UNIVERZITA KARLOVA – FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR

Changing Tendencies in Self-Conscious Narratives: A Contrastive Interpretation

Proměny tendencí v sebereflexivním vyprávění: kontrastivní studie

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí diplomové práce
(supervisor):

Prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.

Praha, srpen 2017

Zpracoval (author):
Bc. Martin Sedláček

Studijní obor (subject):
Anglofonní literatury a
kultury

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

Declaration:

I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

V Praze, dne 8. 8. 2017

………………………………….

Jméno a příjmení

Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objection to the MA thesis being borrowed for study purposes.

Abstrakt

Předložená práce se zaměřuje na souvislosti mezi vybranými metafikčními texty a narativní teorií. Výběr sestává ze dvou skupin sebereflexivních textů. První ze skupin se zaměřuje na metafikční tendence románů 17. a 18. století. Výběr záměrně nebere v úvahu původ textů. Kromě *Toma Jonese* od Henryho Fieldinga a *Život a názory blahorodého pana Tristrama Shandyho* od Laurence Sterna se kapitola zabývá i Cervantesovým *Důmyslným rytířem Donem Quijotem de la Manchou*. Druhá ze skupin se zaměřuje na poválečnou americkou metafikci (*Ztracen v panoptiku* Johna Barthe, *Sněhurka* Donalda Barthelma a *Jatka číslo pět* Kurta Vonneguta). Tyto texty představují souvislý celek z předem vymezeného období.

Obecně je metafikce chápána jako fikce o fikci. Předložená práce navrhuje odlišnou interpretaci, a to v rámci Foucaultova pojetí epistémé. Metafikce tak není chápána jako samostatný literární žánr, ale jako součást širšího kontextu chápání reprezentace. Reprezentace je v metafikci klíčovým pojmem a rostoucí vypravěčské sebeuvědomění tak lze interpretovat v širších souvislostech. Diplomová práce klade důraz na kontrastivní a interdisciplinární přístup.

Práce je rozdělena na pět kapitol. První kapitola představuje teoretický úvod zaměřený na problematickou definici metafikce. Opírá se o Dvorní dámy od Diega Velázqueze a Foucaultovu analýzu tohoto obrazu. Kapitola také prezentuje narativní teorii využitou v práci. Druhá kapitola spočívá v analýze a intepretaci starších textů, které jsou předloženy v chronologickém pořadí (*Důmyslný rytíř Don Quijote de la Mancha* od Miguele Cervantese y Saavedry, *Tom Jones* od Henryho Fieldinga, *Život a názory blahorodého pana Tristrama Shandyho* od Laurence Sterna). Třetí kapitola představuje poválečné metafikční texty a s cílem intepretace na ně aplikuje narativní teorii. Čtvrtá, ústřední kapitola sestává z historického přehledu změn v reprezentaci. Je založena na Foucaultově teorii epistémé, a metafikce je tak chápána v rámci širšího společensko-kulturního kontextu. Mimoto obsahuje tato kapitola i

Iserův koncept významu textu a vysvětluje ho ve vztahu k rámcování. Pátá kapitola práci zakončuje, opakuje hlavní body, shrnuje a analyzuje její výsledky.

Klíčová slova: metafikce, sebereflexivní, vyprávění, Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne, Barthelme, Vonnegut, Barth, narativní teorie

Thesis Abstract

The present thesis investigates correlations between a selection of metafictional texts and narrative theory. The selection consists in two sets of self-reflexive texts. The first one explores metafictional tendencies in the 17th and 18th century novels. To achieve this, the selection largely ignores their provenience. In addition to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, it also examines Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. The latter set of texts focuses on post-War American metafictions (John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*). These represent a coherent body of works from a particular period.

