to stem the debacle: 'Please to be restful. It is only a few crazies who have from the crazy place outbroken'" (*NL*, 63). As a systematised, or institutionalised, form of capitalism, the Chamber of Commerce intervenes to reassert capitalism's power. At this point the chapter ends in order to prevent stabilisation of the narrative, which then changes location and time to detail the story of Carl and the consumptive Joselito.

The Naked Lunch is a series of displacements which do not organise themselves into a sequence. The novel re-configures narrative as a cumulative (rather than a linear) series of events or stories which foreground a temporal dynamic and which avoid the stasis entailed in the linear narrative's closure. While the other novels in Burroughs' early tetralogy move away from this approach, such a strategy returns in *The Cities of the Red Night*. This novel configures a narrative that intercuts a mimetic and fantasy story-space within a linear form and involves Clem Snide's search for the tapes on which Creation has been encoded. Snide discovers that he must travel through time to erase the Creation-tapes, the destruction of which negates their systematisation of experience. The use of time-travel generates a narrative that transgresses the linear and mimetic frames which Burroughs uses to dramatise social control. The eventual result is a complete collapse of cause and effect sequence. The characters leap from one century to another and from one place to another, continually displacing the narrative in order to generate a dynamic form.

The Soft Machine (1961) and *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962) take these accounts of narrative and system further, representing ideology and control only in terms of linearity. Although *The Soft Machine* exaggerates the *The Naked Lunch*'s narrative fragmentation it has difficulty re-creating the dynamics of story

that *The Naked Lunch* maps. It finds instead that the disruption of the stasis of ideological narrative forms, by rendering fluid events and episodes, creates a paradoxical stasis of its own. Robin Lydenberg has discussed this process, referring to Jennie Skerl's analysis of the novel as a series of five dystopias:

> each covering a different historical period. These constitute the major chapters of the novel as Skerl analyses it: the negative "creation myth" of 'Wounded Galaxies'; the "anthropological fantasy" of a "preliterate" society in 'Puerto Joselito'; the "historical fantasy" of a repressive ancient civilization in the 'Mayan Caper'; the "contemporary capitalistic-consumer" society of 'Trak Trak Trak'; and the "futuristic fantasy" of a doomed earth in 'Gongs of Violence'. My own analysis will concentrate on a single early chapter in the novel which condenses these five dystopias into a single accelerated journey through time and space.[12]

Lydenberg finds all five of these in 'Who am I to be critical'. He points out that their compression creates a fluidity of narrative, but that this fluidity actually indicates that stasis is the dominant motif. The accelerated time of the narrative finally results only in inertia: "Time is so accelerated that it produces a stationary blur, like the spinning propeller of an airplane. We find in the style of the cut-up, then, the same uncanny combination of speed and stasis which characterized the framing narrative."[13] The motivating force of this episode is rapid narrative transformation, the narrator constantly shifting roles (drug addict, terrorist, racketeer) and places (Lexington, Mexico, the jungle). The changing of rackets at the end of the chapter is perhaps a metaphor for the macro-narrative of *The Soft Machine* which is continually changing direction and form, from linear narrative, to cut-up, to fragmented episodes. The effect, however, is that transformation becomes a paradigm rather than a dynamic process and seems to indicate that nothing actually changes, as Lydenberg suggests. The act of formal repetition leads the narrator finally back to the system he seeks to escape, when he returns to work for the Total Oil Corporation. The fluidity of narrative is in a sense affected by entropy. The narrative runs out of possible variations and the desire for continual transformation cannot be achieved. The narrator is finally unable to find new organisations to create, or new arrangements to remake.

The Naked Lunch and *The Soft Machine* present conflicting forms of

narrative, both novels involving a struggle between the logical sequence of structural narrative and Burroughs' configuration of dynamic storied narratives which do not end in the stasis of 'Who am I to be critical'. The dynamic narratives that Burroughs constructs have utopian impulses, based in Burroughs' desire to create new forms of perception and knowledge able to transform or transcend existing social relations in the creation of new forms of identity. Burroughs does not see the possibility of finding a place outside state control in the first two novels, seeing American culture as a global phenomenon. It is in the later novels that utopian societies are represented. In the 'Smorbrot' chapter of *Nova Express* K9 finds a utopian garden on the outskirts of the City of Chili Houses (a utopia at the margins of society). Similarly, in *The Wild Boys* (1971) and *The Cities of the red Night* (in the utopia of the pirates' colony) there is a move towards an idealised primitive society. Gregory Stephenson describes *The Wild Boys* as a novel "in which all existing institutions, systems, and cultural and biological patterns are overthrown, and there is a return to a preverbal tribalism as an evolutionary medium to a non-material state of being."[14] Through the utopian impulse of his novels Burroughs resists the siting of his texts in terms of the existing circulation of ideas and meanings in society (ideology) and in terms of the models of narrative ("logical sequence") which construct identity on these terms. Burroughs' utopian narratives do not represent existing social and cultural forms. Instead, they generate new forms of identity, social activity, and social relationships, based in a cultural model that privileges freedom and equality.

While continual transformation, or metamorphosis, seems to be the dominant motif of *The Soft Machine*, the other two novels in the early tetralogy are radically different in form. In *The Ticket That Exploded* it is the act of repetition which is the act of resistance, while *Nova Express* is structured around cycles of control and resistance and the alternation between static image and narrative process. *The Ticket That Exploded* is the most radical of Burroughs' early novels in terms of its use of language. The constant re-arrangement of the same material through the cut-up form focuses on repetition as a form of resistance. Resistance takes the form of Operation Rewrite which involves the repetition of

language through a strategy of intercutting words with the discourses of ideology. These words and phrases are then played back adding new arrangements to the blueprint of history and subtly changing the existing system of cultural meanings. Virtually all representations of events as a traditional linear narrative are abandoned and the cut-up becomes the dominant form. There is only one chapter - 'Combat Troops in The Area' - which uses linear narrative. The rest of the narrative is a series of fragmented episodes which do not connect either micro-textually or macro-narratively. The plan is described as follows:

> Splice yourself in with the newscasters, prime ministers, presidents. Why stop there? Why stop anywhere? Everybody splice himself in with everybody else. Communication must be made total. only way to stop it.
> Wittgenstein said: "No proposition can contain itself as an argument" = The only thing *not* prerecorded in a prerecorded universe is the prerecording itself which is to say *any* recording that contains a random factor.[15]

This is a strategy of subversion, revolving around the repetition of the original blueprint so that there are always additions to the system of control. In a prerecorded universe everything follows an arranged history, or master-narrative. By recording and repeating something, the prearranged plan is interrupted, for the repetition is an unexpected *addition* to the prerecording. It is not accounted for in the original plan, as one of the last cut-ups suggests:

> ..."I think under the circumstances - conduces to a certain lack and as such we protests - *life in all its infinite variety of repetition* to prolong a very old outhouse - fertilizer you understand - inasmuch as any conclusion is at some point foregone by a form of excremental processing - that is any interference you understand on that level..."[16]

Repetition is infinitely variable and produces additions that the system of control lacks; most particularly, freedom of action. *The Ticket that Exploded* is one of Burroughs' more optimistic texts, an optimism that fades in *Cities of the Red Night* where the forms of resistance that are proposed (the utopia of the pirates' colony for example) are recuperated by the system of control:

> "Changes, Mr Snide, can only be effected by alteration in the *original*. The only thing not prerecorded in a prerecorded universe are the prerecordings themselves. The copies can only repeat themselves word for word. *A virus is a copy*. You can pretty it up,

cut it up, scramble it - it will reassemble in the same form."[17]

In this case the cutting up and splicing of forms of language-use have no effect on the system of control and ideology. They are already predicted by the original prerecordings, as are any acts of resistance. Any new cultural forms are already predicted or even determined by existing cultural forms. The system simply reassembles and thwarts any attempts to undermine its activities and formations. The only way that power and control can be overcome is through time travel. This allows the agents of the resistance to travel back to the point of origin and change the system through a single act rather than through a continual process of attrition and resistance to the communication systems of ideology. Transcendence of society rather than its transformation becomes the only strategy, although in *The Cities of the Red Night* transcendence is not a possibility except through fantasy technology.

The Ticket That Exploded, in its extensive use of cut-ups, entirely rejects traditional narrative, rather than parodically feeding off it, as is the case with *The Naked Lunch* and *Cities of the Red Night*. It seems therefore to be a modernist form of experiment with language, as Nicholas Zurbrugg points out: "Burroughs's cut-ups might be defined as attempts to bring literature 'up to date' with the more haphazard experiments of modernism. In this respect, as Burroughs himself admits, his cut-ups systematize the early experiments with aleatory composition of modernists like Tristan Tzara."[18] Burroughs' language play in *The Ticket That Exploded* has as its goal a re-creation of narrative and narrative's generation of new cultural possibilities. Burroughs' cut-ups do not simply entail language-play for its own sake, but seem also to be a preparatory experiment paving the way for the more radical narrative experiments of *Nova Express*. Nevertheless, the focus on repetition also creates the cyclical structure of recuperation of *Nova Express*. *Nova Express* (1964) can be interpreted as an enactment of a subversive polyphony of voices (lacking a dominant voice), but at the same time it produces a system that perpetuates itself and is continually recycled rather than renewed, or supplemented in new ways. The novel opens with many voices, but ends with a repetition of the various aspects of the text, the narrative alternating between

discourses of ideology (and control) and discourses of resistance. *Nova Express* is a text based on conflict. This is most obvious in the struggle between the Nova Police and the Nova Mob but there is also a conflict at a structural level, a struggle for textual dominance between the static image and the dynamic narrative. The image is aligned with the Reality Studios which Burroughs associates with the 'Dream Factory' of Hollywood, the creator of "the control image", as Burroughs phrases it. The Reality Studios reduce life to static image. Narrative and everyday life are reconstituted in the form of the image which suppresses their temporal transformations. The timelessness and permanence that the Reality Studios attempt to impose textually is continually threatened by the interruption of dissonant elements that cannot always be incorporated. Events continue to happen and it becomes obvious that time is actually passing, as the narrative unfolds.

It is here that Burroughs signals his awareness of the ideological processes that occur in contemporary culture, as he configures *Nova Express* in relation to the dominance of the image, and its alignment with power:

> "Give me a shot," says the dwarf. "And I'll tell you something interesting."
> ..."Images - millions of images - That's what I eat - Cyclotron shit - Ever try kicking *that* habit with apomorphine? - Now I got all the images of sex acts and torture ever took place anywhere and I can just blast it out and control you gooks right down to the molecule - I got orgasms - I got screams - I got all the images any hick poet ever shit out - My Power's coming - My Power's coming - My Power's coming - "[19]

Burroughs, however, does not present the Nova Police's task as the taking control of the image. Such an act would simply relegitimate the image as a power nexus. Resistance to the controlling culture of simulation and the image, found in the Reality Studios, is located in the creation of new narrative and discursive forms. For Burroughs, the 'Dream Factory' of Hollywood determines dreams and desires, rather than reacting to the dreams and desires that already exist for the American people. To adopt the principles of the Reality Studios would be to adopt ideology and its channelling of desires.

Ultimately, *Nova Express* transforms itself into a struggle between image and narrative as the many voices of the novel become virtually systematised into simplified binary oppositions and images: Nova Mob - Nova Police, traditional narrative - cut-up, control - freedom, Utopia - Dystopia. By the end of the novel, the narrative has become cyclical, moving from the triumph of the control systems to the success of the resistance and back again. *Nova Express* is transformed in its course from the many apparently free voices of its opening pages to an unresolved and potentially destructive cycle of oppression and freedom. The result is a cyclical form that apparently has no end. There is no escape within the narrative system - and, metaphorically, no escape within the social system. At the end of the last chapter ('Pay Color') the events settle in a seemingly endless cyclical pattern oscillating between control and resistance, the narrative alternating between repetition and variety, regulation and freedom, and resolution and open-endedness. 'Smorbrot' tells of a potentially Utopian community outside the narrative cycles, but is juxtaposed with the residues of control within the system in the next chapter, 'Its Accounts'. In *Nova Express*, Burroughs begins to gesture toward metafictional concerns with exhaustion and re-arrangement, while also self-reflexively configuring an ironic mimesis in terms of narrative mirrors. For Burroughs, the use of cut-ups and disjunctive narratives seems to configure the text within ideology rather than in opposition to it. The possibility of offering forms of narrative as a means of resistance seems abortive, for the re-arrangements of form he proposes are recuperated into a cyclical structure. Narrative and discursive experimentation is unable to break out of this system and able neither to offer new possibilities nor to create the conceptual revolution Burroughs desires. It is perhaps because of Burroughs' desire for a conceptual revolution that the later novels of his tetralogy become overly concerned with the re-definition of concepts and with the investigation of constructions of 'reality'. They lose their direct cultural reference, mapping abstract fantasy narratives that involve the struggle over concepts, rather than narratives which engage with social and cultural struggles. It is only in Burroughs' recent novels (*The Cities of the Red Night* and *The Western Lands*) that cultural reference resurfaces as Burroughs returns to the narrative experiments used in *The Naked Lunch*.

Metafiction and the Language of Narrative

It is the conjunction between political concerns and experimentation with language and narrative that constitute Burrough's fiction as an avant-garde aesthetic, whereas it might be argued that the lack of a political matrix in metafiction prevents it from being seen in the same terms. Metafiction entails a retreat from social action, whereas Burroughs sees his fiction as an exploration of "what's out there", contrasting his own writing with that of Beckett, one of the key influences on metafiction.[20] While metafiction is concerned with the internalisation of experience and the radical unknowability of the 'world' in contemporary society, Burroughs' political concerns align him with political metafiction's exploration of the socialisation of experience and consciousness. Another contrast focuses around the different views of 'reality' that are presented in the fiction of Burroughs and in metafiction, even though both forms of fiction see 'reality' as a cultural construct. Metafiction sees a death of 'reality' - rather than its continued power in Burroughs' Reality Studios - the loss of 'reality' leaving an emptiness that cannot be filled. Any attempts to replace 'reality' are inauthentic because 'reality' can only be replaced by other fictions. The loss of 'reality', however, provokes an ambiguous response in metafiction which has a resigned nostalgia for authenticity and sees in America's rural past a cultural coherence not available in the postmodernity's empty culture of simulation.[21]

The response to the death of 'reality' figures metafiction in terms of modernist aesthetics, metafiction mimicking modernism's retreat from society and 'reality'. There is also, however, a crucial difference. Modernism replaced the loss of the 'real' world with what Richard Wasson calls the Epic "drama of the self", while metafiction retreats from this self-centering aesthetic and, while mimicking modernism's fragmented world and subjectivities, does not see any means of restoring an 'authentic' consciousness.[22] Modernism, on the other hand, desires order, as Alan Wilde points out:

> Order indeed is nothing less than the age's talisman, its heroic

> response to 'incertitude of the void' and, less metaphysically, to the inadequacies of human relationships and the frustration of human hopes. But for what they will into being... the modernists demonstrably pay a price, namely, the need to suffer the distance and detachment that are the inevitable corollary of an overly exigent sense of control...[23]

Modernism's ordering imperative is, however, a paradoxical strategy because it not only serves to detach art from the world, but also imposes order on a chaotic society, thereby relocating modernist aesthetics in culture. Modernist texts both reflect and are detached from the empty forms of modern existence. Terry Eagleton observes, in 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', that:

> Brooding self-reflexively on its own being, it distances itself through irony from the shame of being no more than a brute, self-identical thing. But the most devastating irony of all is that in doing this the modernist work escapes from one form of commodification only to fall prey to another... The autonomous, self-regarding, impenetrable modernist artefact, in all its isolated splendour, is the commodity as fetish resisting the commodity as exchange, its solution to reification part of that very problem.[24]

Modernism posits a system which can both escape and organise the materiality of culture (and culture's ideological forms and processes of commodification). Metafiction seems aware that modernist strategies create a problematic status for the text and retreats from society in its problematisation of the 'experience' of culture and everyday life, refusing to accept culture as a 'reality' to be escaped. As Eagleton puts it: "The depthless, styleless, dehistoricized, decathected surfaces of postmodernist culture are not meant to signify an alienation, for the very concept of alienation must secretly posit a dream of authenticity which postmodernism finds quite unintelligible."[25] Nor does metafiction offer any ordering principles which recuperate writing's referentiality. Metafiction retains and intensifies the self-reflexivity that Eagleton diagnoses by consciously commenting on its own construction as an artwork and thereby pointing to its irrelevance in relation to social and cultural experience.

Not all modernist texts propose a system for society. Robert Musil's *A Man Without Qualities*, for example, parodies the attempts to discover a totality or system. For the 1914 Jubilee of the Emperor a committee is organised in order

to discover an 'Idea' that will totalise the cultural experience of the Austrian Empire. Ulrich, the main character, is doubtful of the possibility of discovering such a complete system, although he goes through the motions of finding one. At one point he arranges a series of interviews during which citizens can put forward their 'Ideas'. One of the interviewees proposes a system which involves "the counting of the number of strokes in the block letters of the names of shops (A for instance had three, M four) and dividing the sum by the number of letters. The average quotient had so far consistently remained two and a half. But obviously this could not be considered invariable, for it might alter in the very next street."[26] At first, it appears as if a mathematical system has been found, albeit a fairly useless one. It soon, however, appears that the system is not a stable one, but is open to variation. Nor is it universal. It only accounts for signs written in German and not in any of the other languages current in the pre-1914 Austrian Empire. The citizen's scheme is further questioned when he reveals that he does not want to propose this as a universal system, but that he simply wants Ulrich to use his influence to enforce the use of four stroke letters. The citizen's 'Idea' is a limiting prescriptive and useless system, rather than a system that can describe the varieties of experience in the Austrian Empire. This is only one example of the systems that are proposed, the novel working through a series of parodies of the 'Ideas' that are put forward, exposing them as personal and partial, rather than universal systems, a tendency that metafiction develops in its parody of totalising imperatives. In a sense, *A Man Without Qualities* can be read as a progenitor of Barth's *LETTERS*. Both novels are maximalist narratives which incorporate a minimalist philosophy that focuses on the impossibility of establishing meaning. Metafiction also tends to avoid systems because they homogenise the variety of the contemporary world and because they place limits around the possibilities available to both fiction and to 'individual' experience. There is, however, a difficulty for metafiction here, because the variety of the contemporary world actually seems to be a replication of old experiences and, as such, an inauthentic repetition. The systems of modernist rationalisation have pervaded society to such an extent that society (and its fiction) is exhausted, as Barth suggests, and unable to find new forms and new experiences.

Metafiction embraces chance as a reaction against systems (or, indeed, as a response to the systematising experience of contemporary society), and as a means to provide new forms of subjective consciousness. This has led to a view of metafiction as an aleatory and playful form, although its embrace of chance is also presented as a potential recuperation of system. Coover's *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J.Henry Waugh, Prop.* (1968) maps this possibility, Waugh's use of chance involving a loss of identity in the system he creates. Harry Mathews' *The Conversions* (1962) also offers a view of chance and system. *The Conversions* concerns the gaining of an adze inscribed with messages, the deciphering of which will reveal a magical secret and allow possession of the Fod estate, left by a mysterious Mr. Wayl in his will. The novel focuses not on the Quest after wealth, but develops by concentrating on the search for the meaning of the adze. The desire for meaning is the only thing the narrator cares about. The narrative, in mimicry of Oedipa's quest in *The Crying of Lot 49* (but without the political subtext), involves the discovery of connections across history. The system of connections uncovered seems to suggest that history is a deterministic cause and effect structure which develops a logic of its own. The subject is at the mercy of history, his or her actions shaped by an historical imperative. At one point, two of the characters compete for an antique adze - which may be the one that will bring Wayl's inheritance - but they compete through other 'agents' which are:

> Worms called zephyrs. They are dried out but alive; moisture will quicken them. On the course, which is wet, they will find in front of them a trail of their habitual food (tiny pharoahs) that will lead them to the finish.
>
> As for the human contestants, they will do more than watch. Each must accompany his worm's advance with an ascending major scale, to be played on one of these instruments;[27]

In this example, although the contestants have an effect on the proceedings of the contest, their involvement is marginal. Ultimately, the result is dependent on the worms' performance. Here, Mathews seems to suggest that the concept of human agency is a fiction, individual action constructed not by 'inner' desires, but by other forces. Mathews seems to adopt a Schopenhauerian view of consciousness where only the world has a will. He does not present this as a tragic vision.

Instead, the subject's ridiculous attempts to control his or her life is presented as a source of great comedy. The view of human agency as a fiction is compounded by the influence of Raymond Roussel's work on Mathews' stylistic forms, particularly Roussel's *Locus Solus*, which involves the objective narration of a series of bizarre events, scenes and mechanisms. Of this intersection David Hayman writes: "Mathews's account, like Roussel's, is rigorously precise, colored by an understated wit, and set in the never-never world of the imagination to which we need give no adherence."[28] He refers to Mathews' fiction in terms of its "impossible objectivity", which he sees as an indication of the fictionality of Mathews' texts. As important to this fictionality, however, is the 'presence' of Roussel in Mathews' fictions. Roussel's fictional forms, and understated style, are privileged over the agency of the characters, who form a marginal sideshow, their actions determined by the set-piece scenarios and events that Mathews adopts from Roussel.

Mathews' novel does not resign itself to a metafictional recognition of purposelessness in its presentation of the set-piece situations characteristic of Roussel's fiction. Although the narrator's quest to fathom the mysteries of Wayl's will does not yield enlightenment, Mathews uses Roussel's strategies as a starting point to develop a metonymic narrative. Stories and episodes develop a narrative momentum that goes beyond Roussel's static set-piece discourse, but the stories do not resolve themselves into a linear narrative. Mathews privileges narrative over the repetitions and stasis that Roussel's privileging of discourse entails. This is something that Mathews develops further in *Tlooth* (1966) which follows the narrator's attempts to avenge herself on the person who put her in prison. The novel takes place in a fantasy world in which the authoritarian society of the Soviet Union is transposed on to the United States. Mathews blurs spatial boundaries, but does so not to make a point about authority and power in contemporary American society, but to highlight the fictionality of the text and to give the fantastic events that occur in the novel a credibility they would not have in a naturalistic novel. The narrative follows the narrator as she escapes from prison and contrives various elaborate plots through which she can take revenge

on the person who imprisoned her. *Tlooth* involves both set-piece scenarios typical of Roussel and a narrative of revenge. The narrative develops as a revenge-comedy rather than a revenge-tragedy, the narrator's carefully contrived plans constantly aborted by accidental occurences which create the need for further elaborate plots. The construction of each plan creates a narrative momentum which collapses when the plan fails. The narrative becomes episodic as it stumbles from one event to another, drawing back from the sense of inevitability associated with revenge tragedy. As a result, *Tlooth* focuses on the comic accidents of chance rather than the tragic determinism of Fate. The narrative's linear sequence is contingent rather than causal.

The "impossible objectivity" that Hayman sees in Mathews' fiction is important to distinctions between modernism and metafiction, because it focuses on the act of 'telling' in metafiction. The act of 'telling' in metafiction is analogous to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle,[29] which states that the mass of an object can be determined at the cost of determining the velocity (and vice versa). As Patricia Waugh observes: "...metafiction rests on a version of the Heisenbergian uncertainty principle: an awareness that 'for the smallest building blocks of matter, every process of observation causes a major disturbance', and that it is impossible to describe an objective world because the observer always changes the observed."[30] Configured in terms of narration two possibilities can be offered: that the events are unreliably narrated and have meaning imposed on them or, conversely, that the events are reliably and objectively narrated, but no overall pattern or meaning can be deduced. This is the case in the following passage from Kenneth Gangemi's *Olt*:

> Robert Olt walked into the department store and went directly to the TV department, where he sniffed the ozone and watched a programme that showed high school kids dancing. In the jewellery department he stood in a crowd of people and watched a silversmith demonstrate the lost-wax process. In the pet department he looked at a cage of saw-whet owls and a cage of baby coatimundis...
>
> Once he had sat in on the orientation movie shown to new salesgirls. Once he had spent two hours riding up and down the escalators on the last Saturday before Christmas. That was the

> Christmas thay had fired their Santa Claus when a newspaper disclosed that he had been a communist.[31]

The events are narrated as an "unordered assemblage", the events accumulated in fragments as an *addition d'effet*, the narration presenting so much detail that no structure can be discerned. Similarly, Olt is so involved in his experiences that no significance can be gleaned from them: "images and events accumulate and sometimes gather great force but do not arrange themselves to demonstrate a theme".[32]

Self-reflexivity constitutes an organising principle in metafiction, making the text an internalised autonomous unit, despite the textual fragmentation frequently involved. The texts create a structure through the use of devices that set the narrative in motion and which organise the text. For example, Coover's *Universal Baseball Association* uses chance to motivate the narrative, while in *Alphabetical Africa* Walter Abish uses the alphabet as a means to construct the text. The first chapter includes only words that begin with 'A', each subsequent chapter adding new words as Abish moves through the alphabet until he reaches 'Z', when he reverses the process and begins to work back through the alphabet, taking words away until he reaches a situation where, once more, only words beginning with 'A' are used. The result is a self-reflexive and symmetrical structure. Self-reflexivity, however, is not necessarily a paradigmatic postmodern form. Linda Hutcheon proposes that such forms are "ultra-modernist" rather than truly postmodernist, as they tend to complete the aestheticisation of language and narrative that the modernists only began.[33] William Gass is an interesting figure in this context because he occupies a middle ground between modernism and postmodernism. Tony Tanner implicity locates Gass in the modernist tradition in his book *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Man*, by pointing to Gass' use of "very Stein-like sentence[s]". Allen Thiher, on the other hand, groups Gass with self-reflexive postmodernism because of his use of metalinguistic strategies.[34] Reginald Dyck, however, has commented that the modernist claims Gass makes for the privileged position of art, in his theoretical writings, frame a content in which characters encounter postmodern paralysis.[35] Gass' modernist aesthetic can be seen in

Omensetter's Luck, a stream of consciousness novel set in a timeless and unlocated rural American past, detached from any contemporary social and political concerns. The story 'In the Heart of the Heart of the Country' is also characterised by modernist or ultra-modernist forms: linguistic self-reflexivity, a fractured self located in an asocial and apolitical world, epistemological uncertainty, and aestheticisation of the ordinary.

This story is set in a town called "B.", which Gass refers to in the preface as both a reference to Yeats' 'Byzantium' and also as a consciously literary form, based on the abbreviated use of proper nouns in eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction. This fictionality and the configuration of space as a linguistic construct also extend to the narrator whose selfhood and consciousness gradually merge with the town. He becomes as tenuous a selfhood as the town is a place: "I must organize myself. I must, as they say, pull myself together, dump this cat from my lap, stir - yes, resolve, move, do. But do what? My will is like the rosy dustlike light in this room: soft, diffuse, and gently comforting."[36] Both the town and the narrator are fragmented constructs of words. "B." is not so much a place, however, as a mood or a psychological state of mind threatening the sanctity of the narrator's mind, further problematising the externality-internality of Gass' story. There is also an intangibility about the description of the narrator's will which seems to construct 'will' textually rather than referentially. The phrase "soft diffuse, and gently comforting" constructs the narrator's 'will' as a fluid, self-defining entity. The vagueness of the definition suggests that the 'will' cannot be directly referred to and can only be articulated through provisional descriptions. It is the act of using language which defines the 'will' and not the definition itself. Reference to an external world or 'object' is lacking, implying that the only point of reference for consciousness is language. Because language cause fragmentation, consciousness does not have any centre around which to organise perceptions. As a result, identity is scattered through the world. Paradoxically the self is moved ever further away from the "heart of the country", never able to reach its centre, and is at the same time constituted as a self by the country, which is also the country as a linguistic construct. Fragmentation follows the discovery that

knowledge and perception are part of an external world made amorphous because it can only be approached as a sign-system and cannot be organised and assimilated by consciousness, because consciousness is a part of the same protean processes. Gass' fiction foregrounds itself as an aesthetically, or artificially, constructed device. As Gass has said in interview: "Very frequently the writer's aim is to take apart the world where you have very little control, and to replace it with language over which you can have some control. Destroy and then repair."[37] *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* is also constructed in terms of language rather than in terms of referentiality. Despite the apparent reference to thought-processes in the use of the stream of consciousness form, this naturalistic process is constantly interrupted. Gass frequently alters the typeface and the text's form (using film-script, advertisements and newspapers). Ultimately, *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* focuses on its own language forms, its points of view, its printed words, and on its own status as fiction or writing.

Although both Gass and Barth are concerned with self-consciously fictional forms of writing, in the case of John Barth, the situation is somewhat different. If it can be said that Gass' fiction is characterised by reflexivity of language, in which the text refers to itself as a product of language, Barth's fiction of the 1960's and early 1970's is characterised by reflexivity of narrative, in which the text refers to itself in terms of its production as narrative. Such is the situation, for example, in *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) and *Chimera* (1972). 'Life Story', from the former collection, for example, has as its subject the problems of a writer with a mental block. However, it soon becomes clear that there is not one writer, but a whole series of writers trying to overcome their block by writing stories about a writer in a similar situation. As each writer takes his place in the scheme, they begin to wonder whether they are actually 'real' writers, or whether they are in fact fictional constructs. Even if they are 'real' historical figures, however, they begin to feel that the 'real' world is as fictional as the piece of fiction they are writing and that they too are part of this fictional process. The self is perceived as a fictional construct in a fictional world: "It's particularly disquieting to suspect not only that one is a fictional character but that the fiction

one's in - the fiction one is - is quite the sort one least prefers", thinks Writer A.[38] If the writer is a fictional character then so too is the world and there are no realities available around which to focus one's perspectives.

Barth is equivocal about the loss of 'reality'. The loss of 'reality' involves the loss of individuality (as evidenced by the proliferating number of Writers, or selfhoods, in the story), but is also an escape from constraints in any form. Reference to an external 'reality' is impossible because 'reality' no longer exists. The constraints of mimesis are no longer relevant and the text is liberated from the necessity of representing society and re-creating its ideological processes. The text avoids both social and literary constraints in the forms of ideology and mimesis. However, the loss of 'reality' also seems to threaten the text with emptiness. There is nothing to write about and despite the story's playfulness, there is fear of exhaustion:

> He rather suspected that the medium and genre in which he worked - the only ones for which he felt any vocation - were moribund if not already dead... He rather suspected that the society in which he persisted - the only one with which he felt any degree of identification - was moribund if not et cetera. He knew beyond any doubt that the body which he inhabited - the only one et cetera - was et cetera. The idea et cetera (*LF*, 118).

The text maps out its own exhaustion. The use of formulaic meaning, in the persistent use of "et cetera", questions the possibility of creating new forms or arrangements of narrative and language.

While 'Life Story' is self-consciously generated as a linguistic construct, in *Chimera* it is a self-reflexivity of narrative that forms the focus. Of *Chimera* Barth has commented:

> ...a novella of mine called 'Perseid'... is based upon a rather complicated structure which is almost, but not quite, completely arbitrary. The structure there... is the structure of the logarithmic spiral that we were talking about the other day: the Fibonacci series of numbers as it manifests itself in the logarithmic spiral. The logarithmic spiral is one that expands exponentially and it occurs all over nature.[39]

The organisation of *Chimera* follows the same pattern, based on the employment

of the "frame-tale" as a narrative device. Each of the three novellas of *Chimera* concludes by opening up the possibility of the succeeding tale. Tony Tanner describes the process as follows: "Within the book there are three contiguous but discontinuous stories, as in the parts of the beast [the chimera]: 'Dunyazadiad', which effectively is concerned with the position of the story-teller; 'Perseid', an authentic hero; and 'Bellerophoniad', a 'phony' or inauthentic hero."[40] In other words, the stories are linked thematically around the idea of the production and reception of fiction: the first tale involves the act of narration, the second involves the story's form and content, while the third involves its reception by the reader (Bellerophon acts firstly as a reader, which leads him into the second stage of imitation of narrative forms). The first story 'Dunyazadiad' begins with an unidentified narrator telling of Scheherazade's plot to prevent her husband, Shahryar, from killing her - the plan of the Thousand and One Nights. The plan, however, is supplied not by Scheherazade, but by "John Barth" who enters the text in the form of a genie and who tells Scheherazade each tale as he remembers it from the book *The Thousand And One Nights*. Through this device, Barth problematises the issue of originality, as it is Scheherazade who is supposed to be the author of this same book. In such a circular system, the production of the book becomes an impossible task of creativity - as it is the reader who becomes the author. Similarly, Scheherazade presents "Barth" with a means to overcome his writer's block when she gives him a "gold ring worked in the form of a spiral shell" which supplies "Barth" with the spiral narrative forms of the other two novellas, as well as with a macro-structure for the three novellas as a whole.[41]

The second novella, 'Perseid', has a similar structure at the level of content, as Perseus, at the age of forty, re-enacts the events of his heroic youth. The story opens with Perseus considering his temporary location and how he arrived there. The location is a temple in which a series of bas-reliefs unwind in "a grand spiral like the triton-shell that Dedalus threaded for Cocalus, once about the bed and out of sight" (*C*, 69). The scenes depicted in the first circle are of Perseus' early heroic deeds but rather than closing the circle they form a spiral in which the second spiral overlaps the first. The second cycle depicts the deeds

of Perseus as a forty year old man as he tries to re-enact the deeds of his youth. Consequently, although the form of the second series is the same, the content and the results are different. The end of this spiral is not, however, the end of the process. Barth uses the spiral of 'Perseid' to begin another narrative spiral, 'Bellerophoniad', which opens with the discovery of this earlier tale: "But Bellerophon, King of Lycia, at sundown on the eve of his birthday found in the marsh near his palace a Greek novella called *Perseid*, a story of his model hero" (*C*, 145). It is this model which sets up the system by which Bellerophon lives out the remainder of his life. However, by too rigidly following the pattern, Bellerophon finds that he is a failed hero, too concerned with living out the patterns that have already been transcribed, rather than forming a continuity as it develops out of the old systems.

What Barth is proposing in the three novellas is a process-system, one in which both narrative and system are possible at the same time, rather than being mutually exclusive. The structural formation of the spiral means that a system is never a totality and never reaches a position of closure. Bellerophon (and, metaphorically, literature) fails because he sees life (and narrative) as a re-enactment of old models of closure, instead of developing new variations on the old models. In the spiral-narrative, there is no restriction on variety as regards the narrative. Freedom of development is ensured because the lack of closure and totality does not force the narrative development along any previously determined formulaic lines. Barth uses the analogies of the circle and the spiral to formulate his version of narrative. In his fictions, the narratives form themselves as if they were circles, developing a trajectory that ultimately seems to return the narrative to its motivating *telos*. Instead of closing the circle the narratives begin again, using the same motivating principle. They do not repeat the same story, however, unlike Barth's 'Frame-Tale' which consists of ten words constantly repeated: "Once upon a time there was a story which began once upon a time there was a story which began..." (*LF*, 1-2). Instead, they spiral into new narratives created by the new contexts created for narrative by the passage of time. The looping spirals each reflect the preceding spirals at the level of form, while also being

determined by them. Narratives are internally determined without reference to an external system. As a result, narrative is the determining principle in the creation of a textual dynamic.

Such a structure is not entirely new to Barth's fiction. Indeed, Barth's writing over three decades focuses around the idea that no system can ever fully account for all variations or possibilities, whether these are narrative or experiential variations. For example, the three stages of *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) - in which George Giles descends into the belly of WESCAC, the computer - all follow the same form (George's decision on passing and failing), but each have different results which subsequently determine, at least partially, the ensuing narrative episodes of the succeeding section. George initially uses binary logic to approach the problem of passing and failing but comes to realise that passing and failing are not the absolute conditions that the binary structure of the University implies, but that they are both relative to each other. They are both dependent on each other for their validity, so that to Pass is to Fail and to Fail is to Pass. As George explains it to Chancellor Rexford: "'*East* and *West*, *temperate* and *intemperate* - they're all the same'", and then continues to say that "East and West Campuses, goat and Grand Tutor, even Passage and Failure, were inseparable and ultimately indistinguishable".[42] George's 'final' solution is to put these tenets into action by placing the Input plug of WESCAC into its Output jack. Input becomes output and output becomes input. No new information can be added to the closed circuit. Only the existing data can be processed as it circulates within the closed and self-referential circuit of WESCAC, enacting the circularity proposed in *Chimera*: "the key to the treasure is the treasure" (*C*, 19). This is a circular arrangement which can be interpreted in two ways. It can firstly mean that it is the key to the treasure that constitutes the treasure, and secondly it can mean the reverse, that it is the treasure which constitutes the key to the treasure itself. In the latter case, discovering any key at all is frustrated, because to find the key the treasure has to be found first, but the treasure cannot be found without the key. Access to the circuit is impossible. It is a circular arrangement which signals the emptiness of the search for meaning because there is no

meaning to find. The former interpretation, however, points to an unlimited potential for meaning, as the search for the key will lead to the discovery of other keys and other treasures: the search for meaning is potentially endless in this formulation, as are the spirals of narrative that Barth articulates.

Metafiction has several different strands. It not only focuses on the linguistic construction of the text but, in the fiction of Barth, focuses on narrative constructions and narrative self-reflexivity. Barth's interest in the configuration of narratives is an interest shared by political metafiction. In both cases, narrative is used to create new possibilities. Barth attempts to renew literature by creating spiral narratives, while political metafiction is concerned with the creation of new cultural positions and new forms of identity. Political metafiction adopts similar narrative strategies to those found in Barth's fiction, but does so with the intention of dramatising and challenging ideology as a cultural and social form. Barth's strategies, on the other hand, stem from his view that literature has become exhausted in contemporary culture, a culture which, in its institutionalisation and commodification of literature, allows only the repetition of sterile forms which the market demands. Barth associates ideology with system, an alignment political metafiction rejects, seeing ideology as the movement of ideas and meanings in culture as these features inform the construction of social roles, narratives of action, and cultural practice. Both Barth and the novelists of political metafiction agree on the need to new create textual possibilities in order to either challenge ideological representations (political metafiction) or system (Barth). Barth's response to system is to base his texts in old forms and to evolve open-ended systems out of them. He is more concerned with the renewal of literary forms and their evasion of the apparently redundant narrative forms passed down from realism and established genre forms. He locates himself in a specifically literary (rather than political or cultural) frame and presents a metafictional aesthetic in its purest form. Larry McCaffery suggests that the characters in metafictional texts seek "a system of meaning which will help to supply their lives with hope, order, possibly even some measure of beauty", a description that also seems to apply to Barth's desires in his literary projects.[43]

For Barth, the creation of new systems of meaning is an attempt to retain the aura around art. The self-generating spiral narratives establish the text as an absolute autonomy and give the text an order and "a measure of beauty" that Barth hopes will allow the text to transcend (rather than transform) the sterile culture he sees around him. Barth's concern with exhaustion in culture, however, produces arid fictions that seem to replicate the conditions he seeks to evade. Textual autonomy seems impossible, as political metafiction recognises. Political metafiction rejects the idea of textual autonomy, seeing literature as a culturally interested form. For political metafiction, literature cannot distance itself from cultural production, but this does not mean that the text has to collude with existing cultural forms. The involvement in cultural production means that texts can present their alternative visions of society within culture, instead of from a marginalised position.

Minimalism and Facsimile Art

The other conjunction that occurs in political metafiction, as mentioned earlier, seems an improbable one for, at first glance, it seems impossible for maximalist texts to combine with minimalist writing. Minimalist fiction foregrounds its non-mimetic and non-narrative forms, focusing on its own status as image and word. As John Mepham argues, minimalism focuses on the creation of internal correspondences so that it is spatial or synchronic concerns that are its motivation.[44] The exhaustion of language and narrative is also an important feature, a feature most obvious in the short fiction of Barth and in the works of Samuel Beckett, where enervation, monotony, rejection, and the alienation of the individual from the object-world are dominant principles. Minimalism is concerned with the reduction of the self and consciousness, a process that a text such as 'In the Heart of the Heart of the Country' mimics when it aligns self and text. In this case, the production of a text is an attempt to hold the self together, an attempt which fails because of the necessity of using language, the cause of fragmentation in the first place. Silence appears to be the only repsonse in these

circumstances. This, however, means that minimalist texts are conceived in terms of negativity: "what is not [the unspoken] is as dominant as what is, and possibly more significant".[45] It is the silences or ellipses in a text that form its generative principle, specifically the paradox that minimalism both desires and fears silence. A further paradox is added because minimalism also desires and resists language. Language is necessary for the production of the text but it is perceived as a babble of nonsense that threatens to fragment the synchronic order provided by minimalism's use of internal correspondences. Language's power to stave off silence is important to minimalist fiction, for minimalism frequently concerns itself with survival, either of language or life. Writing becomes a means by which death can be averted, whether this is at the level of content (the characters' deaths) or form (the death or exhaustion of literature). In some cases, both these features are present as in Donald Barthelme's story 'Sentence', in which a sentence continually extends itself (through additional clauses and parentheses), even if this means it becomes 'nonsensical', because it realises it will die and pass out of existence if it completes itself. The full stop becomes a mark of death.[46] Minimalism is a form concerned with the postponement of the 'end' (whether a specific end or a vague fear of apocalyptic endings), as well as being concerned with the decay and entropy of either life or the use of language.

Concerns with the possible 'death of the novel' do not seem relevant to political metafiction and its attempts to renew the novel in order to offer new cultural possibilities. Nor do the metafictional forms of minimalism (self-reflexivity and the focus on the synchronic image) seem to align it with political metafiction's interest in referentiality and the temporal configuration of narrative. The maximalist form of political metafiction draws on an encyclopaedic imperative through which a range of ideas, genres, styles and systems are brought together to create complex textual forms. The intersection of these many processes demonstrates political metafiction's desire to create new forms of meaning through a dialogic process of re-arrangement. It does not accede to minimalism's acceptance of (and lament over) the loss of meaning. The early novels of Reed and the short stories of Coover seem to share in minimalist fragmentation and

self-referentiality of discourse. In the 1970's these two writers adopt encyclopaedic and referential forms (particularly in *The Public Burning* and *Mumbo Jumbo*) in their return to narrative, while still retaining the self-conscious fictionality of metafiction and the dislocations and disjunctures of minimalism. In this conjunction, political metafiction locates itself in the 'mainstream' and avant-garde experiments that Zurbrugg sees in Burroughs' fiction.

A model for this cross-over can be seen in the minimalist writings of Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme. Like the novels of political metafiction, Richard Brautigan's fiction uses genre not to signal the exhaustion of genre-forms but, in the collision of genres, maps out a means by which new narrative forms can be configured. *Dreaming of Babylon* combines detective fiction with a fantasy historical narrative concerning ancient Babylon (a narrative which also involves transgression of chronological boundaries in the narrator's desire to be an ancient Babylonian baseball star). *The Hawkline Monster* signals such a conflation of genres in its subtitle, 'A Gothic Western', the narrative also incorporating science-fiction elements. Both novels mix genres at a macro-textual level, whereas political metafiction tends to adopt genres provisionally before their displacement by another genre. In both cases, the intersection of genres provides a means by which narratives can be multiplied in an accumulation of stories and plot-lines which develop out of the initial genre-basis, narratives which are not displaced and erased when the genres themselves have been superseded. The genres are displaced, but have created new fictional variations which then provide the dynamic for the narrative. Brautigan's *Sombrero Fallout*, for example, begins with what is now a traditional metafictional form, the novel-about-a-novel, in which a writer attempts to overcome obstacles that face him as he tries to write a novel. Brautigan parodies this form by creating two narrative-lines. The first narrative involves the writer surrendering to the obstacle he faces (his girlfriend's departure) while the second narrative involves the creation of a story in which the writer's novel (now in the waste-bin) writes itself. This narrative has as its motivating principle the self-reflexive novel-about-a-novel form, but loops away from it to configure a new narrative. This new narrative is the absurd story of a

sombrero which falls out of the sky in a small south-west American town. The appearance of the sombrero forms the focus for the citizens' anxieties, creating a 'fallout' as each of the citizens tries to interpret it. The interpretations take the form of stories which beget other stories that have less to do with the sombrero and more to do with the tensions present in the town. The sombrero becomes the site of a power-struggle of shifting alignments. People change sides, new people enter the fray and new power blocks proliferate, the narrative becoming ever more fragmented as it bifurcates into new strands in order to map the new developments. Gradually, the narrative of the sombrero displaces the writer's narrative. The writer becomes a marginal figure, obsessively stroking one of his girlfriend's hairs, his narrative of paralysis (in which nothing happens) overwhelmed by the scale and pace of the dynamic sombrero-narrative. Brautigan uses genre to motivate a dynamic narrative that soon outstrips the parameters established by the initial use of the genre. A referential element is also present. In *Sombrero Fallout* the writer's paralysis maps a contemporary culture paralysed by obsessional behaviour, a paralysis that is avoided by the narrative of the sombrero. Brautigan does not offer an answer to cultural paralysis in this narrative which is too self-consciously fictional to allow this possibility. He does, however, offer a means by which experimental literature can avoid replicating postmodern culture, a process that political metafiction adopts when it too uses genre as the motivation for dynamic narratives.

Donald Barthelme's minimalism is characterised by dislocation and disjunctures of syntax, image and ideas. These dislocations do not take place solely in language as does much other self-reflexive minimalism. They are the means which enable Barthelme to map the disjunctures of culture, consciousness and forms of experience and identity, frequently taking his texts into an investigation of the forms of narrative which he uses to construct this culture of junk (or 'dreck') and dissociated subjectivity. It is these concerns with the cultural attenuation of consciousness that aligns Barthelme with political metafiction. Barthelme's characters have difficulties with time and hence with their own identities. The characters of Barthelme's fiction live fragmented lives, seemingly

unable to make their experiences cohere into an ordered whole. Their experience of time is perverse. Time is mapped not as a flow, as it is in modernism, but as a series of dislocations. Barthelme parodies the stream of consciousness techniques of modernism which assume an experience of time as flux in the Bergsonian sense, a flux which is still a recognisable temporality. Time is experienced as a continuity and enables the mind to evolve as its creates connections and proposes causal relationships, a situation most obvious in Proust's *A La Recherche de Temps Perdu*. Despite the loops into the past through memory, characters in the modernist stream of consciousness arrive back at an identifiable if incomprehensible present. The present, in a spatialised form, remains as a 'space' in which experiences can extend, even if the temporal frame in which they exist may continually be in flux. Consciousness and memory cognitively map an identity for the character, albeit one in flux, and subject to future temporal displacement.

Barthelme's parody of the stream of consciousness is undertaken by a disruption of the concept of the present, of the 'now' of the epiphany, for example. In this, he takes the modernist view of the present one step further, so that it is not only incomprehensible, but also unidentifiable or impossible to locate within consciousness. The characters of Barthelme's fiction seem unable even to find a focus for their experiences, and are constantly displaced and uprooted, moved further away from any centering moment. Thoughts, memories, and experiences through 'sense'-perception are not of actual things or events, but simulations of them, which take place at an indefinable moment in time, a form of perception with which the narrative colludes, never allowing the reader the luxury of knowing whether the story's events are in the past, present, or future. Barthelme's fiction has moved on from modernist versions of identity, in the recognition that identities are just temporary subject positions that are difficult to maintain. The quest for identity that characterises modernism is meaningless in Barthelme's fiction and is replaced with the portrayal of attempts to find a facsimile identity, an identity that is provisional, but self-generated. There is no sense that the facsimile identity is one that is 'real' or authentic, as no authentic

inner self is acknowledged. The facsimile identity is self-consciously generated and becomes the focus for a solipsitic programme of self-maintenance, whereby the flux of the culture of image, 'dreck', and entropy can be kept at a distance. That it may be this culture which has defined the facsimile identity as a negative counter-product, however, means that any attempts to claim authenticity are immediately disavowed. The negativity involved is not a Baudrillardian negativity of the hyperreal or simulacrum. Simulation and decentering are involved, but the facsimile identity attempts to distance subjectivity from cultural and ideological products. The facsimile identity does not reject identity *per se*, but fakes identity as a way of parodying or resisting the apparently inescapable construction of identity within existing cultural and ideological parameters. The faking of identity involves a displacement away from unconsciously determined social identities or social roles. Facsimile identity allows a freedom not normally associated with the disempowering fragmentation of postmodernity. The subject moulds his or her identity within existing cultural parameters, but this identity is not determined by these parameters.

Facsimile identity can be seen as a potentially liberatory form of identity. It parodies cultural norms and suggests that the discontinuities of contemporary culture are not necessarily experienced as absences by the subject (absences to be filled through the drives to economic success and the consumerist consumption of commodities that postmodern culture suggests are the means by which fulfillment can be achieved) but a middle ground of between-ness where ideology is less powerful and new identities and narratives can be constructed. Where this type of identity is simply mimicry of existing cultural identities (Baudrillard's simulation of identity) the re-enactment of cultural norms occurs, although this reproduction of ideology occurs in a fragmented form, rather than in the systematic enactment of ideology that Althusser sees in the interpellation of the subject. Faking identity entails becoming an actor whose roles are constantly displaced so that identity in the traditional sense of a fixed selfhood becomes meaningless, and is replaced by open-ended processes of identification. Barthelme's view of identity is also mirrored in political metafiction which focuses

not on whether identity is a product of either the inner self or culture, but on how it might be possible to create an identity in facsimile which does not accede to these two polarities. Political metafiction sees the inner self/cultural self debate as an opposition that has paralysed approaches to identity in America. To political metafiction both approaches are ideological positions. The inner self is presented by political metafiction as a nostalgic desire for the self of Romantic ideology, a self desired by both modernism and metafiction even as they reveal the inner self to be a fiction. The latter (ideological identity) is aligned with the models of identity that are created in realism. Realism creates what Frank Kermode calls "fictive concords" through which people "make sense of their span... and give meaning to lives".[47] These concords are fictive because they actually involve the systematisation of experience and identity although systematisation is presented in terms of a harmonic relationship between self and society. Realism represents the creation of the unity of self as the product of the fictive recognition that society is a unity. System is presented as a unity which creates harmony between self and society. Political metafiction recognises that both the inner self and realist forms of identity are products of ideology. The belief in the existence of an autonomous inner self is necessary to prevent alienation and fragmentation overwhelming the individual. This process would expose society and culture as sites of dissonance rather than unity and would threaten to create a culture of entropy, enervation and fragmentation. This is not to say that desires for a Romantic identity of the inner self do not occur, nor that the encroachment of ideological identities goes unchallenged (primarily in the conflict between 'individual'-identity and machine-identity and the struggle between consciousness and unconsciousness that is found in Ronald Sukenick's fiction). However, the confluence of these two forms of identity with facsimile identity (and the conflict between them) extends the debates over the 'nature' of consciousness. Identity is no longer conceived solely in terms of the creation of self-autonomy through a dialectic of self and 'other'. Political metafiction challenges the synthesis of self-autonomy implied in this model. It is presented as a form of identity created by ideology with the purpose of maintaining the subject's desire for power and domination, the effect of which is the perpetuation of a society based on these

principles.

Barthelme's fiction presents these positions on identity in its portrayal of characters. The construction of idiosyncratic and dissociated characters suggests that the well-rounded individual has either been replaced by a caricature identity or was always a fiction. In a world typified by accidental collisions rather than by the linearity of progress consciousness seems a matter of unhinged sensibility adrift amongst a bric-a-brac culture. Barthelme's fictions develop several narrative strategies that demonstrate this, in some places projecting identity as a contraction of consciousness to immediate experience, as is the case with the opening lines of 'At the End of the Mechanical Age':

> I went to the grocery store to buy some soap. I stood for a long time before the soaps in their attractive boxes, RUB and FAB and TUB and suchlike. I couldn't decide so I closed my eyes and reached out blindly and when I opened my eyes I found her hand in mine.
>
> Her name was Mrs. Davis, she said, and TUB was best for important cleaning experiences, in her opinion. So we went to lunch at a Mexican restaurant which as it happened she owned, she took me into the kitchen and showed me her stacks of handsome beige tortillas and steam tables which were shiny-brite.[48]

Here, the attentuation of the self produces a consciousness which is only able to perceive basic experience - what people say and do - without being able to reflect on the significance of these actions and discourses. Similarly, a lack of 'will' is dramatised in the character's inability to choose between soap powders and in the passivity of his accidental meeting with Mrs Davis. The language used enacts this reduction, words appearing to be approximations rather than exact references to the events that happen.

Other strategies involve a closer awareness of the effects of culture on identity and writing. The following section from 'The Party', for example, besides using techniques familiar to postmodernist fiction (self-consciousness fictionality, pastiche), also uses techniques common to political metafiction: reference to systems of knowledge, dislocation of consciousness, and a parody of political or philosophical 'truths'. Such 'truths' are exposed as empty clichés:

> The two sisters on the bed were looking at the television in the bedroom, on the bed, amidst the coats and hats, umbrellas, airline bags. I gave them each a drink and we watched the game together, the *Osservatore Romano* team vs. the Diet of Worms, Worms leading by six points. I had never seen khaki-colored punch before. The hostess said there would be word games afterward, some of the people outside would be invited in, peasant food served in big wooden bowls - wine, chicken, olive oil, bread. Everything would improve she said. I could still hear, outside, the drums; whistles had been added, there were both whistles and drums. I was surprised. The present era, with its emphasis on emotional cost control as well as its insistent, almost annoying lucidity, does not favor splinter groups.[49]

The dislocated consciousness presented here is unable to focus for different reasons to that of the contracted selfhood of 'At the End of the Mechanical Age', finding an excess of material in experience, too many signs, symbols, and events, and is thereby unable to assimilate them except as a flux of impressions. The fragmented perceptions could be the result of alcohol, Barthelme perhaps suggesting that the dulled and hazy perceptions associated with drunkenness act as a metaphor for consciousness in the contemporary world. Barthelme is self-consciously involved in this passage, ironically half-offering a 'truth'-statement concerning the contemporary world in the last sentence which, however, does not make much sense because of its blurring of categories: the emotional, the experiential and the political. It is suggested that because too many systems exist synthesis cannot take place except as meaningless cliché. Barthelme, however, is also aware of his role in controlling the first person narrator who he pushes into offering this 'truth'-statement, which he uses, humorously, to challenge the ability of literature to offer statements about truth and reality as narratorial or authorial beliefs. In the wide-ranging scope of such a short example it is possible to see how Barthelme differs from other minimalist writers. Minimalism's paring down of fiction's domain to language and consciousness (as can be found in William Gass' 'In the Heart of the Heart of the Country' and 'The Pedersen Kid') does not seem to pertain here. Despite Barthelme's self-consciously fictional approach, there is an excessive quality to his writing that involves a questioning of the excesses of the culture of dreck in contemporary America.

Several critics have suggested that Barthelme's fiction is almost a new form of realism. David Porush, for example, has remarked that Barthelme's "styles are remarkably reflective of a particular time and place", which he sees as being the desultory collage of experience of post-War Manhattan.[50] Similarly, Charles Molesworth has written that "Fragmentary forms for a fragmentary age: such is one of the axioms that stand behind Barthelme's work".[51] Although the dissociations of consciousness and culture that appear in Barthelme's work suggest that his fiction is a replication of contemporary culture, so easy a relationship between text and society - in which a text is directly reflective of a pre-given 'reality' - does not seem tenable.[52] Instead, Barthelme plays with the mimetic dimension of fiction, reacting against it in a parodic and ironic manner, disrupting the relationship between culture and text. There is a satiric edge to Barthelme's fiction which challenges, rather than glories in, the surface culture of image, collage, pastiche, and simulation experienced in the contemporary world. For Barthelme, as for writers of political metafiction, postmodern culture is the content that is to be shaped by the formal features of the fiction (language or narrative), and not the form that determines the text. After all, to say that postmodernist fiction is a new form of reflexive realism is to suggest that these writers, despite their self-conscious awareness of literary production, are contradictorily too uncritical to be aware of what they are doing.

Barthelme takes a disruptive approach to culture in which the culture of 'dreck' is mimicked and replicated, but also demystified by the juxtaposition of dissonant discourses or ideas. The abstract and fairly meaningless truth-claim in 'The Party' positions the politics of contemporary culture against a debate over religious truth. Religious truth is presented as being dependent on the result of a football match, rather than discovered through any dialogue over the 'inherent' merits that the theological ideas might have. 'Truth' becomes a matter of winning and losing in a quantifiable and, in ideology's terms, empirical framework. A culture of difference is re-created as an either/or homogeneity, where culture is a matter of winning or losing in an oppositional situation rather than an interactive set of relationships at a personal or social level. In this situation,

threats of disruption to culture and society are negated, for they become institutionalised as a spectacle, something for people to observe rather than be involved in. Although the co-option of cultural threats prevents disruption to the prevailing society it also prevents the society from developing, a paralysis Barthelme challenges by the revitalising force of his wit and his reconfiguring of texts so that dissociation becomes a sophisticated accumulation of images. A society of "wonderful elegance"[53] is created, but one in which subjectivity and consciousness have contracted to the immediate and trivialised experience of dislocated and accidental incidents, a scenario present in much of Barthelme's fiction beyond those works cited.

This is not to stake a claim for Barthelme as someone directly engaged with political debates, for it is frequently the case that political and social theories and events form the background to a parodic playfulness. For example, 'The Crisis'[54] portrays a contemporary revolution which Barthelme uses to generate absurdities. The Revolution follows the text-book approach to social transformation in the revolutionaries' plan to occupy the streets. Barthelme plays with this idea by articulating a contemporary world in which new techniques are needed (the taking of broadcasting centres, bribing the army, making promises, and playing golf with opposition leaders). Because the revolutionaries do not put any of these into operation they are ignored and life goes on around them as if they were not there. Politics, therefore, seems to be just another absurdity to be parodied for Barthelme, although this does not mean that he is not concerned with cultural issues. Barthelme maps a brittle and fragile culture that can easily be shattered, because its paralysis can only ever be exacerbated. The ease with which disjunctive areas are connected in his fiction seems to point to a seamless culture of equivalence, but it is a culture of trash, where the dissonant present of elegance and 'dreck' produces a schizophrenic or psychotic culture that is perpetually on the edge.

The Maximalist Novels of Sorrentino and Barth

Barthelme combines the techniques of minimalism with the cultural interests of political metafiction. There is, however, another tendency at work in postmodernist experimentation in the 1970's. In this form of writing, minimalist and metafictional techniques of self-reflexivity and fictionality are extended to a maximalist form. Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* and John Barth's *LETTERS* are two important texts which exemplify this process and provide a crystallisation of metafictional and surfictional techniques. Barth's fiction developed out of the absurdist and existentialist novel of the late 1950's and early 1960's. *LETTERS* is a continuation of the questioning of systems, reality and truth that his fiction of the 1960's displays. In *LETTERS*, a metafictional concern with literature is extended to the question of history and its reality. Sorrentino, on the other hand, works within the surfictional forms of Federman, Katz and Major, writers who have as their antecedents the *nouveau roman* of Robbe-Grillet and Butor. While Barth questions whether 'reality' and history can produce meaning, Sorrentino's alignment with writers like Gass, Mathews, Federman, and Katz means that his starting point is the assumption that 'reality' does not exist. While Barth struggles with the question of what might constitute the 'real' world Sorrentino sets out from a position which does not admit to the existence of 'reality' and history except as language and develops his fictions from this informing principle.

Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* (a novel written in the early 1970's but not published until 1979)[55] is ostensibly about the attempts of a writer of experimental fiction called Antony Lamont to write a novel, *Guinea Red*, about which he has severe doubts. His doubts lead him to constantly defend his work, ostensibly to others (in the form of letters), but primarily to himself, because he fears that he is losing his power as an author. Sorrentino uses Lamont's fears over his loss of authorial power to play with the signifying processes of language in the form of a pun. Lamont is not only losing his power as an author in terms of his ability to produce 'literature', but is also unable to exercise authorial control over his text, whose characters (Halpin and Beaumont) begin to 'live' lives of their own

outside of the novel that Lamont is writing, something which Lamont gradually begins to sense and which fuels his paranoia. Lamont loses control of the characters, in much the same way that the author in Richard Brautigan's *Sombrero Fallout* finds that the text that he has thrown in the waste-bin begins to write itself while he laments the loss of his Japanese girlfriend. Lamont's attempt to write his novel is only one aspect of *Mulligan Stew*. Sorrentino constantly burlesques Lamont's novel, mocking the sterile exploitation of already used characters and stock narrative clichés. Alongside this narrative, *Mulligan Stew* is filled with an abundance of literary forms and narrative scenarios. What is constructed in *Mulligan Stew* is a set of sub-plots rather than a master-narrative, sub-plots that spin out from Lamont's paranoia. Throughout the novel the 'presence' of Lamont is doubtful and he becomes an absent centre who, in mimicry of one of his characters, doesn't know exactly what he is doing. *Mulligan Stew* is more a set of fragments and mirrors, a dislocated configuration of narratives and narcissistic reflections. As well as the 'main' narratives which spin through the novel, *Mulligan Stew* is also filled with fragments of other forms: scrapbooks of advertisements, various letters and notebooks, fragments of Lamont's other novels, reviews of these novels, other people's writings (the poems of Lorna Flambeaux and a play discovered by Halpin called *Flawless Play Restored*), publishers' catalogues, a mathematical treatise, interviews with other writers, rewrites of *Guinea Red*, and various lists (including a list of books Halpin discovers in the log cabin). The novel describes itself as a stew and indeed it does resemble a pastiche narrative, throwing together fragments of genres, texts, and styles so that, in its agglomeration of unmotivated fragments, *Mulligan Stew* aligns itself with minimalist fiction, but a minimalist fiction arranged within a maximalist whole. Each fragment develops along a certain course until it is apparently completed and is then erased from the narrative to be replaced by one of the 'sub-plots' or by another pastiche-fragment. It is only in the last chapter of the novel ('Making it up as we go along') that the novel resolves itself into any kind of synthesis when a 'stew' of all the other genres, texts, and styles that appear in the novel are assembled together in a seamless pastiche discourse. The lack of a master-narrative and the use of an episodic series of 'sub-plots' is a technique that is also

used in the novels of political metafiction, except that they map a master-narrative through the text in order to enact ideology but also subvert it in the use of digressions and narrative disruptions.

John Barth's *LETTERS* also parallels *Mulligan Stew* in this way for it is possible to describe *LETTERS* as a novel in search of a master-narrative. Like *Mulligan Stew*, Barth's novel replicates the minimalist concern with literary exhaustion. In the maximalist form of *LETTERS* the exhaustion of literature entails the repetition of old forms of writing at 'exhaustive' length. It is a parody of itself as a document of exhaustion and, as Tom LeClair argues, it is potentially a paradoxical profusion. LeClair writes that "a real literature of exhaustion is not fiction played out but an art that works toward exhausting - completing, fulfilling - the capabilities inherent in its origin and nature."[56] The principal difference between minimalist fictions of exhaustion and *LETTERS*, however, is Barth's concerns with systems and the construction of a literary design which will organise 'experience' within fiction, not with reference to any external order, but as a self-generated and self-defining process of production. To Barth, the world as it exists does not have enough reality and it is only through fiction that a 'real' world can be constructed. In 'How to Make a Universe' Barth proclaims that what the writer:

> offers you is not a *Weltanschauung* but a *Welt*; not a view of the cosmos, but a cosmos itself... in his essence he wishes neither to explain nor to control nor to understand the universe: He wants to make one of his own, and may even aspire to make it more orderly, meaningful, beautiful, and interesting than the one God turned out... What a botch Nature is.[57]

It is in the context of such an approach to literature that *LETTERS* is constructed, as a debate between the 'ugly' complexity of 'reality' and the structuring principles of fiction, a project that creates a paradoxical alignment between Barth's postmodernist literature of excessive exhaustion and modernist views of art.

LETTERS, published in 1979, acts as a summary of Barth's previous fictions, so much so that most of the main characters are derived from his other fiction: Todd Andrews reappears from *The Floating Opera*, Jacob Horner from

The End of the Road, Ambrose Mensch from *Lost in the Funhouse*, while A.B.Cook VI is represented as a descendent of two characters from *The Sotweed Factor*, and Jerome Bray as a descendent of Harold Bray from *Giles Goat-Boy*. All of these characters are gathered together in a fiction that focuses around the familiar Barth terrain of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay, particularly around the fictional college, Tidewater Tech, where the one new character Germaine Pitt, Lady Amherst, is employed. The last character is Barth himself. The format of the novel involves the characters writing letters, frequently to Barth, sometimes to themselves, and at other times to their parents (dead or living). However, the exchange of letters is not a random process but one that Barth has organised into a strict formal pattern.[58] The subtitle of the novel ("An old time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers each of which imagines himself factual"), besides gesturing to Barth's narcissistic concern with fictionality, frames the novel. The letters of the subtitle are rearranged so that they spell out the word LETTERS which is given a calendar frame, on to which is then imposed the people who will write the letters, each alphabetical letter meaning that the character will write one epistolary letter on a particular date. Even before he has begun writing the novel Barth has created a convoluted formal structure within which the narratives will be arranged, and which already questions the chronological linearity of the realist epistolary novel. The letters are not presented, textually, in chronological order but as the system determines they will be presented.

Into this formal scheme the characters are inserted, each of them having importance for Barth's narrative project rather than as the well-rounded character of the traditional novel. The development of narrative in *LETTERS* is similar to that of Sorrentino's in that none of the plots creates a master-narrative, although each character attempts to find one within the fictions that surround them. Lady Amherst, for example, seeks to find a system of order in the events that take place in Tidewater Tech (the question of the laureateship, for which Cook has applied, and the filming of the British-American War of 1812) by discovering a cultural paradigm or *zeitgeist*. Her model for this is twofold, framed in terms of

an eighteenth century paradigm, discovered through her British heritage, and in terms of a modernist one, focused around her alleged involvement with a number of modernist writers. Lady Amherst is presented as a fiction right from the start, an aspect that is developed in the discourses used to construct her letters which fluctuate between an Eighteenth Century mannered discourse and a discourse of Proustian complexity.

The other characters are used to develop certain ideas and narratives. Jacob Horner supplies an existentialist framework that allows Barth to investigate the nature of identity and being, and whether there is identity outside the world of objects. Todd Andrews is used as an opposition to this, as someone who has apparently submitted to the world of objects (to fate or to the Tragic View, as Andrews terms it), but he also generates concerns with repetition and cyclical events that the novel replicates. Jerome Bray and Ambrose Mensch provide another opposition, this time concerned with the processes that produce fiction, Bray apparently acting as a symbol of the scientific production of fiction (through his computer LILYVAC II) while Mensch represents the production of fiction from an autobiographical perspective. This opposition, however, is problematised in that Mensch is presented as having produced the theory of the spiral narrative that Barth used in *Chimera*, while it is suggested that Bray's fictional project is actually based on personal paranoias, referring as he does to the conspiracies which have driven him to his present undertaking.[59] The combination of Bray and Mensch entails several aspects including a referencing of the impersonal and autobiographical structure of *Ulysses*, as well as the importance of rearrangement and re-enactment to Barth's own literary endeavours.[60] The spiral narratives that Mensch theorises entail repetition and re-enactment. Analogously, the word "RESET", which constantly punctuates Bray's letters, has been described by one critic as a concern with postmodernism's pastiche rearrangement of styles, genres and narratives.[61] This ignores the specific context of the word "RESET" which does not involve the resetting of narratives into new patterns, but resets them back on to the old programmes, an act of censorship rather than one of liberation.

Seemingly the most important of these narratives is the A.B. Cook VI narrative, which for a long time seems to offer the novel a master-narrative, so much so that many critics have focused on this as the principal narrative motivation of *LETTERS*.[62] One of the reasons for this is that Cook's narrative is used to draw attention to the fictionality of history and the unreality of its production and recording. This narrative involves the portrayal of the confluence of history and the contemporary social scene in the form of a conspiracy theory of history in which the members of the Cook line take on various guises (Castine, Burlingame, perhaps even Bray) to effect the project set out by Henry Burlingame described in *The Sotweed Factor*. The Cook dynasty involve themselves with the Seven Years War, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the War of 1812, as well as fomenting rebellion amongst the Indians (Pontiac and Tecumseh). This narrative seems to signal itself as a master-narrative not only because it seems to imply a secret agenda for American history, but also because a second revolution is planned for America using Reg Prinz's film as a cover. In other words, it seems to be directly involved with the construction of a contemporary history of rebellion and subversion.

This is highlighted by the narrative. It describes the making of Prinz's film (another narrative which seems at some points to be destined to unite all the other plots), whose form presents history as a fiction of images and accidental events rather than a chronological and motivated narrative. As a result, the Cook narrative becomes a part of the formal fictional scheme that Barth creates and not a master-narrative. As Marjorie Godlin Roemer has written: "These circumstances [the making of the film] and the welter of coincidence and repetition which serves to connect the lives of Cooks, Andrews, Macks, Horner, et al., trap us in a maze of devious design. The representation of life is convoluted, riddled with ironic congruence, but nowhere is life independent of art."[63] History and its experience are simulations and as such cannot supply a master-narrative. However, this does not mean that the formal scheme Barth creates masters the narratives so that they become connected. Although the seven sub-plots seem to cohere at certain points, it is suggested that it is narrative which

is the dominant form of the novel and narrative which overwhelms the projected formal structure. The narratives of the novel disentangle themselves from Barth's formal structure and develop their own momentum and motivation. In opposition to the view that history spirals inwards ("History really *is* that bird you mention somewhere, who flies in ever diminishing circles until it disappears up its own fundament!"),[64] narrative spirals outwards in ever increasing circles. Like *Mulligan Stew*, however, Barth's fictions do not spiral out to some other reference point, but always look inward to the absent centre of their production (the Author, who is both controller and controlled in *LETTERS*) and to the previous narrative configurations that have occurred. A double edged process of re-enactment and re-beginning is produced, an exhaustive interiority which gestures toward an encyclopaedic completeness, but also to a (minimalist) incompletion and fragmentation into sub-plots. Barth's outward spirals of narrative are an attempt to overcome the entropy of the internalised narratives of 1960's self-reflexive and minimalist fiction and so, as David Porush has noted, he brings to his metafictional strategies an experimentation with structure.[65] This arrangement refuses to accede to minimalist fragmentation, using structure to re-configure metafiction in terms of maximalism and narrative rather than language.

The Narrative Possibilities of Surfiction

Another writer with a metafictional and minimalist background who continued with these forms into the 1970's is Ronald Sukenick. His concern with culture, identity and politics moves him closer to the encyclopaedic novels of Coover, Delillo, Gaddis, Reed, McElroy and Pynchon. The main concern of Sukenick's fiction is the discovery of new structures for language through which new forms of identity can be created, forms of identity which do not accede to the movements of ideology in society. His texts, however, have usually been seen as examples of metafictional self-reflexivity and aleatory randomness, Sukenick's games with language presented as a revelation of language's liberation of meaning rather than the means by which cultural parameters can be changed. Charles

Caramello, for example, argues that Sukenick's texts are programmed by an ambivalence toward textual unities and authorial control, two factors which the texts foreground as their content.[66] More interestingly, Allen Thiher reads Sukenick's novels as texts that enact the fall of language into a paranoid babble of nonsense signifying "the cant of mindlessness", motivating themselves as quests for an alternative language in "the belief that beyond the fallen or demented surfaces of language there must be a conspiratorial domain where something is really said. This domain cannot be directly voiced by the writer. He can only give voice to the language of the world while trying to find messages coming from some other place."[67] Thiher's analysis focuses on language rather than Sukenick's concerns with the attempted transcendence of cultural norms of identity but, nevertheless, his description of a fall into linguistic babble can be extended to Sukenick's view of selfhood. This is postulated as a fall from an originary authentic and formless selfhood of pure consciousness into the mindlessness of identities constructed through ideologically saturated language. These latter forms of identity owe nothing to the conscious free will that Sukenick sees in the pre-fall identities, but are instead a product of ideology and ideology's construction of social roles.

Only David Seed situates Sukenick within a political framework. Seed points to the adversarial tactics of Sukenick's fiction in which critical engagement replaces cultural estrangement:

> One focus to this resistance has been realistic plot-paradigms which Sukenick constantly subverts in the interest of getting nearer to the real. "Things don't appear to happen according to Aristotle any more", he remarks. However, Sukenick has been equally consistent in rejecting the view that such a direction marks a narcissistic introversion of fiction, arguing instead that he has engaged more directly with his culture.[68]

For Sukenick, writing has a political purpose, and is a means to replace "the form of the traditional novel [which] is a metaphor for a society that no longer exists". He projects in its place a form of writing that can escape the comforting ideological illusions that such textualisations produce which include "the feeling that the individual is the significant focus among the phenomena of 'reality'

(characterization)... the notion that the locus of 'reality' may be determined by empirical observation (description); the conviction that the world is logical and comprehensible (causal sequence, plot)."[69] Sukenick's version of the novel involves several things, including a non-mimetic narrative programme, but one which is also non-narcissistic. While the text may reflect on itself, it does so as an interrogation of textual and narrative practices. What it does not do is to repeat old forms as a parodic mimicry (pastiche), but sets out new forms of writing with a view to investigating their possibilities for the renewal of fiction. The second aspect of Sukenick's undertaking stems from this and entails a twofold creation of new novel forms, firstly to find a novel form that acts as a metaphor for the society that currently exists and, secondly, to project a form that acts as a metaphor for societies that do not yet exist, but which could come into existence if desire and the body were liberated from the constraints of society.

Sukenick's creation of new textual possibilities is developed in *Out* (1973) and *98.6* (1975), which develop a form that challenges the mimesis that the 'typical' pop aesthetic of postmodernism produces, in which a culture of simulation is replicated in fiction.[70] In *Out* he produces a text that defies and inverts traditional narrative forms without allowing these forms to enter the text - even as negative reflections - and thereby impinge upon its textual flows. Even though it is possible to trace a movement through the novel the text cannot be reduced to a basic plot summary, for this would be to impose a linear narrative of cause and effect where there is actually digression and continual transformation. *Out* is a novel in which narrative transformation has run wild. Characters' identities are constantly changing, a transformation that also changes the direction of the narrative. The novel opens with a group of people meeting on a skyscraper ledge in New York. Gradually out of the fog of language the scenario is clarified and the reader is informed obliquely that these people are part of an unspecified underground movement, each carrying a stick of dynamite, referred to as their "i.d.", which they will bring together in a "meet" at a future date and which they will then use to produce a bomb. This "meet" will occur by chance when they have all split up and come back together again after randomly

moving across America.

Initially the metaphor of fission informs the configuration of the narrative, a splitting process occuring which whirls the characters out from the centre of the initial "meet". The trope of dynamite as identity points to the potential explosion of consciousness, a process immediately enacted when the character who is initally identified as Rex changes identity. This is done by his adopting new names, so that he becomes Carl, then Donald, then Harrold, then an unspecified narratorial "I", and then possibly becomes Kent. However, each change is not simply a change of name for in each new context he adopts new guises, although because Sukenick uses this device to question the idea of character it is unclear whether there are any noticeable shifts in personality, particularly as the changing of names means that each character blurs into others. The characters of *Out* all speak the same type of language and are never easily distinguishable, unlike the characters in the 'A Cabinet of Coins' section of McElroy's *A Smuggler's Bible* who, though only gradually identified by name by other characters, develop their own characteristic style of discourse (and so become identifiable even when they are not named). Paradoxically, the potential explosion of identities actually produces homogeneity in cycles of fission and fusion. It is unclear whether the "meet" at the beginning is actually a coming together or a splitting apart as it is unclear whether this is in fact the "meet" that is to take place in the future, rather than a "meet" to set up the future coming together. The motivating principle of the narrative (set out in the opening section) leads the reader to expect a series of journeys which will lead ultimately to the resolution of the "meet". Although it is clear in this first section that there will not be a single linear path through the novel, Sukenick presents the possibility that the multiple plots will again intersect. This is also figured in the numbering of chapters which rather than counting from one upwards, count down from nine to zero as if prefiguring a climax of monstrous proportions. However, *Out* does not follow this path, turning immediately away from the parameters established in the opening section. Instead, *Out* pushes the fission metaphor as far as possible, generating a highly abstract and confusing novel. The characters do not remain stable identities, but continually split off

from themselves (even though they adopt the names of other members of the group). Each character is an agglomeration of identities each of which can generate further multiple narratives. Rather than a multiplot novel gathering momentum before it resolves itself there is a reversal of this scheme in the digressive narrative which constantly loops away from the initial motivation. Instead of a single narrative, plot creates new plots and message generates further messages.

The parody of traditional forms of the novel is also seen at the level of narrative, where the text frequently proposes an end to the random accretion of digressive material. At the beginning of both section five and section four the reader is offered an explanation of what has so far taken place and is guided to a reading of the text. In section five the reader is offered a view of the text as a movie, while in section four we are told that it is in fact a novel, and one that is going to start getting serious.[71] The alternative perspectives, however, only add to the indefinability of the text and the ensuing narratives in each case do not bear out what has been said. For example, section four offers a new phase in the novel's development, its position at the midway point apparently suggesting that *Out* is now moving out of its fission stage and into a phase where fusion will occur and the fragmentary digressions of the plot will be answered through a resolved unity of the loose ends. Section four, however, turns out to be an aborted beginning, immediately flowing into digressions that halt the movement of the novel in its westward journey. The narrative alignment involves the persona of this section (Roland Sycamore) in a series of episodes consisting of a dream of a mugging (by one of the underground members), an analeptic recollection of a job in a can-factory, a move back to the 'present' in which Sycamore stumbles on a happening called the Festbowl, the making of a film in a town called Panguitch and finally Sycamore's journey with a co-conspirator to Las Vegas where he first wins a large sum of money and then loses it. The novel does not develop linearly, but is arranged as a series of episodic fragments which only occasionally connect. After the Festbowl is broken up by the police, Sycamore leads a group of people across the desert only to find that they gradually disappear, a situation which

mimics the report of the disappearance of the underground members that Sycamore hears from a co-conspirator, Arnold, when he arrives in Panguitch. The report of the demise of the underground seems to end all possibilities of any resolution, for the "meet" cannot now take place. In fact, the discussion in which this report is made could itself be the final "meet": Sycamore and Arnold are the only ones left of those who started out.

The demise of the underground allows for the final liberation of the narrative from the motivating constraints that it has avoided anyway and Sycamore is able to head westward, escaping the New York consciousness that the idea of the "meet" had imposed on him. In effect, the East Coast, and its cluttered culture of paranoia and violence which the "meet" sought to impose on the West Coast, is jettisoned. So too is the empty unreality with which this culture is imbued, an unreality associated with the commodification of America:

> anyway says Empty Fox the Wasichus [whites] make Disneyland of all this [nature] so they can sell it they get Indians to pretend they're Indians they make believe these beautiful mountains are beautiful they pretend that magic is magic they make believe the truth is the
>
> truth otherwise they can't believe anything. There is a place with a billboard of a mountain in front of a mountain you Wasichus can't see without pretending to see so anyway they don't believe it (*Out*, 141).

For the purposes of tourism, the American landscape and its Indian inhabitants are co-opted into a corporate culture based on simulation and the ridiculous superimposition of a facsimile culture on to an already existing 'real'. It is the encroachment of this society that *Out* seeks to displace so that the opening up of consciousness to new forms of identity can take place, primarily focusing on the development of an identity of the body rather than of the mind. In *Out* Sukenick offers a form of fiction that initially acts as a metaphor for contemporary society, albeit within a highly fictionalised and abstract frame. The novel focuses its attention on a fissured society that both fragments and homogenises identity and subjectivity. However, *Out* also seems to project a form that is able to incorporate alternate futures for society and culture in which alienation is replaced by the

coming together of identities. Like Blake, Sukenick suggests that in a culture of oppression the lack of difference in identity involves fission and homogeneity, whereas in a potential future of liberation the similarity of identities produces neither of these, but constitutes a fusion through freedom and pleasure. In this respect, *Out* can be seen as a reflection on the counter-culture of the late 1960's and its fragmentation in the early 1970's. There is an initial community which splinters through suspicion and fear of betrayal, developing into one-dimensional single-line narratives (particularly involving the character Roland Sycamore) in which uncertainty of location and motivation of will threaten to destroy the dynamics of the novel, a threat only overcome by escape from the one-dimensional culture of consumerism.

A similar fragmentation is at work in Sukenick's next novel, *98.6*, but in a more formalised structure. Although in some ways it is possible to identify distinct themes in the chapters of *Out*, on the whole its narratives cut across chapter divisions blurring whatever boundaries the reader thinks s/he has found, such as the paranoia of section nine which blurs into the alienation of section eight. However, such classifications are arbitrary, overtaken by a narrative motivated by the dynamics of movement and transformation which prevent the stratification of the text into static categories. *98.6*, on the other hand, is a novel that plays with the opposition between stasis and movement, and is perhaps more attuned to the sense of loss and fragmentation of radical politics in the 1970's. Sukenick presents the United States (allegorised as a country called "Frankenstein") as a culture of domination, a culture which seems so powerful that movement "up and out"[72] does not allow a movement beyond its borders. Neither transcendence ("up") nor escape ("out") are possible, a situation discovered by the commune that is represented in chapter two ('The Children of Frankenstein').

Sukenick maps a claustrophobic culture to create a novel which David Seed has noted aligns itself with Sukenick's theory of the architectonic novel.[73] This form of novel is more concerned with experimentation with structural and narrative possibilities than with the discursive experiments of *Out*. *98.6* is divided

into three sections, the first of which ('Frankenstein') has a collage structure which offers fragments of events that do not follow a linear sequence. Each sub-section is dated in a randomly assembled order and documents the experiences of one or more characters' experiences of the already existing culture of Frankenstein, a culture of violence and death that is associated with the Mayan and Aztec civilizations of ritual sacrifice. Sukenick proposes that the United States is a society founded on institutionalised violence against its subjects. This society reproduces binary forms of consciousness which fluctuate between acquiescent passivity and power-games, exemplified in the sado-masochistic sexual relations that such a culture encourages. Identity is constituted in terms of an opposition that comprises either compliant non-resistance or a replication of the violence and domination of the cultural order. In such a frame the struggle against this rigid structure seems futile. This first section, however, does enact attempts to create new forms of relationship, particularly in terms of love. However, the discovery of a non-exploitative passivity through love is not as positive a development as initally appears. Non-exploitative passivity entails a loss of emotion and a concomitant creation of distance between people. Sukenick shows this process at work in his creation of a disjunctive form of connectivity in which sub-sections are juxtaposed thematically (rather than chronologically) to show how positive effects can have negative aspects. For example, sub-section 17 (dated January 7) describes a relationship that twists between non-exploitative love and sado-masochism which seems to offer the former as a way of overcoming the latter. However, the next sub-section (dated April 30) is a scene in which the narrator observes (and remains distant from) the murder of a boy by three Mafia-men. He then goes to have a meal which he pays by cheque, but when asked for some form of identification discovers that his driver's licence, credit cards, social security card and draft card have all disappeared. After talking his way out of this situation he takes a cab, but the driver goes much faster than he should and goes "completely out of control" (*98.6*, 36). The narrative configures the events of these sections as an adsurdist dramatisation of the loss of identity in which the positive aspects of passivity in love are twisted. On a personal level, passivity is positive, but, in social relations passivity produces a waning of affect which not only involves the loss of

identity, but also places the individual at the mercy of forces he or she cannot control. The binary structure of such a society is impossible to escape and produces a 'ping-pong' subjectivity in which the individual bounces between two extremes at varying angles.

The collage structure of this section contributes to this back and forth movement, mapping identity as a mix and match experience where the individual is unable to discover an adequate subject-position. The second section portrays an attempt to escape this culture through the establishment of a commune called "The Monster" in which passivity can more positively create fusion rather than fragmentation. The narrative and textual forms match this movement, by assuming an episodic but linear path that is neither disjunctive nor deterministic. The harmony, however, is not achieved. The narrative gradually moves towards fission as the commune breaks up and the experiences of the members become narcissistic. The loss of community stems from the commune's attempt to parody the 'Monster' of Frankenstein's culture of violence. Parody requires re-enactment and Frankenstein's presence is felt throughout the commune. The commune fails to escape violence. Its attempts to parody Frankenstein (in the form of basketball games in which violence acts as a release of tensions) only result in the reproduction of violence and the commune collapses when a group of psychopathic bikers invade it from the outside world. The failure of both the commune and the narrative form that Sukenick projects leads in the final section, 'Palestine', to a rejection of the forms already constructed. What Sukenick projects in this section is a narrative of disjuncture which randomly generates itself through digression and counter-digression, framed in terms of fantasy. In this section, an alternative present is offered as a desired alternative. Here, Robert Kennedy has not been assassinated, but has become president, ushering in a utopian society:

> Thank god that stopped [the Vietnam War] the moment Robert took office otherwise we might have had eight more years of genocide plus a collapse of civil rights plus a subversion of civil liberties plus government spy networks sabotage teams blacklists of enemies official harassment political trials rigged elections strangely convenient assassinations of course you think me mad admittedly

I exaggerate but still (*98.6*, 180).

The social reality of 1970's America is projected as fantasy. The last few words present an irony that demonstrates the text's awareness of its own fantasy elements without negating the possibilities entailed in them. Sukenick has now reached a stage in the novel where he attempts to project a form that can act as a metaphor for alternative societies, a form of disjunctive fantasy that does not attempt to represent a fixed culture (and its limits) within a strongly developed but static story-space. Instead, the narrative defines itself as it progresses and by so doing maps a utopian culture that allows freedom, difference and a transformation of cultural practices.

Nevertheless, the self-generating principles of Sukenick's narrative configurations do not quite seem to cohere with the idealised view of identity that he proposes, one which owes much to the Romantic views of an authentic natural self that most novels of political metafiction reject. For Sukenick, however, this self is found not in the mind or the soul, but in the liberation of the body where the body finds its own form of behavioural patterns or 'consciousness': "he stops doing his body starts doing things he didn't know it could do" (*Out*, 252). To discover this 'consciousness' involves the abandonment of all conscious desires, desires which are constructed by the ideology of the American culture of violence. Sukenick suggests that to be conscious is actually to be unconsciously constructed by ideology. It is the natural self - that Sukenick locates in the Indian experience which American ideology has displaced - that forms 'true' consciousness, as in the mixing of the body and nature that Empty Fox describes in a which sense becomes attuned to "The way things sound. The way things smell. Birds flying low. Now you have to make friends with this place" (*Out*, 145). This liberation of the body from the desires constructed by ideology is also apparent in *98.6* in which the ritualised sexual and sporting activities of the commune are used as attempts to displace the dominance of the conscious mind in favour of a conscious body. However, the ritualised behaviour begins to duplicate the rituals of the culture of Frankenstein and it is unclear whether Sukenick is able to offer an alternative to this in the utopian scene of 'Palestine' which concerns itself more with the desire

to return to the authenticity of a primal scene of language.

Sukenick's fiction enacts a tension current in other political metafiction novels. These texts offer the possibility that alternative cultural forms and identities can be created, but find that these new forms either reproduce already constructed ideological forms (Sukenick's transcendentalist consciousness of the body) or demand impossible scenarios in the hope that in a culture where 'anything is possible' they might ultimately be achieved. This opens these texts to a paradox. If it is in the power of contemporary culture to allow anything to happen then it is perfectly feasible for such a culture to have either already constructed the new possibilities that are offered or for it to co-opt the new variations that are projected. This prospect creates different strategies in experimental fiction of the 1960's and 1970's. Metafiction refrains from offering new forms of identity and cultural practice, distancing itself from cultural concerns in the hope that it will not be recuperated by society. Instead, metafiction interrogates the ideological creation of 'reality', seeing 'reality' as a fiction and suggesting that any attempts to create new forms of identity and cultural practice will only result in the creation of new fictions which are just as untrustworthy as those they replace. Political metafiction, on the other hand, becomes more aware of the power of ideology and its creation of social and cultural reality and recognises that ideology does not disappear just because a few writers say that it is a fiction. This introduces the question of referentiality, political metafiction recognising a need to engage with culture and its ideological movements as the only way to properly resist them. Where the radically metafictional texts of Gass, Barth and Sorrentino propose that nothing is real and that everything is a fiction, political metafiction moves to a position that recognises the continued power of the 'fictions' of ideology. Political metafiction realises that ideology cannot be ignored, but must be challenged in order to subvert its control of cultural meaning and social practices.

Notes

1. Ronald Sukenick, *In Form: Digressions on the Art of Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p.241.

2. See Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) and *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Charles Caramello, *Silverless Mirrors: Book, Self and Postmodern American Fiction* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1983); Allen Thiher, *Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987).

3. See Charles Russell, *Poets, Prophets and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

4. See John Barth, 'The Literature of Exhaustion' and 'The Literature of Replenishment', *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction* (New York: Putnam, 1984), pp.62-76, pp.193-206.

5. John Mepham, 'Narratives of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), p.153.

6. Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'Postmodernity, *Métaphore manquée*, and the Myth of the Trans-avant-garde', *Sub-Stance*, 48 (1986), p.73.

7. William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express*, in *Three Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1980), p.189.

8. William S. Burroughs, *The Job* (London: Calder, 1984), p.33.

9. Burroughs, *The Job*, p.35.

10. William S. Burroughs, *The Naked Lunch* (London: Corgi, 1968), p.19. Hereafter cited in the text as *NL* with page number.

11. Michael Bliss, 'The Orchestration of Chaos: Verbal Technique in William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*', *Enclitic*, 1 (1977), p.64.

12. Robin Lydenberg, *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p.56, citing Jennie Skerl, *William S. Burroughs* (Boston: Twayne, 1985), pp.54-55.

13. Lydenberg, *Word Cultures*, p.62.

14. Gregory Stephenson, 'The Gnostic Vision of William S. Burroughs', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 4: 1 (1984), pp.46-7.

15. William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded* (London: Calder, 1985), pp.165-6.

16. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded*, pp.191-2 (my italics).

17. William S. Burroughs, *Cities of the Red Night* (London: Picador, 1982), p.151.

18. Zurbrugg, 'Postmodernity, *Métaphore manquée*', p.79.

19. Burroughs, *Nova Express*, p.227.

20. William S. Burroughs, 'Interview', with Conrad Knickerbocker, *Paris Review*, 35 (1965), p.23. See also Burroughs, 'Proust and Beckett', in *The Adding Machine: Collected Essays* (London: Calder, 1985) pp.182-6.

21. William Gass's reconstruction of small-town life in *Omensetter's Luck*, despite its simulated qualities, can be seen as just such a nostalgia for a culture where 'real' experiences can occur.

22. Richard Wasson, 'Notes on a New Sensibility', *Partisan Review*, 36: 3 (1969), p.462.

23. Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p.128.

24. Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), p.67.

25. Eagleton, 'Modernism', p.61.

26. Robert Musil, *A Man Without Qualities*, 3 vols., trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Picador, 1979), II, pp.53-4.

27. Harry Mathews, *The Conversions* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987), pp.7-8.

28. David Hayman, *Re-Forming the Narrative: Toward a Mechanics of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p.58.

29. The Heisenberg principle of narration differs from the Einsteinian principle at work in the modernist act of 'telling', which focuses on the view that a consciousness's spatial and temporal location determine the form and content of the phenomena that are observed. Translated into fiction this means that subjectivity is privileged, as the consciousness's location in time and space not only determines the way that phenomena are observed and comprehended, but also how they are ordered.

30. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), p.3.

31. Kenneth Gangemi, *Olt*, cited in Philip Stevick, 'Scheherezade runs out of plots, goes on talking; the King, puzzled, listens: an Essay on New Fiction', *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977), pp.211-2.

32. Stevick, 'Scheherezade', p.202.

33. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

34. Tony Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.257; Thiher, *Words in Reflection*, p.107.

35. Reginald Dyck, 'William Gass: "A Purified Modernist" in a Postmodern World', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 3 (1991), pp.124-30.

36. William S. Gass, *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country and Other Stories* (Boston: Godine, 1981), p.182.

37. William Gass, 'A Debate: William Gass and John Gardner', in *Anything Can Happen: Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists*, ed. Tom LeClair and Larry McCaffery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p.27.

38. John Barth, 'Life Story', in *Lost in the Funhouse* (New York: Bantam, 1969), p.115. Hereafter cited in the text as *LF* with page number.

39. James McKenzie, 'Pole Vaulting in Top Hats: A Public Conversation with John Barth, William Gass, and Ishmael Reed', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 22: 2 (1976), p.137.

40. Tanner, *Scenes of Nature*, p.187.

41. John Barth, *Chimera* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1973), p.26. Hereafter cited in the text as *C* with page number.