Metafiction is generally understood as fiction about fiction. The present thesis challenges those assumptions and suggests interpreting metafiction within the framework of Michel Foucault's epistemes. Metafiction is not conceived of as a separate genre of literature but in the context of broader cultural tendencies in the understanding of representation. Representation is a key concept in metafiction and the increasing degree of narrative self-awareness is viewed in this light. The thesis emphasizes this contrastive and interdisciplinary approach.

The text is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is a theoretical introduction addressing the difficulties of defining metafiction. As a visual guide, it draws on Michel Foucault's analysis of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. The chapter includes a discussion of narrative theory employed in the thesis. Chapter two consists in the analysis and interpretation of the primary texts from the earlier days of the novel. They are presented in chronological order: Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Chapter three presents the selection of post-War American metafictional texts (John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*). It applies narrative theory to them and interprets them. Chapter four is the focal point of the entire thesis. It consists in a historical survey of the human understanding of representation which is based

on Foucault's framework of epistemes. The present thesis views metafiction as a constituent of broader sociocultural context, not as a separate genre of literature. In addition, Chapter four includes a discussion of Wolfgang Iser's concept of the meaning of the text in relation to framing. Chapter five concludes the thesis, reiterates the primary arguments, summarizes and discusses its results.

Table of Contents

1. Chapter One: Theoretical Introduction

1.1 Defining Metafiction

In Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760), the eponymous narrator refers to his own text as "the most religious" since he "begin[s] with writing the first sentence" and trusts "to the Almighty God for the second."[1] Sterne's narrator, instead of concealing or ignoring the process of artistic creation, brings it to the fore and creates an impression of highly immediate writing. This impression is bolstered by the reference to the physical act of writing itself.

In addition to the thematization of the process of artistic creation, the narrator's commentary is "self-conscious" in the sense that it is aware of its own existence and its position in a larger fictional body. The terms "self-conscious" and "self-aware" are used interchangeably with the term "metafiction" in the Anglophone literary context. All three refer to the same tendency: to suffuse the narration with references to the act of narration; to turn the process of diegesis into the diegesis itself.

Linda Hutcheon provides the simplest definition of metafiction to this date. Metafiction is "fiction about fiction", or fiction including "within itself a commentary on its own narrative."[2] Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980) is the first coherent book-length inquiry into the nature of metafiction, although as is argued below, the concept has been studied before her publication, most notably by Wayne C. Booth and Viktor Shklovsky.

One of the most prominent metafictional theorists Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to

---

1 Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (London: Penguin Classics, 1997) 391.

2 Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986) 1.

its status as an artefact."[3] As Waugh contends, the theory of metafiction has the objective to go beyond narrative analysis, as it "explore[s] the possible fictionality of the world outside the fictional text."[4] According to Waugh, metafiction foregrounds its fictional status "in order to pose questions about relationship between fiction and reality."[5] Waugh addresses the essential part of metafictional narratives: the relationship between the fictional world and that of the reader.

Hutcheon and Waugh attribute the term to William H. Gass, who coined it in his essay "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction" (1970).[6] Gass notes the changing attitude of the writer towards the work of art. By becoming more aware of the medium being used, the author deals away with the pretension of fiction attempting to capture the world, and concentrates on the creation of the fictional world by means of language.[7] Gass reacts to the contemporary discourse. As Waugh points out, recent postmodern texts "explore a *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction."[8] Waugh goes on to argue that Gass' focus on the self-reflection is symptomatic of the 1960s, which saw a "more general cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the world."[9] This focus also implies reflection of observations on language and can be interpreted in the context of Michel Foucault's notion of epistemes.

Borrowing the concept from logic (as propounded by Alfred Tarski), Roman Jakobson introduces 'metalanguage' into linguistics. He defines it by its function: whenever the speaker

---

[3] Patricia Waugh, Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction, (London: Routledge, 1984) 24.

[4] Waugh 2.

[5] Waugh 2.

[6] William H. Gass, "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction", in *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1970) 3-26. Robert Scholes published an essay titled "Metafiction" the same year. Robert Scholes, "Metafiction", in *The Iowa Review* 1.4, University of Iowa (1970), JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20157652> 4th Mar 2017. 100-115.