42. John Barth, *Giles Goat-Boy* (London: Granada, 1981), p.693.

43. Larry McCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p.4.

44. Mepham, 'Narratives of Postmodernism', p.153.

45. Frederick R. Karl, *American Fictions, 1940-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p.385.

46. Donald Barthelme, *City Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968) pp.107-14.

47. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of An Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.7.

48. Donald Barthelme, 'At the End of the Mechanical Age', in *Sixty Stories* (London: Minerva, 1991), p.272.

49. Donald Barthelme, *Sadness* (New York: Pocket Books, 1980), p.57.

50. David Porush, 'Fiction at the End of the Mechanical Age: Barthelme's Art "which has not yet been invented"', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 2 (1991), p.84.

51. Charles Molesworth, 'The Nasciemento Effect and Barthelme's *The King*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 2 (1991), p.102.

52. The same view of postmodernist fiction is presented by Richard Bradbury in his discussion of Barth's *LETTERS* which he sees as a form of realism because it mimics the world economy of late capitalism: "Plots spin outwards in the 'real world' and in the world of postmodernist fiction, describing the mechanisms by which both operate. In that sense postmodernism can be seen as the realism of the contemporary period, because its formal techniques correspond to a perception of the social reality of state capitalism as an international phenomenon." Bradbury, 'Postmodernism and Barth and the Present State of Fiction', *Critical Quarterly*, 32: 1 (1990), p.71.

53. Barthelme, *Sadness*, p.60.

54. Barthelme, 'The Crisis', in *Great Days* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp.3-8.

55. For further details of the publishing history of *Mulligan Stew*, see Jerome Klinkowitz, 'The Extra-Literary in Contemporary American Fiction', in *Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and Sigmund Ro (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p.25.

56. Tom LeClair, *The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p.177.

57. Barth, *The Friday Book*, p.17.

58. For a discussion of the importance of system in *LETTERS*, particularly the significance of the structuring principles of DNA, see Max F. Schulz, 'Barth, *LETTERS*, and the Great Tradition', *Genre*, 14 (1981), pp.95-115.

59. John Barth, *LETTERS* (New York: Putnam, 1979), p.34.

60. See Susan Poznar, 'Barth's "Compulsion to Repeat: Its Hazards and Possibilities"', *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10: 2 (1990), pp.64-75.

61. See Tanner, *Scenes of Nature*, p.176, for a discussion of the use of the word "Reset" in *Chimera*.

62. See Kim McMullen, 'The Fiction of Correspondence: *LETTERS* and History', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 36: 3 (1990), p.408.

63. Marjorie Godlin Roemer, 'The Paradigmatic Mind: John Barth's *LETTERS*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 33: 1 (1987), p.41.

64. Barth, *LETTERS*, p.381.

65. David Porush, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), p.153.

66. Caramello, *Silverless Mirrors*, pp.80-1.

67. Thiher, *Words in Reflection*, pp.146-7.

68. David Seed, 'In Pursuit of the Receding Plot: Some American Postmodernists', in Smyth, *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, p.37.

69. Sukenick, *In Form*, p.3.

70. Sukenick's hostility to the 'pop' aesthetic is developed in *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories* (New York: Dial Press, 1969), p.95. He writes that 'pop' art is "the desperate reintroduction of realism as media realism, stereotype... as if the only thing we can make of our experience is the ultimate mirror image - a photograph, a negative, a cliché".

71. Ronald Sukenick, *Out* (Chicago: Swallow, 1973), p.162. Hereafter cited in the text with page number.

72. Ronald Sukenick, *98.6* (New York: Fiction Collective, 1975), p.131. Hereafter cited in the text with page number.

73. See Seed, 'In Pursuit of the Receding Plot', pp.36-9; and Ronald Sukenick, 'The New Tradition in Fiction', in *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow, 1975), pp.35-45.

Chapter Four: Political Metafiction and Fiction of the 1970's

> Since in the grown up novels I write I have tended to fracture or submerge the storyline, I am all the more haunted by stories I love. They have a speed and wholeness, and they effortlessly obscure the question of just what it is in us that makes us want stories. Whatever it is... as I try to move my characteristic mazes of reflection and modern discontinuity back toward some mode of heart-gripping mystery-thriller, it is a need that my child and I share.[1]

Criticism of contemporary fiction has taken to the word 'postmodernism' with abandon. Any text which shows the slightest interest in self-reflexivity, anti-realism, ironic detachment, or simulation is called 'postmodern' or 'postmodernist'. Even the K-Mart or dirty realism of Carver, Beattie and Mason have been brought under the banner of postmodernism.[2] This over-use of the word 'postmodernism' to describe contemporary experimental fiction tends to have an homogenising effect. To use the word 'postmodernism' so freely requires the construction of literary or cultural paradigms that describe contemporary experimental fiction in terms of its common features. These paradigms also have the effect of detracting from the cultural specificity of individual texts, ignoring specific features articulated by the text and negating the political position offered. This is an issue that John Mepham has addressed. In a discussion of Christa Wolf's *Cassandra* he shows how aesthetic concerns frequently overwhelm political concerns in the focus on a text's 'postmodernist' features:

> But far from it adopting what in postmodernist culture are fashionable positions (disbelief in the possibility of distinguishing between fantasy and reality, the autonomy of art), it positively argues that its myths and fantasies are presented as routes back to the real. It is a repudiation of the aesthetic, a return to the political, to a literature of resistance, of witness, of inquiry.[3]

This chapter will adopt a similar approach to Mepham's. Coover's *The Public Burning*, Gaddis' *JR*, Delillo's *Ratner's Star*, Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, and McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge* will be discussed in terms of their "return to the political".

Although the postmodernist forms of these texts will be articulated they will principally be discussed in terms of their specific cultural location (Nixon's America) and by reference to the specific textual and narrative forms they articulate to achieve their political positions.

Political metafiction develops the strategies of metafiction in alignment with Burroughs' social perspective. The effects of ideology on identity and consciousness are confronted in terms of an interrogation of cultural constructions of 'reality'. Political metafiction, however, does not simply see 'reality' as a transcultural and universal imperative that has failed in contemporary society. Political metafiction views 'reality' as a specifically political or ideological phenomenon that still has impact on contemporary culture and on constructions of identity and social practices. Metafictional strategies, in which cultural constructions of 'reality' are parodied, do not seem adequate in the 1970's when the control of the individual by the State and by Corporate capitalism seem to be re-asserted in the repression of civil resistance. In such circumstances, it does not seem possible to adopt Baudrillard's view that ideology disappears in postmodern culture. Baudrillard argues that ideology and control are exposed as fictions and therefore vanish because, as his logic has it, fictions cannot have real effect.[4] For Baudrillard, plurality replaces ideology as a cultural dominant in postmodernity. Cultural experience in the 1970's does not seem, however, to be the postmodern plurality and heterogeneity described by Baudrillard. Although the theorisation of postmodern culture as post-reality, post-ideology and post-history suggests a lack of system and order (as if postmodernity were the heterotopian paradise of the Los Angeles of *L.A. Story* or Samuel Delany's *Triton*), the persistence of Lyotard's *grand récits* seems to be experienced.[5] The culture of the 1970's is an intersection between modernizing and postmodernizing tendencies, where system and fragmentation (rather than multiplicity of experience) intersect. Ideology circulates in the flux of images and information found in postmodern culture. Instead of collapsing in on themselves, the State and its ideological forms persist and are even renewed in the law and order ideologies that ensure the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 and 1972. Ideology, however, does not have complete

control of cultural production. The 1970's is an experience of the proliferation of cultural forms, as new ideological positions are generated in response to the many forms of resistance offered by the counter-culture and New Left movement. The crisis narratives discussed in chapter two contribute to the proliferation of ideological structures. They use the threats posed by the counter-culture to create the dilemmas that are required to generate new ideological forms. Because of the many oppositional positions involved, however, they do not create a synthesis of cultural forms. Crisis narratives create too many systems, but these are not experienced as a failure of ideology in contemporary society. Ideology develops more complex forms of control to counter the increased resistance to the State and ideology during this period.

Although several writers of political metafiction (Burroughs, Barthelme and Sukenick) have already been considered, they have been discussed in relation to other forms of textual experimentation: Burroughs' alignment of cultural concerns and modernist cut-up techniques, Barthelme's minimalism, and Sukenick's surfictional experiments. This chapter will provide a more detailed discussion of political metafiction, with a particular focus on the forms developed in response to the new cultural forms of the 1970's. Political metafiction, in the 1970's, consolidates and develops the forms of experiment found in Burroughs, Barthelme, and Sukenick and also draws upon the strategies of metafiction. While metafiction provides an interrogation of 'reality' and 'truth' as a cultural construct from a specifically ontological perspective, political metafiction develops the interrogation of 'reality' alongside its concerns with cultural and social forms. This involves an intersection between metafiction's focus on the linguistic construction of fiction and narrative (what Genette describes as the diegetic or "the universe of the narrative" and what Brian McHale describes as the creation of linguistic or paper worlds) and Burroughs' "world out there".[6] Political metafiction configures itself in terms of parallelism, which stems from the complexities that this intersection creates. Narrative forms proliferate in much the same way that Philip K. Dick creates proliferating analogue and parallel realities in a novel such as *Now Wait For Last Year*. Multiple narratives spin out from the analogue structures

(referentiality/metafiction, system/context, static narratives/dynamic narratives, genre/story) that are configured. Complex forms develop in texts which privilege fragmentation, disruption and digression. The complexities do not, however, replicate postmodernity's fragmented landscape. They are always informed by political metafiction's reference to contemporary culture and society, and either defamiliarise the forms of control found in contemporary culture or are mapped as a means to offer alternative forms to those articulated by ideology.

The use of analogue forms does not, however, create a new system of binary oppositions. Although political metafiction uses structuring principles (genres and binary oppositions) it also parodies them. This process is not new to political metafiction. Metafictional novels also parody the use of structuring principles in favour of the operations of language. They negate the structures that are introduced, but do not offer alternative forms of textual production. Political metafiction uses the same strategies, but, like the novels of Brautigan, also develops new narrative forms which displace those which have been parodied. The presence of the two forms of narrative in political metafiction has led to radically different views of these texts because they appear to be both highly structured *and* digressive or aleatory. Tom LeClair, for example, discusses a similar group of texts in terms of their mastery of systems, while Brian McHale focuses on their anti-totalising impulses.[7] The paradoxical forms of contemporary experimental fiction have been recognised by Charles Harris who says of absurdist metafiction that its writers "reject traditional forms and styles while at the same time continuing to use these forms and styles".[8] Patricia Waugh also describes this process in her analysis of metafiction's defamiliarisation of realism: "Very often realistic conventions supply the 'control' in metafictional texts, the norm or background against which the experimental stategies can foreground themselves."[9] In metafiction genre and the conventions of realism supply the axis that allows the metafictional strategies to take place. In political metafiction, however, their use does not just foreground the "experimental strategies" of the texts. Genres and the conventions of realism also act as the cultural code of the novel, dramatising the effects of control and ideology in contemporary society.

The articulation of genre also involves the intervention of a system of codes and values which may be 'alien' to the text itself. The text potentially becomes alienated from itself, threatened with complicity, its own narrative configurations subordinated to narrative forms that direct it to goals or points of closure it would otherwise avoid. The development of dynamic narratives and the focus on story, however, means that the texts of political metafiction move away from these ideological forms. Genres and the conventions of realism are exposed simply as fictions which prove useful to the text in its enactment of ideology's encoding of culture. As a result, the encoding of ideology into the text is resisted.

A more positive strategy articulated by political metafiction is the dialogism of genres. Political metafiction offers the dialogism of genres as a strategy that resists the construction of the text as an ideological form. The use of genre at a macro-textual level brings with it a set of narratives that are already pre-figured. The use of multiple genres on the other hand entails a continual metonymic displacement (which also occurs in Brautigan's fiction) and allows the abandonment of one genre for another. This not only has the effect of a rejection of a genre's cultural meanings, but also allows the production of multiple narrative pathways. The use of genre also has import for the question of identity and is not only used as a means to dramatise the production of ideology in society. The proliferation of genres that takes place in *Mumbo Jumbo*, for example, where detective fiction, historical novel, Quest novel, conspiracy fiction, and the 'Gothic' elements of the voodoo narratives mingle together creates a situation in which genres are figured as fields of action. Each genre creates a particular form of identity. Detective fiction configures the characters as rational analysts, villains or victims while the Quest novel creates the characters as heroes or villains, and the conspiracy novel configures the characters as paranoids. The use of genres allows the characters the means to discover an identity before they move into a new genre and a new field of action. The access to different fields allows new combinations to take shape. In *Mumbo Jumbo*, Papa LaBas escapes the parameters of detective fiction (in which he is trapped in the rationality underpinning white culture and allowed only certain lines of thought and modes

of analysis) but retains his role as an analyst when he enters the genre of conspiracy fiction. This genre gives him access to fantasy (or anti-rational) forms of knowledge and his synthesis of the two enables him to understand why white society represses black culture. His assistant, Earline, is involved in a similar process, moving from being a victim (detective fiction) to a heroine (Epic), to a discoverer of alternative forms of knowledge which help LaBas and which liberate Earline from her "possession" by white culture. While the use of only one genre presents a one-dimensional frame for identity, the use of multiple genres creates identity as processes of identification. The same is the case with political metafiction as a whole. The multiple narrative forms that are available in the complexities of these encyclopaedic and baroque novels are used to map identity outside ideological constructions of subjectivity. The metonymic displacement that the dialogism of genres entails allows the possibility of a transformation of identity within existing culture. So too does the use of non-generic, non-linear narratives of digression. Political metafiction creates a dynamics of story relocating the novel in its story-telling antecedents, in the Benjaminian sense, where stories lack the informational and ideological content which Benjamin identifies with the novel. Political metafiction maps non-generic episodic or digressive narratives as a means to configure new forms of experience or knowledge. This is the case, for example, with Joseph McElroy's use of narrative in *Lookout Cartridge*. *Lookout Cartridge* challenges the master-systems that seem to be imposed, opposing the recuperative narrative of connections entailed in Cartwright's investigation by mapping a non-centering alinear subjectivity in the stories that loop out from this narrative. These stories create multiple fields of action similar to those offered by *Mumbo Jumbo*'s use of genre.

The discovery of non-ideological forms of identity has negative aspects in some of these novels, focusing specifically around gender and masculinity. Writers like Burroughs and Sukenick tend to retreat into identities of male individualism in order to escape the attenuation of self in Corporate America. Similarly, although Barth and Sorrentino try to ironise the masculine elements present in their novels, a residue of such perspectives is still retained. A binary view of

gender in the construction of identity is produced, in which the proto-modernist view of contemporary culture as a feminised sphere that threatens male identity is adopted.[10] Loss of male power and identity is figured. This loss occurs in the protean selfhoods that develop in consumer culture and in the figuring of men as automata in the Corporate work-place where they are no longer active decision-makers. There is a fear that the stable masculine self (which is actually constructed by ideology) is either threatened by the feminised protean consumer culture (where men simply become consumers rather than producers) or attenuated by contact with the economic sphere of the Corporations. There is either flux or absence. Like the narrator of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (though in a radically different context), several of these male writers perceive themselves as strangers in their own country, alienated by the loss of male power. As a result, writers like Barth, Sukenick and Burroughs fear that men will also be constituted as the 'other', figured not as a self-autonomous active agent but as a protean self moved by ideology. Men are perceived to suffer the same repression as women, but this does not result in solidarity with women. These writers try to avoid the representation of male identity as a protean form, seeing the feminine as a negativity that destroys male autonomy. Because they cannot think outside ideology they are unable to offer new forms of identity. They turn instead to already existing forms of masculinity, configuring identity in terms of self-reliant autonomy, an identity that allows the protean world of consumer culture to be controlled and dominated by the 'individual'. Identity is premissed on the same principle of domination that underpins the society they criticise and which they see causing their disempowerment in the first place.

Other writers, however, see the protean self as the starting point for a transformation of identity. Ideological constructions of male identity (conceived in terms of power and domination) are replaced by the processive transformation of identity. The more interesting reconstitutions of identity that take place in 1970's novels (and which distinguish 1970's political metafiction from the political metafiction of Burroughs and Sukenick) premiss the creation of identity on the protean identities generated by the facsimile self. The flow of images and

information in postmodern culture create identity as a simulated individuality, a process analysed by Frank Dexter (see chapter two) and by Ian Angus:

> It is not so much goods that are for sale nowadays as lifestyles. And here, it may well be, the inner logic of industrialism reaches its apogee: not goods *for* individuals, but 'individuals' produced *through* the staging of goods. Cultural identities produced industrially and exchanged at will.[11]

Identities are simulated in consumerism, desires constructed and simulated as economic forms, staged by the informational and commodity networks. Political metafiction configures identity in terms of the facsimile self (discussed in the previous chapter), a parody of the simulated self figured by postmodern culture, involving the faking of identity in terms of already mapped out forms of subjectivity. Identity is not reconstructed as the simulated one-dimensional self-autonomy of consumer capital, but as an alinear form that brings together different identities and reconstitutes them as processes of identification, a process found, for example, in *Mumbo Jumbo*.

Transformation is also evident in political metafiction's approach to system. Certain novels of political metafiction desire a system or structure that will allow the chaos of the postmodern world to be defused but are wary of the limits systems impose, seeing ideology at work in the parameters systems create. They adopt systems that do not co-opt the subject into the ideological structures that already exist in contemporary culture. These writers embrace the new sciences of the twentieth century because they seem to liberate perception and knowledge from a Newtonian deterministic view of the world. The Newtonian view of the universe sees immutable laws at work, the subject simply an atom bounced around by invisible forces. These forces do not, however, work externally. The subject is an integral part of this system, the forces in operation needing an 'object' through which to work. Quantum science seems to suggest that the Newtonian system, and the rational empirical methodology it produces, are provisional constructs. The adoption of quantum science by experimental writers entails the adoption of this critique of Newtonian science but also entails a critique of ideology with which Newtonian science is associated. Both Newtonian science and ideology project

worlds in which immutable laws are in operation and where change is impossible. They also both restrict perception, the result of which, in the case of ideology, is the limiting of identity and cultural practice, ideology preventing the theorisation of new forms of social relations and the concomitant transformation of identity and culture. In Corporate capitalism the similarity between social control and Newtonian science is made concrete. Thomas Schaub descibes the co-option of 'system' into Corporate capitalism which refigures 'system' as a Newtonian rationalised machine (systems planning), to which the interests of the subject are subordinated. He notes that this creates an ambivalence to systems on the part of contemporary writers.[12] The perspective supplied by the Uncertainty Principle suggests that systems alter information to fit the existing structure and therefore act as homogenising forms that construct uniformity. They create stasis rather than process or transformation. The systems that writers of the 1970's find in modern science (Barth's model of DNA, McElroy's use of wave-theory, Delillo's use of mathematical models, Pynchon and Gaddis' use of Godel's Theorem) all involve processive systems that can take account of change. These systems are descriptive rather than prescriptive.[13] They do not organise or control, but are used because they allow for, or even enable, the development of new possibilities.

The desire to escape machine-systems is represented by the proliferation of narratives generated by the maximalist form of these novels. Even novels as short as Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* and Burroughs' *The Cities of the Red Night*, contain an encyclopaedic impulse.[14] Encyclopaedic narratives are not articulated with the purpose of containing all knowledge or models of human action, but to show that no single system can explain or organise all the information available in postmodern culture. While these novels seem to display a totalising principle - in which, either collectively or individually, they incorporate aspects of information theory, science, technology, philosophy, politics, cultural theory, mass and popular culture (televison, film, comics, music), history, literature, and psychiatry - they actually portray the impossibility of operating such a principle. The proliferating systems of data in these novels enact the proliferation of systems of meaning

through which control is created, each of which pulls the subject in different directions. The fragmentation of texts in the multiplication of narratives, however, is not a mimicry of a labyrinthine postmodern culture, but an attempt to find a way out of the grid-like labyrinth of culture that ideology creates. The multiplication of narratives is an attempt to escape the systems of data that the referential narratives configure and which seem to impose stasis on the text. This is the case with Don Delillo's *Ratner's Star* which maps a referential narrative in which the movement of information in society is portrayed not as a flux of fragments but as a symmetrical system - represented by Maurice Wu's discovery that history follows a cyclical path. Information follows channels like those of a mainframe computer, the subject locked into the system and at the mercy of it for his or her access to information. The systems-narrative which maps this movement of information in society is resisted by Delillo's generation of multiple narrative path-ways. These allow Billy Twillig (or Terwilliger) to loop outside the systems-narrative's domain. Billy's narrative takes place in a scientific institute. The institute has as a reference point the nightmare prison of Doctor Terwilliger in the film *The Five Thousand Fingers of Doctor T.* and enacts the prison created by Corporate capitalism's control and systematisation of information. Billy's narrative follows a digressive trajectory that wanders through alternative (interpretative) systems which provide multiple perspectives for both Billy and the novel as a whole. This is not a plotless wandering, however. Each new system entails the use of different mathematical principles which shape the narrative: "In 'Convergence Inward' Billy learns that Ratner's star is a black hole and watches a nameless Australian bushman spin himself into physical nonexistence. These events are analogues of the contraction and concentration on extreme limits that characterize the mathematics of Euler and LaGrange."[15] Elaborate narrative forms are created by the use of mathematical systems but never resolve themselves into a master-system that determines or controls the flow of information, despite the attempts of other scientists to find just such a master-system. The baroque tendency generated by the diversity of narratives stems not from a reflection of postmodern culture, but a critical awareness of it, the extravagance, exuberance and whimsicality generated by the use of digressive and non-linear narrative

developments plotting a way through and, hopefully, out of the systems that impose themselves on culture. The baroque elements of these novels also reflect on the grotesquerie and monstrosity of the culture in which they are located, introducing a satirical defamiliarising process to some of these texts (those of Reed, Gaddis, Coover, and Pynchon), a process also enacted by their fictionalising tendencies.

Political metafiction's defamiliarising tendencies demonstrate its return to referentiality. Political metafiction does not, however, reject metafictional forms of writing. Political metafiction investigates the possibilities of metafiction in conjunction with culturally interested narrative and textual configurations. The return to narrative is a return to a site of literary conflict in which constructions of reality (through what Barthes calls the cultural code) can be contested rather than rejected. Political metafiction's concern with ideology and social control also highlights its attempts to resist the siting of literature as an ideological form. Political metafiction not only questions the operations of ideology in culture, but attempts to construct non-ideological forms of writing. Political metafiction therefore is formulated not as an escape from social structures, in the manner of high modernist aesthetics, but as an avant-garde project intervening in the creation of cultural meanings. Its vision of the future is, however, less optimistic, following its awareness that writing is always constructed from within social and cultural forms of meaning and practice and potentially recuperated by them.[16] Tony Tanner notes this referential economy in a discussion of metafictional strategies in contemporary literature. He comments that Walter Abish's *How German Is It* is "manifestly concerned with Nazi Germany and - among other things, what does 'it' matter to our contemporary state of mind ultimately - the different ways in which the Nazi past is buried, suppressed, disavowed, covered over with the rich cake of contemporary Germany."[17] While the novel maps a self-consciously fictional imagining of Germany it is just as concerned with the investigation of the persistence of Nazi ideology in the present at a referential level. The book presents contemporary Germany as a culture of fictions in which history and the persistence of Nazi ideology in the present are concealed. In its

mimicry of ideology's fictionalising strategies the novel presents a critical and satirical perspective which defamiliarises as well as fictionalises.

From Metafiction to Political Metafiction: The Fiction of Robert Coover

Having generally delineated some of the aspects of political metafiction, I now want to turn to the texts themselves, beginning with the work of Robert Coover, whose fictions map the changes between metafiction and political metafiction. Coover's earliest novels, *The Origin of the Brunists* (1966) and *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* both articulate the provisional and arbitrary character of 'reality' and 'truth'. The former novel does so primarily within the frame of a linear narrative and it is only in the latter novel that Coover's metafictional project comes into play. This latter novel concerns J. Henry Waugh's creation of a baseball game that is played using dice and charts, the dice used to determine the possibilities made available by the charts Waugh has produced. The possibilities set out by the dice take place within a frame of already limited probabilities (even in Waugh's Extraordinary Occurrences Chart). The novel develops Waugh's obsession with his baseball game as he retreats from society into a solipsistic domain where Waugh bėlieves that he is in control or, as Margaret Heckard has suggested, where he is God - although if this is the case, he is not the controlling God that Heckard sees, but an anti-Einsteinian God who plays dice with the universe.[18]

The game-system he has developed seems in its purity of form to be an alternative to the controlled chaos of contemporary life that Waugh sees around him, "full of moving people, going going going, the endless jostling flow. They gave him somehow a vague and somber sense of fatality and closed circuits. Motion. The American scene."[19] The baseball game seems to have an aesthetic mathematical beauty because it is not disturbed by the dissonances present in contemporary society. Whereas contemporary culture cannot be transformed, for Waugh the baseball game is a structure of ideal perfection that as a process-

system allows transformations to occur: "Perfection wasn't a thing, a closed moment, a static fact, but *process*, yes, and the process was transformation" (*UBA*, 212). The importance of the system for Waugh lies in its ability to generate variations which Waugh takes beyond the simple mechanics of rolling dice. Out of this mechanical process, Waugh begins to construct narratives which frame the rolling of the dice. His baseball teams and players are not simply names, but have distinct identities. The importance of the game for Waugh is not merely the abstract mathematical purity of the game, but the ways in which its abstraction can be made concrete in his fantasising of stories and scenarios for his players as they face up to the possibilities entailed in the throw of the dice. It is these narratives, dialogues, and actions (motivated by the identities that Waugh has constructed for his players) that dominate his system. The system may have its own symmetries, but it is the variations that Waugh constructs through the generation of narratives that allow him to liberate himself. In his construction of narratives, Waugh becomes an active agent so that the game is not a system, nor is it "a message, but an event" (*UBA*, 143). This event is the creation of Waugh as an identity distinct from the fragmenting flux of contemporary culture.

Waugh's construction of these narratives, however, is also the cause of crisis. At one point, the dice decide that one of Waugh's favourite players, Damon Rutherford, is to be killed (by the throwing of a bean-ball in a match between the Pioneers and the Knickerbockers). This event precipitates a crisis in the identity that Waugh has created for himself. He has invested so much effort in the construction of a personality for Rutherford (who as a rookie pitcher has come close to breaking a record, the possibility of which the system doesn't seem to allow) that Waugh has created a hero-figure whose death he cannot accept. The triumph of the system makes him aware that his involvement in the game does not allow an unlimited scope for the construction of an identity. It points instead to the negation of the self through chance. Waugh has "devised a machine for the production of narrative" which does not need his involvement.[20] The system allows Waugh a role through his marginal involvement in narrative production, but also involves his willing abnegation of the control of his own identity through

the operations of chance which, he begins to realise, display some of the attributes of the random culture he has escaped. It is at this moment that Waugh tries to take control and to assert his own 'willed' involvement in the game. He juggles things so that the Knickerbockers (the team of the pitcher who killed Rutherford) put out their weakest players and, when the system still triumphs and the Knickerbockers continue to win, alters the roll of the dice so that the pitcher who killed Rutherford is also killed, an act of revenge that is more directed at the system he has created.

Waugh realises that his intervention means that the game becomes a mirror of the dissonant culture he has fled. Waugh's imposition of his own desires means that the game is subject to the same arbitrary and wilful behaviour found in society. As a result, the game becomes a site of randomness instead of stability and order. This is not the worst of it for Waugh. He realises that by imposing his desires he is paradoxically negating the identity that the game creates for him because his desires are actually a product of contemporary society. Waugh can assert his own agency by his involvement, but he also negates this agency because he negates the system which constructed his identity in the first place. In the end, he allows the system to triumph and, in a sense, dies. In the curious last chapter, Waugh has disappeared and what is narrated is not a description of the baseball dice game as played by Waugh, but a description of the game from the perspective of the players. Waugh's 'presence' is felt, however, in the players' mimicry of Waugh's desires for a system that will make the game meaningful. To create a system, the players take part in a ritualised baseball game which mimics the death of Damon Rutherford and which possibly involves 'human' sacrifice. They even propose a record-keeper in the sky, who they believe to be insane for allowing the random events they 'experience' to take place. It is here that Coover's playful and ironising metafictional strategies become more obvious. He foregrounds the fact that the baseball players are not 'real' people, directing attention to their status as paper fictions. One player, for example, looks up at the 'sun' and sees the words "100 watt" written across it (*UBA*, 232), this event revealing that the player is looking up from a piece of paper spread across

Waugh's kitchen table. The revelation that these are paper players introduces a humorous distance on Coover's part. He plays with the ludicrous prospect of paper players becoming involved in political intrigues (between Caseyite and Damonite sects) and acting out the ritual sacrifice of another paper player. Coover foregrounds the fictionality of the text, ironising the apparently mimetic qualities of Waugh's narrative and his escape from contemporary culture. Waugh is shown to be just another paper 'player' whose actions and desires are only textual experiences.

Despite Coover's parody of mimesis as the basis of literature, *The Universal Baseball Association* does have a referential aspect. Although Coover suggests that systems of meaning may be fictions and may involve the negation of self and identity he also suggests that they provide solace in a culture where the subject seems to be a random atom bounced around by incomprehensible forces. Personal systems may involve self-negation but may also allow the construction of an identity. It is this process of creation and liberation that Coover sees as an important part of the acts of both writing and reading:

> Artists re-create: they make us think about doing all the things we shouldn't do, all the impossible, apocalyptic things, and weaken and tear down structures so that they can be rebuilt, releasing new energies.[21]

Writing not only alters perspectives, but also alters the shape of desires in society, refracting them away from already constructed cultural, social, and philosophical norms and into new areas of possibility. In the development of Coover's writing it seems to be metafiction which destroys and political metafiction which produces the "new energies" he describes. The political and cultural force of Coover's argument, which Coover expressed in 1973, does not fully appear until *The Public Burning*, but Coover's collection of stories, *Pricksongs and Descants* (1969), clearly point in the direction of a more critical and creative awareness of the power of both fiction and narrative to create new desires and perspectives.

The stories in *Pricksongs and Descants* do not involve linearity, resolution, or unity. The stories in this collection are open-ended and frequently involve

proliferation of plot-lines out of an initial scenario, particularly in those stories which Larry McCaffery has called "cubist".[22] One such story is 'The Magic Poker' which is both a fiction concerned with its own status - involving a narrator who describes his own involvement in the construction of the world in which the story is set - and a fiction intent on developing an open-ended form of narrative. 'The Magic Poker' begins with the arrival of two girls on a wilderness island, once inhabited by a wealthy family but now only occupied by the old caretaker's son and a mysterious man wearing a turtleneck sweater. Several events take place, but not as a cause and effect narrative. One of the girls (the girl in gold pants) discovers a magic poker, but this is narrated more than once in different contexts. On one occasion she kisses the poker and the man in the turtleneck sweater appears as a 'Fairy Prince'. On another she discovers it is covered in bugs and recoils. And on a third occasion she kisses it and while the man in the turtleneck sweater once more appears the event is narrated as an ironised romantic meeting. The 'same' event takes several forms and in the process sets up different narrative possibilities. The narrative-lines generated include other events which are also narrated several times in different contexts and which also set up other narrative pathways. There is a continual bifurcation of narrative lines, events from one narrative occurring simultaneously with different events in other narrative pathways. In one narrative the girl in gold pants does not find the poker at all. It is her sister, Karen, who discovers it. As a result of this event, the girl in gold pants enters an entirely different narrative with entirely different possibilities and variations available to it, a narrative in which she is followed by the caretaker's son and finds an old piano rather than the poker.

'Morris in Chains', another story from the same collection, offers another form of narrative experimentation. Here, Coover uses genre to create narratives. In 'Morris in Chains' there is a collapse of genre boundaries, pastoral and dystopian forms alternating and eventually intersecting when the latter triumphs over the former. The story's narrative takes place in an unspecified metropolis (although it is implied that urban space is all that is left in the world that is projected) and involves the search for a shepherd called Morris (who grazes his

flocks in the parks) by a governmental or Corporate police who see him as a threat to their society. Morris is associated with myth (in the form of both Pan and Prometheus and their connotations of chaos and defiance) which figures him in the minds of the police as a threat to the "conceivable realities" of their society.[23] He is apparently a disruptive force who challenges the circulation of ideology in society by offering an alternative lifestyle which promises more freedom than the State allows. Narratively, this is accompanied by the entry of folk-lore and myth into the story which is subsequently shaped by two oppositions: futurism and nostalgia, and mass society and Arcadian society.[24] Coover initially seems to be using myth and folk-lore to re-create and supplement the perspectives on culture and identity that are made available by the parameters of ideology and to offer alternative narrative possibilities to the narratives (linear narratives and genre) Coover sees constructed by ideology. His use of myth, however, takes place within the form of parodic "fractured fairy-tales", a re-configuration of the fairy-tale which foregrounds its fictional status.[25] Coover questions the view that the fairy-tale is an embodiment of eternal truths and archetypal forms of human nature, seeing it as simply a fiction designed for the purpose of entertainment. He also questions the fairy-tale's power to offer alternative perspectives in contemporary society, particularly in the use of the fairy-tale as a representation of resistance (where Morris is figured as Prometheus). Morris does not see himself as a mythic archetype engaged in an attack on society. This position is constructed for him by the police who paranoiacally attribute thoughts of resistance to him, thoughts which his inarticulate soliloquies do not express. This parody also carries over into Coover's juxtaposition of pastoral and dystopian genres. In his use of genres, Coover parodies those contemporary writers who see Romantic pantheism as an adequate response to the repressions created by ideology in contemporary culture, while also questioning the novel of technological dystopia, drawing attention to the paranoia involved in this novel form. The return to Romantic idealism is presented as a disempowering move, the retreat from social involvement that this entails meaning that those in power are free to impose their own values on society, a situation figured by Morris' capture when his body is manipulated by the hands of the police. The paranoid dystopian

novel is parodied because it constructs a nihilistic view of society in its suggestion that resistance is pointless and change impossible to achieve.

In *The Public Burning* Coover brings together the genre-games of 'Morris in Chains' and the narrative bifurcations of 'The Magic Poker', but articulates them within a political framework. The novel is set in what Tom LeClair calls the "circus state" of 1950's America, the period when Nixon was Vice-President and when the Rosenbergs were executed for their alleged involvement in giving nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union.[26] However, *The Public Burning* does not attempt to create a naturalistic portrait of America, but mixes fantasy with cultural reference. This intersection takes place through narrative, particularly in the use of the Epic. Coover shows how America imagines itself to be an Epic hero (in the form of Uncle Sam) but, by cultural reference, reveals that this is a fiction or fantasy. America's representation of itself in terms of the Epic is interrupted by carnivalesque elements which show how Epic can become farce, particularly in the actions of Richard Nixon who is portrayed as an inept fool. It is through the focus on Nixon that Coover establishes a contemporary reference for his novel. Coover suggests that the power structures of 1950's America persist in the 1970's, ensuring Nixon's election despite his obvious shortcomings. The election of a corrupt fool to the presidency seems, for Coover, to indicate that ideology is so strong that it can overcome any acts of resistance, even those which threatened to topple the State in the 1960's and early 1970's.

The Public Burning has two major narrative strands, one in which Nixon is the first person narrator, the other having an omniscient narrator who narrates a cultural history of the period and who establishes the referential story-space that enacts ideology. Although it takes up half the novel it is difficult to classify Nixon's narrative as a major narrative. Nixon's narrative presents self and identity as minimal facts (if they exist at all), overpowered by the Epic weight of history that the other narrative provides. Nixon's narrative constantly fragments, adopting a bifurcating form as Nixon takes on various identities (Quaker prophet, campaigning lawyer, tragic lover) in order to create himself as an individual who

can control the Epic historical narrative of the novel. Each identity figures him as an outsider although they also all promise the possibility that he will be recognised as an Epic hero in time. Nixon chooses goal-orientated narratives which construct identities that promise a future destiny for him but do not allow him to control the present. Against a background of larger forces (international and national politics, contemporary events, contemporary popular culture, and the political, economic, philosophical, and ideological history of America) Nixon is exposed as a fool stumbling from one crisis to another, unsure of what he is doing. The novel contrasts the many narratives that Nixon's accumulation of identities creates with the Epic narrative configured in the 'history' chapters. He is shown to be a minor actor unable to control his own actions let alone able to control history. The subject is such a minimal fact in contemporary society that even those subjects who live through the values and norms generated by ideology (desires for power and domination) are unable to achieve success. Indeed, Coover suggests that failure is one of ideology's trump cards. Success means that ideology and society are immune from change: no-one who has succeeded will wish to change the society that allowed them to succeed. Failure also serves society. The guarantee that the subject will fail means that no-one ever achieves enough power to impose an alternative vision on society and cannot therefore change the parameters of ideology. Failure also has the effect of strengthening desires for success and power, questions concerning the legitimacy of these desires fading as a one-dimensional obsession for power is created. Coover suggests, however, that this process disempowers the subject. The one-dimensional subjectivity created by ideology restricts perspectives and limits the subject's domain of power in an increasingly diverse society. The Epic scope of America - mapped in the cultural history chapters - seems assimilable only by existing systems of meaning. One such system is supplied by *The New York Times* which, as Linda Hutcheon notes, acts as a "manipulator of ideology".[27] *The New York Times* creates continuity and constancy out of "the daily debris of human enterprise" and constructs an ideological narrative of destiny for Americans.[28] Nixon, on the other hand, while adopting the same paranoid vision, refuses *The New York Times*' systematising tendency, foregrounding his ability to ad-lib rather than any ability to organise

events into a structure. He seems therefore to be the embodiment of the maverick principles which are held dear by Uncle Sam, (because of the maverick's role in creating the United States as a nation) who appears in the novel as a fantasy figure symbolising American ideology. Nixon's lack of identity, however, creates him as an absence, controlled by history and unable to live up to the maverick ideal that Uncle Sam sees as the model for American identity.

Nixon's marginality is enacted in the narrative of *The Public Burning*. His one-dimensional paranoid drama is juxtaposed to the Epic scope of the Rosenberg narrative which encompasses a cosmic battle between good and evil, a universal tale of love, a dialectical struggle, and a conflict involving international power-politics. The novel creates a dialogism of genres, but this is not a productive dialogism. The genres that accumulate (historical novel, romance, and spy story) are always subordinated to the monologic Epic form. Nixon tries to use these genres to create an identity, but is always figured as a marginal character. In the Epic he is a fool, in the historical novel he is simply a messenger, in the romance one of many rejected suitors, and in the spy-story he is the decoy or bait who allows the main figure (Uncle Sam) to achieve his goals. Nixon seems to be an extra with a walk-on role. He attempts to find a narrative which will allow him access to the world stage, but is always represented as part of a sideshow. Even when he occupies centre-stage at the Times Square ceremonies he is the clown who follows the television and cinema stars and acts as the warm-up for Uncle Sam.

The importance of genres and their reference to cultural, political, and historical forms is configured in the novel to establish the importance of narrative in the construction and re-creation of new perspectives, systems of meaning and identity. Nixon privileges narrative (and uses it to create an identity for himself) because it seems to offer a challenge to the 'inevitability' of history. Narrative seems to provide the individuality and individual endeavour that built America and which 1950's America seems to lack. Nixon wants to prove that individuality is still possible so that the spirit which built the nation can be re-created in the

present, a development he deems necessary if American ideology is to triumph over Marxism. Besides this, narrative will enable Nixon to prove that the Rosenbergs acted on their own desires and were not pawns at the mercy of larger forces. This is important to Nixon because he sees himself as having come from a similar background. If the Rosenbergs can be proved to have triumphed over history then Nixon has a model for his own life. Nixon's logic leads him to see the Rosenbergs as having escaped the social roles created by ideology:

> And the deeper they get into their roles, the less they remember who they were before they took on the parts. But what is the alternative? Going on with life at all means having to adopt one role or another, even if it's a rebellious one, doesn't it? She is sixteen years old and she doesn't think so... She said, no, life is more open-ended than that (*PB*, 107).

For Nixon, narrative is the means by which Ethel Rosenberg escapes ideology and creates an identity. Her example leads him to expect the same result in his adoption of narrative. Nixon's version of narrative, however, is just another system. He configures 'American' narrative in the same cause and effect structure that is involved in 'Marxist' history. Even though he attributes motivation to the individual rather than to history, he still locates it within an already created system of action. Ethel Rosenberg's narrative of individual action is created for her by the State. She is not an individual but a scapegoat and is not liberated but destroyed by the State's control of narratives. Nixon seems unaware of this and it leads him to mistake Uncle Sam's role. Nixon sees Uncle Sam (in his incarnation as President) as an individual who dominates and controls the ideas and values in circulation in society. However, Uncle Sam is a subject of ideology as manifested in popular opinion. Eisenhower (Uncle Sam's current incarnation) is described, for example, as an empty self: "he was simply unconscious. He didn't know what was going on" (*PB*, 276). Nixon's version of narrative subordinates narrative to system. Desire, identity, and the subject's field of action are constructed by already existing ideological models of narrative and identity. Nixon's entry into these narratives constructs him, like Eisenhower, as an absence.

Nixon's search for narrative and order inform his contradictory view of the United States. He sees it as a country dominated by systems and structures, one

in which ideological narratives (Horatio Alger style happy endings based on the work-ethic, individualism, power-struggles) are constructed through the culture industry (in newspapers, television, cinema, and in the consumerist ethic). However, these structures seem to generate a chaotic cultural space and Nixon feels that culture needs a macro-structure or master narrative to organise it. This situation is dramatised in the omniscient historical narrative chapters where variations of folk-consciousness are represented. Jackson I. Cope sees in this diversity a dialogism of "personal-life narratives with their central motif of love", a diversity that forms a single plot ending in the redemptive carnival of the Times Square celebrations.[29] This view, however, is not borne out by the novel's satirical elements. I agree with Cope that the folk-diversity does not create a dialogistic plurality, but disagree with his view that the novel finds a redemptive unity. The paranoid historical narrative generates a monologic dialogism where the plurality of perspectives provided by the novel's many stories are subsumed into the monologically created desires of ideology. The multiple perspectives do not generate the ideas and values circulating in society. Instead, it is ideology which generates them. It is this apparent homogeneity of fragmentation that Nixon wants to transform through the discovery of a dominant idea. Nixon proposes a return to a literal frontier to be defended (the defence of America), but is defeated by Uncle Sam's vision of a metaphoric frontier to be expanded, not in a literal dominance by force, but a dominance of the world through consumerism and its ideology.

A similar situation is presented by Stanley Elkin in *The Dick Gibson Show* which adopts a similar tension between master-narrative and proliferating sub-plots. Against Dick Gibson's solipsistic and sterile projection of a system that controls the culture of America - one which he locates in the plots of Behr-Bleibtrau, a master of disguise, who is apparently intent on destroying Dick's identity and causing his insanity - Elkin portrays America as a heterogeneity of voices which cannot be made uniform. Dick, as a Disc Jockey, has no identity of his own, but is dependent upon the voices of America who contact him through phone-ins for the construction of his consciousness. Dick's identity is drowned out

by these voices, a reversal of Baudrillard's view that the multiplicity created by the mass media (represented by Dick) drowns the subject's identity. Dick becomes aware of the need for a centering principle which is unconsciously supplied by his paranoid desire for order: "I'll find out. I'll see how it works, how it's all connected. *Everything's* connected. There's order, there's process, there's meaning, there's system".[30] The narrative maps a scenario in which the mass media (represented by Dick) tries to homogenise culture.[31] The mass media, however, only succeeds in creating an emptiness at its own centre, an emptiness which the mass media then attempts to extend into the consciousness of the people of America.

In the sub-plots which map the voices of America the narrative discovers a richness and cultural variety that challenges the projection of a sterile and internalised cultural homogeneity. It is the producers of mass-media (Dick Gibson) whose identities are decentred and who need a one-dimensional paranoia in order to construct meaning. The narrative configurations of the novel mitigate against system, Elkin using what Robert Coover has called his "show-off shaggy-dogging"[32] to create a narrative of digressions and anecdotal stories. The random stories of the novel exist only as fragments in the consciousness of Dick Gibson, fragments that he is unable to assimilate and totalise. Despite his attempts to unify the voices by tracing the presence of Behr-Bleibtrau behind them he is unable to impose an order on their randomness and variety. His vision of a mad doctor aiming at his downfall is simply a paranoid construction of a master-narrative. It is, however, a master-narrative that is inadequate to the task of unifying the American culture that exists in the stories of the novel, stories which supply the text with its dynamic.

Like Dick, Nixon fails to find a system or narrative that will organise the plurality of America. Although the multiple genres of the novel offer multiple perspectives for Nixon, he always seeks to subordinate the genres to a master-narrative which will allow him dominance of contemporary America and the historical narrative that figures it. As a result, the novel does not break out of its

binary scheme, Nixon's attempt to construct a master-narrative mimicking the historical narrative's trajectory. Coover uses the proximity of the historical narrative and Nixon's narrative to show that America is closer to farce than to the Epic status it desires. Nixon's failure is enacted through the attenuation of his narrative as it is juxtaposed with the universalising narrative that surrounds him. Nixon's drive to individuality leads him to visit Ethel Rosenberg in Sing Sing so that he can discover her 'real' motivations (those which he believes stem from her inner self) and redeem her through love. Here Nixon imposes a Wagnerian Romantic ideology (in terms of *Tristan and Isolde*'s redemption through sacrifice) in which truth and reality are found in the force of the will, individual action, and in the motivation for such action. This, however, is a position based on the ultimate triumph of a Schopenhauerian deterministic will, in which the world (history, society) triumphs and the self is denied. The individual will that Nixon desires is already constituted in ideology as a form of identity that creates domination, determinism and exploitation. Nixon imposes this version of identity on Ethel in order to dominate her. Nixon is unable to escape the culture he criticises and by the end of the novel he has submitted to ideology, a submission enacted in the scene where Uncle Sam sodomises him. Although at this point Nixon is dominated, Coover suggests that Nixon's acceptance of the legitimacy of processes of domination means that he will adopt and perpetuate them as his vision for society.

Redemption does not occur at Sing Sing. The tryst that Coover constructs ends not in sublime tragedy, but in farce. Nixon, his pants round his ankles and with the words "I AM A SCAMP" lipsticked on his buttocks (which figures him as a naughty boy who needs to be punished by Uncle Sam's patriarch), leaves Ethel's cell and re-appears on the podium that has been set up in Times Square for the Rosenbergs' execution. This episode - as well as the integration of Uncle Sam and Eisenhower - has led Brian McHale to argue that *The Public Burning* is primarily concerned with the questioning of reality that occurs in Coover's blurring of the historical and the fantastic.[33] Coover seems, however, to map the fantasy elements as part of his political vision, suggesting that ideology projects

fantastic paranoias to perpetuate existing social forms. These paranoias compress space and allow the metaphoric spatial superimposition of the Soviet Union on to the United States in the form of the 'reds under the beds' fantasy. It is in ideological fantasies such as this that Nixon's desired unification of America eventually takes place. Paranoia creates a system that unifies America and strengthens the State, a process enacted in the Epic ideological narrative that controls the heterogeneous stories it contains. Coover, however, challenges post-war America's view of itself as a major hero in an Epic conflict. He suggests that this is farcical self-aggrandisement. The chaos that follows the blackout at the public burning (the Spectacle which is meant to epitomise the Epic quality of American life) points to a collapse of order in America. The narrative chaos which accompanies this event produces discontinuous stories and a fragmentation of the Epic narrative, the fragmentation created by the very ideologies that seem to systematise individual desires. Paranoias create an atomistic society where no-one trusts anyone else and where unity is impossible. The fears that paranoia engenders create an America where farce best describes individual action. The individual is not created as an Epic hero, but as a fool driven by irrational fears. The attempt to create a monologic system paradoxically creates fragmentation (a negative dialogism) as society flies apart. This situation creates an irony as Nixon comes to dominate America by providing it with a model for subjectivity and, as a result, unwittingly achieves his goal of imposing his will on society.

The Narrative Flows of Gaddis'*JR*

On the surface, William Gaddis' *JR* seems to be characterised by the same narrative chaos that follows the blackout in *The Public Burning*. In *JR*'s narrative flows the characters have no fixed position at all, constantly assailed by the flows of information and unable to fully view the structures that surround them. Whereas Nixon believes he can distance himself from society and its movements in order to objectively observe them, in *JR* the characters are entirely within the flux of the text, a flux which Gaddis uses to enact the submergence of subjectivity

in the circulation of images, information and commodities in postmodern culture. Gaddis, however, also uses the narrative of *JR* as a means to resist the pervasive influence of late capitalism, particularly its totalising recuperation of all forms of cultural production. Gaddis has said of his novel that it is:

> a commentary on this free enterprise system running out of control... Going back to entropy, I'm most intrigued by its correlation as the loss of available energy in a closed system with stupidity as the corresponding loss of available intelligence in our own political establishment especially as regards foreign policy and the economy..."[34]

Gaddis is clearly concerned with the economic freefall of late capital and the culture it creates. The influx of commodities in late capitalism means that everything and everybody becomes part of an economic exchange, reduced to the level of a product. All forms of social and cultural activity are co-opted into a totalising social matrix, even those which seem to offer positions of resistance. Systematic control of subjectivity seems to be achieved, but this is experienced as fragmentation. Tom LeClair describes this process when he writes that:

> In the runaway system, the free energies of individuals are used by - bound to - large, powerful governmental and commercial institutions... thus increasing their complexity and organisation, qualities that are negentropic. The effect is entropy in individual lives, energy is unavailable to do private work: families and individuals break down, degenerate, waste away."[35]

In its construction of narratives *JR* maps both late capital's desire for totality and its fragmentation of subjectivity. *JR* is one long flow and constructs an apparent order in its continuous form. The narrative of *JR* constructs itself by a process of accumulation and synthesis recuperating events and episodes into a single narrative (the narrative of JR Corp), despite the multiplot nature of the novel. The many narratives of *JR* (those of Bast, Gibbs, Amy Joubert, Black Jack Cates, and JR himself) lose their definition as they are collapsed into one another. There are no boundaries of any kind (including genre) and the novel develops as a flow of events. Superficial cause and effect connections between events and episodes are created because there are no gaps or breaks in the novel. This configuration of narratives mimics the apparently seamless and totalising flows of commodities, images and information that Jameson sees in late capitalism.

It is in the narrativization of JR's creation of a corporate empire that the narratives of *JR* most obviously mimic the economic drives of late capital. A narrative of accumulation and waste, interconnection and self-reflexivity is represented through JR's accumulation of 'junk' businesses, a business empire that teeters on the edge of uselessness and immateriality, even while JR and his employees assert its materiality because it has monetary value. Although JR Corp seems to have a substance, in its agglomeration of companies (although whether these companies are anything other than names is questionable), Gaddis presents it as an immaterial entity. It is a collection of self-generating companies controlled by an 'invisible' owner who never has direct contact with his businesses. The individual companies that JR 'owns' have no use or value in isolation but only become valuable when they are connected with the other useless companies. For example, when JR buys Eagle Mills he finds that it does not produce anything and only has value for its pension fund which he uses as a temporary loan to buy Wonder Brewery and which he then loans back to Eagle Mills. The acquisition of Wonder Brewery provides a block of shares that have a hypothetical value and which are used by JR as security for his acquisition of Ace Development. Ace Development is acquired because it owns land where there are mining claims. These claims are worthless because the land is occupied by a protected tribe of Indians. However, the land is also heavily forested and, after the Indians are bought off with electrical products they cannot use (because they have no electricity supply), JR decides to develop the lumber sector to supply X-L Lithography, which manufactures paper match books. These in turn have little profit-making potential, so JR uses the match book covers to advertise the other companies he owns. He constructs what Joel D. Black has described as a "paper empire" which has no material value.[36] Although the products do not sell very well and no individual company shows a profit the sheer size of JR Corp gives the impression that it has a 'real' and substantial value. JR's corporation, however, is incestuous. Each company provides only for the others. Its value remains uncertain and even when the figure of "four million in sales" is mentioned it is uncertain whether the denominator is cents, dollars, or even match books.[37]

The narrative that enacts the growth of JR Corp also implicates all the other characters in the novel in one form or another, whether it be Edward Bast, a composer, or Jack Gibbs, one of JR's teachers. The novel generates a narrative of inclusion that depends on the making of connections. It is only through the proliferation of connections and the co-option of other characters into the narrative of JR Corp that allows this narrative to keep its momentum. For most of the novel it does so and seems to approach the position of a master-narrative which will provide unity and totality for the many narrative strands of the novel. However, the narrative of JR Corp is not a totality. There are numerous gaps in its structure. These are represented in the narrative space of the novel and in the mapping of the characters' identities as absences. Scenery and landscape are rarely described and used only to connect scenes, while the characters are only presented as unidentified voices. There are no descriptions of their physical features and no access to their thoughts. Gaddis uses the ellipsis to represent the absences of consciousness and the absent space of America, each of them overwhelmed by the culture of simulation created by late capitalism.

Although absences threaten the text with dislocation, it is possible to argue that in *JR* it is discontinuities that actually construct narrative continuity. They create openings which the narrative can later fill (although the filling of a gap also creates another gap to be filled).[38] This occurs, for example, in the use of what might be called the 'delayed punchline'. One example of this involves the pocket radio that Bast has to wear when he gets a job with a recording company, Bast receiving no income as an intermediary for JR. Bast uses the hearing aid to monitor the transmission of songs on which the company has copyright. The information that he might have to take this job comes in a telephone conversation with JR who tells him that he can pretend that it is a hearing aid when he is conducting JR Corp business (*JR*, 468). This information seems to have little significance even as it is learnt (as it only seems to be a latent possibility) and is soon submerged in a welter of new data. Yet, nearly fifty pages later it is recuperated into the narrative as a punchline to a joke when Davidoff (JR's publicity executive) comments on it: "I showed him this big Alaska Development

story and he just drew a blank standing here like that hearing aid was tuned in on outer space..." (*JR*, 511). This episode foregrounds the cumulative quality of both JR Corp's development and the narrative which maps it. The novel configures events which seem only to have a superficial narrative continuity, but which are later recuperated into the master-narrative of JR Corp, as Bast is recuperated into JR's expanding empire. This narrative, however, cannot hold together all the events or narrative strands of the novel. The need for continuity generates events which are then able to create their own narratives. Bast, for example, is brought into JR Corp to act as an agent for JR Corp and his narrative is co-opted into the JR Corp narrative. However, he decides that he will no longer help JR and leaves his organisation, creating a narrative outside JR Corp's master-narrative in the process. The narrative of JR Corp does not create a single master-narrative but produces instead a narrative that bifurcates into multiple strands which JR Corp has difficulty holding together. Entropy (or the tendency towards the random rather than order) is inherent in the cumulative structure of both the narrative and its enactment of the formations of late capital. This is not only because of late capital's basis in the production-as-consumption nexus, but also because the circulation of so much data in the novel means that the likelihood of order ever being effected gradually recedes. The more the JR Corp narrative asserts its narrative continuity and totality, the more Gaddis makes obvious the randomness and fragmentation at its heart.

In *JR* the decline into the random is represented by the uptown office of JR Corp (an apartment shared by Gibbs and Bast), which is also a metaphor for the organisation of corporate capital. The headquarters of the large corporations are afflicted by chaos. JR Corp, when it is controlled from a suite in the Waldorf Hotel, has executives playing children's games, telephones constantly ringing, Bast practising on the piano, misprinted press releases being lost between the typist and Davidoff, deliveries of equipment, and the hotel management demanding payment. The uptown office is not only afflicted by similar confusions, but also by an increasing accumulation of various objects. The telephone calls are either never answered or they never make the required connection (the 'bad connection'

being a metaphor for the narrative), being mediated by Bast, Gibbs, Rhoda and Al (the doped up guitarist), none of whom fully understand the messages received. Nothing is ever filed or organised, but merely left on the floor or thrown into boxes, while in the background can be heard the noise of running water from broken taps (in both the bath and sink) and a radio which can't be switched off. There is an accretion of noise and waste, so much so that shit is found in Bast's piano. Noise is used as a metaphor for the condition that information has reached in contemporary society. Information is a meaningless garble that is used simply to fill the empty spaces that *JR* has as its 'story-space'. Gradually the uptown office is filled: "letters, string, shoe polishing cloth, glue, a Liberty Head quarter... cigarette lighters, a view of the Ghiralda, snapshots... undeveloped film, clippings, typed pages" (*JR*, 583) are supplemented by an electric letter opener, a set of Thomas' Register, empty grape juice cans, uneaten food, mail scattered on the floor (or put in the oven), a set of golf clubs, a crate of match books, a rapid reading course, Gibbs' collection of paper bags, Eigen's newspapers, notes and manuscripts, a steak watcher, a rotating tie rack, a case of business cards, and copies of Textile World. The room is filled with material and noise, the haphazard accumulation of the former acting as a metaphor for the economic scene in which *JR* is located, the latter indicating the state of chaos that has been reached. The space is so saturated with junk that nothing can be ordered and the data (material and metaphoric) cannot be assimilated or processed.

Although the narrative of JR Corp seems to create a linear continuity Gaddis does not allow it to take control of the text. Late capitalism floods culture with images, information and commodities, filling its spaces to such an extent that a seamless continuity appears to be established. One image immediately succeeds another, one product immediately replaces an out of date model. In the space of culture ideology circulates in the uninterrupted flows of image, information and commodity. The narrative of JR Corp seems to mimic this uninterrupted flow. The novel, however, refuses to implicate itself in late capitalist society's desire for continuity, a continuity which promises the construction of a cultural logic that will overcome ellipsis and randomness and unify society. Instead, the narrative

conspires with randomness to draw attention to the interruptions in the continuities of the novel. While disconnected episodes are brought together through various means (the telephone, chance encounters) to construct what appears to be a linear continuity and to create a totalising system, the multiplication of stories in the novel subverts any notions of continuity. On the surface, the saturation of the novel's space seems to indicate a lack of gaps in its relentless transmission of information. This appearance, however, depends on a perverted temporality which insists that narrative time moves in a smooth and regular progression. This, however, conceals the disjunctures between one episode and another. When the narrative changes direction it shifts location and there is frequently a shift in time between the end of one episode and the start of another - even while the text insists that one scene immediately follows another in a cause and effect sequence. For example, the narrative's temporal structure suggests that only a day has passed between Bast's visit to Crawley to discuss JR's portfolio (*JR*, 187-206) and his return from Union Falls on a business trip for JR (*JR*, 277). The intervening scenes dealing with Mrs Joubert's custody suit, the School budget, the Bast sisters' share account, the threat of a teachers' strike, Gibbs meeting with Mrs Joubert, the Eigens' domestic trouble, and Schramm's suicide are linked to give the impression that only a few hours have passed. Yet, in the few hours it has apparently taken for these events to occur, Bast has moved into Schramm's apartment, been on the trip to Union Falls, and taken advice on his music from Schramm who has then been admitted to and discharged from hospital before committing suicide. These latter events are only learned in a much later episode and are not directly presented but only reported in Bast's conversation with Gibbs. Because they are not narrated in the narrative present these events are marginalised from the narrative so that they do not interrupt its continuity. The compression of several weeks (chronological time) into a few hours (narrative time), however, draws attention to the narrative as a series of disjunctive episodes rather than a continuum. Only the suppression of disturbing events and the sidelining of stories that loop outside the master-narrative (Bast's failure to complete his deal, his temporary escape from JR's control, Schramm's suicide) allow the narrative of JR Corp and late capitalism to claim success in creating a

continuity. A narrative of dislocations is also mapped in Thomas McGuane's *Panama* which, in its articulation of Chet Pomeroy's alinear experience of time, portrays a consciousness that is out of control. The same process occurs in *JR*, but here the narrative's alinear experience of time enacts a society out of control. In *Panama*, Pomeroy prevents a complete loss of identity by hiring a detective to fill in the gaps of memory. *JR*, however, has no such controlling agent. The narrative can only repress its gaps in order to maintain continuity. When JR Corp collapses at the end of the novel, the master-narrative that accompanies it also collapses.

The referential configuration of the narrative of JR Corp appears to entail a conspiracy between narrative and capitalism, constructing a representation of capitalism as both a continuity and a unifying totality. However, Gaddis' defamiliarisation of capitalism reveals this narrative to be a "fictive concord" informed by ideology. The narrative is clearly not a single linear continuity but a collection of discontinuous narratives and an alinear series of events. Continuity is exposed as a fiction and Gaddis draws attention to the ideological fiction that society is a unity. The narrative of JR Corp attempts to construct a master-narrative which totalises contemporary experience, but this narrative collapses into a "torrent catalogued as literature", a description of Thomas' Register which supplies a metafictional reference to *JR* itself (*JR*, 571). Gaddis exposes narrative as an episodic unmotivated configuration without a stable form and suggests that the use of narrative to create continuity reproduces ideology by presenting society as a unity and a place where dreams can be lived out. For every JR who finds success there are, however, people like Bast, Gibbs, Schramm and Eigen who are disempowered or destroyed in this society. Gaddis does not present an entirely negative vision in *JR*. Although the master-narrative attempts to overcome entropy, the text itself embraces entropic fragmentation because it creates gaps in the flows of late capitalist society. Gaddis uses the self-conscious fragmentation of the narrative not only to enact social and economic reality, but to offer a way of reconstructing identity outside the cultural parameters generated by late capitalist economic forms. The narrative creates gaps rather than filling them and it is the gaps that are opened up in capitalism that provide the potential for

resistance to it. A refusal to be co-opted is a conscious desire to be one of capitalism's gaps: to enter the between state of the middle which Gibbs recognises when he says that "life is all middle" (*JR*, 486). At the end of the novel Gibbs creates order in the uptown office. He purges it of the waste products of JR's corporate empire. Through this act he creates a gap in the totality of Corporate capital and creates a space for his own identity. Late capitalist society constructs the subject as an absence or gap, a simulated self 'filled' by postmodernity's flood of images and information. To self-consciously become a gap is to create a gap in the apparent continuity of late capitalism which, Gaddis suggests, is thereby disrupted by the refusal to enter its flows. For Gaddis, the more gaps that are created, the more likely late capitalism will collapse in on itself, unable to establish the totalising continuum it needs in order to perpetuate and extend itself. Admittedly this is a negative politics that does not involve the transformation of late capitalism and bring to an end ideology and social control, but it does mark a refusal of ideology and an awareness that it does not have to set the agenda for the development of identity and individual or social fulfillment.

Narrative in the Information Age: Delillo's *Ratner's Star*

Don Delillo's *Ratner's Star* (1976) shares *JR*'s use of abstraction. In both novels, a referential narrative attempts to create a system which will either totalise cultural experience or systematise meaning and knowledge. In *JR* this system (mapped by the narrative of JR Corp) entails the imposition of Corporate economic forces on culture. In *Ratner's Star* it is the creation of a mathematical and scientific model which promises the systematisation and unification of knowledge. In both novels the systems fail and are exposed as fictions whose main role is the control of subjectivity. *Ratner's Star* is not the first of Delillo's novels to focus on systems and systems-planning. The importance of systems and organisation principles is established in *End Zone* (1972). In this novel Gary Harkness, a college football player, attempts to retain some notion of the self in a society dominated by systems, represented for Gary by the oversystematising

principles of football. Football, in Gary's consciousness, is associated with nuclear war. Both seem to be governed by similar organisation structures where "it's better to be efficient than brave" and where tactical principles and strategic planning override the interests of the subject.[39] As the Coach of the football team says:

> "Football is a complex of systems. It's like no other sport. When the game is played properly, it's an interlocking of systems. The individual. The small cluster he's part of. The larger unit, the eleven. People stress the violence. That's the smallest part of it. Football is only brutal from a distance. In the middle of it there's a calm, a tranquillity." (*EZ*, 199)

Systems-planning in football creates a pyramid structure. The subject (as part of a collective) forms the base which creates the conditions that allow the system to operate and who is left behind when the governing system takes over and develops its own logic, a logic abstracted from the needs of those involved. The perpetuation of the system overrides the needs of the individual it purports to serve. This also seems to be the case with both the nuclear arms-race and with nuclear war which develop their own principles of 'play'. The subject becomes a minimal self in awe of nuclear systems-controls which seem to develop autotelic principles. In the midst of this is an absent centre, the subject, reduced to a gap, the minimal character of which is expressed in the minimalist vocabulary that Coach Creed uses to describe the principles of the football-system. The effect on Gary is that he constantly finds that he is an identity under threat, moving "not as myself but as some sequence from the idea of motion" (*EZ*, 62). He is no longer even a molecule or a 'nodal point' moving within the system, but one of its processes: not an actor, but an action.

The narrative of *End Zone* follows a similar trajectory, its informational output on systems-planning gradually overwhelming the narrative activity of the characters. The novel begins as the story of an individual attempting to construct a self by denying systems principles. Gary continually drops out of school because he finds that his involvement with the football team is a mind-numbing experience. Gary, however, is always enmeshed in the equally destructive (both self-destructive and destructive of the self) worlds of mass media and commerce

and ultimately turns to football again in order to reconstruct whatever selfhood he has previously had. However, this means that he becomes part of a narrative of abstracts and continuities, attenuated as a subjectivity despite the first person narration's attempts to overcome the loss of identity. The narrative concentrates on descriptions of football games and on technological and systems theories while Gary becomes a random molecule floating through the narrative and the larger movements of the games. As a result, the novel moves in a systemic trajectory despite the fragmentary and episodic characteristics of the narrative, which seem to point to a lack of connection.

The systemic logic of the narrative, however, continually hints at Apocalypse and, despite the perfect order of the football and nuclear systems, suggests that collapse is imminent. This is also implied by Gary's fascination with disaster technology and with catastrophe theory in which he finds an apt metaphor for the systems in which he lives. His knowledge of these theories and those of systems-planning suggest, however, that they are not simply metaphors but have become the informing principles of cultural movements. Systems planning seems not to reduce the chance of disaster but to increase it. The most perfectly regulated systems (football for example) seem to have incorporated violence and conflict as laws of motion which can be controlled. These systems do not negate violence. The continued reliance on violence means that the system can only develop through violence, a situation Gary recognises when he elliptically comments on the modes of transformation these systems require: "'The universe was born in violence. Stars die violently. Elements are created out of cosmic violence'" (*EZ*, 121).

The same principle is at work in *Ratner's Star* which again configures an episodic narrative that is framed by the search for an abstract system of meaning. The same narrative movements are involved. A systems-narrative creates abstraction as a dominant narrative motor into which are subsumed the many narratives of the characters. Whereas the systems-narrative remains a dominant form in *End Zone*, in *Ratner's Star* it is exposed as an abstract fiction unable to

control the text. The novel follows Billy Twillig who is called to a scientific institute called Field Experiment One where he tries to unravel the meaning of a message from another planet (the Ratner's Star of the title). As the narrative progresses the scientists at work on the project discover that the message has not come from another planet but has originated from Earth, warped by "Moholes" so that it returns to its source. A mohole is explained as being a cosmic phenomenon which:

> traps electromagnetic information... and then either releases it or it doesn't. It's as though the mohole were a surface that absorbs light and sound and then reflects either or both to another part of the universe But it's not a surface and it doesn't absorb. It's a mohole. It's part of a theoretical dimension lacking spatial extent and devoid of time value. Value-dark in other words.[40]

Moholes distort paths of light and messages and thus alter the focus of perspective, preventing a 'real' observation of phenomena through moholean relativity. The moholes are initially seen as being distant fields which exist far out in the universe, capable of deflecting messages so that they only appear to move in a straight line. Moholes are also able to accelerate or decelerate light or messages, a property that leads the scientists to conclude that the message has come from a distant part of the universe and has been deflected and accelerated by the mohole.

They learn, however, that the mohole is not distant, but that the Earth is at the centre of a moholean field. The message has been 'stored' by the mohole and released back to its source. Hypotheses are proposed in order to understand the message but none of them seem to be relevant until it is learnt that the message has actually been transmitted from a civilization on Earth many thousands of years earlier, a situation the scientists initially find hard to believe. However, one of the scientists, Maurice Wu, discovers that the history of the Earth follows a reverse symmetry, so that before a certain date in humanity's history the artifacts discovered at archaeological digs get more and more sophisticated the farther in time the archaeologists go back. This theory displaces the importance of the message for the scientists who use Wu's discovery to construct a system of knowledge. Only Billy sees the message as an important

phenomenon. By the narrative process of *addition d'effet*, and on the basis of Wu's proposition, the scientists glean more and more information about the Universe and its history until they believe that they have solved its riddles. At this point Billy solves the message, but his work is to no avail. An eclipse occurs that the scientists had not expected (but which the message predicts) and confounds the scientists' view that they have reached a state of total knowledge.

The scientists believe that the information they accumulate forms a linear connectivity - each piece of information growing out of the knowledge they already possess - which creates a narrative leading to resolution and unity. However, like the narrative of *Ratner's Star*, the accumulation is not linear and logical, but haphazard and random, subject to an exponential accretion that generates so much information that it is impossible to organise and assimilate. The organisation of narrative in *Ratner's Star* has been lucidly discussed by Tom LeClair who notes that the chapters of section one ("Adventures: Field Experiment Number One") develop in terms of a history of mathematics that begins with Mesopotamian and Egyptian mathematics and ends with late nineteenth century theories of mathematics. This history informs the configuration of narratives in the novel, Billy using the theories that LeClair mentions in order to understand the message. LeClair also notes that the second section ("Reflections: Logicon Project Minus-One") involves a reversal of this structure, winding down toward a state of zero knowledge, a structure that mimics the symmetry that Maurice Wu finds in history.[41] In other words, there is apparently a system at work in the novel that regulates the syntagmatic level of the narrative, in the same way that a system of doubling, in which characters are paired off together (Wu and Mainwaring, Edna Lown and Lester Bolin, Rob Softly and Jean Venable, and perhaps Billy and his mentor, Henrik Endor), constructs the paradigmatic level.

Although the syntagmatic level that LeClair recognises offers a system (the history of mathematics), this system does not have a regulating function. The system does not create a linear continuity. Instead, an episodic narrative is

mapped. Each chapter proposes a hypothesis which is worked through but which ends in failure and is replaced by a new hypothesis. The initial data (the message from Ratner's Star) remains unchanged by the intervention of these systems of knowledge and the systems-narrative loops back to its starting point. As Endor notes: "Magnitudes correspond in terms of proportion. Variables in terms of function. But nothing ever happens. Statements are proved to be neither provable nor disprovable. Nothing has happened, yet everything is changed" (*RS*, 191). As a metafictional aside this constitutes a good description of the novel. The accumulation of abstract models in the systems-narrative does not create a single system of knowledge. The systems-narrative is unable to totalise knowledge and is consequently unable to determine Billy's responses. Billy is able to loop in and out of the systems-narrative without initially being incorporated by it. Each system is displaced after Billy has selected what is useful and when the system's limits are discovered. As far as the first section is concerned, the systems-narrative actually acts as an enabling device creating new perspectives in Billy's narrative, although this does not lead to any transformation in the systems-narrative. The static systems cannot change and it is only in Billy's narrative that transformation occurs as he moves from one model to another, a process mimicked in his aimless wandering around the Institute. It is Billy's intervention into the systems-narrative structure which creates a narrative of addition, albeit a rather desultory narrative of false starts in section one. It is for this reason that the systems-narrative seems to have legitimacy as a narrative determinant, organising Billy's active exploration of Field Experiment One as his narrative wanders through the Institute's labyrinth. The systems-narrative determines movement, but does not produce transformation. By the end of section one, Billy is no closer to understanding the message despite the systems-narrative's 'help'. He adds information (and adds to the narrative in so doing), but becomes a storer of information rather than a processor. Ironically, it is only when Billy avoids the systems-narrative's approach to mathematics in section two (an evasion that produces inertia and listlessness as Billy abandons his work), that he discovers the meaning of the equation.

There are, then, two narrative configurations in the novel. One of these is

the systems-narrative that LeClair describes, the other the narrative of Billy as he experiences Field Experiment One. The former appears to change the data through the discovery of knowledge concerning the message, but actually changes nothing - and even impedes the discovery of meaning. The latter follows Billy as he explores the Institute, this narrative mapping the discovery of knowledge which appears to have only peripheral meaning, but which in the context of the macronarrative has important effect. Billy's selective acquisition of information leads to his decoding of the message, an event which exposes the scientists' 'knowledge' as just a collection of random phenomena. This event also leads to the displacement of the dominance of the systems-narrative by Billy's narrative, a process figured in the novel's trajectory. Although a regulating order is projected (as it is learned that history is ordered in cycles) there is gradually less order in the systems-narrative, the scientists' desire to totalise meaning making them less selective and less able to assimilate the accumulating information. The systems-narrative disintegrates into fragmentary sections which have little or no connection with each other. In section two, the systems-narrative is displaced by the focus on the consciousness of Billy, a focus which prevents the system working itself out as a narrative determinant. Ultimately, the narrative of information and system produces data that confuses itself rather than allows it to continue. The information that the scientists uncover destabilises the order of the narrative rather than developing a structure. At the end of the novel, the unpredicted eclipse reveals the systems-narrative to be inadequate. The systems-narrative claims that identity is predicated on its creation of meaning. As a result, the systems-narrative's failure to provide meaning also entails a failure of self, leaving only one response for the subject: "The only way to survive is to curtail one's perspective, to exist as close to one's center as possible" (*RS*, 115). Billy and Rob Softly enact this process when they retreat from Logicon Minus-One and begin to scrape at the earth, following Endor's example by digging a hole into which they can retreat.

While *Ratner's Star* seems to deal primarily with philosophical rather than political concerns, it does focus around what Eric Mottram has called the

"political-technological systems" of contemporary society and enacts the loss of self in an age of information and technology.[42] Similarly, LeClair writes that "Though set in 1979, *Ratner's Star*, in its socio-economic conditions, presents a future metamorphosis of the Age of Information."[43] Delillo's novel questions a society in which State and Corporate institutions invest their energy in information networks and systems. These information systems create a society that is only able to sustain itself by continually changing its parameters and expanding its limits, although this has the effect of subverting the premisses on which society is based. Society and culture become overdetermined, threatened by imminent collapse. Society, however, provides the only available forms of meaning, its continual expansion co-opting any new forms of cultural production. This is a situation that Billy faces:

> There is life inside this life. A filling of gaps. There is something between the spaces. I am different from this. I am not just this but more. There is something else to me that I don't know how to reach. Just outside of reach there is something else that belongs to the rest of me. I don't know what to call it or how to reach it. But it's there. I am more than I know. But the space is too strange to cross. I can't get there but I know it is there to get to (*RS*, 370).

Billy cannot find anything that is relevant to his identity at a personal level. The expansion of the systems of information and meaning in the novel mean that no experience can be articulated outside their domain. Experience and knowledge always seem to be constructed by these systems. Any new information (or cultural possibility) is already interpreted and processed by them before being channelled into the individual's consciousness. As a result, the referential systems-narrative of *Ratner's Star*, despite being exposed as a fiction, still dominates Billy's narrative. The failure of the systems-narrative causes an emptiness that Billy cannot fill. Instead of filling the vacuum created by the system's failure, by digging a hole Billy creates another one.

The death of self and of willed motivation produces a subject contingent on random and unmotivated activity. The subject is unable to control the self because of the inertia that is created by a culture which does not allow the subject to generate his or her own identities or patterns of behaviour. Billy Twillig moves

and is moved, narratively, by the systems-economy he inhabits. He becomes a piece of information, passively and randomly moving through the matrix of information systems. Delillo establishes connections with quantum theories of the wave-particle duality in this conceptualisation of identity. At a certain point it becomes unclear whether particles are physical objects (a presence) or are wave-like movements.[44] Subjectivity is constituted along similar lines in Delillo's fiction, focusing around the question of whether a person has any subjectivity (presence) at all or whether subjectivity is an absence constructed as a presence by the circulation of information, knowledge or ideology within it.

A similar process occurs in *Players* (1977) in which Lyle Wynant wanders through a rambling and disconnected narrative that enacts a randomly motivated culture of images and information. In *Players*, the adoption of self-consciously random behaviour is regarded as a way of resisting cultural and ideological forces. Disruptions to the systems-culture of contemporary society are presented in the form of unmotivated terrorism. Randomness is regarded by the terrorist groups (and by Lyle Wynant) as a means to rescue the self from an over-systematised and dehumanising culture. Violence as a basis for the construction of identity, and the retention of individuality, is also presented in *Running Dog*, *The Names* and *Libra*. In each of these novels the main characters see violence as a means of creating a self that does not reproduce ideological forms of identity. The fascination with violence is not shared by Delillo who is shocked that such a negative form of resistance seems to be the only form of resistance available in contemporary society. Delillo, increasingly sees the culture of the United States as a culture of randomness and violence. This development problematises violence as a response. Violence seems to promise recuperation into a society which is becoming more obviously self destructive with the passage of time. Over-systematisation has created the same logic of insanity that characterises the logic of nuclear war in *End Zone*, an insanity mirrored in the insane randomness of individual action. After *Ratner's Star* (which is not itself a very hopeful novel) Delillo's novels become ever more pessimistic. In *Running Dog* (1978) no alternative to a culture of violence seems possible. Glen Selvy (an ex-CIA agent)

attempts to escape the culture of violence by fleeing from the centres of government, following a straight line across America. His response is a self-centering obsessive subjectivity which, while it escapes randomness, creates a one-dimensional subjectivity that is easily controlled by State agencies (and ideology) who intercept and 'neutralise' him.

History and Conspiracy in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*

The novels so far considered take a negative view of culture, recognising the debilitating power of ideology, but unable to fully articulate strategies of resistance. Coover sees ideology producing fragmentation in society, a fragmentation that drives people apart and prevents collective resistance to ideology and the State. Gaddis sees a systematising tendency in the flow of images, information and commodities in postmodern culture and suggests that the only response occurs at the level of the individual action in the refusal to enter the flux of culture. Delillo's view of postmodern culture suggests that all forms of identity and cultural practice are already co-opted by ideology and that, despite the imminence of cultural collapse, only emptiness is promised. Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) is a more optimistic novel, generating strategies that both resist the impingement of ideology on his text and offering alternative forms of identity and cultural practice. Like *Ratner's Star*, *Mumbo Jumbo* is a novel that attempts to solve a mystery. In *Mumbo Jumbo* the mystery concerns the reasons why Afro-Americans are so systematically repressed, Reed's novel an attempt to understand and then to challenge the processes which produce repression. *Mumbo Jumbo* takes the form of a detective novel, mysteries multiplying as it progresses. The mystery of Jes Grew opens the novel but is soon supplemented by many others: a series of art-thefts, the death of Warren Harding, the U.S. invasion of Haiti, the murders of Abdul Hamid and Berbelang, the mystery of Earline's possession, and the theft of Black religious mystery by Christianity.[45] *Mumbo Jumbo* is primarily a political detective novel, searching amongst the images and fictions of contemporary culture for the mechanisms of social control. Reed

suggests that the discovery of the operations of ideology in culture will allow those who are oppressed to more effectively direct resistance against those in power. To this end, Reed explores the culture of 1920's America, an archaeology that seems not only to reveal the antecedents of contemporary forms of repression but also to mirror contemporary culture quite closely. Reed has written of *Mumbo Jumbo* that he "wanted to write about a time like the present or to use the past to prophesy the future - a process our ancestors called necromancy. I chose the twenties because they are very similar to what's happening right now."[46] To Reed, awareness of the mistakes made by black culture in the 1920's will reveal which strategies need to be adopted in Nixon's America if Afro-Americans are to be liberated from oppression.

The structure of mirrors that *Mumbo Jumbo* maps (black culture/white culture, 1920's America/Nixon's America) means that the novel is, at first glance, arranged in a highly structured form. A static narrative structure is presented at the paradigmatic level in the opposition between the Wallflower order (a white Masonic organisation which traces its descent through the Knights Templar) and the Jes Grew epidemic which acts as a defining metaphor for black culture. Jes Grew attempts to evade any process of fixing, which Reed correlates with white culture's attempts to ensnare black culture in a dialectic of the one and the 'other', in which the second term is always positioned and dominated by the former. Jes Grew is a "psychic epidemic", self-generating and "out-of-its-head",[47] producing a loss of control in those affected. This is not simply a loss of self control, but a loss of social control as well. Jes Grew is described as searching for its "Text", a text that will liberate new possibilities for black culture and allow blacks to articulate their own experiences instead of being figured by ideological representations. Narratively, Jes Grew undermines the paradigmatic opposition that seems to fix it, producing the proliferation of mysteries that supplies a dynamic to the text. Through this narrative development, Reed suggests that *Mumbo Jumbo* is the text that Jes Grew desires, the constant narrative transformations of the novel mimicking Jes Grew's dynamism.

Despite Jes Grew's influence, the syntagmatic axis seems to collapse the diachronic into the synchronic. The novel works by juxtaposition, its five phases alternating between a focus on white culture and a focus on black culture, a process that seems to displace syntagmatic movement into paradigmatic relations. Initially, in chapters one to nine, a static story-space is presented, setting up a binary opposition between the Wallflower Order and Jes Grew. This section sets the novel in 1920's America, presenting it from the point of view of a factual authority who supplies epigraphs, quotations, photographs, etymologies, and footnotes, all of which direct attention to the apparent authenticity of the culture portrayed. In this section *Mumbo Jumbo* enacts a sterile and ossified white culture (a culture which seeks to re-create Afro-American culture in its own image) through the organisation of the text into binary oppositions - which for Reed typify Western culture - and in the static story space that the novel maps. These narrative devices enact a culture of domination in which black culture is 'anaesthetised' through its recuperation by white culture. Reed uses the 1920's story-space, as Richard Martin suggests, "to insist on the cultural and political stasis of white American attitudes *vis-à-vis* the black American community".[48] The novel refuses this referential figuring of the limited possibilities available in white culture. Reed does not allow black culture to be co-opted into the static white culture enacted in this first section. Reed transposes 1960's issues on to the 1920's and uses anachronisms (references to Cagney movies and to television for example) to disrupt the 'realist' story-space's replication of a culture of domination. These anachronisms are used to point to the incompletion of the white culture that is represented in the story-space and in the paradigmatic relations of the novel. The ideological parameters of white culture are not the fixed and natural forms that white culture claims. Nixon's America and 1920's America may share the same forms of domination, but there are always new developments that threaten to disrupt them. They lack the dynamic that Jes Grew supplies to black culture. Indeed, white culture's lack of a dynamic is its weakness and the main reason why white culture attempts to co-opt black culture. Syntagmatically, *Mumbo Jumbo*'s five phases are configured by Reed to resist the paradigmatic role they have in the novel.[49] Similarly, the narrative of *Mumbo*

Jumbo does not allow this stasis to be achieved. The fantasy of the opposition between the Wallflowers and Jes Grew as well as the text's encyclopaedic elements indicate that the narrative can neither be contained within a naturalistic structure nor limited to the genre of detective fiction, but spills out of this genre into several others and into different media.

The next three phases of the novel seem to fit into the binary structure created in the first section, but by process of syntagmatic juxtaposition rather paradigmatic opposition. Phase two involves the introduction of the black characters and their preliminary hypotheses and assumptions on the Jes Grew phenomenon. Phase three shifts back to white culture and the Wallflowers' attempts to infiltrate and co-opt black culture through the use of a Talking Android (a metafictional simulation of black culture which Reed portrays as an inauthentic pastiche). Phase four juxtaposes this narrative with a narrative that portrays the 'authentic' Afro-American world, a narrative which charts the rise of the Mu'tafikah and Papa LaBas' investigation into the Jes Grew mystery which also develops into a more traditional search for the murderer of Abdul Hamid. This separation of narrative units is, however, constantly under question, initially because the Wallflowers are always figured in the background, but also because other interruptions occur to set out narrative possibilities in the other phases. For example, Earline's meeting with the trolley busman occurs in phase four, but its importance is not revealed until phase five when he is figured as part of Earline's possession by white culture. The tram-lines that the trolley follows act as a metaphor for the way in which black culture is guided along fixed pathways by white ideology, a process that is mimicked by the Wallfower's attempts to create *Mumbo Jumbo* as a linear narrative. Earline's obsession with the trolley-busman (his entry into her mind) suggests that ideology has overwhelmed black culture and its ability to map its own desires and cultural practices. In the fifth phase of the novel all forms of fixed separation are collapsed and the self-conscious production of fictional narratives (LaBas' rewriting of history) displaces the referential Wallflower narrative and its enactment of the limits ideology imposes on black culture. The binary structure (white realism and black fantasy,

Wallflower and Jes Grew) that Reed uses to map a static white culture is subverted by the fictional level. This section more completely mingles the sub-plots and genres that have previously been used and deflects the novel away from a replication of culture. LaBas' writing of history as a fiction reveals that the Wallfower version of history is also a fiction. It is not the rational and objective description of 'reality' that white culture claims and which is mapped in the 'realist' referential narrative.

Disruptions to the narrative's structure are also figured in what Henry Louis Gates identifies as the impediments of the mystery subplots.[50] These mystery sub-plots are not just obstacles for the narrative to overcome but create bifurcations into new narrative possibilities. Earline's possession, for example, is a digression into a new mystery whose connection to the main mystery of Jes Grew is never completely established. The mysteries are problems that white culture cannot contain. In chapter seventeen, the Wallflower headquarters is described (*MJ*, 62). It is presented as well regulated and well ordered, a metaphor for a well regulated and self-perpetuating white culture. The apparent systematisation that the Wallflowers have achieved is, however, soon subverted: "Now some problems, Jes Grew. *Mu'tafikah*, Teutonic Knights who've done it again making such a mess of things..." (*MJ*, 63). After these problems are listed, the episode ends, suggesting that the problems can neither be contained nor solved by white culture but spiral out of control. The narrative bifurcations produced by the mystery sub-plots map an evasion of the linear cause and effect realist narrative used to represent white culture, a narrative that does not allow unmotivated and unresolved digressions or problems.

The same spiralling effect is found in the multiplicity of sub-plots that spin through the novel. Although the Jes Grew narrative and the detection of its mystery seem to be the master-narrative, this story is actually only one amongst many. The novel is a dialogism of stories, the monologic narrative here represented by the realist Wallflower narrative and its attempts to impose stasis in binary oppositions and linear cause and effect relationships. Amongst the sub-

plots are narratives that describe the Haitian war (news of which the white media try to censor), Woodrow Wilson Jefferson and the Talking Android, the Mu'tafikah reappropriation of art, the mystery of Abdul Hamid's murder, the three narratives of Papa Labas (his detection of Hamid's murderer, detection of Jes Grew's Text, and a Voodoo narrative), a gangster narrative which involves the struggle between Buddy Johnson's black gang and the police, Earline's possession, and a narrative involving the imagined murder of Warren Harding. These sub-plots are interruptions into the syntagmatic structure and create a dynamics of narrative which challenges the referential level's move to stasis through linear and binary relations. Reed has referred to this mapping of narratives as a "scatter" technique.[51] Rapid jumps from topic to topic and from scene to scene are made, fast cuts that "quicken the pace of the book" and prevent the narrative stasis associated with ideology.[52]

A further narrative dialogism supplements this multiplicity of sub-plots. Genres proliferate in the novel. Besides the detective form these include gangster movies, the Voodoo narratives of Zora Neale Hurston, the Quest (for contact with Jes Grew), historical fiction (which acts as a macro-narrative frame), the bildungsroman form that Ralph Ellison uses (a form parodied in the story of the renegade W.W. Jefferson), conspiracy theory, and the encyclopaedic novel (which is an encyclopaedia of the 1920's and an encyclopaedia of black culture from the Harlem Renaissance to the 1970's, a culture which offers an escape from the totalising tendency represented by the Wallflower Order's white culture). As well as these genres there are the numerous forms of inserts that Henry Louis Gates catalogues.[53] Reed uses this proliferation of narratives to resist the systematising tendency of ideology represented by white culture and art. As a means of resistance he initally offers the political detective novel which is not a traditional suspense narrative (although it does culminate in a parodic revelation scene), but one which seeks to expose white ideology and to offer possible means of resistance to those who are oppressed by it.

The detective narrative exposes ideology, but it is the multiplication of

narratives which provides the model for black cultural activity and aesthetic practice. The solution Reed proposes for culture is rearrangement. As far as identity is concerned Reed proposes that the *bricoleur* (who constructs a facsimile identity) is the model. This solution displaces the initial motivation of *Mumbo Jumbo* (created in the white culture/black nature opposition of the Wallflowers' ideology) which points to a return to a 'natural' condition of consciousness for black culture and black identity. Jes Grew seems to offer a return to a natural state outside ideology and to act as a cure for the disease of white culture. In his articulation of Jes Grew, however, Reed shifts ideological definitions of health and sickness and normality and abnormality, in which health and normality are aligned with white culture. One of Papa LaBas' critics, Hank Rollings (educated at Oxford), accuses LaBas of colluding with the 'sickness' of black culture and looks forward to the day that Papa LaBas gets well. LaBas responds by reversing Rollings' logic: "To some if you owned your own mind you were indeed sick but when you possessed an Atonist mind you were healthy. A mind which sought to interpret the world by using a single loa. Somewhat like filling a milk bottle with an ocean" (*MJ*, 24). White culture's reduction of subjectivity to a one-dimensional consciousness is portrayed by Reed as a sickness that is cured by contact with Jes Grew. Jes Grew is open-ended and does not seek to contain or close down possibilities for variation. At this point, Reed seems to be proposing an inner natural essence for black identity, black culture collapsed back into the white culture/black nature opposition that produces white domination. This gradually appears to Papa Labas as a one-dimensional perspective. He becomes aware of the need to open up consciousness, identity, and culture to all possible variations. He recognises that Jes Grew is not a system, but an opening that creates new possibilities and allows transformations within its parameters, a source of confusion for the Wallflower Order who see in Jes Grew the natural essence Reed has rejected (*MJ*, 139-40). In terms of identity this points to an eclectic facsimile identity: "The thing that works here will have a little bit of jive talk and a little bit of North Africa, a fez wearing mulatto in a pinstriped suit. A man who can say give me some skin as well as Asalamilakum" (*MJ*, 38). Papa LaBas combines Yoga and Voodoo, a matrix that involves a rearrangement of existing

forms of identity rather than a transformation of culture. For Reed, however, a transformation of consciousness is the first step in the transformation of culture, the "new melodies" created by re-arrangement opening new perspectives on the possible forms culture can take.

As far as writing is concerned, Reed proposes an aesthetic of narrative which replaces history with story and myth.[54] This is mapped in the conspiracy theory fiction that Papa LaBas narrates at the end. In his narration LaBas presents the oppression of blacks as a Wallflower conspiracy which began in myth with the usurpation of Osiris by Set. Reed rewrites myth to construct a narrative describing how Set (a disciplinarian clerk) displaces Osiris (associated with dance and nature) in order to construct Christianity (Atonism) and to appropriate the black Masonic rituals which are warped by the Wallflower Order (his worshippers) to suit their own ends. In his rewriting of history Reed proposes that ideology is a fiction. The self-conscious fiction he substitutes is not meant to be taken literally (as an objective description of history), but articulates a necessary suspicion of official and ideological voices. Conspiracy theory is a liberatory device which encourages distrust of ideology's simulated identities and cultural practices. Reed also sees conspiracy theory as a means to oppose ideological fictions through the construction of alternate perspectives. Conspiracy theory offers new variations which can be developed in new narrative forms. This is a refinement of the self-conscious fictionality of his earlier novels, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* and *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* which foreground their fictionality but do so by feeding off other fictions. *Mumbo Jumbo* stresses the productive fiction making process which allows new narrative openings to be generated. Although the novel feeds off genre forms its mapping of proliferating sub-plots stresses the dynamic function of narrative. The new perspectives and variations offered allow the liberation of consciousness which no longer has to follow the narratives constructed by society, represented in *Mumbo Jumbo* by the referential axis of binary oppositions and conflicts.