[7] Gass 3-8.

[8] Waugh 2.

[9] Waugh 3.

or listener "need[s] to check up whether they use the same code" the speech becomes focused on the code they are using, thus performing the metalingual or glossing function.[10] In effect, Jakobson argues, we may communicate using English (as metalanguage) about English (as "object language"). Far from being restricted to linguistics and technical discourse, the model is used extensively in everyday communication in phrases such as: "Did you mean …?". Moreover, it is "the vital factor of any verbal development."[11] The concept of metafiction is based on analogy to metalanguage. Metalanguage is the code used for reference to the code in use, metafiction is fiction referring to the fiction itself. In both cases, the medium is the message. Both concepts are self-referential.

The first theoretical account of self-aware fiction is presented by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky in *Theory of Prose* (1925). In his analysis of Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760) Shklovsky refers to Sterne as "a radical revolutionary" in terms of form, which is "presented without any motivation whatsoever, simply as it is", and gives several examples: "the action constantly breaks off, the author constantly returns to the beginning or leaps forward", "the main plot […] is constantly interrupted" and the "unfinished story" remains unmotivated.[12]

Shklovsky does not use the term 'metafiction' or 'self-conscious fiction' but refers to the method wherein Sterne "lay[s] bare the device." [13] The process is fully intentional in Shklovsky's reading; it is an "ingenious attempt to confound the reader."[14] Shklovsky's reading consists mainly in analyzing the narrative "displacement of time" as a contrast between literary

---

[10] Roman Jakobson, *The Framework of Language* (Ann Arbor: Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 180) 86. Jakobson identifies six functions of language: emotive, referential, poetic, phatic, metalingual, and conative (Jakobson 81).

[11] Jakobson 86, 91.

[12] Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991) 147, 156.

[13] Shklovsky 147.

[14] Shklovsky 148.

time, whose "pure conventionality" does not "coincide with the laws of ordinary time."[15] For Shklovsky the purport of the narrative self-awareness is to parody the contemporary conventions by "thrusting [the older conventional devices] to the fore" instead of concealing "their conventionality." [16] Although Shklovsky defines fiction 'laying bare the device' (partially) in relation to the reader, the emphasis is on the temporal structures and their violations in the novel.

As suggested by the title of his essay "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*" (1952), Wayne C. Booth examines fiction written prior to the publication of *Tristram Shandy*. As is argued in the following chapters and as the selection of the primary texts implies, metafiction is not exclusive to the 20th century. Booth compares the reception of Sterne's masterpiece in his day and in the twentieth century, pointing out that modern readers "tend to see deliberate artistry where earlier readers saw only whimsy."[17] Booth thus notes the readers' changing attitudes towards the novel, most significantly the device that "led earlier readers to overlook its artistry": "the transforming presence of an intruding narrator."[18]

Booth's reading establishes the platform for accepting *Tristram Shandy* as a work of art with a multitude of possible readings, though still basing that relationship on a binary opposition; the recipient can either view Tristram the narrator as the one "who tears the book apart", or "holds it together."[19] Furthermore, Booth anticipates later metafictional theories by roughly drafting a typology of narrators intruding upon the act of narration and formulates the concept of the 'self-conscious narrator' as the one "who intrudes into his novel to comment on

---

[15] Shklovsky 148, 154.

[16] Shklovsky 150.

[17] Wayne C. Booth, "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*", in *PMLA* 67.2, University of Iowa (1952), JSTOR: 163 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/460093> 3rd Mar 2017.

[18] Booth 163.

[19] Booth 163.

himself as writer, and on his book", dismissing the "moral implications" of the narrative and focusing on it as "a literary product" instead.[20]

In addition to the comic aspects of Sterne's fiction, Booth concentrates on the historical development of self-conscious narration by placing Sterne within a cultural context among literary figures as varied as Montaigne, Burton and Swift. It is a context thriving with "the devices […] within the tradition […] of what had been happening in English and continental fiction for generations."[21] Booth's examination questions: in what respect do the earlier self-conscious texts differ from their twentieth century counterparts, and how has the position of the reader changed in the course of the two centuries?

Robert Alter provides a potential answer to the first part of the question. In his *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (1975) Alter argues that the self-conscious novel has evolved as a parallel genre to its non-self-conscious counterpart. He asserts that a "fully self-conscious novel" endeavors to "convey to us a sense of the fictional world as an authorial construct" through "the style, the handling of narrative viewpoint, the names and words imposed on the characters, the patterning of the narration" and "the nature of the characters and what befalls them."[22] Self-conscious fiction is defined "against a background of literary tradition and convention."[23]

---

[20] Booth 164-165. Booth asserts that all written fiction implies an author trespassing from the fictional world of the characters upon that of the reader by selecting the subject matter of his or her fiction. Unlike Tristram this narrator does so "unobtrusively". The second, more explicit kind, is the narrator who chooses himself or herself as the hero or secondary character of his own account. This narration is more obtrusive, since it poses the problems of "the narrator's suitability for his task"—such as the necessary knowledge, or certain skill. The third kind is the narrator who makes a "rhetorical commentary on the characters or event of his story", e.g. "Our *hero* was ...". Other instances listed are Fielding's and Thackeray's "moralizing interruptions" (Booth 164-165).

[21] Booth 185.

[22] Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) xi. Alter points out that the "phenomenon of an artwork mirroring itself as it mirrors reality" is not restricted to the novel and can be found in other forms of art, e.g. oral poetry and drama (*Odyssey*, Euripides' parody of the Greek tragedy, or some of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's plays) (Alter xi).

[23] Alter xi.

Alter points out the potential dangers of narrative self-consciousness and argues that exposing the work's fictional status can possibly result in "[nothing] more than a mannerism, a self-indulgent game."[24] On the other hand, provided that narrative self-consciousness is "integrated into a large critical vision of the dialectic interplay between fiction and reality", it has the potential to "produce one of the most illuminating dimensions of the experience we undergo in reading a novel."[25] Using the form of the novel, Alter's examination interprets narrative self-consciousness as part of a continuous tradition. Most importantly, self-consciousness is defined by its relation to the reader and the interaction between the fictional and the recipient's world.

Linda Hutcheon's *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980) is taken to be the first comprehensive account of metafictional practices. For Hutcheon, the narcissism of metafiction does not have pejorative connotations. It refers to the narrative self-awareness, or to use Hutcheon's wording, to "fiction about fiction."[26] Hutcheon follows Alter's inquiry into the alleged rupture from tradition and poses the question whether we are dealing with a long tradition of self-reflexive texts.

To illustrate this, Hutcheon provides a distinction between overt and covert metafiction. Texts belonging to the former category "reveal their self-awareness in explicit thematizations or allegorizations of their diegetic or linguistic identity within [themselves]."[27] Their narcissism, or "self-consciousness and self-reflection" is "clearly evident" and the reader of overtly self-conscious works "learns that he is indeed in a paradoxical position."[28] The narrative narcissism

---

[24] Alter xiv.
[25] Alter xiv.
26 Hutcheon 1. Its fundamentally paradoxical nature in relation to the reader is discussed in the last chapter.
[27] Hutcheon 7.
[28] Hutcheon 23, 117.

in the covert metafictions, on the contrary, is "internalized, actualized"; these texts are "self-reflexive but not necessarily self-conscious."[29]

As the definitions show, covert narrative narcissism is much more elusive than its overt counterpart. Accordingly, it is more difficult "to generalize concerning the various shapes [it] might adopt."[30] Overt metafiction brings its fictionality to the fore, but owing to its implicit, elusive and internalizing nature, covert metafiction questions the "outer limits of the novel as a narrative mimetic genre."[31] Hutcheon extends the metaphor of Narcissus and asks: "Has Narcissus […] died by the pool" or has he killed himself, being "lured by his own reflection?"[32] The implications and possible uses of Hutcheon's dichotomy are examined below.