Montage and Analogue: McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*

To conclude this chapter I want to turn to a novel which aligns itself with many of the cultural concerns and narrative configurations of the novels already discussed, but which offers an alternative perspective on these issues. Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge* (1974) does not attempt to provide an overview of contemporary culture. Instead, it focuses on the effects of contemporary culture and ideology focalised through the 'central' consciousness of the novel. McElroy investigates a culture of obsession in *Lookout Cartridge*, but does so from the perspective of a character affected by the obsessions created in contemporary society. The novel follows Cartwright's search for a stolen film, a search which leads to his discovery of a range of information systems and power groups, all of which offer clues as to the whereabouts of the film. His contact with these systems and groups brings him under their power and into their sphere of influence, the result of which is that he loses control of his own actions. The novel maps Cartwright's attempts to extricate himself from these systems and his attempts to create himself as a self-motivated subject in the process. The events of the novel are mapped as a narrative of investigation as Cartwright searches for a film that has been stolen. He has co-directed this film (with Dagger diGorro) and has invested so much energy in its production that he sees it as an integral part of his identity. The theft of the film is a theft of his identity and its retrieval a release from the plots, systems and power structures that surround him. The theft creates an absence that needs to be filled and his search becomes an attempt to re-create or find an identity that will fill the vacuum of his consciousness. In his investigation Cartwright encounters a mass of contradictory information. This information is controlled by various power groups (particularly businesses and Corporations) who are interested in owning the film and who either conceal information or use it to impose their own version of events on Cartwright. Each power group circulates its information as a system, a system that is ready to fill the vacuum created by Cartwright's loss of identity. Cartwright is inserted into successive information systems, acquiring fragments of data which he tries to create into a connected whole or narrative. He is, however,

overwhelmed by the narrative he has entered, a narrative which guides him linearly from one piece of information to another. Cartwright discovers that he is not the one who is making the connections but that they are constructed for him by the power groups he encounters. His narrative of investigation, therefore, is created for him, governed by a logic over which he has no control.

Cartwright's entry into already existing systems of information and meaning lead him to realise that he is not a processor of data, but simply a gatherer of already processed fragments which he cannot integrate. Instead, he is at the mercy of the information, his actions and thoughts determined by it. The narrative of investigation subjects Cartwright to a flow of information he cannot control, a narrative that enacts the circulation of ideology in an information society. The subject is disempowered and fragmented by the flows of information in society because he or she is unable to process or mould this information. McElroy proposes that Cartwright's experience of the multiple systems of information is an experience shared by the subject in postmodern society. The systems that Cartwright encounters are analogous to the crisis narratives discussed in chapter two. Each system is created in order to solve a dilemma or crisis, offering a master-narrative that will resolve the confusions that the subject faces. The confusions have, however, been created by the information systems in the first place, their attempts to resolve the chaotic flows of information adding to the chaos experienced. Each system solves a dilemma but opens up further dilemmas. In *Lookout Cartridge* Cartwright encounters one system (crisis narrative) after another, each system solving a problem but requiring another system to solve the problems it creates. As a result, Cartwright is linearly guided from one system to another, his problems and solutions created by the information systems. Information moulds consciousness and creates identities and positions for the subject. It is only larger organisations such as Corporations who can organise information and who process it for the subject. Only Corporations have access to the 'codes' that will supply a system of meaning to the information. The networks that Cartwright encounters (business, information, terrorism) come to take on the aspect of a wider system of control, the novel suggesting that it is not Cartwright

alone who is slotted into controlling power systems. The systems he encounters are merely specific to his own experiences and are themselves implicated in a societal matrix of power and ideology. The novel implies that other people are controlled by different systems but that these systems are within the same ideological matrix that Cartwright experiences.

The narrative of investigation maps a society which incorporates subjectivity as part of its flows of information. In his investigation Cartwright is inserted into information systems which flood his mind with already constructed values, norms and 'truths'. In this situation, the only response seems to be the discovery of a private space within the information culture. Such a position will allow access to information without the information overwhelming the subject. Throughout the novel Cartwright attempts to discover a private space so that he can both observe and process "the world out there". He gradually begins to realise that public and private have collapsed into each other, a realisation which alters the tenor of his quest. He is no longer concerned with finding the film or discovering information about it. Instead, his search entails the discovery of an identity he can call his own, an identity which will allow him to map out his own narrative: "since Glasgow I had cared less about the film and some meager muddle of my past that it held, for what I wanted was information that would take me into the future."[55] The incorporation of subjectivity into systems of information seems, however, to deny the possibility of finding a private space and points instead to the entry of subjectivity into an economy of control that limits individual action. At the beginning of the novel Cartwright descends, in a helicopter, into the city of New York. Or, rather, he descends into "the city's grid" (*LC*, 3), a metaphoric transformation of the city into a system. The literal scene of New York is mapped metaphorically as a set of informational and ideological 'grids'. The city's grid is later identified with the grid of the brain's circuits (*LC*, 174), signalling an elision between subjective space and systems of information, control and ideology. Subjective space becomes metaphoric. There is no private space free of the information and ideological systems. The subject is already slotted into other systems and has never been external to them, as the descent

seems to indicate. Cartwright is already located within the systems he is about to enter.

The descent into New York becomes a metaphoric descent into systems of information, power and ideology, systems that already involve the subject. Cartwright believes he is continually finding new systems to enter but he subsequently finds that he has already been slotted into them. The film that he and Dagger DiGorro have directed has brought together alignments of power (business, information, terrorism) which already exist as part of Cartwright's life. Cartwright, however, is unaware of their existence and when he encounters the systems of power DiGorro has brought together he believes them to be new systems. As a result, Cartwright's position develops an ambiguity. He is unsure whether he is already incorporated in DiGorro's systems, "looping inside someone else's plan" (*LC*, 280), or discovering new systems which only gradually incorporate him. Cartwright discovers that the theft of the film was not an attack on his identity, but an attempt to suppress the film's revelation of a plot involving the Flint Corporation and its aliance with a terrorist cell, the ends of the plot involving the control of the liquid crystals that will revolutionise information technology. The plot's connections (like information) threaten to draw Cartwright into their domain, threatening the definition of his identity, complicity with the plot meaning that his actions are determined by someone else's decisions. The already existing connections are brought to light by the apparently random story that Cartwright and Dagger have developed for their film. The locations - Corsica, Stonehenge, the Hebrides, the Marvelous Country House - and the people placed there - Gene, Jack, and Paul (the Flint brothers who are part of a business corporation and a terrorist cell), the deserter, Jan and Phil Aut, Monty Graf, Krish, Reid, John and Chad - are implicated in a business enterprise which has political motives. The film is meant as a collage of random events, but Cartwright learns that this collage has a 'system' behind it: the plot to steal the rights to liquid crystals. The film is not an accidental composition at all. Jan Aut tells Cartwright that it is Outer Film who have collected together the cast and chosen the locations. The theft of the film is therefore not an affront to Cartwright's

subjectivity, for this was not recognised in the first place. Cartwright had no meaningful input in the film and so cannot claim it as part of his identity. He is not an integral part of the system as he thinks, but only one minor actor who has been manipulated. He is not the director at all, but ironically has been directed by his actors.

The question over whether Cartwright is director or directed, mover or moved, is addressed by the novel's central metaphor, the lookout cartridge. This device also enacts Cartwright's ambiguous position in terms of the information he experiences during his investigation. The lookout cartridge is gradually defined as an agent or device that is slotted into closed systems as a means to simultaneously observe and process information from a neutral objective position. The lookout is outside the systems of information and observes several systems at once, making connections between them. The cartridge, on the other hand, can only be used when it is slotted into a specifc system in order to record its information. Each position has advantages and disadvantages. The lookout can process and mould data, by the creation of connections, but does not have access to all the information. The connections may therefore be entirely imaginary. The cartridge has access to all the information of a particular system but this is all it knows. It does not have access to the information found in other systems and so cannot make connections. It is entirely processed by the system it enters. The lookout cartridge, on the other hand, combines the advantages of the lookout and the cartridge. It allows a view of the many systems of information (lookout) and a complete knowledge of specific systems (cartridge). As a result, it can construct the complete picture that Cartwright desires. Cartwright, however, finds that he is defined as only one of these at any one moment. He is either a recorder (cartridge) or a processor of information (lookout) - and the latter only infrequently. His quest is so relentless that he never has time to process the accumulating data. He attempts to process data as he experiences (records) it, but finds that the information is in a continual state of flux. There is always data to process during his observations while each new observation adds to the data already accumulated. As a result, the processing of data is always deferred. At

one point, Cartwright tires of the relentless flow of information and attempts to take a moment's rest in a phone booth by dialling random numbers:

> and because they [passers-by] came from my left and my right I could not easily think I was the one moving and they stationary.
>
> A lookout stays in one place. But what of a moving lookout with a stationary trust?
>
> If I knew my destination - someone who knew what June had said to me in another old station not so many hours ago - why then have me followed? Why not wait for me instead? (*LC*, 288-9).

Cartwright realises that he is not resting and processing data, but still observing. The 'information' still continues to flow around him, as is implied in the statement "I could not easily think I was the one moving and they stationary". The sentiment that is being expressed here is that he cannot accept that he is the one who is moving and that the people who come from his left and right are stationary (and metaphorically that the information he observes is stationary). His stationary position in the phone booth suggests that this is literally impossible. He must be stationary and the world must be moving around him, a metaphor that he applies to his quest. He is not an active quester moving through the systems of information. Instead, he is a stationary observer who perceives the information as it flows around him.

The elliptical expression seems to indicate an uncertainty over this position, and a suspicion that he *is* moving and that what he encounters *is* stationary. He concludes that he is both stationary and moving, as are the information systems he encounters. While he is moving around within the systems of information gathering data he is also unconsciously 'stationary', subject to the influence of these systems. He is never a distant stationary observer perceiving and noting the transformations of a moving field of information. He is an observer who is implicated in the systems of information, moving in and around them as they move in and around him. He is a "moving lookout" who observes but is also influenced by the fields of information and control into which he is slotted. He is both outside *and* inside the systems of information; outside because he does not have access to the codes or narrative that will supply meaning and inside

because he is under the influence of the systems he 'touches'. This situation is represented by Cartwright's figuring of the brain as a computer. Cartwright needs access to information and can only achieve this by being plugged into the systems of information and power. A computer in the 1970's was simply an access point, plugged into a grid or mainframe, receiving information from this system. The computer depends on the mainframe for its data and is ultimately a passive receptacle whose field of operations is determined by the system it accesses. Cartwright recognises that if consciousness is conceived of as a computer then it too is determined by the information it receives. Cartwright cannot initially break out of this metaphor of programming although escape from this system is represented in McElroy's next novel, *Plus* (1977). *Plus* describes the trajectory of a disembodied brain (Imp Plus) which is sent into space to act as a computer but which breaks out of its programming to develop a consciousness of its own.[56] This situation is not articulated in *Lookout Cartridge*. Cartwright's obsession leads him into a system of operations that controls his responses, but which blurs and fragments his own perspective.

Cartwright's blurred perspective, as a "moving lookout", has an effect on the narrative. It blurs his narration of events, a blurring that is also enacted by the lack of speech marks in the novel. This device frequently makes it difficult for the reader to distinguish between speakers and to distinguish between Cartwright's narration and someone else's speech. Definition of self becomes vague. It becomes uncertain which narrative data originates with Cartwright and which data originates elsewhere, the narrative enacting Cartwright's blurred location within the systems of information and power. Cartwright's narrative of observation (the immediate narrative of active time, or observation time, in which Cartwright appears to be an experiencing subject) contributes to this confusion. This narrative is interrupted by memories of previous events, descriptions and discussions, the narrative present and narrative space becoming uncertain. This confusion occurs in the opening section already cited. Here, Cartwright is anticipating the helicopter descent of the last few pages of his narration (the narrative future) rather than experiencing the descent in the narrative present.

The descent in the helicopter actually takes place chronologically towards the end of Cartwright's investigation, but occurs on the first page of the narrative. Not only is Cartwright unable to sort information but he is also unable to separate the events and sort them into their proper chronological order. This example also shows how the narrative loops back on itself. The narrative loop suggests that Cartwright is unable to break out of the circuits of information and the circulation of ideology within them. His narrative attempts to escape these circuits but he constantly loops back into them.

The looping of the narrative back to the information systems is also mapped by the constant interruption of his investigation narrative by memories of the past, all of which have occurred prior to his investigation, but which are all connected with it. An example of this narrative disruption occurs before Cartwright sets out from Glasgow to Lewis in search of his film diary which has also gone missing (*LC*, 299-303). He describes his trip to Lewis before it has happened: "In Stornoway tomorrow I did not look for a hotel..." which leads him to a memory of a meal he had five years earlier and which he regards as being in a straight line leading to the narrative present in Glasgow. Cartwright apparently loops outside the circuits of information at this point (into the future and the past) and digresses from the narrative of investigation created for him by these circuits. These digressions, however, either prefigure his re-incorporation into the circuits of information or refer to their prior influence on him. The trip to Lewis involves a meeting with Krish who is an assassin working for the corporation owned by the Flint brothers. His memory of the meal brings a recognition that the system of power alignments was already in operation even then, something he had not known at the time. The many systems of information do not seem to create multiple narratives for Cartwright. Instead, his narrative of investigation maps his incorporation into culture's systems of information and power, creating a single linear narrative as he is guided through the 'grid' of contemporary culture. When Cartwright begins his investigation he enters the systems of information and from this point his actions are directed by the movements of information. Like Billy, in *Ratner's Star*, Cartwright becomes part

of an economy of information and ideology and like the characters of *JR* his identity is fragmented by it.

No escape from this economy seems possible. It extends itself throughout culture and, to Cartwright, seems to take on spatial dimensions. Both these aspects are mapped by the metaphor of the city grid. Cartwright notices that the city grid of New York resembles that of London (his starting point). Their similarity makes Cartwright aware that he has never been outside ideology, his incorporation enacted by the narrative. He is stuck in a looping system, his investigation bouncing him between New York and London as he follows up the clues he has been given. McElroy, however, does not suggest that the systems of information create a totality. A plurality of systems exists. Although each system determines how its information is to be perceived, setting out values, norms, and 'truths' ideologically, because there is a plurality of systems the subject does not need to remain within a particular system. He or she can become aware of the alternative norms, values, and 'truths' available. Cartwright does not initially take advantage of this plurality. He sees in the many systems of information the cause of the fragmentation he experiences and wishes to avoid. He avoids plurality. Instead, he attempts to construct a master-system which will totalise the contradictory information. In a review of *Lookout Cartridge* George Stade describes this process:

> The clues to the knowledge and power he seeks are always broken, or buried, or on the periphery of his attention - Mayan calendars, Stonehenge, computers, the properties of liquid crystals, the forgotten art of wheelwrighting... The systems of power - financial, political, domestic, erotic and psychotic... have the feel of sub-systems waiting for a supersystem to resolve them.[57]

Both Cartwright and the novel refrain from creating a super-system or master-narrative because they ultimately realise what this will entail. A super-system would simply unify the many closed systems as one closed system, preventing the possibility of resistance in the space "between two truths [where] a space occurs, a new volume there was not room for" (*LC*, 487). The creation of a super-system would reveal the inescapability and inevitability of social control and the impossibility of resistance. A super-system would create a condition of "blind

coghood" for Cartwright rather than the alternative he sees in the space "between blind coghood and that sinister hint of godhead or godbody in me issuing from my place in a field of multiple impingements" (*LC*, 459). Here, multiple impingements create multiple possibilities for identity rather than the limited one-dimensional consciousness mapped by Cartwright's obsessive investigation.

The novel maps the multiple impingements in the many stories and sub-systems that Stade describes, a process McElroy has himself described: "The events of *Lookout Cartridge* are not only linear but also a collection of dispersions."[58] Instead of creating a super-system or master-narrative (through the resolution of Cartwright's narrative of investigation) the novel fragments. It creates a series of stories that ultimately allow Cartwright to loop outside the information systems he encounters. On these terms, the scene in Glasgow can be interpreted as a form of narrative resistance. Cartwright's memory of the meal does not just reveal a system of connections but also introduces some of the sub-systems that Stade mentions, sub-systems that are mapped in digressive stories. These sub-systems provide alternative perspectives (through their creation of "multiple impingements") and allow Cartwright to break free of the narrative of investigation and to loop into other narrative pathways. He realises that he does not have to insert himself into the information systems circulated by ideology but can loop outside their domain. Stories describing Cartwright's relationships with other characters (Tessa, Dudley, Lorna, and Ned Noble) enter the narrative and disrupt the linear logic that the narrative of investigation maps as it guides Cartwright through a succession of information systems. The stories have no connection with the information and power systems that determine the trajectory of the investigation narrative. They loop away from it and create, instead, alternative trajectories for Cartwright (and the narrative) to follow.

The many narrative pathways and sub-systems create what John Johnston has called the "constructivist-like assemblage" of *Lookout Cartridge*'s narrative. Johnston argues that this assemblage of materials and stories creates the novel as a unity, a unity represented by Cartwright's discovery of a master-narrative. This

master-narrative takes the form of Cartwright's destruction of the film. For Johnston, this act removes Cartwright's self from the public sphere and liberates him from the fragmentation caused by the economy of information and power. Cartwright's inner self is rescued by the destruction of his social self.[59] Johnston offers an interesting account of the novel, but the view that Cartwright creates a master-narrative is questionable. The discovery of a master-narrative is precisely the discovery of a super-system that will make of the individual a "blind coghood" within society's machine-like grid. The subject's discovery of a master-narrative will reveal that culture is a place of domination and mastery. The subject can only be empowered if he or she takes part in the economy of domination (by constructing a master-narrative that will allow domination of other people), submitting to culture and ideology in the process. Cartwright's discovery of the connections between business and terrorism suggest that culture is indeed a site of domination, the alignment between terrorism and business threatening to produce a super-system that will reproduce domination. Cartwright discovers that his film was stolen by agents representing the businesses of the Auts and Len Incremona's Outer films. These businesses have connections with the Flint brothers who are linked to a large Corporate enterprise. The Flint brothers are also involved in the operations of a terrorist cell, their activities revealed by the film, and their exposure giving Paul Flint a reason to destroy it.[60] This seems to indicate a subversive element to the text although, as Johnston points out, this terrorism tends to arbitrary violence rather than any positive form of social resistance.[61] The Flint brothers' connections with both commerce and terrorism also point to a complicity between existing power structures and opposition groups. This seems to create a super-system that makes of society and culture an enclosed space that cannot be escaped. McElroy, like Delillo, proposes that all forms of social and cultural practice are determined by ideology, even forms of resistance. McElroy also uses the narrative's mapping of connections between business and terrorism to demonstrate how Corporations have turned to the methods of terrorism to perpetuate their domination of society. Violent methods are used to protect their interests, an aggressive strategy which sees the oppressed as enemies to be dominated. Terrorism, however, is presented as the work of

opposition groups, a representation that has two effects. It means that the Corporations' legitimacy is never challenged. The violence in society is seen to be the work of opposition groups and not those in power. The representation of terrorism as a product of opposition groups also has an ideological currency. The figuring of opposition groups as terrorists means that they are represented as violent criminals willing to destroy lives in their pursuit of power. Opposition groups are represented as gangsters who wish to take control of society in its present state rather than to transform it. In this situation, ideology encourages a desire for a strengthening of authority in order to protect existing social structures and to 'protect' the interests of the oppressed, a situation which actually results in a strengthening of oppression.

The narrative refuses to accept a super-system. The availability of sub-systems, and the stories that develop out of them, indicates that a master-narrative cannot be constructed. Ideology does not completely dominate subjectivity, the gaps in its control witnessed by McElroy's awareness and critique of the movement of ideology in society. In opposition to the referential narrative of investigation (which enacts ideology's control of subjectivity) the novel constructs a montage narrative premissed on the irruption of the sub-system narratives into Cartwright's narrative of investigation. *Lookout Cartridge* ultimately evades the story of the investigation whose one-dimensional linear logic guides Cartwright from one piece of information to another. The montage of a contiguous sequence displaces the referential narrative's mapping of a one-dimensional culture guided by ideology. The possibility of montage is also recognised by Cartwright who sees montage as a means of evading the one-dimensionality of culture and the forms of identity it produces. He uses montage to reconstitute identity, a possibility that is offered by the discovery of the liquid crystals which Monty Graf suggests are the reason why the film is stolen. The film reveals the existence of these crystals, the knowledge of which the Flints, in their capacity as businessmen, want to suppress (*LC*, 436). Liquid crystals are used in computers and provide the means by which data can be retrieved from the information systems (the mainframe) without the computer-user having to be slotted into the system's grid. Because of

their fluidity the liquid crystals can enter information systems while simulataneously flowing outside them. Cartwright takes this as a metaphor for the possibility of the lookout cartridge becoming a model for subjectivity. The subject moves through culture, and the circulation of ideology within it, but is not processed by this culture. The subject is able to act and move outside ideology even though he or she still moves through the culture it creates.

Cartwright uses the metaphor of the liquid crystals to reconstitute consciousness. This is achieved in conjunction with another metaphor: the *shtip*. *Shtip* is a Yiddish word meaning a push and refers to the way in which people's actions are motivated by the multiple fields they inhabit. Cartwright becomes aware of the possibility of the *shtip* as a means of accessing many fields of information simultaneously:

> For my *shtip* exemplifies the multiple and parallel sorties which raise our brain above the digital computer to which it is akin; the digital computer works its yes and no operations faster than the brain yet is confined to serial single-file one quest-at-a-time circuit-seeking; not the human natural Body brain (as my Druid terms it) sends countless of these single files not one at a time but all at once circulating down the deltas, through the gorges and moving targets and (like parties of Indians - Brooklyn, Hindu, Maya, Hollywood or, as the English call the American, *Red*) athwart the axes of all pulsing fields (*LC*, 447).

Cartwright suggests that identity can be reconstructed outside the obsessive, paranoid and one-dimensional forms of identity that the slotting into culture produces. These latter forms of identity involve the subject in an economy of control where only one dimension of subjectivity and consciousness is available at any one moment. These forms of identity are theorised in terms of the collage self which is expressed in the metaphor of the omnidirectional microphone. Like the omnidirectional microphone the collage self is constantly bombarded by information. The subject becomes a part of the waves of information that exist in postmodern culture, consciousness and identity generated by the information that is passively received.

The montage self is a selective accessing of "multiple impingements", the

simultaneous entry into many narratives or fields of action. The montage self allows the subject to be more than one identity at once. Identity is not determined by the flows of information in culture, although the subject is still located in culture. The subject is able to take part in the social and cultural sphere without being constructed by it. As a result, freedom of access to information is precisely freedom. Information can be accessed and assimilated without ideology being transferred with it. This process is also configured in terms of narrative. In the narrative of investigation Cartwright acts as an omni-directional microphone, picking up information from the many information systems, a collage of narratives which assumes a linear form as Cartwright is guided from one system to another. Montage, on the other hand, is temporal and transformative and is traced, in terms of the *slitip*, in the dynamic narratives that Cartwright finds in the novel's sub-systems. These provide multiple fields of action and enable Cartwright to articulate his thoughts, observations and desires as he loops outside the systems of contemporary culture. *Lookout Cartridge* moves from a digital (yes/no, lookout/ cartridge) frame to an analogue narrative in which multiple possibilities are available simultaneously.

McElroy is slightly anomalous in the context of the novels discussed here. While the other novelists of political metafiction see only limits to freedom and identity generated by the movement of ideology in contemporary culture, McElroy asserts that the subject is at some point able to constitute him/herself as a self-motivated agent, freed from the culture which apparently constructs subjectivity. He offers the possibility that the subject can legitimate knowledge even though the fluxes of information in society seem to pre-empt such a possibility. In this case the last words of *Lookout Cartridge* ("I knew what we had done") are not ironic, but offer a belief in the possibility that knowledge can be discovered and that a reality that has meaning for the subject can be generated. His view of American culture and society is not entirely negative. While he clearly sees contemporary culture as a space which reduces people to empty subjectivities, either moving randomly or controlled by social forces, he does not feel the need to offer a perspective which requires a transformation of society. This perspective

is rather different to the view offered by the other writers considered in this chapter who see in America a society that has failed to allow the freedom it has promised. These writers see the need for a reconstruction of American society (even if they do not have a fully theorised utopian vision themselves), a reconstruction Thomas Pynchon (whose fiction will be discussed in the final chapter) also deems necessary.

Notes:

1. Joseph McElroy, 'Growing Up Embooked', *New York Times Book Review* (6 May 1973), part 2, pp.1-2.

2. See Larry McCaffery, *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-biographical Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

3. John Mepham, 'Narratives of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), p.155.

4. A similar argument is parodically used by Douglas Adams in *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, when he describes how the 'book' *That About Wraps It Up For God* dismisses God because he is a fiction.

5. For a discussion of the heterotopian society that Delany imagines in *Triton*, see Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), pp.156-195.

6. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p.228; and Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), pp.179-196.

7. See Tom LeClair, *The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) and McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*.

8. Charles Harris, *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd* (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1971), p.23.

9. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984), p.18.

10. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), pp.44-62.

11. Ian H. Angus, 'Circumscribing Postmodern Culture', in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp.100-1.

12. Thomas H. Schaub, 'Don Delillo's Systems: "What is Now Natural"', *Contemporary Literature*, 30: 1 (1989), pp.128-32.

13. For more details of the use of science made by these writers, see LeClair, *The Art of the Excess*.

14. The encyclopaedic forms of political metafiction have been discussed by many critics. See, for example, LeClair, *The Art of Excess*; Marjorie Godlin Roemer, 'The Paradigmatic Mind: John Barth's *LETTERS*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 33: 1 (1987), p.33; and Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York:

Routledge, 1989), pp.62-70.

15. Tom LeClair, *In the Loop: Don Delillo and the Systems Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p.129.

16. See Charles Russell, *Poets, Prophets, and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.236-70.

17. Tony Tanner, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.243.

18. Margaret Heckard, 'Robert Coover, Metafiction, and Freedom', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 22: 2 (1976), p.224.

19. Robert Coover, *The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* (New York: Plume, 1971), p.141. Hereafter cited in the text as *UBA* with page number.

20. Roy C. Caldwell Jr., 'Of Hobby-Horses, Baseball, and Narrative: Coover's *Universal Baseball Association*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 33: 1 (1987), p.164.

21. Robert Coover, 'Interview', in *First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing*, ed. Frank Gado (Schenectady: Union College Press, 1973), p.157.

22. "Coover's cubist stories create [a] vision of 'multiple and even contradictory' views of reality; like cubist paintings, they are consistently structured to force the viewer to consider competing realities as equally 'real' or true." Larry MacCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme and William H. Gass* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p.73.

23. Robert Coover, *Pricksongs and Descants* (London: Minerva, 1989), p.39.

24. For a discussion of folk- and fairy-tale in Coover's fiction see David C. Estes, 'American Folk Laughter in Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*', *Contemporary Literature*, 28: 2 (1987), pp.239-56.

25. A description used derogatively by Neil Schmitz in 'Robert Coover and the Hazards of Metafiction', *Novel*, 7 (1974), pp.210-19.

26. LeClair, *The Art of Excess*, p.106.

27. Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, p.88.

28. Robert Coover, *The Public Burning* (New York: Viking, 1977), p.200. Hereafter cited in the text as *PB* with page number.

29. Jackson I. Cope, *Robert Coover's Fictions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p.98.

30. Stanley Elkin, *The Dick Gibson Show* (New York: Dutton, 1983), p.375.

31. A similar situation is found in Elkin's *The Franchiser*, a novel which desribes how the American landscape is made uniform as Flesh, the franchiser of the title, constructs chains of hotels, restaurants and cinemas. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Patrick O' Donnell, *Passionate Doubts: Designs of Interpretation in Contemporary American Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), pp.113-136.

32. Coover, 'Foreword', to Stanley Elkin, *Stanley Elkin's Greatest Hits* (New York: Dutton, 1980), p.ix, cited in LeClair, *The Art of Excess*, p.126.

33. McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.94 and p.203.

34. William Gaddis, 'The Art of Fiction CI', *Paris Review*, 105 (1987), p.67.

35. Tom LeClair, 'William Gaddis and the Art of Excess', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 27: 4 (1981-2), p.594. LeClair argues that the novel proposes mastery and the creation of master-narratives as an answer to the fragmentation experienced in society. This construction of master-narratives by the subject, however, mimics the same domination achieved by JR's Corporate empire and involves a recuperation of the subject into society through a reproduction of ideological forms of identity.

36. See Joel Dana Black, 'The Paper Empires and Empirical Fictions of William Gaddis', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 2: 2 (1982), pp.22-31.

37. William Gaddis, *JR* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.529. Hereafter cited in the text as *JR* with page number.

38. Michel Pierssens has also pointed to the importance of gaps in the configuring of narratives: "In the case of film narrative, it has been clear since its early years that discontinuity is part and parcel of the art of *montage*, central to the filmic art. But this observation should also be extended to other narrative forms as well: what makes sense in fiction in any guise might very well be the multiplicity of interruptions and breaks that make of it a fundamentally discontinuous process". Pierssens, 'What Does Fiction Know?', *Sub-Stance* 55 (1988), p.3.

39. Don Delillo, *End Zone* (New York and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.84. Hereafter cited in the text as *EZ* with page number.

40. Don Delillo, *Ratner's Star* (New York: Vintage, 1980), p.181. Hereafter cited in the text as *RS* with page number.

41. LeClair, *In the Loop*, pp.124-5 and p.131.

42. Eric Mottram, 'The Real Needs of Man: Don Delillo's Novels', in *The New American Writing: Essays on American Literature Since 1970*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Vision Press, 1990), p.67.

43. LeClair, *In the Loop*, p.135.

44. See Jonathan Powers, *Philosophy and the New Physics* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), pp.153-64.

45. For a discussion of this last example, see Michael Boccia, *Form as Content and Rhetoric in the Modern Novel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p.42.

46. Ishmael Reed, *Shrovetide in Old New Orleans* (New York: Avon, 1978), p.157.

47. Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (London: Allison & Busby, 1988), pp.5-6. Hereafter cited in the text as *MJ* with page number.

48. Richard Martin, 'Clio Bemused: The Uses of History in Contemporary American Fiction', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), p.21.

49. Reginald Martin has provided a very lucid account of the ways in which Reed uses Hoodoo narrative time "through the usage of present-tense verbs at the beginning of narratives of selected consequential chapters. The synchronic effect is achieved by following the ending of a preceding chapter, in which actions have built pyramidally and sequentially, with the openings of new actions in a new chapter whose verbs and situations are set in the present tense; this effect introduces the reader to the simulteneity of the text..." which points to narrative as a process rather than a static series of syntagms linearly connected. See Reginald Martin, *Ishmael Reed and the New Black Aesthetic Critics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p.90.

50. See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.229-31.

51. Ishmael Reed, 'Interview', in *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers*, ed. Joe David Bellamy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), p.140.

52. James McKenzie, 'Pole-Vaulting in Top Hats: A Public Conversation with John Barth, William Gass, and Ishmael Reed', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 22: 2 (1976), p.140.

53. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p.223.

54. For a discussion of Reed's view of history as a form of oppression, see Theodore O. Mason Jr., 'Performance, History, and Myth: The Problem of Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 34: 1 (1988), pp.97-109.

55. Joseph McElroy, *Lookout Cartridge* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1985), p.340. Hereafter cited in the text as *LC* with page number.

56. Interestingly, this creation of consciousness through narrative is something that Paul Ricoeur discusses in 'Narrative and Identity', an essay which develops the theory of narrative Ricoeur proposes in *Time and Narrative*. See 'Narrative Identity', in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp.188-99.

57. George Stade, 'Review of *Lookout Cartridge*', *The New York Times Book Review* (2 February, 1975), cited in David Porush, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), p.190.

58. Joseph McElroy, 'Interview', in *Anything Can Happen: Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists*, ed. Tom LeClair and Larry McCaffery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p.242.

59. John Johnston, "The Dimensionless Space Between": Narrative Immanence in Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 10: 1 (1990), pp.103-4.

60. For further details of these connections, see Gregor Campbell, 'Processing *Lookout Cartridge*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 10: 1 (1990), pp.116-7.

61. Johnston, "The Dimensionless Space Between"', pp.105-6.

Chapter Five: Chasing Rainbows, Pynchon and the Dynamics of Narrative

> Most of it ['Under the Rose'], happily, is chase scenes, for which I remain a dedicated sucker - it is the one piece of puerility I am unable to let go of. May Road Runner cartoons never vanish from the video waves, is my attitude.[1]

Pynchon's interest in 'control', power and 'plots' has attracted a lot of attention. Several critics have recognised the play on the word 'plot' in Pynchon's fiction and have subsequently aligned narrative with conspiracy and 'control'.[2] Much critical energy has also been expended on discussions of Pynchon's treatment of humanity's enslavement by 'ideas', by history, by various cabals and conspiracies, by science and technology, and by the abstract forces at work in contemporary Corporate society. Too often, however, studies of Pynchon's fiction have reduced 'control' to a transhistorical human essence, an approach taken by Molly Hite, for example: "In *Gravity's Rainbow* there is always a Pogo-like sense in which They are Us, a fact that is not necessarily consoling..."[3] An apolitical view of power relations leads to the claim that the powerless and oppressed would act in the same way as those who currently have power if only the positions were reversed. What begins as a discussion of Pynchon's critique of structures of power ends by repeating the ideological position that the desires for power and domination are universal and 'natural'. This type of approach to Pynchon's fiction also frequently claims that it is the loss of a spiritual centre that has created a destructive cyclical logic, the struggle for power at any cost leading to an inevitable Apocalypse. Only the restoration of God and spirituality to a fallen world will allow the logic of the death-instinct to be transcended.[4]

Until recently there have been few discussions of Pynchon's fiction in terms

of its reference to specific configurations of power and control in contemporary culture: power alignments, counter-cultural concerns, or forms of ideology.[5] The focus in the discussion of Pynchon's 'plots' has also tended to ignore politics, focusing on the fiction-making process, rather than the specific narrative mechanics of his novels. This chapter will offer an alternative perspective, discussing the alignment of narrative and politics in Pynchon's fiction (with particular emphasis on *Gravity's Rainbow*) by focusing on both his critique of ideology and his vision of Nixon's America as a society of domination and repression. The discussion will focus on Pynchon's recognition that freedom can only be achieved through the transformation of society and the reconstruction of identity, rather than through escape from, or transcendence of, ideology and social control. The chapter will also explore the ways in which Pynchon develops narrative strategies as a means to resist the siting of the contemporary experimental novel as an ideological form. I shall be arguing that Pynchon's aesthetic is based on resistance to ideological forms of literature and that his fiction does not replicate the reified culture of postmodernity as Paul Coates argues, a view that is echoed by Terry Eagleton in his discussion of postmodernist fiction.[6]

Gravity's Rainbow is a novel which draws together most of the forms of narrative that have been analysed in the preceding chapters. Like *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Public Burning* it maps the subject's location within the ideological narratives created by history. Like *Ratner's Star* and *Lookout Cartridge*, one of the axes of narrative is presented in terms of systems and their discourses (the systems-narrative or systext), systems, however, which also spawn narratives of resistance. And, like Gaddis' *JR*, *Gravity's Rainbow* uses a static story-space in order to enact the entrapment of the subject within the flows of ideology and as a means to map the ideological view that it is impossible to escape from the parameters created by postmodern culture. This is evident, for example, in the proliferation of images of labyrinths in the novel (the White Visitation, Dora-Nordhausen and the bureaucratic cities of Raketenstadt, Hexes-stadt and the City Dactylic) which enact the spatialisation of consciousness and experience produced

by the fixing of identity within existing cultural parameters. Spatialisation of consciousness prevents the temporal transformation of experience out of these parameters and ensures the perpetuation of existing models of identity because there are no alternatives (because there is no space) outside them. Gaddis, however, does not generate narratives outside this spatialisation, finding that the story-space he has mapped continually re-centres the narrative on the story-space of New York (and particularly Wall Street) because this story-space is the motivating force for the narrative. Pynchon, on the other hand, resists such a pattern in *Gravity's Rainbow* by generating narratives for the characters which take them outside the established spatial matrix. He develops dynamic and transformative narratives that resist the spatialisation of experiences of time in their insistence on the temporal basis of narrative. Slothrop's escape from the Casino Hermann Goering, for example, enacts this process, Pynchon mapping an accelerated narrative in which constant spatial displacement is exploited as Slothrop moves from Nice to Zurich to Geneva and into the Zone at breakneck narrative speed.

Gravity's Rainbow forms a nexus for many of the issues and concerns that underpin political metafiction. Pynchon, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, shares with Burroughs a concern with arrangements of power in contemporary society and their enactment and imagining through ideology. This is particularly the case with the novel's counter-cultural aspects which, despite the use of the Second World War as the novel's frame, centre on the social and cultural movements of the 1960's and 1970's. Eric Meyer has argued that issues generated out of the New Left movement, the protests against the Vietnam War, and the awareness of the increasing power of the culture industry find expression in *Gravity's Rainbow*.[7] Meyer, however, takes a reflectionist approach, seeing *Gravity's Rainbow* as a simulation of the conflict between System and counter-culture, rather than an intervention into this conflict. Meyer sees *Gravity's Rainbow* as a typical 'postmodern' text, parasitically feeding off cultural processes because it has nothing new to offer. Meyer's discussion of the text's subversiveness focuses on its affront to a monolithic System, an affront figured in *Gravity's Rainbow*'s

reproduction of the System's contradictions. This view of *Gravity's Rainbow* as a replication of cultural fragmentation, however, presents it as an unsophisticated mimicry of cultural forms, a view that does not seem tenable in terms of the variety of strategies Pynchon articulates so that *Gravity's Rainbow* can escape an ideological positioning. The fragmentation of the text is caused by the variety of forms Pynchon uses to both refuse ideology as the determinant of cultural life in postmodern society and to resist the polarisation of society in the 1960's and 1970's, a polarisation his earlier texts seem unable to resist. Because it is structured around several binary oppositions *V.*, in particular, seems to replicate a polarised Cold War world. The differences between *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow* do not end there. The structure of *V.* also directs attention to the way in which Pynchon's fiction has developed, from the proto-modernist experimentation of *V.* to a more sophisticated awareness of the matrices of ideology and control in the political metafiction of *Gravity's Rainbow*. *V.* is primarily concerned with self-reflexively exploring the structure of its discourses and narratives. *The Crying of Lot 49*, on the other hand, develops in terms of a recognition that structural patterning can dramatise ideology, using narrative and discursive forms as a means to both enact and resist the irruption of ideology into the text. *Gravity's Rainbow* amplifies this cultural and political configuration of narrative. It constantly searches for new arrangements of narrative which will forestall the intervention of system and its double, ideology, into the text. In the context of this development a brief discussion of Pynchon's earlier novels offers a means to approach *Gravity's Rainbow* and its alignment with political metafiction.

Aesthetics and Politics in Pynchon's Early Novels

Brian McHale sees *V.* (1963) as a paradoxical novel. He describes *V.* as "a series of stylized imitations of modernist strategies" predicated on an epistemological enquiry into the world-as-sign. This enquiry is disrupted, however, by the introduction of the fantasy realm Vheissu, which generates the ontological

concerns that McHale associates with postmodernist poetics.[8] *V.* becomes a doubled text, using its two forms - aesthetic structure and pastiche - to comment on each other. The former suggests that there is a system to the world, while the pastiche arrangement suggests that systems (and the world) are simply constructs of signs, pastiche allowing the creation of multiple worlds, each of which is as legitimate as any other. This self-referential structure creates a textual matrix involving a series of oppositions, each of which is given equal status. For example, toward the end of the novel an entry in Stencil's journal is described:

> "If there is any political moral to be found in this world... it is that we carry on the business of this century with an intolerable double vision. Right and Left; the hothouse and the street. The Right can only live and work hermetically, in the hothouse of the past, while outside the Left prosecute their affairs by manipulated mob violence. And cannot live but in the dreamscape of the future."[9]

Stencil's world-view is of a system based in oppositions, a system that does not, however, create order. Instead, Stencil's system fragments the world into chaos because neither of its oppositions is allowed dominance. He describes a society where living in the present appears to subscribe to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. The Right's distance from events means that the events can only be understood when they have already become history, while the Left's involvement in social action means that while events can be manipulated there is no understanding of them and no precise knowledge whether they lead in the right direction. The lack of synthesis produces a double structure in the novel and generates several irreconciliable oppositions. McClintic Sphere, for example, sets up an opposition between "flip" and "flop" very similar to the opposition in jazz between 'hot' and 'cool', in which the former represents passion and the latter coolness. This, however, presents a world which is either at peace ("flop") with "'no love, no hate, no worries, no excitement,'" or one where passion is dominant ("flip"), but which presages violence: "'if you take a whole bunch of people [who] flip at the same time you've got a war. Now war is not loving, is it?'" (*V.*, 293). Sphere's eventual resolution is the platitude "keep cool, but care" (*V.*, 366), a position that allows neither involvement nor distance, presenting an empty response in which the world is left alone if it will leave McClintic alone.

The most important double in the novel is that between system and randomness which, according to Michael Kowalewski, "articulates the dilemma at the center of the novel: is there an underlying pattern, order, or myth, as Stencil believes, that would explain the entire course of modern history, or does the world consist merely of a series of accidents, do we live, like Profane in a universe of brute, meaningless facts?"[10] The structure of the novel develops a narrative momentum through its presentation of the dichotomy within American Romanticism, between Emerson's ordered universe, where everything is significant, and Poe's world of the perverse, where what seems significant is in the end meaningless, where the man in the crowd is just a man in the crowd, moving without any deeper motivation. This process is reflected in the message that Mondaugen receives, which is actually two messages, one that is potentially significant, "DIE WELT IST ALLES WAS DER FALL IST" ("The world is all that the case is") and one that seems to indicate that the creation is nonsensical, "GOD MEANT NUURK" (*V.*, 278).[11] Neither world-view is privileged, however, because neither is adequate on its own terms. Although each view of the world presents itself as an absolute law, the presence of the other questions its legitimacy. The world cannot be a place full of meaning if meaninglessness is also present and nor can meaningless and randomness be seen as a universal condition if it is still possible to construct meaning. Although the world cannot reconcile the opposition, the text can, creating an apparent unity through the juxtaposition of system and randomness and meaning and meaninglessness. *V.* creates a static aesthetic arrangement that has little reference to the world the binary opposition is meant to organise. The resultant structure produces textual order but not a structure that organises the disparate phenomena of culture and society. Narrative production is subsumed into the novel's structure, narratives motivated by the paradigms that are created by the binary system and not by the creation of a narrative dynamic. The doubled structure of *V.* becomes the "narrative's sequential engines".[12] *V.*'s narratives are reduced to the role of enactment, illustrating and developing the text's articulation of system (in Stencil's narrative) and randomness (in the Whole Sick Crew's narrative). Tony Tanner analyses this process when he writes that: "instead of the characters living *in* their environment,

environment lives *through* the characters".[13] This process signals Pynchon's concern with the enactment of the attenuation of individuality in contemporary society, Pynchon using forms of narrative that determine the characters' actions (narratives which are stimulated by an external structure) as metaphors for the construction of subjectivity.

In *V.* Pynchon does not directly link ideology and social forces with constructions of identity, but suggests that identity and actions are determined by technology and an impersonal history. In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), however, Pynchon links social forces and narrative, articulating his fictional strategies in terms of the containment of identity in the burgeoning consumer culture of America. As has already been discussed (see chapter one), the novel opens with Oedipa Maas' experience of an empty consciousness in contemporary society, an experience shared by other characters in the novel. Stanley Koteks, for example, sees a loss of individuality created by the structures of Corporate teamwork. Corporate structures create identity in terms of machine principles, the individual a cog in a wider system.[14] Pynchon aligns consumer culture and Corporate economy because he sees an apparently systematic control of identity in contemporary society. The rationalised machine systems of the Corporations produce a culture of fragmentation in which identity is dispersed, a matrix that is resisted in Pynchon's "opposition to the culture industry".[15] The culture of simulations created by the Corporations is not a culture of plurality, but one in which subjectivity is 'plugged' into the 'empire' of signs, images and information made available by Corporate capital. Identity is constructed by the movement of ideology within this nexus of signs and information. Such a scenario is referenced in Oedipa's entry into San Narciso which is described as "less an identifiable city than a group of concepts - census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei..." (*CL*, 12). Through a metaphorical displacement, similar to that found in *Lookout Cartridge*'s topographical alignment of the city grid with ideology, the space of San Narciso is configured as a nexus of information, money and commerce, a space that is also a closed system:

> She looked down the slope... and she thought of the time she'd

opened a transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her first printed circuit. The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios than about Southern California, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. There'd seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her (if she had tried to find out); so in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding (*CL*, 13).

San Narciso's metaphoric space does not only reference the circuit cards of transistors and computers, but also figures a labyrinth that once entered cannot be escaped. Despite the passage's religious imagery and its promise of revelation, the entry into the labyrinth of San Narciso, and its informational and ideological systems, does not allow the possibility of escape or transcendence. The distance that Oedipa has at the top of the slope - which provides a view of the total structure - is never again available. Oedipa's entry into San Narciso involves her in a system that gives her knowledge of details but, because these details are fragments of meaning, does not allow her to 'project' a vision of an overall structure. Once she has entered the system she cannot leave it. The system of San Narciso is a closed loop which constantly re-centres the involved party within its labyrinth.

The passage also gestures to the possibility that Oedipa has already entered the closed loops of information and ideology. The reference to the earlier moment of knowledge in the vision of the radio's transistor is expressed as a loss of innocence (as a sexual metaphor) but also gestures to an entry into the symbolic and ideological order of society. There is an inevitability about Oedipa's failure to find the 'reality' behind the Tristero (as she failed to find the truth of the transistor circuit) established here. She is already within the systems of ideological and informational exchange and cannot break out of them and enter the alternative 'reality' that the Tristero seems to create. Like the "arrows" created by the realities of shopping, religion, television and drugs (see chapter one) her previous failure to understand the transistor directs Oedipa into a narrative already constructed for her. Her failure is not just a failure of knowledge, but a

signal that she has already entered ideology and is being guided by it, guided into San Narciso. The images suggest that she has never been outside ideology and has never had an individuality to call her own. The computer chip image also alludes to the actantial or narrative labyrinth she is about to enter, the labyrinth a space where parameters are already mapped out and the paths she can take already plotted. Oedipa, like Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow*, becomes a steel ball bouncing around inside a pinball machine. And like a pinball machine, there is no exit. Oedipa, like the ball, re-enters the circuit she has just left. Even when she leaves the circuit of San Narciso for Kinneret she bounces back again. Nor is her flight to San Francisco an escape from the circuit. In San Francisco she finds the same information systems she found in San Narciso, re-entering the 'circuit' without being aware of it. This same process is mapped in the narrative of encounters described by John Johnston, Oedipa bouncing from one male source of information to another (Metzger, Fallopian, Di Presso, Driblette, Koteks, Genghis Cohen, Emery Bortz, and John Nefastis), at the mercy of masculine interpretations of the information.[16]

Oedipa's trajectory is not a narrative of liberation, as she expects, but a narrative of entrapment that leads her further into the systems of information, signs and images. This is why the Tristero is so attractive to her. It offers the possibility of "a counternarrative to the one articulated by official power and embodied in the national postal system" and seems to be the means by which Oedipa can recapture the narrative of her own experiences.[17] The Tristero, however, has an ambiguous status and Oedipa comes to see it as another empire of signs which can only offer already constructed narratives. Although Tristero in its manifestation as WASTE seems to offer a counter-system to ideology, it also betrays a complicity that makes Oedipa doubt its legitimacy as an oppositional site of resistance. Not only does it seem complicitous in its analogous use of signs, but its embodiment as waste suggests that it is not a system found in the margins, but a product of ideology, an alignment discussed by Jonathan Culler:

> 'Where there is dirt there is system,' [Mary Douglas] writes. 'Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, insofar as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate

> elements.' She argues that dirt is vital evidence for the total structure of thought in a culture because it is an omnibus category for everything that is out of place.[18]

Waste signifies system rather than resistance. It is a sign of the presence of ideology not its absence. In the light of this it can be seen how Oedipa's discovery of WASTE is a discovery of the all-pervasiveness of ideology, and not the discovery of an alternative set of cultural values and practices. Culture is so dominated by the sign of ideology, and the system it creates, that even resistance is a product of that system.

Oedipa's realisation is enacted narratively through her attempts firstly to escape the system of signs and, secondly, to discover a new form of experience and the means to articulate it. Her first escape attempt involves her experiment with Maxwell's Demon. This act is an attempt to overcome entropy and to create perpetual motion, Oedipa following Inverarity's advice to "'Keep it bouncing'" (*CL*, 134). To be perpetually in motion seems to allow escape from the static informational systems, of which Oedipa has become a part. By entering the information systems Oedipa has become a sign written by ideology. The desire for perpetual motion is a desire to escape information and ideology by the entry into 'pure' movement or 'pure' consciousness. Here, an affiliation between pure consciousness and pure narrative can be suggested, in which continual movement escapes the 'narration' or enunciation of the subject by the empire of signs and by ideology. Oedipa recognises that escape through the pure narrativity of perpetual motion is either an illusion, or is an already co-opted position. To "keep it bouncing" is to be a pinball trapped in a closed system, a narrative exemplified by Oedipa's decision to "drift tonight, at random, and watch nothing happen" (*CL*, 80). Oedipa's 'night-walk' through San Francisco enacts an attempt to both escape the enunciation of identity by information and ideology and to overcome the loss of narrative momentum engendered by their static discourses. Moving in any direction is both an attempt to escape (on Oedipa's part) and an attempt to supply a narrative dynamic to the novel (on Pynchon's part). Although her walk neither proves the existence of the Tristero or otherwise, it does indicate that she cannot escape the world of sign and ideology. In her aimless wandering Oedipa

still 'accidentally' finds the systems of signs and information and she is led in a circular direction back to her starting point. She not only returns to her spatial starting point (Nefastis' apartment), but also narratively returns to the discourses of information that describe the Tristero's activities, these discourses dominating textually until the end of the novel. Rather than finding an exit from ideology she actually finds her way back to it. Oedipa tries once more to break out of the circuits of information that loop around her when she tries to analyse the new data in order to come to a final conclusion. However, she finds that everything is reflected back at her in "that afternoon's vanity mirror" and she is unable to plot a way through the various binaries that form around the Tristero: oppositional system or hallucination, a plot against her or a fantasy-plot (*CL*, 128). Paul Coates suggests that the Tristero is a potentially oppositional group in which waste "is not just a residue but the growing point of the revolution of the new".[19] Oedipa's discovery of a self-reflexive system of binaries, however, seems to mock this view. She is locked within the discourses articulated by ideology, discourses with which the Tristero seems to be complicit. The only future available to Oedipa is to bounce between ones (State) and zeroes (Tristero), between the various male sources of information, and between cities. Whichever path she chooses her route always takes her through the closed loop of signs and ideology.

Gravity's Rainbow: Narration, Language and Ideology

The eventual loss of the narrative dynamic in *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49* is something that Pynchon attempts to overcome in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). The two earlier novels seem unable to avoid a replication of culture despite their defamiliarising tendencies. *V.* constantly fluctuates between the two axes of the order-randomness structure, while *The Crying of Lot 49* constantly loops back to the discourses of information and ideology that generate the impetus for Oedipa's narrative. *Gravity's Rainbow*, while articulating similar textual structures to those of *V.* and similar systems of information and discourse of those of *The Crying of*

Lot 49, uses them self-consciously as the ideological referential axis of the text. *Gravity's Rainbow* does not, however, subsume narrative production into these textual configurations, but juxtaposes a fictional level in the dynamic configuration of narrative, attempting to discover the pure narrativity that *The Crying of Lot 49* gestures toward.

Whereas *The Crying of Lot 49* offers a movement from apparent freedom to a state of control, *Gravity's Rainbow* begins by assuming that control is so pervasive that there is a "sense that the Firm - 'Them' - exists not as a projection of a subjective neurosis but as an objective reality".[20] Whereas the earlier novels suggest that desires and dreams offer escape within consciousness, but not in society, in *Gravity's Rainbow* these desires and dreams seem to be entirely constructed by ideology. New desires and dreams are not just recuperated by culture, simulated and fed back to the consuming subject. Instead, they are created by ideology as a means to pre-empt resistance to the power structures of existing society. *Gravity's Rainbow*, however, does not submit to the force of ideology. It attempts to find new forms of expression for desires as a means to contest the siting of the text as an ideological form and to resist the view that the production of cultural meaning is the domain of the moneyed and powerful. *Gravity's Rainbow* constructs its narratives in terms of dreams of escape from ideology, whether these are Slothrop's dreams of becoming a movie star and marrying Rita Hayworth, Prentices's dream of a Counterforce, Mexico's dream of new forms of subjectivity, Tchitcherine's dreams of revenge, Enzian's dreams of a Rocket that will allow escape from death, or Blicero's dream of a new cultural order.

These dreams, however, always seem to be framed in terms of existing social, cultural and ideological parameters, because they can only be articulated within ideological forms of discourse. This is particularly the case with the women characters who, because of their siting by masculine forms of language, seem unable to dream except ideologically. Women are so oppressed that they cannot find new desires. They are always trapped within patriarchal ideology and male

power structures: Greta Erdmann is trapped in S and M desires, Jessica Swanlake is figured as a domain of possibility between Mexico and Beaver (and, like the Zone, is a space where a text can be written by the male characters), Bianca is exploited by the dreams of rape she cannot escape, while Leni Pökler is literally confined in the Dora concentration camp. Women are oppressed by the "masculine technologies" (324) that are figured in the conjunction of Romantic idealism and modernist futurism in Blicero's dream of transcendence through science. Blicero's dreams, however, foreground the ideological construction of desires. Pynchon shows the complicity of Blicero's position by focusing on the historical logic that it produces as it generates the Nazi 'Oven-State' of mass extermination and is then transferred, through the Romantic idealism espoused by Wernher Von Braun, to the United States, where it forms the basis of Nixon's authoritarian and repressive American Rocket State.[21] Pynchon also perhaps connects Blicero's Fascism with the Disney organisation for whom Wernher Von Braun fronted an animated picture (on the 'freedom' provided by space travel) in the 1950's. Von Braun's Nazi engineering is aligned with the Disney 'imagineering' that built Disneyland, a 'city' that Pynchon associates with the authoritarian city of Raketenstadt. Pynchon's portrayal of Blicero also reflects on the failure of the Romantic idealist escape into consciousness (a position adopted by the counter-culture), which is presented as a means by which the State is allowed control of society and cultural experience. Resistance occurs only in consciousness, diverted away from social action into areas where the State is not threatened.

The difficulty that faces Pynchon, as he maps dreams for his characters, is that discourse seems to be so imbued by ideology that there are no discourses available for new desires and dreams to be articulated. Pynchon's response is to focus on narrative as a means to map escape and to configure new forms of identity. Discourse is used negatively to map referential narratives that enact ideological processes. Pynchon, like Burroughs, sees the presence of ideology in discourse, particularly in literary language which, as Charles Russell has noted, is associated in *Gravity's Rainbow* with "inherited languages and the social world

built upon them".[22] Language writes paradigms and parameters that determine identity and cultural practice. When literary language is used, Pynchon signals that the text is being looped back to ideological forms, although he still allows a space for disruption in the use of expressions from popular culture, such as "Fanx", "sez", and "Komical Kamikazes". This does not mean that Pynchon sees discourse as the only means to contest the construction of ideological meanings. The interruptions of these popular expressions are transgressions (an affront to literature) rather than a fully-fledged strategy. The use of language is something that Edward Mendelson has discussed in an analysis of the chapter portraying the introduction of the New Turkic Alphabet into the central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union. Mendelson discusses how Pynchon aligns language with ideological constructions of reality: "The introduction of the NTA involves a complex of political motives arising in the decisions of a central authority, and shaped by political circumstances."[23] Mendelson concludes that language and politics interlock. Language, however, is not a tool for political action, as Mendelson suggests, but articulates ideology and begins to set parameters for actions instead of expediting them. Pynchon suggests that resistance cannot be effected through language and discourse because they have become too imbued with ideology.

Gravity's Rainbow images the repression created by language through its correlation of polymerisation with language. The forcing together of molecules in the connective chains of polymers is used as a metaphor for the entanglement of the subject in the chains of language, one of the characters coming to feel that she is "shut in by words, drifts and frost-patterns of white words".[24] Discourse constructs a web of connections in the text, a process exemplified by the acronym 'ID'. In the "vaguely criminal face on your ID card, its soul snatched by the government camera" (134), the identity card not only represents the State's criminalisation and distrust of its citizens, but also shows how identity only exists if it is officially recognised by, or constructed through, the State's ideological apparatuses. 'ID' also evokes the 'id' and ideology's colonisation of the unconscious, while also reflecting on the '1-D' (one-dimensional) identities created through ideology. The discursive connections suggest a flattening and fixing

process in ideology's creation of subjectivity, a flattening process engendered by discourse and its creation of connections, which reduce everything to homogeneity.[25]

Pynchon's principal means of articulating official and ideological discourses is through the use of an intrusive narrative voice, which seeks to connect, produce meaning and set out parameters for the novel. Despite its apparently panoramic perspectives the narrative voice actually attempts to create frames for the text and to position it ideologically by imposing its own interpretations. This is the case in the following passage in which Tchitcherine ponders on the number of times the word "black" appears in Slothrop's Sodium Amytal induced discourse:

> Or has he by way of the language caught the German mania for name-giving, dividing the Creation finer and finer, analyzing, setting namer more hopelessly apart from named, even to bringing in the mathematics of combination, tacking together established nouns to get new ones, the insanely, endlessly diddling play of a chemist whose molecules are words... (391).

Language is represented here as potentially fragmentary, although it also makes possible the discovery of new arrangements of discourse which can perhaps engender new arrangements of identity and cultural action. Although these arrangements appear to be insane or pedantic to Tchitcherine - establishing a distance between the language-user and the world of objects - there is a sense in which a strategy of re-arrangement allows additions to the static structures of ideology, additions which, like those provided by Burroughs' Operation Rewrite, are not catered for in the existing system. The focus on language in terms of its signifiers is also seen as a challenge to ideology. Pynchon presents the establishment of connections between words and objects (signifier and signified) as an ideological process that naturalises identities and social relations founded on domination. If language simply names objects found in nature then language always speaks objectively, even though it is actually speaking ideologically. There is, however, an uncertainty over whose voice is speaking here, whether it is Tchitcherine or the narrative voice. This is a device that Pynchon frequently uses. The uncertainty over who is speaking means that the narrative voice can distance itself from any ideas which seem to offer forms of resistance.[26] If the view that

language allows re-arrangment is taken to be Tchitcherine's then it can be presented as a partisan view, instead of legitimated as an authoritative 'truth'-statement. If the 'speaker' is the narrative voice, however, language is presented as a means to create connections, the re-arrangement of words and discourses creating new ideological meanings which can overcome the fragmentation found in society. Language acts ideologically to create artificial unities out of actual divisons. The narrative voice presents language as an ideological trap and suggests that Tchitcherine's counter-view is a fantasy that can never be actualised.

The narrative voice is not usually as unobtrusive as this, frequently intruding into the narrative, in the manner of Balzac's didactic narrator, to direct the reader's attention to particular ideas, or to close off narrative possibilities: "Promised plots, either storylines or conspiracies, are never fully developed because Pynchon is continually vanishing into some new discursive 'field' just as the promise is being extended."[27] The narrative voice acts to re-position the novel to the level of discourse, through which it can explain away the complexities produced by the narrative, and reduce complexity to a single ideological 'truth'. At the same time, the narrative voice privileges itself as the main focus of the novel, denying the legitimacy of the possibilities engendered by the production of narrative. The narrative voice, like Balzac's narrator, acts as an intrusion into the narrative, attempting to interpret by making connections within existing parameters and to close off the possibilities that the narrative promises. It therefore acts not to set out new fields of discourse but, like the discourses of information in *The Crying of Lot 49*, spatialises the text, preventing the temporal movements of narrative. The narrative voice also acts to place a meaning around the events and episodes that occur, directing the reader to specific (ideological) interpretations and thereby closing off meaning. The main role of the narrative voice is to control the direction of the narrative, to frame and position it and to attempt to create order and symmetry. However, its intrusions to create meaning - in what Charles Newman calls an "inflation of discourse" typical of postmodernism - fragment the text, creating new discourses which proliferate exponentially in an attempt to explain the proliferating narratives of the novel.[28]

The narrative voice is unable to control the protean narratives of the text because it adds to them, while it also has to transform itself to take account of narrative transformations. *Gravity's Rainbow* maps the proliferation of discourses in order to question both the apparent rationality of the narrative voice and its hold on 'truth', the proliferation of discourses signalling its paranoia as it tries to control the text. In the process, like Chandler's Marlowe, the narrative voice involves itself within the events it seeks to objectively explain and acts as a catalyst, shaping and determining events rather than simply describing them. Ishmael Reed uses this device in *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*, but does so more literally. He introduces a Chorus into his novel, intially using it to act as a commentator, but transforming it to show how voices of authority both impose meaning and create unsubstantiated 'truths' as if they were universal and absolute.[29]

This accumulation of discourses has the effect of not only preventing unity, but also of preventing a single explanation from establishing itself as the privileged site of meaning.[30] Although the narrative voice's presentation of ideas seems so rational and full of meaning, it is led into a situation where it frequently contradicts itself. It becomes increasingly untrustworthy as a source of information and as an authority on 'truth'. The more insistently it asserts its presence and authority the less rational it seems. Towards the end of the novel, for example, the narrative voice pronounces on the way in which the Schwarzgerat Rocket will be viewed:

> So, yes yes this is a scholasticism here, Rocket state-cosmology... the Rocket does lead that way - among others - past these visible serpent coils that lash up above the surface of the earth in rainbow light, in steel tetany [...] But the Rocket has to be many things , it must answer to a number of different shapes in the dreams of those who touch it - in combat, in tunnel, on paper - it must survive heresies shining, unconfoundable... and heretics there will be [...]
>
> But these heretics will be sought and the dominion of silence will enlarge as each one goes down... they will *all* be sought out. Each will have his personal Rocket. Stored in its target-seeker will be the heretic's EEG, the spikes and susurrations of heartbeat, the ghost-blossomings of personal infrared, each Rocket will know its intended and hunt him, ride him a green-doped and silent hound, through our World, shining and pointed in the sky at his back, his

guardian executioner rushing in, *rushing closer*.... (726-7).

The insistence of the voice here could suggest that it is one of the masochists who inhabit the world of *Gravity's Rainbow* who is speaking, expressing pleasure in the promise of pain that the Rocket state will bring. However, this very insistence and the suppressed euphoria of the second paragraph suggest that it is the ideological narrative voice who is taking pleasure in the future destruction of the preterite. It articulates its view of the Rocket State's power in order to figure the Hereros' firing of the 00001 (the episode that follows this passage) as a failure of resistance, the Hereros destroyed by the "executioner" who is rushing towards them. The narrative voice, however, is on the edge of paranoid psychosis at this point, perhaps even in a state of panic, uncertain whether the events it describes will happen. The narrative voice is not describing here, but using a matrix of discourses (mystic, religious, cosmological, scientific, political) to map out the text's future, and to determine interpretations of the text and of the Rocket, as if its apparently authoritative knowledge guarantees it the role of visionary. It positions the Hereros' firing of the second Schwarzgerat in terms of their failure, 'predicting' that they will be recuperated and destroyed by the Rocket state. The narrative voice's interpretation and its positioning of events and narratives, however, contradicts the narrative of the Hereros' enterprise. Deborah Madsen argues that it is not the triumph of ideology that Enzian discovers in the Rocket, but that, in its uncontrolled state after Brennschluss, the Rocket represents an "irruption of uncertainty" into the systems that ideology (and the narrative voice) construct.[31] The trajectory of the quoted passage conceals this possibility, the narrative voice attempting to present the Rocket as the word of God, its creation of ideological fields of action presented as the righteous path to redemption and fulfilment. Resistance is presented as a masochistic action promising death, whereas it is, rather, ideology which creates a masochistic desire for control.

Pynchon uses the narrative voice to map ideology's construction of paradigms of action and behaviour in society. This is a process Charles Russell analyses. Russell argues that ideology creates systems of meaning, succeeds in modifying 'reality' so that it corresponds with the system, but then finds that this

system cannot maintain the promise of meaning.[32] Temporal transformations alter the 'phenomena' of the text, creating new narratives and introducing new ideas and fields of action, with which the original system cannot cope. The construction of discourses in *Gravity's Rainbow* follows the same pattern. The narrative voice attempts to fix the text (around binaries and a system of connectivity), but is unable to contain the narratives generated and must continually modify itself by producing the new fields of discourse that Michael Kowalewski recognises.[33] The narrative voice becomes contradictory and develops its own narrative of transformations. It is not a privileged authority, but an unreliable source which not only develops a paranoid view, but also seems to fragment in schizoid fashion, thereby allowing voices of dissent access to the text, voices that, for example, direct the reader to "Check out Ishmael Reed. He knows more about it [Masonic conspiracy] than you'll ever find here" (588).

The unreliability of the text's discourses and their inability to sustain a single vision suggest that Pynchon uses narrative to articulate the text's political outlook. *Gravity's Rainbow* seems to demand that it be read in terms of its narrative arrangements and its specific events and stories in order to uncover the text's radical politics. An episode that exemplifies Pynchon's critique of ideology is Slothrop's trip to Potsdam. Dale Carter has discussed how Slothrop's meeting with Mickey Rooney at Potsdam presents the world of politics as part of the ideology of the spectacle, Carter stating that although the "Potsdam conference is not a Hollywood premiere... by reading it this way Slothrop illustrates the function of the imagery: once politics is taken as show business, the exercise of power can be translated into innocent, ahistorical news; politicians may become celebrities, their calculated rant magical charms justified by natural authority."[34] Carter's focus on cultural and historical correspondences generates an insightful account of the Potsdam episode. His analysis can be developed further, if the episode is read narratively as an event, to incorporate Pynchon's critique of power relations in society as a whole. The episode configures the Allied leaders as characters acting out roles against a backdrop of larger social forces. The politicians are not just celebrities, they are also front-men. In effect they are

Public Relations officers, without real power, standing at the front to divert attention away from the actual holders of power (Corporations) and the real movements of power (economic forces and commercial transactions). The intrusion of narrative in the form of Slothrop's entry into Potsdam adds to the effect of this representation of power structures. Slothrop's presence at Potsdam draws attention to the real movements of power in society. His retrieval of the dope mimics the commercial nexus of buying and selling, albeit in a minor way. Like the politicians, Slothrop is a middleman, who expedites the business deal rather than being a prime mover. Slothrop's proximity to the politicians indicates that they, like him, are being used as middlemen, Tchitcherine, for example, suggesting that Stalin may not know about the new social arrangements that are taking place (566). The politicians, however, are far less innocent. Pynchon figures each of them as representatives of repressive political systems: Churchill represents Empire, Truman the Corporate State emptied of New Deal idealism, and Stalin the Communist Corporate state.

The reading of narrative and events is demanded because of the narrative voice's involvement in the text, the narrative voice becoming a sub-plot which, like Brigadier Pudding in his book, *Things That Can Happen in European Politics* (77), attempts to determine narrative possibilities. This process is demonstrated by the frequent use of paralepsis in the novel: "Later he will figure out where it was she went. By then they will be well on board the *Anubis*, and it will only make him feel more helpless" (459). Here, the story is mapped out in advance and the possibility of narrative developing its own course in the novel seems to be denied. By this process, Pynchon enacts the construction of narratives in society, suggesting that ideology's construction of identity and behaviour patterns means that it can determine (and can even predict) future cultural practices as well as the subject's patterns of behaviour. The feeling of helplessness Slothrop experiences is generated not by his failure to understand but by the loss of control of his actions, his future behaviour predicted by the narrative voice. The articulation of discourses in the novel conspires with the narrative voice's construction of a master-narrative (a systems-narrative or systext), which will map

out narrative possibilities in advance. The limits the narrative voice imposes are articulated in an episode in which Slothrop, after his trip to Potsdam, is enjoying what he thinks is a period of freedom from the Conspiracy's system of connections. He finds instead that he is reincorporated in to this system in his seemingly chance encounter with Greta Erdmann. As he shelters from the rain, the following meditation occurs:

> If there is something comforting - religious, if you want - about paranoia, there is still anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is, and only pasteboard images now of the Listening Enemy left behind him and the wet sky.
>
> Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure he wouldn't, actually, rather have that reason... (434).

Paranoia and anti-paranoia are not just forms of consciousness but cultural and social paradigms created by the culture of simulations Slothrop discovers in the "pasteboard images of the Listening Enemy" against which he is figured. Paranoia is a state in which everything is connected, where there is a system or master-narrative which assures that all forms of identity or cultural practice are functioning parts in a totalising social machine. Paranoia is also analogous to the Emersonian 'Great Chain of Being' in which history and Nature create a system external to human agency. Pynchon, suggests, however, that the theory of the Great Chain acts ideologically. Its promise of transcendence deflects resistance away from social inequalities while its association with system suggests that it destroys individuality rather than liberating the subject. Pynchon also seems to question the contradictory philosophy theorised by Emerson, recognising the polarity between the system of the great Chain of Being and the theory of the self-reliant individual. Pynchon aligns Emerson's self-reliant individual with anti-paranoia, a state in which nothing is connected and where a fragmented atomistic society, lacking any narrative at all, is created. The limits to experience mapped in this passage question its status as an objective structural or ontological statement. It is an ideological statement that also has implications for the

configuration of narratives in the text. Slothrop is forced back into the master-narrative of connections that the narrative voice constructs at this point, because of the sense of security and belonging a master-narrative provides. The alternative of anti-paranoia is not an alternative at all, providing fragmentation of identity rather than the discovery of new modes of experience and new forms of desire. Despite the proliferation of dreams of new possibilities (for identity) in the novel, the binary structure ideology constructs as its map of 'reality' proposes that alternatives to ideological forms of social relations and identity are worse than the system of control. Slothrop decides he would rather be co-opted into the master-system of *Gravity's Rainbow* (the narrative of connections) and into the ideological systems of society that it maps.

In this passage, the narrative voice marginalises a position that creates possibility. This position is the possibility of the middle ground, a prospect offered earlier in the novel when Mexico and Pointsman are presented in apparent opposition:

> If ever the Antipointsman existed, Roger Mexico is the man [...] in the domain of zero and one, not-something to something, Pointsman can only possess the zero and one. He cannot like Mexico survive anyplace in between. Like his master I.P. Pavlov before him, he imagines the cortex of the brain as a mosaic of tiny on/off elements. Some are always in bright excitation, others darkly inhibited. The contours, bright and dark, keep changing. But each point is allowed only the two states: waking or sleeping. One or zero [...] But to Mexico belongs the domain *between* zero and one - the middle Pointsman has excluded from his persuasion - the probabilities (55).

In terms of chance, one and zero represent certainty and impossibility, the two poles where it is known that something either *will* or *won't* happen, a view that does not actually admit chance into Pointsman's binary structure. Mexico's domain, on the other hand, is the world of possibilities or excluded middles which Pointsman wants to appropriate into his binary scheme in order to predict the future. However, as Mexico tells him, there are no links between probability and possibility. Unlike Pointsman's either/or Pavlovianism, there is "no conditioning" involved in Mexico's domain of possibility which, as a result, cannot be used in

Pointsman's deterministic logic. Mexico's realm of possibilities is outside the binary system (the structure of ones and zeros that Pointsman represents), although the narrative voice claims that Mexico's domain is within the binary structure. The narrative voice attempts to co-opt Mexico's domain of possibility into its own structure of connections. Mexico threatens to break out of the narrative of connections and the narrative voice's realisation that his domain of possibilities cannot be co-opted into a system of control leads to alternative forms of control. As the novel progresses Mexico is narratively co-opted through his mimicry of Slothrop. The master-narrative defines Mexico as the Fool or scapegoat, roles initially set out for Slothrop. Mexico also adopts Slothrop's ex-'sidekick', Bodine, and begins to imitate Slothrop's use of language and his desires for escape. Because the binary system cannot co-opt Mexico he is recuperated narratively, his field of action limited and defined by the narratives and roles created for him.

Ideology and Narrative in *Gravity's Rainbow*

The construction of a narrative of connections in *Gravity's Rainbow* is something that many critics have discussed. Tony Tanner, for example, has described how *Gravity's Rainbow* deploys two opposed narratives, one of which is the story of the Rocket and the other the adventures of Rocketman.[35] Neil Schmitz complements this reading by noting how there are two binary narrative structures in the novel. The first of these narrative structures juxtaposes the construction of the Rocket - and the trajectory of its flight towards London - with the reverse trajectory that Slothrop maps as he travels from London to Peenemunde, where the rockets are built and launched. The other narrative structure contrasts Slothrop with Blicero. The former's narrative is complicated and fragmented by proliferating plots and stories while the latter moves linearly to his appointed goal.[36] In both cases these critics present two configurations of narrative, one narrative predicated on symmetrical connections, typical of the

unity created by a realist novel, the other mapping a picaresque story which constantly displaces itself through digression. Each of these narratives has a specific function in the text. The former narrative referentially maps the ideological parameters that limit identity and cultural practice in contemporary society, enacting social processes through narratives (a narrative of connections, the Epic Quest for the SG-1, genres, and role-narratives) which attempt to limit the movement of the proliferating stories of the picaresque narrative. This latter narrative attempts to loop away from the former narrative, generating stories as alternative fields of action for identity and cultural practice.

Gravity's Rainbow does not only configure a conflict between the systematising tendency of discourse and the freedom supplied by a dynamics of narrative. A constellation of narrative forms spirals through the text, generating conflicts between the systematising narrative of connections and a narrative of digressions, between Pointsman's binary oppositions and Mexico's domain of possibility, and between paranoia and anti-paranoia.[37] Leo Bersani discusses this latter opposition when he describes how the Zone operates as a juxtaposition to one of the text's ideological narratives (the search for the SG-1), creating a "spectral double" in the text.[38] Bersani, however, sees the Zone as a replication of a fragmented postmodern culture, rather than seeing it as a metaphor for the possibility of creating new narrative possibilities in the digressive picaresque of Slothrop's story. Bersani, like Meyer, sees *Gravity's Rainbow* primarily in terms of its referential configuration of narratives and discourses, which he argues are unable to avoid simulating a fragmented postmodern world. For Bersani, the values and meanings in circulation in postmodern culture define or determine all textual, discursive and narrative forms. This approach ignores the self-consciousness of Pynchon's textual strategies. Pynchon is aware of the significance of the narratives he uses, self-consciously mapping ideological narratives as a means to enact the limits and repressions ideology generates in its construction of identity. These ideological narratives do not, however, define the text, despite the narrative voice's attempts to find a master-narrative that will create textual unity and ideologically represent contemporary society as a place of unity rather

than fragmentation. A master-narrative would site the text as a replication of contemporary ideological forms. The narrative voice tries out several narratives in its search for a master-narrative, the master-narrative acting as a determining principle for the text in the same way that ideology determines identity and cultural practice. Its proliferation of narratives only adds to the text's chaos and reveals the inability of ideology to totalise cultural experience. Genres accumulate in the novel, each genre intended to totalise experience and limit fields of action. Their proliferation has the reverse effect, creating multiple possibilities that no master-narrative can control.

The narrative of connections involves a constellation of narratives: narratives depicting the matrix of Corporations (enacting economic forms of control), the connections established through information (the movement of ideology in the postmodern flows of information), the co-option of characters into connective and binary systems (control of identity), and a linear narrative that attempts to create causal relationships between events. Pynchon engenders a referential function for the narrative of connections by tracing the intersections between Corporations and cartels, a matrix which is imaged in terms of paranoia and the Rocket state that Tchitcherine sees beginning "to form in the stateless German night, a State that spans oceans and surface politics, sovereign as the International or the Church of Rome [...] IG Raketen" (566). Although this may be a paranoid view of society, articulated by either Tchitcherine or the narrative voice, such a vision does seem to be mimicked in the deployment of discourses in the text, which connect together as a seamless whole, recuperating any potentially new discourses as they are articulated. Several critics have suggested that paranoia offers a new and positive form of consciousness in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The articulation of paranoid fantasies leads to a recognition of the operations of ideology in society, a recognition that seems to suggest that ideology has failed - because it can longer invisibly naturalise or legitimate the inequalities found in contemporary society.[39] Paranoia, however, reaffirms ideology by suggesting that resistance is pointless in a world where social control is so universal and systematic. Ideology effects control on a global scale. There is no

'outside' to escape to and no form of action or identity which is not already recuperated by ideology. By creating resistance in terms of paranoia, ideology suggests that it is impossible to think outside the system, a pattern enacted in the ideological narrative of connections which seems to co-opt everything within its domain in order to prevent the characters looping away into narratives that represent new forms of social relations, cultural practice and identity. The location in the text of Tchitcherine's vision also acts narratively to foreground the system of connections. Tchitcherine's vision occurs in the Zone, a place which seems to be the domain of possibility and freedom that Mexico represents, except that both the Rocket-state and the narrative of connections extend here too.

Besides paranoia, the narrative of connections is also imaged in terms of the electrical grid into which Byron the Bulb is inserted, this grid also imaging the apparent impossibility of escaping the systems of ideology and control. There is no existence outside the grid. Byron clearly cannot unplug himself and create an alternate grid. He must, therefore, act within the existing electrical grid. This image enacts the construction of grids of information in the text, which are also 'grids' of history, ideology and culture. The characters, like Cartwright in *Lookout Cartridge*, are always 'plugged' into the grid of information and history - having no existence outside it. Because the State, Corporations and the 'culture industry' create these grids, to be inserted into them means that subjectivity is inserted into ideological forms of behaviour, desires, thoughts, and identities. Mondaugen's theory of temporal bandwidth and "personal density" traces this arrangement:

> 'Temporal bandwidth' is the width of your present, your *now*. It is the familiar 'Δt' considered as a dependent variable. The more you dwell in the past and in the future, the thicker your bandwidth, the more solid your persona. But the narrower the sense of your Now, the more tenuous you are. (509)

Here, withdrawal from society (and the historical and ideological belief-systems on which it is premissed) leads to the simultaneous attenuation of identity. What Mondaugen's theory does not say, however, is that withdrawal from society may only attenuate ideologically constructed identities. Mondaugen's theory is itself an ideological position because it suggests that 'being' and identity can only be

created by the acceptance of already existing social structures. To abandon the cultural paradigms and parameters created by ideology (in favour of other cultural practices and identities) causes the death of the self. Pynchon enacts the ideological creation of identity (through the subject's insertion into the Mondaugen's grids of information) at the narrative level through the insertion of characters into the ideological control narratives of the text. He makes a connection between characters' involvement in narratives and the construction of subjectivity and identity in society, something that will be discussed in more detail shortly.

The novel's narrative of connections (also called the systext) is established as part of the historical narrative in which links between Corporations are delineated. Pynchon traces links, narratively and historically, by focusing on IG Farben and its connections with Krupps, Theissen, Shell Oil, the fictional Swiss company AG Chemie, IG Farben's connections through Siemens with General Electric and the American government, and its connections with its American subsidiaries Agfa-Ansco and Chemnyco. Narratively, these connections are represented through the contacts that Pointsman has with Shell, through Wimpe's contact with Russian industries and Lyle Bland's links in the United States with the Masons and the Mafia. By mapping these connections Pynchon correlates economic movements of power with narrative arrangements, suggesting in the process that both involve the creation of grids of control; the subject becomes a product, his or her actions determined by economic processes, while characters' movements are determined by the narrative of connections. This process is mapped, narratively, through the creation of links between apparently different plot-lines, a set of narrative connections focusing on Slothrop. Lazslo Jamf, the creator of Imipolex-G and the scientist who conditioned Slothrop as a baby, is involved with Broderick Slothrop and Lyle Bland who has dealings with Major Marvy and Der Springer, the latter connecting with Blodgett Waxwing and the criminal underworld of Saure Bummer as well as with the German film industry (introducing Greta Erdmann) and the Counterforce, whose members are all double agents in the service of the Firm. As a result, Slothrop finds already

constructed narratives and connections wherever he turns, moving within a web of control that the systext creates. From many different angles links are established. Prentice's narrative, for example, is ultimately connected to the system of Corporations. Prentice shares an apartment with Teddy Bloat who puts Pointsman's octopus plan into operation on the Riviera. This event involves the introduction of Katje to Slothrop, their subsequent affair mimicking that of Prentice and Katje. Both affairs are arranged with the purpose of extracting information for economic and political purposes, Katje having connections with Shell Oil in the Netherlands and with Blicero, as part of his sado-masochistic *ménage à trois* (along with Gottfried), this arrangement mimicking that between Mexico, Jessica and Beaver. Katje and Blicero are also connected to Enzian, who works on the Rocket programme, which also introduces Narrisch, Pökler, Mondaugen, and through them Der Springer who also joins the Couterforce, of which Prentice is a member. Every move that the characters make (particularly Slothrop) seems to bring them into the systext, a configuration of narratives that enacts the movement of the subject within ideology.

The systext also spatialises the text through its construction of paradigmatic relationships in which binary oppositions and differences turn into connections. Tchitcherine and Enzian are divided by the desire to destroy each other, but linked because they are half-brothers. Similarly, Pökler's daughter Ilse and Greta's daughter Bianca are divided by class lines, but linked by the nature of their conception, conceived under the influence of the film *Alpdrucken*. Binary doubles proliferate through the text, apparently collapsing it into a static system of connections which figures the characters in already constructed narrative and ideological roles. Characters even seem to be co-opted before they enter the text. Both Slothrop and Enzian (as well as having their own personal Nemesis, in the form of Marvy and Tchitcherine respectively) are introduced into the texts as absences, but absences that are already part of a system of narrative surveillance. Slothrop is introduced through Teddy Bloat's monitoring of his desk (17), while Enzian is introduced in terms of the White Visitation's creation of a simulated Schwarzkommando (153), a simulation created for proapaganda purposes in order

to represent Africans as an 'other' that threatens white power and that needs to be controlled.

Deborah Madsen has discussed the relationship between a systematising narrative and ideology, describing how this narrative is predicated on "the Firm's mechanistic (Newtonian) cosmology, which claims pseudo-figural legitimation through the Protestant 'Argument from Design'". She links this with the narrative connections recognised by Thomas H. Schaub in which ideology is constituted in terms of the replacement of:

> the notion of self as consciousness with the concept of the self as an intersection. But the pretextual connectedness of 'Their' interpretation of reality co-opts the conscious self into a pattern of pretextual determinations by defining the self as the site where all of 'Their' systems of control meet.[40]

The narrative of connections is the site where systems of control meet in the text. When the narrative brings together Slothrop and Greta Erdmann, for example, there is "a crossing of solipsisms [...] The two patterns create a third: a moiré, a new world of flowing shadows, interferences..." (395). The new world, or narrative, does not create a new world of possibility, but augments existing ideological forms, each figure bringing different ideological "interferences" into the other's consciousness. They act as bearers of ideology, bringing other people into the fields of ideology that determine their actions. Pynchon, however, parodies the narrative of connectivity by extending its connections to the Δt equation and its simulation of temporal movement. The Δt equation establishes temporal connectivity but in so doing collapses time into stasis. Despite its ability to predict temporal developments, the Δt can only represent time as a line on a graph, not the actual experience of time. Nor can it represent all of time's infinite moments, but selects a few and assumes a connection between them. Pynchon focuses on the gaps that the Δt equation's assumption of connections conceals, revealing that the systext's obsession with connections actually introduces gaps into it.[41] One episode that demonstrates the opening of these gaps describes Jessica and Mexico's discovery of a cottage (itself a gap) that allows them respite from the War and from 'Their' machinations (53-60). The episode begins with Jessica in

bed, after which she drifts up to the ceiling to watch herself before moving to a time past when Mexico is explaining V-Bomb statistics. The episode then moves forward to a later time (though it is unclear whether this is still in the narrative past, or in the present or future) when Mexico is seen as a prophet, before reverting to the present and a further description of Mexico's theories on probability. The episode is expressed as a continuous sequence as if the various events had a cause and effect relationship. The time-shifts, however, foreground the episode's disconnectedness, revealing the gaps that the narrative of connections seeks to conceal in its mimicry of the Δt's "rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement" (407). By highlighting the episode's temporal slippages Pynchon reveals the counterfeit movement constructed by the narrative of connections, as it homogenises Jessica's narrative experiences.

Pynchon also questions the narrative of connections by showing how it creates one-dimensional narratives instead of opening out new possibilities as it expands. If all narrative possibilities are encompassed by the systext, then all narratives are the same narrative. Through this process Pynchon mimics and defamiliarises the one-dimensional identities created by ideology. This is represented by the concept of Holy Center Approaching in which narratives centre around the search for the Schwarzgerat Rocket and the system of connections it has established textually, an analogy extended to the centering involved in paranoia, which loops consciousness obsessively back to the same point. Although the narrative of connections expands, the characters experience this connectivity as a one-dimensional paranoia and only seem to experience disconnections. Franz Pökler's narrative figures him in terms of a one-dimensional Corporate identity. His consciousness is merged with the other workers at the Nordhausen Mittlewerke so that he does not seem to have a distinct identity. He is not, however, liberated by the development of this new 'telepathic' subjectivity but is narratively re-inserted into ideology and control through the introduction of his daughter, Ilse, who appears once a year at exactly the same time. To guarantee the return of his daughter the following year he must accept the conditions of control he experiences at Nordhausen: "Pökler understood that he

had been negotiating for his child [...] He was expected to behave a certain way - not just to play a role, but to live it" (417). The introduction of Ilse brings further forms of control because Pökler is uncertain whether the girl who comes to see him is actually his daughter or a new girl every year:

> A daughter a year, each one about a year older, each time taking up nearly from scratch. The only continuity has been her name, and Zwölfkinder, and Pökler's love - love something like the persistence of vision, for They have used it to create for him a moving image of a daughter, flashing only these summertime frames of her, leaving him to build the illusion of a single child (422).

Persistence of vision describes the fact that the eye takes in images faster than the brain can assimilate them. If the brain were just as fast as the eye, the gaps between frames in a moving film would be obvious to the viewer. Pökler only has a partial view of Ilse, but uses it, as the SS desire, to construct a connected narrative through persistence of vision, even though the full vision of his daughter depends on his belief in the SS statement that each girl is the same one. The freedom that Pökler experiences at Zwölfkinder is only legitimated as freedom through official and ideological authorisation. Pökler constructs a one-dimensional narrative based on the acceptance of ideology as an origin of truth, a narrative that not only involves the reduction of identity to the roles created by ideology, but also involves the creation of a perspective which is directed by ideology and not opened up to wider possibilities.

One-dimensional narratives also incorporate another form that Pynchon uses to enact ideology, a form of narrative that aligns role theory with genre. An example of this occurs in the story of Tchitcherine's involvement in the enforcement of the NTA on oral Kazakh culture. At the end of the story Tchitcherine goes out into the Kazakh steppes to record the aqyn's song:

> "Got it," sez Tchitcherine. "Let's ride, comrade." Off again, the fires dying at their backs, the sounds of string music, of village carousing, presently swallowed before the wind.
>
> And on into the canyons. Far away to the north, a white mountain-top winds in the last sunlight. Down here, it is already shadowed evening. (359)

Here the narrative transforms itself from Revolutionary Russia to a scene from

a Hollywood Western. "Let's ride, comrade" is interchangeable with "Let's ride, pardner", while Tchitcherine and his sidekick leave the carousing of the village, imaged in terms of a western saloon, to ride into the sunset across a Western landscape of canyons. Pynchon's use of genre maps the construction of identity in terms of roles, Tchitcherine entering into the ideological codes articulated by the media's representation of culture and history. He is no longer a Revolutionary officer creating a new order for society, but a cowboy upholding the old order's system of laws and values. Even though he acts as if he is a Revolutionary, Pynchon figures Tchitcherine as a cowboy whose actions actually serve capitalist structures of power and domination. The State in Nixon's America needs an external threat to legitimate its authoritarian and repressive conduct. Individual needs and desires are subordinated to the protection of the State, a situation represented in terms of the protection of the individual's right to freedom when it is actually the interests of the State and those with power and money who are protected. Tchitcherine's very existence as an oppositional figure legitimates America's system of domination and supports its laws and values.

Pynchon configures this episode to reveal how identities are constructed by ideology as one-dimensional social roles. He draws on role theory - a prevalent form of sociology in 1950's America - as a model for the construction of character in terms of narrative. Roles involve the construction of sets of actions or behaviour patterns through which social interaction and identities are created. Erving Goffman, a key role-theorist, states that it is through roles that "tasks in society are allocated and arrangements made to enforce their performance". These arrangements do not simply construct roles in the work-place, but work on the subject to "condition other important possibilities in life, forcing him to take (certain) courses of action". Goffman also points out that roles construct a notion of selfhood in which the individual "need only conform to the pressures on him and he will find a *me* ready-made for him".[42] This is something that R.W. Connell has discussed, describing how identities are already constructed for the subject, the adoption of these identities leading to the entry into already constructed narratives in which the dynamic is created by assigned goals and

norms ("husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker").[43] Ideology's control of role-formation leads to the control not only of identity, but also the control of the available fields of action and narratives within society. Pynchon uses this model in *Gravity's Rainbow* in his mapping of ideological role-identities as they are experienced by the characters, something that is most evident in the characters' imitation of Hollywood role-models.[44]

One example of this use of roles involves the figuring of John Dillinger as a model for role-identity. Dillinger, as the long time Public Enemy Number One, seems to be the main symbol of resistance in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The use of Dillinger introduces the narrative of his life as a bank robber and his eventual death at the hands of the FBI into the novel. He is configured as a tragic hero, doomed in his attempt to resist the State. Klaus Narrisch's story mimics this narrative. Narrisch images his stand against a group of vengeful Soviet soldiers in terms of Dillinger's life and death (516-7), seeing himself as an oppositional figure. However, although the Dillinger role offers resistance to a system of repression and control, it also promises death at the system's hands. Säure Bummer's use of the Dillinger catch-phrase "As B/4" also seems to implicate his counter-cultural underworld in a culture of repression and death. Tom LeClair, however has interestingly argued that roles in *Gravity's Rainbow* are figured in terms of Brechtian alienation. Although the characters "conceive of themselves in terms of artificial models - movies, radio, comic books, and other fictions - and... perform conditioned routines", these create an alienating effect that exposes control and highlights the simulated qualities of the identities created by ideology.[45] Pynchon uses the artificial routines referentially to mimic ideological forms of identity, but he simultaneously parodies them, highlighting their artificiality and their inability to express the 'real' desires of the subject for freedom. Pynchon uses the artificial routines to show how ideological forms of identity lead to repression and death and not freedom.

It is principally in the use of genre that Pynchon configures subjectivity in terms of social roles, the insertion of characters into genres enacting ideology's

construction of identity in society. Genres proliferate in *Gravity's Rainbow* ranging across the War novel (or historical novel), the existentialist novel of self-discovery, tragedy and comedy, romance, picaresque, melodrama, science fiction and fantasy, dystopian novel, occult horror, beat novel, spy thriller, jeremiad, spoof spy thriller, western, fairy-tale, and detective fiction amongst many others. The genre narrative that has most importance as an ideological narrative is the Epic Quest which is configured in terms of Slothrop's 'Progress' through the novel. Initially, Slothrop's Quest is a search for an escape from the V-2 bombing of London, but gradually his search for escape takes on wider implications as he is caught up in the Quest for the Schwarzgerat-1 which will seemingly provide a totalising system of meaning and, narratively, will provide a legitimating centre for the systext, around which all the other narratives and stories must revolve. By inserting Slothrop into an Epic narrative the systext attempts to legitimate itself as a master-narrative, making an Epic of the novel by using Slothrop as the Epic hero it neeeds. This narrative can be read in terms of Wagner's theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* which, to produce a totality, synthesises all art-forms within it.[46] The narrative of connections' creation of an Epic follows this pattern, providing a master-narrative that will totalise the disparate stories and discourse of the text. In the process it will apparently create a system of meaning that will provide a paradigm for identity and cultural practice, Pynchon seeing the same process at work in ideology's attempts to totalise experience in contemporary society. Pynchon images the narrative of connections' desire for the creation of the novel as a 'total work of art' in the mythic and Wagnerian references that have led some critics to suggest that Slothrop does indeed take on the role of Epic hero in the guise of an Orphic archetype.[47] Pynchon, however, parodies this construction of identity and refuses to construct the novel as a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, denying synthesis by foregrounding disjuncture. The privileging of a particular genre as the Grail of the novel's Quest is always resisted, the configuring of the text as a war novel, for example, being undercut by the use of songs which, while appearing to contribute to the synthesis of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, actually mean that the war-novel genre is displaced by the creation of the novel as a Hollywood musical. Similarly, a process of syntagmatic displacement occurs to prevent one genre

totalising the multiple narratives. In Slothrop's trip down the toilet (62-71), for example, the narratives slip from paranoid fantasy to Western and then into Puritan allegory.

The other means by which Pynchon resists the stasis of the Epic genre involves Slothrop's refusal to enter the Epic narrative structure the narrative of connections creates for him. The first attempt to create Slothrop as an Epic hero occurs when his quest for information on the SG-1 leads him to the Mittelwerke at Nordhausen. The narrative is coded with allusions to the Wagnerian Epic (with references to the Nibelungen, 299) and to Greek Epic (by reference to the Titans who live under the mountains, 330), but what Slothrop finds when he enters the Mittelwerke is a group of drunken soldiers singing vulgar limericks. Nevertheless, he does come across Major Marvy whose role as Slothrop's Nemesis seems to insert Slothrop into a revenge narrative. Rather than confronting Marvy and his cronies in battle, however, Slothrop runs away, substituting the narrativity of the chase scene for the expected death or glory struggle that has been devised for him. The Epic is predicated on a confrontation between the hero and an apparently indestructible foe, the hero seemingly placing his destiny in the lap of the Gods, or at the mercy of chance, when he engages his foe in combat, a combat that results in either victory or glorious death. The hero, however, has a system of power on his side (in the form of Greek Gods or Christ) and is only apparently alone. The Epic is actually a confrontation between systems at an individual level. The attempts to encode Slothrop into an Epic confrontation with a mass of enemies (Marvy's crew) is an attempt to destroy or co-opt resistance. Slothrop does not have a system behind him and will be defeated unless he calls for help from another system: the system of control he is trying to escape. The system will intervene to ensure that he is successful but will also co-opt him as one of its agents. The making of an Epic of *Gravity's Rainbow*, therefore, revolves around ideology's guaranteed victory: Slothrop will either be defeated or recuperated if he takes on the role as Epic hero.

A further attempt to co-opt Slothrop into the Epic structure occurs when

he meets Bummmer's group of drug addicts in Berlin. He discovers them in a place where "Signals [are] coming in from all directions, and from back in time too, probably, if not indeed forward..." (367), a signal not of a literal space of control, but a topographical displacement between city and mind (similar to that of *Lookout Cartridge*) which generates a situation or moment in which ideology impinges and seems to drive him toward accepting the role of Wagnerian hero. For it just so happens that Bummer has a Wagnerian costume of horned helmet, green velvet cloak and buckskin trousers which he gives to Slothrop. Slothrop is placed in an encoded situation which will produce an already constructed narrative for him if he accepts the role-identity with which he is presented. Although Siegfried escapes the Norns' control of history, he is inserted into a more insidious system of control and becomes subject to the machinations of Hagen. And although Siegfried helps to destroy the Gods' old order he has no control over the new order that is created, a society which, Pynchon suggests, is a site of worse repression, represented as it is by the Nazis' 'New Order'. Slothrop decides not to take on the role of Siegfried but prefers to think of himself in terms of popular heroes such as the Lone Ranger and chooses to remove the horns and become Rocketman (or Raketenmensch). He becomes a comic book or cartoon hero rather than a 'Knight of the Holy Rocket', his actions characterised by the same anarchic behaviour of Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. The same thing happens when Slothrop is asked to act as the Pig-hero, Plechazunga. Instead of fulfilling the expected narrative, he turns it on its head and acts out the role as Porky Pig, refusing the identity created for him, and the narrative that it entails, choosing instead an identity for himself.[48]

Narrative Resistance: Pure Narrativity and the Dialogism of Genres

The importance of cartoons in *Gravity's Rainbow* is not to be underestimated. Although cartoons seem to be marginal to the main 'business' of the novel (the narrative of connections and the search for the SG-1) they actually form one of

the models of narrative that Pynchon uses to refuse the systematising tendency of the systext. Cartoons are configured in the novel for several reasons. Firstly, they produce a negentropic effect creating life out of 'death'. They make animate the inanimate and turn static frames into dynamic narratives. Pynchon's taste for cartoons and his liking for Road Runner cartoons can be seen to have an effect on the production of narratives in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Road Runner cartoons represent Wylie Coyote's attempts to halt the motion of Road Runner, something which he consistently fails to do. In the constant move from one chase scene to another Pynchon perhaps sees movement as a means to escape control. Cartoons are also episodic in form, predicated on rapid displacements, the narrative cutting quickly between routines or scenes. Nor do any of the episodes have relevance for the succeeding episodes, each scene being a little story in itself. Cartoons destroy cause and effect narratives, in which the events of one scene determine those of another. In their episodic format, cartoons generate narratives of continual renewal and re-beginning.

The rapid cuts and acausal configuration of episodes that characterise cartoons are presented in the chapter that describes Thanatz's experiences after his fall from the *Anubis*. This chapter begins with the statement "You will want cause and effect. All right" (663), but this announcement only has meaning retrospectively in the conclusion of the episode when Thanatz relates his adventures to the Schwarzkommando in an attempt to explain to them how Blicero has come to dominate his life. The conclusion seems to recuperate Thanatz into the narrative of connections, but the episode itself presents a meandering story formed by a series of digressions that do not link together except as an accidental temporal sequence. The episode begins with Thanatz's rescue from the sea by an undertaker, an event that is followed by a digression on the effects of lightning, a fantasy narrative (describing how those struck by lightning are carried off by dwarves in plastic masks and Carmen Miranda hats), and a digression on Ben Franklin. Thanatz's rescue seems to 'cause' a series of reflections on the effects of lightning but the narrative soon reveals that these stories are pointless. The undertaker's interest in lightning (which has motivated

these stories) is economic and does not extend to the scientific, historical and fantastic frames involved in the digressions. These digressions are shown to be purposeless irruptions into the narrative, having neither connection to the story of Thanatz's rescue nor to any wider scheme of reference. Thanatz's rescue is followed by a further displacement as the story moves to Thanatz's experiences at a prison-camp for homosexuals, an episode follwed by his departure in a police car which is attacked by Polish guerillas who mistake Thanatz for an anti-Lublin journalist. At this point the episode's lack of a causal structure is made clear. Thanatz tells the guerillas of their mistake: "'Not me,' Thanatz sez./ 'Shit. He's right.' / They roll him out the car door into a DP encampment a few miles on" (669). The minimal vocabulary here suggests that narrative momentum and the rapid cuts from one event to another outweigh the placing of the events in frames of connectivity and meaning. The events occur haphazardly with only temporal succession to connect them, the narrative moving purposelessly from one scene to another in the same way that Thanatz then wanders randomly with the DPs. This episode is a picaresque in miniature, parodying the Epic narrative by mimicking Slothrop's picaresque adventures. While the narrative voice promises cause and effect - as does the Epic narrative - there are no necessary links between events, the narrative shifting direction at random as if the narrative of connections did not exist. The narrative bears more resemblance to a cartoon or a series of vaudeville routines, tied together by a self-consciously artificial conclusion, than it does to a linear plot. Pure narrative movement is the result.

Slothrop's cartoon resistance to his incorporation into the Epic narrative is not the only form of narrative resistance in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Slothrop also resists the role-identities and narratives created for him in the other genres which proliferate in the novel. Although this proliferation is affiliated with the dialogism of genre mentioned in chapter one, the use of genre initially involves the construction of ideologically encoded narratives which Pynchon uses to enact the various forms of control in operation in society. A key instance of this latter use of genre occurs at the beginning of 'Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering' a point in the novel when Slothrop believes that he has escaped from both the

systems of control and the terror of the V-2 bombing he experienced in London. The arrangement of genres and situations at the beginning of this section makes clear that Slothrop has been taken out of obvious forms of control and inserted into concealed ideological processes. This is not only signalled through the Octopus plot that Pointsman has created (where Slothrop becomes aware of secret motives behind his rescue of Katje), but also through the arrangement of genres, each of which involves aspects that locate identity within ideological parameters.

The section opens with a travelogue section which implicitly figures Slothrop as scenery or background, submerged in a spatial frame and defined by it. The narrative continues by presenting a picnic that has been pre-arranged by Pointsman for Slothrop. The picnic locates Slothrop in genres such as the Western or narratives of small-town America, the picnic an event that evokes civic and familial values. The next event is the attack on Katje by the octopus Pointsman has conditioned, an event whose purpose is to contrive an affair between Katje and Slothrop and to give the Firm access to Slothrop's secrets. Narratively it invokes stories of underwater adventure and threats by sea monsters. These narratives imply the conquest and domination of Nature, Slothrop's attack on the Octopus aligning him with this capitalist ideology. The ensuing relationship with Katje involves a tryst in the manner of the spoof spy thrillers made popular by Bob Hope, a genre in which a schlemiel or Fool (represented here by Slothrop) is co-opted into the service of the State. The tryst, however, turns to slapstick, during which Slothrop's clothes are stolen, stripping him of his official identity. This theft of Slothrop's selfhood does not have the desired effect. Instead of realising his powerlessness in the face of a much greater power, Slothrop becomes aware of the forces controlling him. He then attempts to evade these forces by random motion, but his wanderings evoke Oedipa's night-walk and the pervasiveness of the ideological sign-systems that she experiences, Slothrop seeing rain drops "splat into giant asterisks on the pavement, inviting him to look down at the bottom of the text of the day, where footnotes will explain all" (204). He is surrounded by grids of information, a situation figured more overtly when the

actual purpose of his 'escape' to the Riviera is revealed, and Dodson-Truck introduces him to the scientific discourses of the V-2 Rocket to find out whether he knows something that Pointsman does not. The use of genres continues. Slothrop figures himself as Cagney in his final dealings with Katje (222), evoking gangster movies and their spirit of oppositionalism. The gangster movie figures a deathly oppositionalism, however, its melodramatic frame locating the gangster-hero in a narrative determined by the system of natural justice (a system which is actually based on the values of the dominant cultural power) the gangster film assumes. Resistance to the law and to the State is only temporarily successful, 'natural justice' ultimately triumphing, destroying the gangster-hero in the process, and re-legitimating the State's laws. Each genre represents Slothrop, locating him within ideological forms of desire and identity. His actions are determined by the roles and situations created for him, his future behaviour already mapped were he to accept the narratives he enters.

Barbara Johnson has discussed the relationship between characters and narrative, focusing on the way in which the construction of identities is enacted through the figuring of characters within imposed narrative forms. She analyses the way in which the husbands in Hawthorne's 'Birthmark' and Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' have organised narrative worlds for their wives predicated on scientific rationality. The wives become "prisoners of an idealization. The cost of their attaining a valued status in the world is to become an object in someone else's reality and, hence, to have, in fact, *no* status in the world." Johnson argues, however, that characters can resist these narratives and can site themselves as the figuring power of a text, a process that allows the characters' actions to determine narrative production. Johnson discusses, for example, how Perkins Gilman's narrator manages to resist the narrative which enunciates her, so that by the end of the narrative "the patriarchal story lies senseless on the floor, [and] the escaped story creeps wildly around in circles".[49] This narrative resistance also occurs in *Gravity's Rainbow* when Slothrop, attempts to resist the construction of narratives around him, exhorting Dodson-Truck into a drinking-game with the purpose of getting Dodson-Truck so drunk that he will

reveal the reason why the Firm are so interested in himself. Although playing games is associated with the 'System' the drinking-game allows Slothrop to take control of the construction of narratives, a development figured by Slothrop's introduction of variation through the constant changing of the game's rules.

The escape of, or through, story is something Pynchon uses to challenge the ideological enunciations of already constructed narratives (such as genre), dramatising the repressive forms of identity construction involved in their use. Slothrop's response to genre's ideological forms of identity is to leave the Riviera and to mimic the Beat narrative of continual movement. This narrative, however, does not have an end in sight (such as the West Coast of America in Beat narratives). The desire for an end would simply reassert the structured narratives that direct identity toward certain goals, a structure evident in the Epic, which has as one of its aims the incorporation of the hero into the system after he has shown his worth through a series of tests. Pynchon initially figures Slothrop's escape, however, as pure story. One event follows another episodically, without the use of a connective structure, temporal movement being the only determinant involved. Slothrop's movements between Zurich and Geneva, however, increasingly resemble a pinball shuttling between solenoids and it is only later that Pynchon maps Slothrop's narrative as a pure temporal dynamic, undirected by any motivating principle or structure.

Once Slothrop enters the Zone he begins to slough off the identities constructed for him, Pynchon again using genres to map Slothrop's creation of identity. Slothrop's transformation of the Epic into comic book and cartoon narratives (as has been mentioned) is an example of this process. Pynchon also figures Slothrop's creation of identity in terms of genres which provide oppositional identities. These include anti-establishment gangster genres (represented by Jimmy Cagney and John Dillinger) musical biopics (Charlie Parker and Orpheus), narratives of Existentialist self-discovery, and slapstick narratives (in which Slothrop becomes a Charlie Chaplin little man fighting the system). This use of genres is not simply an articulation of genres as ironic

quotation or as a means by which an ironic double voicing can be introduced into the text.[50] Although this ironic aspect is present there is a more positive aspect to the use of genres. Pynchon recognises the necessity of reconceptualising identity in a postmodern culture which reduces subjects to "mouthpieces of a discursive ventriloquism".[51] He uses a dialogism of genres to map this new form of identity. Mimicry or simulation of available discourses is certainly suggested in Pynchon's use of genre. Pynchon, however, configures identity in terms of a subjectivity that is aware of ideology's investment in the forms used to construct experiences and patterns of behaviour. Slothrop, for example, becomes aware of the death-drive in his mimicry of Dillinger, and of the negativity and alienation that surround the Existentialist hero while also recognising that the 'little man' of Chaplin's films is defined by the system he resists. The adoption of identities becomes a provisional transformative matter. Slothrop does not permanently adopt one form of identity, an act that would both create a one-dimensional identity and re-insert him into a narrative orientated to fixed goals. Identity becomes a process of identification, Pynchon using the cross-cutting between genres as an enactment of identity transformation.

The collision of genres operates as a dialogistic principle which reconfigures the genres so that the ideological elements are attenuated and the genres are reconstituted in terms of resistance to ideology. The overall effect of this narrative strategy is not to locate identity in terms of fixed parameters, but to stress the oppositional character of the identities and narratives articulated. The dialogistic principle diminishes the death-driven, ideologically defined, and alienated forms of identity found in the genres Slothrop mimics, privileging the different forms of resistance figured by each genre: the aggressive resistance of the Dillinger gangster narrative, the creation of new (musical) possibilities in the Charlie Parker biopic, the resilience and invincibility of the Chaplin 'little man', and the analytic skills of the Existentialist hero. The cross-cutting between genres also involves a constant displacement of narratives. Displacement generates a dynamic that a persistence with a single genre would not allow, this latter deployment of genre collapsing narrative into static paradigms rather than

syntagmatic and dynamic narrative movement. An analogous situation occurs in the reconstitution of identity in terms of role-identities, where there is another collision of forms. As well as the roles already mentioned, Slothrop adopts the roles of a Zoot-suiter, the Fool, and a transcendentalist philosopher, retaining the oppositional element in each case. The glamorisation of oppression that inheres in the Zoot suiter is deflated (and resistance highlighted) when it is brought into conjunction with the other roles adopted. The transgressiveness of the Fool's satiric vision overcomes the sense that he usually has official sanction for his comments. Similarly, Slothrop's "feeling natural" (626) is given a value through its implications of Transcendentalist disobedience and resistance, his position unaffected by the ideological facets of either the Emersonian allegory of an interconnected Creation or the colonisation of Nature by commercial powers.

While the dialogism of genres maps a means of constructing identity in society and offers ways of overcoming ideology in social and cultural action, the other strategy of narrative resistance that Pynchon uses (dynamic narrativity) is more concerned with the means by which the text can escape ideology. Pynchon articulates textual resistance through "narrative divagations" which "plant the seeds of rebellion and Counterforce" in the narrative's desire to disrupt the assimilating processes of the static systext.[52] An example of these "narrative divagations" occurs when Slothrop enters Nordhausen. Slothrop seems to enter Nordhausen twice, the first arrival acting as a misleading motivation. This first episode is a false trail dominated by the narrative voice's explanation of events as it describes the bright and clean future on offer in the city of the future (Raketenstadt), for which Nordhausen is the model. However, the scene develops into an official paranoid fantasy in the description of the sinister forces at work in Nordhausen, finally admitting to the nexus of controls there: "Wait - which one of them was thinking that? Monitors, get a fix on it, *hurry up* - " (298). The episode then breaks off and Slothrop appears to arrive for a second time. The impression created by the second arrival is that the narrative has taken a wrong turning, veering toward a narrative of control which is then repressed. The second arrival is a diversion away from ideology and control, the episode configured as a chase

narrative involving constant changes of focus and direction as Slothrop is chased round the tunnels of the Mittelwerke by Marvy and his gang. In the first Nordhausen episode, narrative diegesis moves toward a representation of the creation of control and surveillance, its goal the representation of the power and invincibility of ideology and the concomitant futility of resistance. Pynchon, however, shifts the narrative focus and disrupts the ideological narrative that the narrative voice has constructed. He generates a slapstick narrative of continual movement where the dynamic of the chase (in which events just seem to happen at random, one following the other without necessary connection) seems to allow Slothrop and the narrative to escape the controlling forces at work in the text.

A similar narrative dynamic occurs in the episode that maps Slothrop's escape to Berlin by balloon. In his role as Nemesis (his singing of limericks described as "the singing of Furies", 334) Marvy intrudes into the story in order to force Slothrop back to earth. An aerial pie-fight follows and Marvy is vanquished when a sand bag hits the engine of his plane. Cartoon-like events generate a comic episode (alluding to Dastardly and Muttley cartoons) whose story has little relevance to either the narrative of the SG-1 or the narrative of connections, a narrative into which Marvy hopes to co-opt Slothrop. The episode's importance lies in the fact that it foregrounds the fictionality of narrative production and deflects *Gravity's Rainbow* away from an affirmation of the referential narratives that threaten to create the novel as a replication of the movements of ideology in contemporary culture. Episodes like this continually intrude into the ideological systext, intruding and displacing it by introducing gaps of 'pure' narrative that threaten its totalising imperative. The effect of these intrusions is that *Gravity's Rainbow* reconstitutes narrative in terms of transformation (rather than connection) and prevents the irruption of ideology into the text as a determining principle, a situation that would define *Gravity's Rainbow* ideologically as a text "totally encapsulated in, and a direct expression of, the reigning cultural codes of meaning".[53]

A similar narrative disruption occurs in the Floundering Four episode,

which seems to figure the intervention of ideology in the form of the Oedipal father (Pernicious Pop), but actually acts to dislocate and subvert the ideological narratives. The action, articulated in a fantasy frame, occurs in Raketenstadt - where Utopia has been appropriated for capitalism and where bureaucracy and order are at a premium - a story-space that seems to re-impose the narrative of control. While gesturing toward an Epic narrative of conflict, and while establishing parameters in the orientation of the narrative to a constantly renewed set of goals, in "the father's daily death plots" (674), the episode forms itself into a comic book or adventure story narrative. While comic book heroes can be seen as just different kinds of Epic hero, the narrative subverts this by making the Floudering Four completely fallible. Nevertheless, although the narrative is apparently subversive in its anti-patriarchal element, it is premissed on the continual return of the father for its continuation. In this kind of narrative the villain is indestructible, constantly being reincarnated: Sherlock Holmes never finally defeats Moriarty, Fu Manchu announces that "the world shall hear from me again", and Flash Gordon never vanquishes Emperor Ming. If one villain is defeated, another one is immediately found for the sake of the persistence of the narrative. There is, therefore, a formulaic or systematised element in the narrative, apparently enacting a narrative of ideology, the narrative unable to loop outside the parameters created for it. However, the goals and parameters are avoided by Slothrop and the Floundering Four through their avoidance of decision making processes, which involve a narrowing of possibilities: "There's no real direction here, neither lines of power nor co-operation. Decisions are never really *made* - at best they manage to emerge, from a chaos of peeves, whims, hallucinations and all-round assholery" (676). The narrative occurs as spontaneous or dynamic action without reference to already constructed models of action, displaying a lack of direction in terms of the assigned parameters or goals. Slothrop attempts to take this further by evading action altogether. He takes a break "for that *Pause that Refreshes*!" (a can of Coca Cola) but finds himself immediately trapped inside a fridge. Pynchon seems to suggest that his attempt to evade action makes him a static target who can be easily located and neutralised. Movement and narrative dynamic seem to be represented as the only

means of escape from containment, so that, when Slothrop escapes from the fridge, the episode continues not in terms of the goals set for it (the rescue of the Radiant Hour), but by finding forms of action that evade the narrative's parameters, ending before any rescue attempt has been made. In this episode, narrative is simply aligned with movement in terms of continual action, a never-ending cartoon form which finds its momentum simply by the temporal shift from one unrelated event to another.

A similar attempt to provide movement occurs in resistance to the stasis implied in the two forms of story-space in the novel. The first of these is enacted in the proliferation of bureaucratised cities, where order and symmetry are the dominant principles. Each city controls a different area, but they all mirror each other. Raketenstadt is the dominant image of this, but it is also reflected in the figuring of Berlin as the City Sacramental (372-3), in the City-Paranoiac (the control of imagination, 172), in the City Dactylic (control of the soul, 566), in Happyville (the control of alternate realities generated through hallucinogenic drugs, 644) and in Hexes-stadt (the control of magic, 718). In the correlation of the bureaucratic cities with ideology Pynchon shows how consciousness is spatialised within ideological parameters, unable to break out temporally through the creation of new possibilities.[54] Only bureaucracy and ideology can move and grow, expanding to enmesh subjectivity within their grids and preventing transcendence. Narratively, this is expressed through the image of the pinball machine, Slothrop (and later Mexico) becoming a steel ball bouncing around Europe from city to city, momentum already determined by the control structures. The Displaced Persons who roam Europe are also figured in terms of the pinball image, presented as molecules "colliding, shearing alongside for miles, sliding away, numb, indifferent to all momenta except the deepest" (549). They bounce between cities apparently at random, but their paths are linearly directed by ideology, imaged as the railway tracks they use, an image that portrays the one-dimensional linear narratives created by ideology. A similar image ends the novel. The final image of the novel is the bouncing ball guiding the viewer through the words of the hymn, "There is a Hand to turn the time", as it flashes up on the

cinema screen of Zhlubb's Orpheus theatre. The breakdown of the film that precedes this image has often been seen as a revelation that what the reader has experienced in *Gravity's Rainbow* is "a movie-within-a-novel", a metafictional simulation of a text, rather than any version of social or cultural reality.[55] That the film is shown at a cinema owned by Richard M. Zhlubb (a thinly disguised portrait of Richard M. Nixon) suggests, however, that the novel actually maps and critiques Nixon's society of the spectacle. The final image compounds this effect, the image implying that subjectivity is directed by the hidden hand of ideology, both the bouncing ball and the "Hand to turn the time" implying that the subject's actions are determined by social forces.

The second configuration of the static story-space occurs in the attempts to fix the space of the story discursively, a process presented in the first two sections of the novel. 'Beyond the Zero' attempts to construct a naturalistic evocation of London, which Pynchon initially parodies through the introduction of mysticism and the sense that there are alternate realities not covered by the historical or mimetic frame invoked. 'Un Perm' au Casino Hermann Goering', on the other hand, constructs a story-space focused around cinematic representations of both international espionage and Vichy France, a story-space reminiscent of *Casablanca*. The story-space is a simulation of reality, but has a mimetic function in its evocation of the simulations of postmodernity. Pynchon resists the siting of the text as a replication of postmodern cultural forms by displacing Slothrop from this cultural landscape, moving him into the domain of possibility represented by the Zone. In 'In the Zone' Pynchon continues to disrupt static story-space, configuring the Zone - in terms of the middle-ground of Mexico's equations - as a domain of narrative possibility, a domain where the plots of the novel proliferate and become blurred. Towards the end of the section, however, the possibilities created by the Zone are attenuated and order is restored by the narrative of connections (figured in Tchitcherine's vision of the Rocket state), so that, in the final section, 'The Counterforce', there is a sense that the old narratives are becoming systematised. David Seed, however, has argued that the novel turns against its earlier forms, mapping a disassembly that "denies the text

any formal stability".[56] New characters (Eddie Pensiero, Paddy McGonigle, the Komical Kamikazes, Mister Information, Byron the Bulb, and the ghost of Blicero) are introduced. They provide new possibilities for the production of narrative, displacing the old plots that seem to threaten textual stasis. The new narratives are fragments of stories and are constantly displaced by the advent of new stories, a process most obvious in the montage chapters where different episodes and scenes are juxtaposed without any sense of connection being established. The first montage chapter, for example, begins with the Floundering Four (674), shifts suddenly to Slothrop's meeting with Rohr the "low-frequency listener", intrudes "Mom Slothrop's Letter to Ambassador Kennedy", jumps to Slothrop's explanation of "Ass Backwards" to Säure Bummer and then continues by introducing new scenes and episodes: the Toilet ship, an explosion in the transvestites' toilets, dope-songs in Der Platz, the Komikal Kamikazes, a description of Imipolex-G, and Slothrop's wandering through the Berlin streets. The narrative that results is similar to the arrangement of scenes and routines in a cartoon, the narrative evading its recuperation into a causal linear continuity because of its vagueness of time-frames, a vagueness that focuses attention on the temporal dynamic of the narrative rather than its mimicry of a 'real-time' experience. The narrative becomes a series of unconnected stories which simply replace each other, so that the description of Imipolex-G becomes a 'story' rather than a piece of discursive information. The narrative is constituted in terms of digressive events rather than in terms of a connected synthesis where relationships between individual units are firmly established.

The narratives in 'The Counterforce', however, become so fragmented that the narrative voice asserts itself in order to make explanatory connections. Slothrop's life is analysed in an academic discourse and after the Schwarzkommando's re-creation of the SG-1 the narrative voice attempts to close the novel by returning it the the goal it had set itself (the discovery of the Grail of the Rocket's meaning), thereby establishing a connective framework to supply meaning to the rest of the novel. However, the narration of the events surrounding Blicero's firing of the first SG-1 has little relevance to either the

activities of the characters or to the novel's narratives. The connective and Epic narratives of *Gravity's Rainbow* premiss themselves on the search for and discovery of the secret of the firing of the SG-1 which will apparently reveal a final truth if all the data is uncovered. In the final pages of the novel the information that the characters have been seeking is finally disclosed, but no final meaning results. The revelation seems to prove the legitimacy of the systext and the Epic form as the dominant narrative and genre, but actually exposes these narratives as false trails. The events that are described are a set of unconnected fragments and stories, a montage of loose ends that are not finally tied together.

Despite the rather subdued ending, in which the bouncing ball guides the reader through the song - as the narrative voice has guided both the characters and the reader and as ideology guides subjectivity - the novel ultimately refrains from legitimating a master-narrative. It foregrounds narrativity at the expense of the ideological narratives (master-narrative, genres, role-narratives) generated by the narrative voice in its role as the voice of ideology. The resistance to the ideological siting of the text as well as the new cultural possibilities Pynchon offers configure the text as a site of resistance instead. The proliferation of narratives (and the possibilities for mapping new forms of identity, cultural meaning and cultural practice they allow) does not allow the narrative voice, the Epic, or genre to delimit the text's narrative production. Pynchon draws an analogy between textual production and forms of social production. He suggests that, in the same way that the multiple narratives of *Gravity's Rainbow* resist the limits of the ideological narratives, so resistance in society can be achieved as long as the parameters set by the moneyed and powerful through ideology are not allowed to set the agenda for resistance. Neither the subject nor the text should attempt to escape or withdraw from culture and social action, strategies that would allow the State, the powerful, and the Corporations to continue their domination of the majority unopposed. In effect, Pynchon challenges in advance the approaches to *Gravity's Rainbow* that see in it a desire for transcendence and those which see, in the final image of the film breaking down in the Orpheus theatre, a revelation that the text is just a fictional 'movie'. The Rocket that

threatens to land on the Orpheus theatre not only enacts the Cold War's threat of nuclear destruction, but also points to the impossibility of transcendence. The Rocket does not, as Blicero hopes, escape gravity and enter another world, but falls back to earth. *Gravity's Rainbow* does not, however, see the impossibility of transcendence as a loss, but recognises that Nixon's theatre of spectacle (Zhlubb's Orpheus theatre), and its ideological apparatuses, must be confronted. The desire for transcendence must be replaced by the desire for social and cultural transformation.

Coda: From Nixon's Rocket State to Reagan's Police State

Like *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Vineland* (1990) was published at the end of a period of State repression, Reagan's rolling back of the liberties the New Left helped to achieve in the 1960's replacing *Gravity's Rainbow*'s catalogue of the repressions experienced in Nixon's America. Unlike *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Vineland* offers little hope for the future. While Pynchon expresses a desire for social transformation in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the America portrayed in *Vineland* does not seem to allow the possibility of transforming society and culture, a situation described by Deborah Madsen:

> Where Oedipa Maas stumbles across the traumatic discovery that her nation is actively hostile to many of its citizens, Frenesi Gates is confronted with the brutal fact that the State no longer needs to disguise its hostility. With the proclamation of an 'underclass', always and inevitably excluded from the 'normal' life of the Republic, the stark reality of exploitation is naturalized and made part of official ideology.[57]

The State has created a cultural consciousness where guilt defines subjectivity. The State makes the subject feel that he or she is guilty of a crime against the State simply by being conscious, because consciousness allows the most heinous crime of all: independent thought outside the parameters created by ideology. Brock Vond's 'Political Re-Education Program' exemplifies the State's criminalisation of the subject. Instead of having to be monitored, sought out and

arrested, students voluntarily turn themselves in so that they can learn how to live ideologically, according to the desires and forms of behaviour sanctioned by the State. State surveillance and prisons are no longer necessary. The subject monitors his or her own desires and actions in terms of the criteria set by ideology, convicting and punishing themselves if any thoughts of resistance occur.

The pervasiveness of oppression in *Vineland* is again figured in terms of society's treatment of women. Frenesi Gates, at one point, comes to recognise and accept that, as a woman, she is nothing more that a piece of meat in the eyes of the State: "an animal with the full set of pain receptors".[58] Women are figured as objects or commodities driven by the desires of the State and subject to its manipulations and abuse. Their acceptance of this treatment is the signal that ideology has triumphed in its construction of cultural norms and meanings. Ideology's representation of women as objects who desire pain goes unchallenged. Ideology's representation of women is even adopted by Alan Wilde in his analysis of *Vineland*. Wilde argues that Vond and Frenesi are "indivisible in their dynamics", each reliant on the other for the motivation of their desires, thoughts and actions. Wilde condemns Frenesi for accepting and desiring her role as victim to Vond's oppressor, assuming that she has freely chosen this role even though he has also argued that her choices are the product of a society of domination.[59] If the State defines the choices available in society, however, it is not possible for the subject to have the power to freely choose to be oppressed. The oppression is created by the State's definition of 'correct' cultural practices and patterns of behaviour, and free will does not enter the equation.

The creation of roles by ideology is even more obvious in *Vineland* than it is in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Pynchon again uses genre as a means to represent ideology's definition of the subject, a process most obvious in the use of television genres. Zoyd and Prairie are narratively represented by sit-coms and game-shows, their actions and desires defined by its norms of behaviour. Prairie, for example, wishes that the problems her family face could be resolved by their "waking into something more benevolent", a world where they would be "three different people,

only some family in a family car, with no problems that couldn't be solved in half an hour of wisecracks and commercials, on their way to a fun weekend at some beach" (*Vineland*, p.191). Prairie's desires are constructed by an imaginary world that does not square with the reality she experiences. Despite Prairie's awareness of their limitations, these ideological desires still have a concrete effect on the subject, as no other desires are available for Prairie to adopt. Other characters also live by TV genres. The actions of Frenesi and her second husband Flash are represented in terms of soap-operas, while DL and Takeshi act like television super-heroes, their ability to right wrongs, however, defined only in terms of the laws of the State and not by the criteria of other forms of social relations or cultural practices. The narrative of *Vineland* attempts to evade the fixed parameters of these genres. The narrative develops at a frenetic pace, looping in and out of the characters' specific narratives, jumping from one short episode to another, cutting, fading in and out, and shifting angles at accelerated speed. It attempts to loop outside the official and ideological models of narrative provided by television, but constantly finds that it is collapsed back into these models because of their all-pervasiveness in contemporary consciousness.

Pynchon's less hopeful vision is shared by many other writers of political metafiction. The experimental narrative strategies that seemed to offer so much hope for the re-creation or transformation of identity and cultural practice in the 1970's no longer seem to have the same power. Some writers of politcal metafiction strengthen their political focus, but others retreat from social engagement. While Burroughs in *The Cities of the Red Night* returns to the political and narrative strategies mapped in *The Naked Lunch* and Ishmael Reed combines a satirical perspective with narrative experimentation in *The Terrible Twos*, many of the other writers of political metafiction move away from political and cultural concerns. Coover, for example, returns to the metafictional strategies of his 1960's' fiction while, interestingly, the fly-leaf of the paperback version of *Pinnochio in Venice*, lists all of Coover's previous fiction except *The Public Burning*, suggesting that he now wants to distance himself from this novel. Delillo, as has been mentioned, is still directly concerned with contemporary culture, but

is increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of change, while Gaddis' *Carpenter's Gothic* is an exercise in style that focuses on personal relationships rather than their cultural relevance. This move away from the engagement with cultural issues in experimental contemporary fiction suggests that Andreas Huyssen is right to say that: "postmodernism, which in its artistic practices and its theory was a product of the 1960's, must be seen as the endgame of the avantgarde and not as the radical breakthrough it often claimed to be."[60] The power of political metafiction has not been entirely lost, however, its cultural and narrative concerns having been passed to a new generation of writers who also see the limits imposed by ideology. William Vollmann's *You Bright and Risen Angels*, for example, aligns itself with political metafiction, presenting a satiric portrayal of the history of America as the application of a Corporate plan. Bradford Morrow's *Come Sunday* also engages with social and cultural concerns, mapping the failures of ideology and the State as they attempt to impose their vision on American culture. Kathy Acker, in *In Memoriam to Identity*, is more positive, attempting to map new forms of consciousness and identity to replace those generated by ideology. Despite his pessimistic outlook Pynchon shares their political concerns. Although *Vineland* suggests that Reagan has successfully imposed a reactionary and repressive culture on America Pynchon does not submit to the ideologies and cultural meanings in circulation in Reagan's police state. His vision of resistance, however, is less positive than the one offered in *Gravity's Rainbow*. It is nostalgic, looking back to the resistance offered by the IWW and the New Left movement (most obviously figured in the Traverse-Becker family reunion that ends the novel), their visions of an America founded on freedom and equality seemingly impossible in contemporary society. Nevertheless, Pynchon does suggest that there are gaps in ideology's control of identity, cultural meaning and cultural practice. That the Traverse-Becker family reunion can take place at all seems to suggest that there are still spaces for resistance and that the State and Corporations have not entirely colonised culture. Culture can still be a domain of possibility and can create meanings and practices that offer the possibility of transforming culture and social relations in the future.

Notes

1. Thomas Pynchon, *Slow Learner* (London: Picador, 1985), p.21.

2. See, for example, David Leverenz, 'On Trying to Read *Gravity's Rainbow*', in *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little Brown, 1976), p.233; Tony Tanner, *City of Words* (London: Cape, 1976), p.156; and Lawrence Wolfley, 'Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel', in *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Richard Pearce (Boston: Hall, 1981), p.100. Wolfley recognises the importance of control in *Gravity's Rainbow*, but sees it as an inescapable transhistorical essence, rather than culturally effective through the operations of ideology.

3. Molly Hite, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), p.127.

4. For a discussion of Pynchon's desire for transcendence, see Thomas Moore, *The Style of Connectedness: 'Gravity's Rainbow' and Thomas Pynchon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), and Kathryn Hume, *Pynchon's Mythography: An Approach to 'Gravity's Rainbow'* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). Dwight Eddins offers a similar view of *Gravity's Rainbow*, but focuses on the novel's nostalgia for a pre-postmodern period of cultural coherence. See Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

5. For a discussion of *Gravity's Rainbow* in terms of the history of post-War American politics, refracted through technological obsession, see Dale Carter, *The Final Frontier: The Rise and Fall of the American Rocket State* (London and New York: Verso, 1988). For a discussion of the relationship between discourses of culture and power, see Khachig Tölölyan, 'Discoursing with Culture: The Novel as Interlocuter', *Novel*, 21: 2 (1988), pp.228-38.

6. See Paul Coates, *The Realist Fantasy: Fiction and Reality Since 'Clarissa'* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 208-217; and Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), pp.60-73.

7. Eric Meyer, 'Oppositional Discourses, Unnatural Practices: *Gravity's* History and The '60's', *Pynchon Notes*, 24-25 (1989), p.82.

8. Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p.21.

9. Thomas Pynchon, *V.* (London: Picador, 1975), p.468. Hereafter cited in the text with page number.

10. Maarten Van Delden, 'Modernism, the New Criticism and Thomas Pynchon's *V*', *Novel*, 23: 2 (1990), p.119.

11. This, however, is re-arranged by Weissmann to spell "Kurt Mondaugen", a creation of meaning that is adopted by interpreters of this passage who focus on the citation of

Wittgenstein rather than on the nonsense element in which God's intention is described as meaning "Nuurk". See Thomas H. Schaub, *Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1981), p.81; Tanner, *City of Words*, p.168; and Melvyn New, 'Profaned and Stenciled Texts: In Search of Pynchon's *V.*', in *Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), p.98.

12. Michael Kowalewski, 'For Once, Then, Pynchon', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 28: 2 (1986), p.199.

13. Tanner, *City of Words*, p.158.

14. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York: Bantam, 1967), p.61. Hereafter cited in the text as *CL* with page number.

15. Paul Coates, 'Unfinished Business: Thomas Pynchon and the Quest for Revolution', *New Left Review*, 160 (1986), p.125.

16. John Johnston, 'Toward the Schizo-Text: Paranoia as Semiotic Regime in *The Crying of Lot 49*', in *New Essays on 'The Crying of Lot 49'*, ed. Patrick O' Donnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.57.

17. Bernard Duyfhuizen, '"Hushing Sick Transmissions": Disrupting Story in *The Crying of Lot 49*', in O' Donnell, *New Essays on 'The Crying of Lot 49'*, pp.84-5.

18. Jonathan Culler, 'Junk and Rubbish: A Semiotic Approach', *Diacritics*, 15: 3 (1985), p.2. The citation is from Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.48.

19. Coates, 'Unfinished Business', p.127.

20. Deborah Madsen, *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon* (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1991), p.80.

21. See Carter, *The Final Frontier*, p.33 and pp.55-6.

22. Charles Russell, 'Pynchon's Language: Signs, Systems, and Subversion', in *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), p.253.

23. Edward Mendelson, 'Gravity's Encyclopedia', in Levine and Leverenz, *Mindful Pleasures*, p.171.

24. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Viking, 1973), p.339. Hereafter cited in the text with page number.

25. For a different interpretation of Pynchon's use of language, see Christopher Ames, 'Power and the Obscene Word: Discourses of Extremity in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Contemporary Literature*, 31: 2 (1990), pp.191-207. Ames argues that, through the use of obscenity, language becomes a transgressive force in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

26. For a discussion of the way in which the narrative voice imitates the discourses of the characters, see Hite, *Ideas of Order*, pp.143-4. Hite's view can also be extended to consider the ways in which the narrative voice enacts ideology, the narrative voice's infiltration of the characters' discourses enacting ideology's 'infiltration' of subjectivity in society.

27. Kowalewski, 'For Once, Then, Pynchon', p.187.

28. Charles Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura: The Art of Fiction in an Age of Inflation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985), p.92.

29. For a discussion of Reed's use of the Chorus, see Reginald Martin, *Ishmael Reed and the New Black Aesthetic Critics* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1988), pp.94-5.

30. Brian McHale has also analysed the strategies by which the reader is led to desire the construction of modernist systems of meaning, a desire *Gravity's Rainbow* parodies. Although the reader constructs paradigms, these are questioned when new systems of meaning are constructed which contradict the previous paradigm. See McHale, 'Modernist Reading, Post-Modern Text: The Case of *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Poetics Today*, 1: 1-2 (1979), pp.85-110.

31. Madsen, *Postmodernist Allegories*, p.88.

32. Russell, 'Pynchon's Language', in Clerc, *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, pp.251-72. Steven Weisenburger sees a similar principle, arguing that there is a threefold narrative structure at work in *Gravity's Rainbow*, represented by "Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer". Weisenburger, *A 'Gravity's Rainbow' Companion: Sources and Notes for Pynchon's Novel* (Athens, Ga. and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988), p.86.

33. For a different interpretation of the novel's structure of connections, see Thomas Moore, *The Style of Connectedness: 'Gravity's Rainbow' and Thomas Pynchon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987). Moore claims that the connectedness of imagery in the novel produces a mystical song promising redemption.

34. Carter, *The Final Frontier*, p.16.

35. Tony Tanner, *Thomas Pynchon* (London and New York, Methuen, 1982), p.78.

36. Neil Schmitz, 'Describing the Demon: The Appeal of Thomas Pynchon', *Partisan Review*, 42: 1 (1975), pp.121-2.

37. Steven Weisenburger offers a further perspective on the creation of structure in *Gravity's Rainbow*. He argues that the novel's narrative is shaped like a mandala (a magical talisman), an interpretation which leads him to see the novel's structuring processes as a positive development of an alternative ethical and value system based in primitive myth. See Weisenburger, 'The Chronology of Episodes in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Pynchon Notes*, 14 (1984), pp.50-64.

38. Leo Bersani, 'Pynchon, Paranoia, and Literature', *Representations*, 25 (1989), p.105.

39. See Johnston, 'Toward the Schizo-Text', p.75.

40. Madsen, *Postmodernist Allegories*, p.78 and p.84. Madsen's citation is from Schaub, *The Voice of Ambiguity*, p.63.

41. For a further discussion of the use of the Δt equation in *Gravity's Rainbow*, see Alan J. Friedman, 'Science and Technology', in Clerc, *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, pp.73-4.

42. Erving Goffman, *Where the Action Is: Three Essays* (London: Allen Lane: 1969), pp.41-2.

43. R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p.52.

44. For a discussion of the importance of the roles generated in the media's construction of images for Hollywood actors, see Charles Clerc, 'Film in *Gravity's Rainbow*', in Clerc, *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, pp.103-152.

45. Tom LeClair, *The Art of Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p.53.

46. See Richard Wagner, 'The Artwork of the Future', in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Volume I, ed. and trans. William Ashton (New York: Broude, 1966), pp.69-213.

47. Schaub, *The Voice of Ambiguity*, pp.71-3. For an interpretation which presents Orpheus as a redemptive figure, see also Kathryn Hume and Thomas J. Knight, 'Orpheus and the Orphic Voice in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Philological Quarterly*, 64: 3 (1985), pp.299-315.

48. Not all the characters reject the Epic roles that are created for them. Pökler, for example, accepts his role as a Wagnerian Epic figure when he attempts to buy redemption through the gift of a gold ring to a dying woman in the Dora concentration camp (p.432). Deborah Madsen has also described Blicero as an actualisation of the Romantic hero and demonstrates how this role aligns him with ideological forms of cultural production; Madsen, *Postmodernist Allegories*, p.100.

49. Barbara Johnson, 'Is Female to Male as Ground is to Figure?', in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), p.262 and p.266.

50. See Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.93; and *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p.39.

51. Kate Soper, 'Postmodernism, Subjectivity and the Question of Value', *New Left Review*, 186 (1991), p.126.

52. Stuart Moulthrop, 'Strobe's Stimulus', *Pynchon Notes*, 24-25 (1989), p.77.

53. Russell, 'Pynchon's Language', p.253.

54. The figuring of cities as the centres of experience is also discussed by Kathryn Hume in 'Views from Above, Views from Below: The Perspectival Subtext in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *American Literature*, 60: 4 (1988), pp.625-42.

55. McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.116.

56. David Seed, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988), p.219.

57. Madsen, *Postmodernist Allegories*, p.128.

58. Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (Boston: Little Brown, 1990), p.287. Hereafter cited in the text with page number.

59. Alan Wilde, 'Love and Death in and around Vineland, U.S.A.', *Boundary 2*, 18: 2 (1991), pp.168-69.

60. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p.168.

Bibliography

ABISH, Walter, *How German Is It?* (London: Faber, 1982). First published in 1970.

ABISH, Walter, *Alphabetical Africa* (New York: New Directions, 1974).

ACKER, Kathy, *In Memoriam to Identity* (London: Pandora, 1990).

ADORNO, Theodor and HORKHEIMER, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979).

ADORNO, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C.Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

ADORNO, Theodor, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

ALTHUSSER, Louis, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1979).

ALTHUSSER, Louis, *Essays On Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984).

AMES, Christopher, 'Power and the Obscene Word: Discourses of Extremity in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Contemporary Literature*, 31: 2 (1990), 191-207.

AMES, Sanford S., 'Coming Home: Pynchon's Morning in America', *Pynchon Notes*, 26-27 (1990), 115-123.

ANGUS, Ian and JHALLY, Sut, eds., *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989).

ANGUS, Ian, 'Circumscribing Postmodern Culture', in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 96-107.

ARONOWITZ, Stanley, 'Working Class Culture in the Electronic Age', in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (London: Routledge, 1989), 135-150.

BAKHTIN, M.M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

BAKHTIN, M.M., *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl

Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

BALIBAR, Etienne and MACHEREY, Pierre, 'On Literature as an Ideological Form', trans. Ian McLeod, John Whitehead and Ann Wordsworth, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 79-99.

BARTH, John, *The Sotweed Factor* (London: Granada, 1965). First published in 1960.

BARTH, John, *Giles Goat Boy* (London: Granada, 1981). First published in 1966.

BARTH, John, *Lost In The Funhouse* (New York: Bantam, 1969). First published in 1968.

BARTH, John, *Chimera* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1973). First published in 1972.

BARTH, John, *LETTERS* (New York: Putnam, 1979).

BARTH, John, *Tidewater Tales* (London: Minerva, 1989). First published in 1987.

BARTH, John, *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction* (New York: Putnam, 1984).

BARTH, John, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in *The Friday Book* (New York: Putnam, 1984), 62-76. First published in 1967.

BARTH, John, 'The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction', in *The Friday Book* (New York: Putnam, 1984), 193-206. First published in 1980.

BARTHELME, Donald, *City Life*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968).

BARTHELME, Donald, *Sadness* (New York: Pocket Books, 1980). First published in 1972.

BARTHELME, Donald, *Great Days* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

BARTHELME, Donald, *Sixty Stories* (London: Minerva, 1991).

BARTHES, Roland, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974).

BARTHES, Roland, *Image/Music/Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

BARTHES, Roland, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Granada, 1973).

BARTHES, Roland, 'Textual Analysis of Poe's "Valdemar"', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 133-161.

BAUDRILLARD, Jean, 'The Ecstasy of Communication', in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Verso, 1985), 126-134.

BAUDRILLARD, Jean, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

BAUDRILLARD, Jean, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988).

BELL, Daniel, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic, 1976).

BELLAMY, Joe David, ed., *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

BELSEY, Catherine, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Methuen, 1980).

BENJAMIN, Walter, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969).

BENJAMIN, Walter, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1979).

BERSANI, Leo, 'Pynchon, Paranoia, and Literature', *Representations*, 25 (1989), 99-118.

BERTHOUD, J.A., 'Narrative and Ideology: a Critique of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*', in *Narrative: From Malory to Motion Pictures*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), 101-116.

BLACK, Joel Dana, 'The Paper Empires and Empirical Fictions of William Gaddis', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 2: 2 (1982), 22-31.

BLAIN, Virginia, 'Double Vision and the Double Standard in *Bleak House*: A Feminist Perspective', *Literature and History*, 11: 1 (1985), 31-43.

BLISS, Michael, 'The Orchestration of Chaos: Verbal Technique in William Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*', *Enclitic*, 1 (1977), 59-69.

BLOOM, Harold, ed., *Thomas Pynchon* (New York: Chelsea House, 1986).

BOCCIA, Michael, *Form as Content and Rhetoric in the Modern Novel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

BRADBURY, Malcolm and RO, Sigmund, eds., *Contemporary American Fiction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987).

BRADBURY, Malcolm, ed., *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977).

BRADBURY, Richard, 'Postmodernism and Barth and the Present State of Fiction', *Critical Quarterly*, 32: 1 (1990), 60-72.

BRAUTIGAN, Richard, *A Confederate General From Big Sur* (London: Picador, 1973). First published in 1964.

BRAUTIGAN, Richard, *The Hawkline Monster: A Gothic Western* (London: Picador, 1976).

BRAUTIGAN, Richard, *Sombrero Fallout: A Japanese Novel* (London: Picador, 1978).

BRAUTIGAN, Richard, *Dreaming of Babylon: A Private Eye Novel* (London: Picador, 1979).

BROOKEMAN, Christopher, *American Culture and Society Since the 1930s* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984).

BURROUGHS, William S., *The Naked Lunch* (London: Corgi, 1968). First published in 1959.

BURROUGHS, William S., *The Soft Machine* (London: Paladin, 1986). First published in 1961.

BURROUGHS, William S., *The Ticket That Exploded* (London: Calder, 1985). First published in 1962.

BURROUGHS, William S., *Nova Express* in *Three Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1980). First published in 1964.

BURROUGHS, William S., *The Wild Boys* in *Three Novels* (New York: Grove Press, 1980). First published in 1971.

BURROUGHS, William S., *Cities of the Red Night* (London: Picador, 1982).

BURROUGHS, William S., with Daniel Odier, *The Job* (London: Calder, 1984).

BURROUGHS, William S., *The Adding Machine: Collected Essays* (London: Calder, 1985).

BURROUGHS, William S., 'Interview', with Conrad Knickerbocker, *Paris Review*, 35 (1965), 13-49.

BUTOR, Michel, *Passing Time*, trans. Jean Stewart (London: Calder, 1965). Originally published in French as *L'emploi du temps* (1957).

BUTOR, Michel, 'The Novel as Research', in *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977), 48-53.

CAESAR, Terry P., '"Beasts Vaulting Among The Earthworks": Monstrosity in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Novel*, 17: 2 (1984), 158-170.

CAESAR, Terry, '"Impervious to Criticism": Contemporary Parody and Trash', *Sub-Stance*, 64 (1991), 67-79.

CALDWELL, Roy C., 'Of Hobby-Horses, Baseball, and Narrative: Coover's *Universal Baseball Association*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 33: 1 (1987), 161-171.

CALLINICOS, Alex, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).

CAMERON, Deborah and FRAZER, Elizabeth, *The Lust to Kill: A Feminist Investigation of Sexual Murder* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).

CAMPBELL, Gregor, 'Processing *Lookout Cartridge*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 10: 1 (1990), 112-118.

CARAMELLO, Charles, *Silverless Mirrors: Book, Self and Postmodern American Fiction* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1983).

CARROLL, Peter N. and NOBLE, David W., *The Free and the Unfree: A New History of the United States* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).

CARTER, Dale, *The Final Frontier: The Rise and Fall of the American Rocket State* (London and New York: Verso, 1988).

CHAMBERS, Ross, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power*

of Fiction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

CHATMAN, Seymour, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

CHATMAN, Seymour, 'What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)', in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 117-136.

CLARKE, Graham, ed., *The American New Writing: Essays on American Literature Since 1970* (London: Vision Press, 1990).

CLAYTON, Jay, 'Narrative and Theories of Desire', *Critical Inquiry* 16: 1 (1989), 33-53.

CLERC, Charles, ed., *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983).

CLERC, Charles, 'Film in *Gravity's Rainbow*', in *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), 103-152.

COATES, Paul, *The Realist Fantasy: Fiction and Reality Since 'Clarissa'* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983).

COATES, Paul, 'Unfinished Business: Thomas Pynchon and the Quest for Revolution', *New Left Review*, 160 (1986), 122-128.

COHAN, Steven & SHIRES, Linda M., *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

COMNES, Gregory, 'Fragments of Redemption: Reading William Gaddis' *JR*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 35: 2 (1989), 161-182.

CONNELL, R. W., *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).

CONNOR, Steven, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

COOPER, Peter L., *Signs and Symptoms: Thomas Pynchon and the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

COOVER, Robert, *The Origin of the Brunists* (New York: Norton, 1966). First published in 1964.

COOVER, Robert, *The Universal Baseball Association Inc., J.Henry Waugh,*

Prop. (New York: Plume, 1971). First published in 1968.

COOVER, Robert, *Pricksongs And Descants* (London: Minerva, 1989). First published in 1969.

COOVER, Robert, *The Public Burning* (New York: Viking, 1977).

COOVER, Robert, *Gerald's Party* (London: Paladin, 1988). First published in 1988.

COOVER, Robert, 'Interview', in Frank Gado, ed., *First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing* (Schenectady: Union College Press, 1973), 142-159.

COPE, Jackson I., *Robert Coover's Fictions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

COSTE, Didier, *Narrative As Communication* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

COUTURIER, Maurice and DURAND, Régis, *Donald Barthelme* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

COWARD, Rosalind, *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today* (London: Paladin, 1984).

CROOK, Stephen, PAKULSKI, Jan, and WATERS, Malcolm, *Postmodernization: Change in Advanced Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

CULLER, Jonathan, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

CULLER, Jonathan, 'Junk and Rubbish: A Semiotic Approach', *Diacritics* 15: 3 (1985), 2-14.

DEBORD, Guy, *The Society of the Spectacle* ([Exeter?]: Rebel Press, 1987).

DELANY, Samuel R., *Nova* (London: Gollancz, 1986). First published in 1968.

DELANY, Samuel R., *Triton* (New York: Bantam, 1976).

DELEUZE, Gilles and GUATTARI, Félix, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984).

DELILLO, Don, *Americana* (New York: Penguin, 1989). First published

in 1971.

DELILLO, Don, *End Zone* (New York and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986). First published in 1972.

DELILLO, Don, *Ratner's Star* (New York: Vintage, 1980). First published in 1976.

DELILLO, Don, *Players* (New York: Vintage, 1984). First published in 1977.

DELILLO, Don, *Running Dog* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

DELILLO, Don, *The Names* (London: Picador, 1987). First published in 1983.

DELILLO, Don, *White Noise* (London: Picador, 1985).

DENZIN, Norman K., *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (London: Sage Publications, 1991).

DERRIDA, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, ed. and trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

DERRIDA, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre', in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 51-77.

DERRIDA, Jacques, 'Sending: On Representation', trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research* 49: 2 (1982), 194-326.

DEXTER, Frank, 'Seriality Kills', *Here and Now*, 12 (1992), 29-32.

DICK, Philip K., *Simulacra* (New York: Ace Books, 1964).

DICK, Philip K., *Now Wait For Last Year* (London: Granada, 1975).

DICKENS, Charles, *Bleak House* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

DICKSTEIN, Morris, *The Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Basic, 1977).

DOUGLAS, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Pollution and Taboo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

DUYFHUIZEN, Bernard, '"Hushing Sick Transmissions": Disrupting Story in *The Crying of Lot 49*', in *New Essays on 'The Crying of Lot 49'*, ed. Patrick O' Donnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 79-95.

DYCK, Reginald, 'William Gass: A "Purified Modernist" in a Postmodern World', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 3 (1991), 124-30.

EAGLETON, Terry, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1978).

EAGLETON, Terry, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 152 (1985), 60-73.

EAGLETON, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

ECO, Umberto, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (London: Hutchinson, 1981).

EDDINS, Dwight, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

ELKIN, Stanley, *A Bad Man* (New York: Dutton, 1984). First published in 1967.

ELKIN, Stanley, *The Dick Gibson Show* (New York: Dutton, 1983). First published in 1971.

ELKIN, Stanley, *The Franchiser* (Boston: Godine, 1980). First published in 1976.

ELKIN, Stanley, *Stanley Elkin's Greatest Hits* (New York: Dutton, 1980).

ELKIN, Stanley, 'Plot', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), 70-74.

ESTES, David C., 'American Folk Laughter in Robert Coover's *The Public Burning*', *Contemporary Literature*, 28: 2 (1987), 239-256.

FEATHERSTONE, Mike, ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

FEDERMAN, Raymond, ed., *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* (Chicago: Swallow, 1975).

FELDSTEIN, Richard and ROOF, Judith, eds., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

FOSTER, Hal, ed., *Postmodern Culture* (London: Verso, 1985).

FOSTER, Hal, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985).

FRIEDMAN, Alan J., 'Science and Technology', in *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983), 69-101.

GADDIS, William, *The Recognitions* (London: Penguin, 1985). First published in 1955.

GADDIS, William, *JR* (London: Penguin, 1985). First published in 1975.

GADDIS, William, *Carpenter's Gothic* (London: Picador, 1987). First published in 1985.

GADDIS, William, 'The Art of Fiction CI', *Paris Review*, 105 (1987), 55-89.

GADO, Frank, *First Person: Conversations on Writers and Writing* (Schenectady: Union College Press, 1973).

GASS, William S., *Omensetter's Luck* (New York: Plume, 1972). First published in 1966.

GASS, William S., *In The Heart of the Heart of the Country and Other Stories* (Boston: Godine, 1981). First published in 1968.

GASS, William S., *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (Naperville, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1989). First published in 1968.

GASS, William S., *Fiction And The Figures of Life* (Boston: Godine, 1979).

GASS, William S., *Habitations of the Word* (New York: Touchstone, 1986).

GASS, William S., 'A Debate: William Gass and John Gardner', in *Anything Can Happen: Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists*, ed. Tom LeClair and Larry McCaffery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 20-31.

GATES Jr., Henry Louis, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

GENETTE, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

GIBSON, William, *Neuromancer* (London: Grafton, 1986).

GODLIN ROEMER, Marjorie, 'The Paradigmatic Mind: John Barth's *LETTERS*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 33: 1 (1987), 38-50.

GOFFMAN, Erving, *Where The Action Is: Three Essays* (London: Allen

Lane, 1969).

GRAFF, Gerald, *Literature Against Itself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

GRAFF, Gerald, 'The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough', in *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977), 217-249.

HABERMAS, Jürgen, *Towards a Theory of Communicative Action: Volume Two*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).

HARRIS, Charles, *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1971).

HARRIS, Charles, *Passionate Virtuosity: The Fiction of John Barth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

HARVEY, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

HASSAN, Ihab, *Paracriticisms: Seven Speculations of the Times* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

HASSAN, Ihab, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*, second edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

HASSAN, Ihab, 'The Culture of Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture and Society* 2: 3 (1985), 119-131.

HAWKES, Terence, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen, 1977).

HAWTHORN, Jeremy, ed., *Narrative: From Malory to Motion Pictures* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).

HAYMAN, David, *Re-Forming the Narrative: Toward a Mechanics of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

HELLER, Agnes and FEHÉR, *The Postmodern Political Condition* (Cambridge, Polity, 1988).

HELLER, Joseph, *Something Happened* (London: Corgi, 1975).

HECKARD, Margaret, 'Robert Coover, Metafiction, and Freedom', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 22: 2 (1976), 210-227.

HERRON, Jerry, 'The Gentrification of Desire and Posthistorical

Pastiche', *Sub-Stance*, 52 (1987), 45-58.

HITE, Molly, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1983).

HUME, Kathryn and KNIGHT, Thomas J., 'Orpheus and the Orphic Voice in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Philological Quarterly*, 64: 3 (1985), 299-315.

HUME, Kathryn, *Pynchon's Mythography: An Approach to 'Gravity's Rainbow'* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

HUME, Kathryn, 'Views from Above, Views from Below: The Perspectival Subtext in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *American Literature*, 60: 4 (1988), 625-642.

HUTCHEON, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

HUTCHEON, Linda, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

HUYSSEN, Andreas, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

JACKSON, Rosemary, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981).

JAMESON, Fredric, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981).

JAMESON, Fredric, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), 53-92.

JAMESON, Fredric, *The Ideologies of Theory, Essays 1971-1986: Volume I, Situations of Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988).

JAMESON, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

JENCKS, Charles, *What is Post-Modernism?*, third edition (London: Academy Editions, 1989).

JOHNSON, Barbara, 'Is Female to Male as Ground is to Figure?', in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 255-268.

JOHNSTON, John, '"The Dimensionless Space Between": Narrative

Immanence in Joseph McElroy's *Lookout Cartridge*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 10: 1 (1990), 95-111.

JOHNSTON, John, 'Toward the Schizo-Text: Paranoia as Semiotic Regime in *The Crying of Lot 49*', in *New Essays on 'The Crying of Lot 49'*, ed. Patrick O' Donnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47-78.

JOYCE, James, *Ulysses* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992). First published in 1922.

KADREY, Richard, *Metrophage* (New York: Ace Books, 1988).

KARL, Frederick R., *American Fictions, 1940-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

KERMODE, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

KLINKOWITZ, Jerome, *Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction*, second edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

KLINKOWITZ, Jerome, 'The Extra-Literary in Contemporary American Fiction', in *Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and Sigmund Ro (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), 19-37.

KOSTELANETZ, Richard, 'Twenty-Five Fictional Hypotheses', in *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow, 1975), 283-286.

KOWALEWSKI, Michael, 'For Once, Then, Pynchon', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 28: 2 (1986), 182-208.

KRISTEVA, Julia, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (London: Blackwell, 1980).

KROKER, Arthur and COOK, David, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*, second edition (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

KROKER, Arthur, *The Possessed Individual: Technology and Postmodernity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

KUTNIK, Jerzy, *The Novel as Performance: The Fiction of Ronald Sukenick and Raymond Federman* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

LECLAIR, Tom and McCAFFERY, Larry, eds., *Anything Can Happen:*

Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

LECLAIR, Tom, 'William Gaddis, *JR*, and the Art of Excess', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 27: 4 (1981-2), 587-600.

LECLAIR, Tom, *In The Loop: Don Delillo and the Systems Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

LECLAIR, Tom, *The Art of the Excess: Mastery in Contemporary American Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

LEMON, Lee T., and REIS, Marion J., ed. and trans., *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln, Neb. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

LEVERENZ, David, 'On Trying to Read *Gravity's Rainbow*', in *Mindless Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little Brown, 1975), 229-249.

LEVINE, George and LEVERENZ, David, eds., *Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (Boston: Little Brown, 1975).

LLOYD SMITH, Allan, 'Brain Damage: The World and the Word in Postmodernist Writing', in *Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and Sigmund Ro (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), 39-50.

LUKACS, Georg, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963).

LUKACS, Georg, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971).

LYDENBERG, Robin, *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction* (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 1987).

LYOTARD, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

McCAFFERY, Larry, *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982).

McCAFFERY, Larry, ed., *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-biographical Guide* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

McCAFFERY, Larry, ed., *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of*

Cyberpunk and Postmodern Fiction (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

McELROY, Joseph, *A Smuggler's Bible* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1986). First published in 1966.

McELROY, Joseph, *Hind's Kidnap* (London: Blond, 1970). First published in 1969.

McELROY, Joseph, *Lookout Cartridge* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1985). First published in 1974.

McELROY, Joseph, *Plus* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1987). First published in 1977.

McELROY, Joseph, *Women and Men* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

McELROY, Joseph, 'Growing Up Embooked', *New York Times Book Review* (6 May, 1973) part 2, 1-2.

McELROY, Joseph, 'Interview', in *Anything Can Happen: Interviews with Contemporary American Novelists*, ed. Tom LeClair and Larry McCaffery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 235-251.

McGUANE, Thomas, *Panama* (New York: Penguin, 1979).

McHALE, Brian, 'Modernist Reading, Post-Modern Text: The Case of *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Poetics Today*, 1: 1-2 (1979), 85-110.

McHALE, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987).

McHOUL, Alec and WILLS, David, *Writing Pynchon: Strategies in Fictional Analysis* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990).

MacINTYRE, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981).

McMULLEN, Kim, 'The Fiction of Correspondence: *LETTERS* and History', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 36: 3 (1990), 405-420.

McKENZIE, James, 'Pole Vaulting in Top Hats: A Public Conversation with John Barth, William Gass, and Ishmael Reed', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 22: 2 (1976), 131-151.

MACHEREY, Pierre, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

MADSEN, Deborah L., *The Postmodernist Allegories of Thomas Pynchon*

(Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1991).

MARCHETTI, Gina, 'Action-Adventure as Ideology', in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 182-197.

MARCUSE, Herbert, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1986).

MARRIOTT, David, '*Gravity's Rainbow*: Apochryphal History or Historical Apochrypha?', *Journal of American Studies* 19: 1 (1985), 69-80.

MARTIN, Reginald, *Ishmael Reed and the New Black Aesthetic Critics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

MARTIN, Richard, 'Clio Bemused: The Uses of History in Contemporary American Fiction', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), 13-24.

MASON Jr., Theodore O., 'Performance, History, and Myth: The Problem of Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 34: 1 (1988), 97-109.

MATHEWS, Harry, *The Conversions* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987). First published 1962.

MATHEWS, Harry, *Tlooth* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987). First published in 1966.

MENDELSON, Edward, 'Gravity's Encyclopedia', in *Mindless Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little Brown, 1975), 161-195.

MEPHAM, John, 'Narratives of Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), 138-155.

MEYER, Eric, 'Oppositional Discourses, Unnatural Practices: *Gravity's* History and The '60's', *Pynchon Notes*, 24-25 (1989), 81-104.

MIDDLETON, Peter, 'Language Poetry and Linguistic Activism', *Social Text*, 25-26 (1990), 242-253.

MITCHELL, W.J.T., ed., *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

MOLESWORTH, Charles, 'The Nascimento Effect and Barthelme's *The King*', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 2 (1991), 102-107.

MOORE, Thomas, *The Style of Connectedness: 'Gravity's Rainbow' and*

Thomas Pynchon (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

MORGAN, Speer, '*Gravity's Rainbow*: What's The Big Idea?', in *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Richard Pearce (Boston: Hall, 1981), 82-98.

MORROW, Bradford, *Come Sunday* (New York: Collier, 1988).

MOTTRAM, Eric, *William Burroughs: The Algebra of Need* (London: Marion Boyars, 1977).

MOTTRAM, Eric, 'The Real Needs of Man: Don Delillo's Novels', in *The New American Writing: Essays on American Literature Since 1970*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Vision Press, 1990), 51-98.

MOULTHROP, Stuart, 'Strobe's Stimulus', *Pynchon Notes*, 24-25 (1989), 71-79.

MOYLAN, Tom, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (New York and London, Methuen, 1986).

MUSIL, Robert, *The Man Without Qualities*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, 3 vols (London: Picador, 1979).

NASH, Christopher, ed., *Narrative In Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

NELSON, Cary and GROSSBERG, Lawrence, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1988).

NEW, Melvyn, 'Profaned and Stenciled Texts: In Search of Pynchon's V.', in *Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 93-109.

NEWMAN, Charles, *The Post-Modern Aura: the Art of Fiction in an Age of Inflation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985).

O' DONNELL, Patrick, *Passionate Doubts: Designs of Interpretation in Contemporary American Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986).

O' DONNELL, Patrick, ed., *New Essays on 'The Crying of Lot 49'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

O' DONNELL, Patrick, 'Engendering Paranoia in Contemporary Narrative', *Boundary* 2, 19: 1 (1992), 181-204.

PARFREY, Adam, ed., *Apocalypse Culture* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1990).

PEARCE, Richard, ed., *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon* (Boston: Hall, 1981).

PEARCE, Richard, 'Pynchon's Endings', *Novel*, 18: 2 (1985), 145-153.

PIERSSENS, Michel, 'What Does Fiction Know?', *Sub-Stance*, 55 (1988), 3-17.

POIRIER, Richard, 'The Politics of Self-Parody', *Partisan Review*, 35: 3 (1968), 339-353.

POIRIER, Richard, *The Performing Self: Compositions and Decompositions in the Languages of Contemporary Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971).

PORUSH, David, *The Soft Machine: Cybernetic Fiction* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985).

PORUSH, David, 'Fiction at the End of the Mechanical Age: Barthelme's Art "which has not yet been invented"', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 11: 2 (1991), 83-93.

POWERS, Jonathan, *Philosophy and the New Physics* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

POZNAR, Susan, 'Barth's "Compulsion to Repeat: Its Hazards and Possibilities"', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 10: 2 (1990), 64-75.

PROPP, Vladimir, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott (Austin, Texas and London: University of Texas Press, 1968).

PYNCHON, Thomas, *V.* (London: Picador, 1975). First published in 1963.

PYNCHON, Thomas, *The Crying of Lot 49* (New York and London: Bantam, 1967). First published in 1966.

PYNCHON, Thomas, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Viking, 1973).

PYNCHON, Thomas, *Slow Learner: Early Stories* (London: Picador, 1985).

PYNCHON, Thomas, *Vineland* (Boston: Little Brown, 1990).

REED, Ishmael, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (New York: Atheneum, 1988). First published in 1967.

REED, Ishmael, *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* (New York: Atheneum, 1988). First published in 1969.

REED, Ishmael, *Mumbo Jumbo* (London: Allison & Busby, 1988). First published in 1972.

REED, Ishmael, *The Last Days of Louisiana Red* (New York: Atheneum, 1989). First published in 1974.

REED, Ishmael, *Flight To Canada* (New York: Atheneum, 1989). First published in 1976.

REED, Ishmael, *The Terrible Twos* (London: Allison & Busby, 1990). First published in 1982.

REED, Ishmael, *Shrovetide in Old New Orleans* (New York: Avon, 1978).

REED, Ishmael, 'Interview', in *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers*, ed. Joe David Bellamy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 130-141.

RICHARD, Claude, 'Causality and Mimesis in Contemporary Fiction', *Sub-Stance*, 40 (1983), 84-93.

RICOEUR, Paul, 'Narrative Time', in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 165-186.

RICOEUR, Paul, *Time and Narrative: Volume I*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

RICOEUR, Paul, *Time and Narrative: Volume II*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

RICOEUR, Paul, *Time and Narrative: Volume III*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

RICOEUR, Paul, 'Narrative Identity', in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 188-199.

RIMMON-KENAN, Shlomith, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

RUSSELL, Charles, 'Individual Voice in the Collective Discourse: Literary Innovation in Postmodern American Fiction', *Sub-Stance*, 27 (1980), 29-39.

RUSSELL, Charles, 'Pynchon's Language: Signs, Systems, and Subversion', in *Approaches to 'Gravity's Rainbow'*, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio State

University Press, 1983), 251-272.

RUSSELL, Charles, *Poets, Prophets, and Revolutionaries: The Literary Avant-garde from Rimbaud through Postmodernism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

SAFER, Elaine B., *The Contemporary American Comic Epic: The Novels of Barth, Pynchon, Gaddis, and Kesey* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

SCHAUB, Thomas H., *Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

SCHAUB, Thomas H., 'Don Delillo's Systems: "What is Now Natural"', *Contemporary Literature*, 30: 1 (1989), 128-32.

SCHOLES, Robert and KELLOGG, Robert, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

SCHMITZ, Neil, 'Robert Coover and the Hazards of Metafiction', *Novel*, 7 (1974), 210-219.

SCHMITZ, Neil, 'Describing the Demon: The Appeal of Thomas Pynchon', *Partisan Review*, 42: 1 (1975), 112-125.

SCHULZ, Max F., 'Barth, *LETTERS*, and the Great Tradition', *Genre* 14 (1981), 95-115.

SEED, David, *The Fictional Labyrinths of Thomas Pynchon* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988).

SEED, David, 'In Pursuit of the Receding Plot: Some American Postmodernists', in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), 36-53.

SKERL, Jennie, *William S. Burroughs* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985).

SINGER, Alan, 'The Dis-position of the Subject: Agency and Form in the Ideology of the Novel', *Novel*, 22: 1 (1988), 5-23.

SMITH, Marcus and TÖLÖLYAN, Khachig, 'The New Jeremiad: *Gravity's Rainbow*', in *Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 139-155.

SMYTH, Edmund, ed., *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction* (London: Batsford, 1991).

SOPER, Kate, 'Postmodernism, Subjectivity and the Question of Value', *New Left Review*, 186 (1991), 120-128.

SORRENTINO, Gilbert, *Mulligan Stew* (London and Boston: Marion Boyars, 1980).

STARK, John O., *Pynchon's Fictions: Thomas Pynchon and the Literature of Information* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980).

STEPHENSON, Gregory, 'The Gnostic Vision of William S. Burroughs', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 4: 1 (1984), 40-49.

STEVICK, Philip, 'Scheherezade runs out of plots, goes on talking; the King, puzzled, listens: an Essay on New Fiction', in *The Novel Today*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, first edition (London: Fontana, 1977), 186-216.

SUKENICK, Ronald, *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories* (New York: Dial Press, 1969).

SUKENICK, Ronald, *Out* (Chicago: Swallow, 1973).

SUKENICK, Ronald, *98.6* (New York: Fiction Collective, 1975).

SUKENICK, Ronald, 'Interview', in Joe David Bellamy, ed., *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 55-74.

SUKENICK, Ronald, 'The New Tradition in Fiction', in *Surfiction: Now and Tomorrow*, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow, 1975), 35-45.

SUKENICK, Ronald, *In Form: Nine Digressions on the Act of Fiction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).

SULEIMAN, Susan Rubin, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

TABBI, Joseph, 'The Compositional Self in William Gaddis' *JR*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 35: 4 (1989), 655-671.

TANNER, Tony, *The City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Cape, 1976).

TANNER, Tony, *Thomas Pynchon* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

TANNER, Tony, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

THIHER, Allen, *Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

TINDALL BROWN, George, *America: A Narrative History: Volume II* (New York: Norton, 1988).

THOMPSON, John B., *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984).

TODOROV, Tzvetan, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

TODOROV, Tzvetan, *Genres in Discourse*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

TÖLÖLYAN, Khachig, 'Discoursing with Culture: The Novel as Interlocuter', *Novel*, 21: 2-3 (1988), 228-238.

VAN DELDEN, Maarten, 'Modernism, the New Criticism and Thomas Pynchon's *V*', *Novel*, 23: 2 (1990), 117-134.

VIRILIO, Paul, *Speed and Politics*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

VOLLMANN, William T., *You Bright and Risen Angels* (London: Picador, 1988).

VOLOSINOV, V.N., *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R.Titunik (Cambridge, Mass: University of Harvard Press, 1973).

VONNEGUT, Kurt, *Cat's Cradle* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965). First published in 1963.

WAGNER, Richard, 'The Artwork of the Future', in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Volume I, ed. and trans. William Ashton (New York: Broude, 1966), 69-213.

WAKEFIELD, Neville, *Postmodernism: The Twilight of the Real* (London: Pluto Press, 1990).

WAUGH, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Methuen, 1984).

WAUGH, Patricia, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992).

WASSON, Richard, 'Notes on a New Sensibility', *Partisan Review*, 36: 3 (1969), 460-477.

WEISENBURGER, Steven, 'The Chronology of Episodes in *Gravity's Rainbow*', *Pynchon Notes*, 14 (1984), 50-64.

WEISENBURGER, Steven, *A 'Gravity's Rainbow' Companion: Sources and Notes for Pynchon's Novel* (Athens, Ga. and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

WHITE, Hayden, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

WILDE, Alan, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

WILDE, Alan, *Middle Grounds: Studies in Contemporary American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

WILDE, Alan, 'Love and Death in and around Vineland, U.S.A.', *Boundary 2*, 18: 2 (1991), 166-180.

WILLIAMS, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

WILLIAMS, Raymond, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980).

WOLFLEY, Lawrence, 'Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in Pynchon's Big Novel', in *Critical Essays on Thomas Pynchon*, ed. Richard Pearce (Boston: Hall, 1981), 99-123.

WOOD, David, ed., *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

YOUNG, Robert, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

ZIEGLER, Heide, *John Barth* (London: Methuen, 1987).

ZIZEK, Slavoj, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

ZURBRUGG, Nicholas, 'Postmodernity, *Métaphore manquée*, and the Myth of the Trans-avant-garde', *Sub-Stance*, 48 (1986), 68-90.

Index

Abish, Walter
Alphabetical Africa, 153
How German Is It?, 204
Acker, Kathy
In Memoriam to Identity, 315
Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max, 98, 110
Althusser, Louis, 16-17, 43-4, 46, 166

Bakhtin, Mikhail, 14, 33-6, 71, 76- 7
Balibar, Etienne, 37-9
Balzac, Honoré de, 31, 278
Barth, John, 5, 17, 55, 58, 61-2, 132, 133-4, 155-61, 174-8, 188
Chimera, 123-4, 155-8, 159, 176
End of the Road, The, 175
Floating Opera, The, 174
Giles Goat-Boy, 159-60, 175
LETTERS, 6, 74, 133, 149, 172, 174-8
Lost in the Funhouse, 155-6, 158, 175, 199
Sotweed Factor, The, 175, 176
Barthelme, Donald, 3, 55, 108, 133, 162, 163, 164-71, 172, 196
'At the End of the Mechanical Age', 168-9
'The Crisis', 171
'The Party', 168-71
Sadness, 168-71
Barthes, Roland, 25, 31-3, 62
Baudrillard, Jean, 92, 94, 96, 98, 102, 117, 134-5, 166, 195
Beattie, Ann, 194
Beckett, Samuel, 147, 161
Benjamin, Walter, 57, 138, 199
Bersani, Leo, 286
Bleak House (Dickens), 70-1
Bliss, Michael, 139
Brautigan, Richard, 5, 28, 133, 197
Dreaming of Babylon, 163
Hawkline Monster, The, 163
Sombrero Fallout, 163-4, 173
Burroughs, William, 3, 5, 53-4, 55, 74, 76-7, 116, 122, 133, 134-47, 163, 196, 264-5, 275, 277
Cities of the Red Night, 56, 77, 140, 143-4, 146, 202, 314
Naked Lunch, The, 58, 76, 136-40, 141-2, 144, 146, 314
Nova Express, 136, 142, 144-6
Place of Dead Roads, The, 20-21, 41-2
Soft Machine, The, 136, 140-2
Ticket That Exploded, The, 136, 140, 142-4
Western Lands, The, 146
Wild Boys, The, 142
Butor, Michel, 21-2, 172

Cagney, James, 302, 303
Callinicos, Alex, 110
Caramello, Charles, 33, 52, 132, 179
Carroll, Peter and Noble, David, 114, 116-7
cartoons, 298-300, 306-8
Carter, Dale, 281
Carver, Raymond, 194
chance, 150-1, 205-7, 284-5
Chandler, Raymond, 279
Chaplin, Charlie, 303-4
Chatman, Seymour, 19-20, 23, 64
Clayton, Jay, 75
Coates, Paul, 6, 264, 273
collage/montage, 108, 185-6, 246, 254-7
Connell, R.W., 294
Connor, Steven, 1, 89, 92, 113
Coover, Robert, 3, 6, 55, 74, 132, 134, 162, 178, 204, 205-18, 235
Gerald's Party, 92-4
Origin of the Brunists, The, 205
Pinnochio in Venice, 314
Pricksongs and Descants, 208-11
Public Burning, The 37, 163, 194, 211-8, 264, 314
Universal Baseball Association, The, 150, 153, 205-8
Cope, Jackson I., 215
corporations, 94, 109-115, 195, 199, 202, 233, 263, 269
Coste, Didier, 10
counter-culture, 116-7, 184, 196, 265-6
Coward, Rosalind, 47-50
crisis narratives, 106-7, 196, 244-5

Crook, Stephen, Pakulski, Jan, and Waters, Malcolm, 90, 94, 108-112, 118
cubist writing, 208-9
Culler, Jonathan, 271-2
cut-ups, 5, 134, 135, 144-5
cyberpunk, 62, 95

dadaism, 134
Debord, Guy, 94, 99
deconstruction, 29-36
Delany, Samuel R.
  Triton, 195
Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, 96, 100-1
Delillo, Don, 6, 106, 178, 226-35, 253, 314-5
  Americana, 104, 120
  End Zone, 226-8, 234
  Libra, 234
  Running Dog, 104-5, 120, 234-5
  Names, The, 234
  Players, 64, 78, 120, 234
  Ratner's Star, 74, 194, 203-4, 226, 228-34, 235, 264
  White Noise, 105, 120
Denzin, Norman K., 99
desire, 75-6, 274-5
Dexter, Frank, 101-2
dialogism, 33-6, 71, 74, 75, 78, 144, 215 (see also *genres*)
Dick, Philip K., 63
  Now Wait For Last Year, 196-7
  Simulacra, 113
Dickens, Charles, 70-1
Dillinger, John, 295, 303-4
Disney, 275
Douglas, Mary, 271-2
Dyck, Reginald, 153

Eagleton, Terry, 42-3, 45, 96, 97-8, 120, 148, 264
Eco, Umberto, 26-9
Elkin, Stanley, 57, 59
  Bad Man, A, 67-9
  Dick Gibson Show, The, 58, 125, 215-6
entropy, 222-3

fantasy, 140, 151, 211, 217-8, 267
  and utopia, 142-3, 146, 186-7
Federman, Raymond, 13, 172
Flaubert, Gustav, 32
Fleming, Ian, 26-9
Foster, Hal, 121
fragmentation, 92, 154, 167

Gaddis, William, 3, 6, 40, 55, 139, 178, 194, 204, 218-26, 235, 264-5
  Carpenter's Gothic, 315
  JR, 78, 139, 194, 218-26, 264-6
  Recognitions, The, 133
Gangemi, Kenneth
  Olt, 152-3
Gass, William, 5, 13, 17, 55, 132, 133-4, 153-5, 172, 188
  'In The Heart of the Heart of the Country', 154-5, 161, 169
  Omensetter's Luck, 52, 154
  Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife, 155
Genette, Gérard, 80n, 196
gender, 47-50, 114-5, 199-201, 274-5, 294, 302-3, 313
genre, 4-5, 64-5, 71, 73, 76-7, 93, 151-2, 197-9, 293-8, 300-2, 313-4
  confessional narratives, 49-50
  detective fiction, 235-6, 240-1
  dialogism of, 163-4, 198-9, 209-11, 213, 217-8, 303-5
  Epic/encyclopaedia, 5-6, 61, 133, 202-3, 211, 213, 218, 296-8
  Western, 20-21, 41-2
Gibson, William, 62
Godlin Roemer, Marjorie, 177
Goffman, Erving, 294-5
Gramsci, Antonio, 42
Graff, Gerald, 62-3
grand narratives, 1-3, 107, 195
Greimas, A.J., 25

Harris, Charles, 197
Harvey, David, 96, 97, 111
Hassan, Ihab, 2, 91, 132, 134
Hawkes, Terence, 25
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 302
Hayman, David, 151
Heckard, Margaret, 205

Heisenberg, Werner, 152, 267
Heller, Joseph, 132
Herron, Jerry, 96, 106-7
history, 15-19
  as narrative, 17-18, 238-9, 242
  and totality, 15-16
Hite, Molly, 263
Hong Kingston, Maxine
  Woman Warrior, The, 200
Hutcheon, Linda, 55, 89, 153, 212
Huyssen, Andreas, 55, 118, 122, 124-5

identity, 2, 18, 88, 135, 142, 165, 181-8, 199-201, 206-8, 212-3, 225-6, 232-5, 241-2, 246-7, 269-73, 276-7, 288-9, 294-8, 303-5, 308
  facsimile, 108, 165-9
  montage, 108, 254-7
ideology, 5, 11, 15-16, 37-50, 108, 109-10, 135, 143-5, 160, 167, 179, 187-9, 195-6, 212, 235-8, 245-6, 250, 253-6, 265-6, 269, 270-3, 274-81, 288-9, 306, 312-5
  and the text, 37-42
  narratives of, 47-50
information, 112-3, 203, 223, 232-3, 243-52, 254-6, 270-3
information age, 92, 233

Jameson, Fredric, 12, 14-19, 37, 40, 72, 87-9, 91, 96-101, 120
Jencks, Charles, 90-2, 96, 112
Johnson, Barbara, 302-3
Johnston, John, 252-3, 271
Joyce, James,
  Ulysses 133, 176

Kadrey, Richard, 62
Kafka, Franz, 67-70, 91
Katz, Steve, 172
Kermode, Frank, 167
Kesey, Ken, 132
Kostelanetz, Richard, 9
Kowalewski, Michael, 268, 281
Kristeva, Julia, 10-11, 30-1
Kroker, Arthur, 102-3
  and Cook, David, 96
Kutnik, Jerzy, 52

Lacan, Jacques, 44, 99-100
language, 10, 30-6, 135-6, 142-5, 154-5, 162, 275-81
LeClair, Tom, 93, 174, 197, 219, 230-1, 295
Lefort, Jules, 45
Lukacs, Georg, 14, 37, 87
Lyotard, Jean François, 1, 91-2, 96, 106, 195

MacCabe, Colin, 29
McCaffery, Larry, 95, 160, 209
McElroy, Joseph, 3, 52, 55, 108, 178, 181, 199, 243-57
  Lookout Cartridge, 6, 61, 105, 106, 194, 243-57, 264, 288
  Plus, 249
  Smuggler's Bible, A, 181
McHale, Brian, 89, 196, 197, 217, 266-7
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 65
Macherey, Pierre, 37-42
Madsen, Deborah, 280, 291, 312
Major, Clarence, 172
Marchetti, Gina, 46
Martin, Richard, 237
Marx, Karl, 43
masculinity, 114-5, 199-201
Mason, Bobbie Ann, 194
mass media, 135, 233-5
Mathews, Harry, 132, 150-2, 172
  Conversions, The, 150-1
  Tlooth, 151-2
maximalism, 133, 172-8
Mendelson, Edward, 276
Mepham, John, 134, 161, 194
metafiction, 119, 125-6, 132, 147-61, 172, 178, 188, 195, 197, 205-8
Meyer, Eric, 265-6, 286
Middleton, Peter, 12
midfiction, 58-9
mimesis, 21-2, 54-5, 140
minimalism, 133, 134, 161-71, 173, 178
modernism, 132, 134, 147-9, 153, 165, 266-7
modernity/modernization, 108-112
Molesworth, Charles, 170
Morrow, Bradford
  Come Sunday, 315

Mottram, Eric, 232-3
Musil, Robert
Man Without Qualities, A, 148-9

narration, 151-2, 154, 249-50, 271, 277-82, 284-5 (see also *narrative discourse*)
narrative, 1-36, 125, 146, 206-7, 211-5, 236-9, 263-5, 267-9
cause and effect, 4, 142
chronotope, 76-9
discourse, 29-36, 136, 139, 266, 272-3, 275-81 (see also *language*)
displacement, 140-1
dynamic narratives, 19-24, 70-79, 140, 164, 197, 199, 236, 256, 291-2, 299-300, 305-12
episodic narratives, 138, 249
goal-orientated, 65-6, 307
linear, 2, 23, 135-7, 152, 180-2
formalist theories of, 4, 23, 35
and ideology, 15-19, 136-7, 138-9, 285-98
juxtaposition, 4, 139, 281-3
master-narrative, 173, 175-8, 216-8, 221, 223-6, 228, 229-32, 245, 248-9, 250-4, 271-2, 283-4, 287-93, 296-8, 306
multiform nature of, 4, 70-79, 173, 181-2, 196-7, 209, 219, 221-2, 223-6, 229-32, 239-41, 251-4, 256-7, 285-9
plot/emplotment, 18, 23-4, 55-7, 246, 263-4
and politics, 13-19, 147, 194, 208, 211, 264 (see also *ideology*)
realist, 10-11, 53
referential narratives, 13, 53, 59-69, 74, 164, 204-5, 225-6, 254-5, 274
resistance, 252, 298-312
spiral narratives, 5, 157-61, 178
story, 11, 57-8, 74, 138, 215-6, 251-2, 303, 309-11
structuralist theories of, 3, 19-20, 24-29, 36, 59-60
transformation, 4, 145, 180-1, 306-8
Newman, Charles, 278
Nixon, Richard, 6, 195, 211-8, 236, 264, 275, 294, 309, 312
nouveau roman, 172

O' Donnell, Patrick, 105
OULIPO, 132

paralogy, 2
paranoia, 105-8, 255, 279-80, 283-5, 287-8
Parfrey, Adam, 101
Parker, Charlie, 303-4
pastiche, 52, 91, 105 (see also *postmodern culture*)
Perkins Gilman, Charlotte, 302-3
Piaget, Jean, 19-20
Poe, Edgar Allan, 32-3, 268
political metafiction, 3-4, 7, 13, 51-79, 124-6, 132-4, 160-1, 164, 188, 194-257, 264-5
and narrative, 51-79, 160-1
and referentiality, 133-4, 162
Porush, David, 170, 178
postmodern
self, 91, 153, 161, 218-9
styles, 90
subjectivity, 91, 98, 99-103
postmodern culture, 72, 87-126, 164, 195, 218-20, 223-4, 235, 264-6
apocalypse culture, 101-2
commodification/consumption, 96-8, 114-5, 166, 183, 269
critical distance, 88-9, 120
hyperreality, 117
paralysis, 163, 170-1
pastiche, 97, 103-4, 180
perpetual present/instanteneity, 97
schizophrenia, 91, 103-4, 171
simulation/the image, 92-3, 95, 99, 110, 136, 145, 177, 200-1
text-culture relationship, 87-90, 92-3, 94-5, 103-4, 120-6, 134-5, 170-1, 194, 197, 265-6
postmodernist fiction, 3, 11, 13, 87-90, 94-5, 103-4, 124-5, 132-3, 194 (see also *postmodern culture*)
and the avant-garde, 118-26, 135, 204
fictionality, 13, 151, 155-6, 174, 176, 207-8
language games, 2, 11, 179
literature of exhaustion, 132, 133-4, 161, 162
narcissism, 103-4, 106, 173

parody, 13, 52, 186
self-reflexivity, 13, 52, 91, 105, 153, 160, 162, 178
postmodernity, theories of, 87, 96-108
postmodernization, 94, 108-118
power, 244-6, 249-50, 253-4, 263-6, 274-6, 289-95
Propp, Vladimir, 24-5, 33
Proust, Marcel, 165
Pynchon, Thomas, 3, 55, 91, 178, 204, 257, 263-315
Crying of Lot 49, The, 71-3, 117-8, 150, 266, 269-74, 301
Gravity's Rainbow, 6-7, 40, 58, 70-1, 74, 95, 139, 263-6, 271, 273-312, 313
Slow Learner, 263
V., 266-9, 273-4
Vineland, 312-5

Reagan, Ronald, 312, 315
realism, 87, 10, 20, 137, 167, 197-8, 237
K-Mart, 91, 194
reality, death of, 3, 33-4, 147, 156, 172-3, 179-80, 188, 284
reality principle, the, 62-3
Reed, Ishmael, 3, 6, 162, 178, 202, 204, 235-42, 279, 281, 314
Flight to Canada, 28-9, 36, 65
Freelance Pallbearers, The, 242
Last Days of Louisiana Red, The, 279
Mumbo Jumbo, 58, 74, 139, 163, 194, 198-9, 201, 202, 235-42, 264
Terrible Twos The, 314
Yellow Back Radio Broke Down, 242
Ricoeur, Paul, 22, 24, 59, 75
Robbe-Grillet, Alain, 172
role theory, 294-8
Roussel, Raymond, 133, 151
Locus Solus, 151
Russell, Charles, 121-2, 275, 280

Schaub, Thomas, 202
schizophrenia, see *postmodern culture*
Schmitz, Neil, 285
Seed, David, 23, 179, 184, 309-10
simulation, see *postmodern culture*
Singer, Alan, 18, 51
Smyth, Edmund J., 89-90
Sorrentino, Gilbert, 13, 55, 132-3, 188
Mulligan Stew, 6, 172-4, 178
Spectacle, the, 94, 218
State, the, 94, 122-3, 195, 233, 276, 294
Stein, Gertrude, 55
structuralism, 3
subjectivity, the subject, 44-50, 52, 243-9, 253-7 (see also *postmodern*)
Sukenick, Ronald, 1, 3, 6, 54-5, 132-3, 167, 178-88, 196
98.6, 66, 180, 184-8
Out, 56, 63, 180-4, 187
Suleiman, Susan Rubin, 2, 120
surfiction, 133, 178-88
surrealism, 134
system, 148-50, 158-61, 167, 197, 201-4, 214, 227-8, 229-32, 243-52

Tanner, Tony, 37, 123-4, 153, 157, 204, 268, 285
telos, 2, 20, 65-6, 158
Thiher, Allen, 52, 132, 153, 179
Thompson, John B., 45
Todorov, Tzvetan, 25, 59-60
Truman, Harry S., 6
Tzara, Tristan, 144

Verne, Jules, 39-40
Virilio, Paul, 98, 102
Vollmann, William, 315
You Bright and Risen Angels, 315
Von Braun, Wernher, 275
Vonnegut, Kurt
Cat's Cradle, 40

Wagner, Richard, 296-8
Wakefield, Neville, 99
Wasson, Richard, 147
Waugh, Patricia, 52, 92-3, 104, 118-20, 152, 197
White, Hayden, 19
Wilde, Alan, 58, 313
Wolf, Christa, 194

Zizek, Slavoj, 44
Zurbrugg, Nicholas, 134-5, 144, 163