Hutcheon distinguishes between "mimesis of *product*" and "mimesis of *process*."[33] In the former category, the reader is "required to identify the products being imitated" such as "characters, actions, settings", to "validate their literary worth" and to "recognize their similarity to those in empirical reality."[34] In the "mimesis of *process*", on the other hand, the conventions are bared and codes disrupted by being openly acknowledged. [35] In her poststructuralist reading, Hutcheon brings forth the reader. In the mimesis of the product, the reader is a passive participant, while in the mimesis of the process, he or she is required to partake in the co-creation of the fictional universe. [36] This implies a transference of responsibility from the author onto the reader, who is forced to acknowledge his or her accountability "for the act of decoding, the act of reading."[37]

---

[29] Hutcheon 7
[30] Hutcheon 31.
[31] Hutcheon 31.
[32] Hutcheon 31-32.
[33] Hutcheon 5.
[34] Hutcheon 38
[35] Hutcheon 39.
[36] Hutcheon 39.
[37] Hutcheon 39.

Hutcheon's emphasis on the mimesis of process can be paralleled to Roland Barthes's distinction between readerly and writerly texts. While readerly texts largely ignore the reader and approach him or her as a consumer, rather than a producer, writerly texts are "a perpetual present" defiant to totalizing structures, since "no consequent language […] can be superimposed" upon them.[38] The writerly texts are "ourselves writing" before "the infinite play of the world […] is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system […]."[39] Barthes argues that the objective of literature is to transform the reader from a consumer into a producer of the text and relies on the new novel in achieving this distinction.[40]

Hutcheon refers to the recipient as the "co-creator" of the fictional universe and equals the act of writing to the act of reading, in that they both have "the creative function to which the text draws attention."[41] Rather than concealing the process of artistic creation, the author-narrator highlights them. According to Hutcheon, the novelist "actualizes the world of his imagination through words", and using the same words, the reader "manufactures in reverse a literary universe that is as much his creation as it is the novelist's."[42] These tendencies have already been articulated by previous theoreticians. Hutcheon's approach differs in her selection of texts (the majority of them are twentieth century metafictions), in her emphasis of the role of the reader, and in her familiarity with French criticism. In addition to Barthes, Hutcheon's study incorporates the respective theories of Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette and Michel Foucault.

Following Hutcheon's emphasis on the "mimesis of process", metafiction is interpretable as a narrative method highlighting the process of representation. The present thesis builds on Hutcheon's theory and draws from Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966) which deals

---

[38] Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, Richard Miller, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974) 5.
[39] Barthes, *S/Z* 5.
[40] Barthes, *S/Z* 4.
[41] Hutcheon 39.
[42] Hutcheon 27.

with the changing tendencies of representation. Metafiction is therefore understood as a part of broader tendencies in human thought, not as a separate genre of literature. Foucault's examination is used to venture beyond narratology and to approach metafiction in a contrastive and interdisciplinary manner.

1.2   Las Meninas: A Visual Parallel to Self-Conscious Fiction

Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966) opens with the analysis of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656). With the elision of the object of mimesis, the painting is "finally freed from the relation that was impeding it."[43] *Las Meninas* is the representation of a representation in its purest form; it is the artistic rendering of the process of mimesis. This effect is achieved by undertaking the arduous task of "represent[ing] itself […] in all its elements, with its images, the eyes to which it is offered, the faces it makes visible, the gestures that call it into being."[44] Velázquez's painting foregrounds the complex interpretative question of our understanding of the artistic representation of reality and the recipient's role therein. Despite its focus on mimesis, Foucault's interpretation of *Las Meninas* is applicable to self-conscious fiction as well and is used as a visual parallel to the textual representation of diegesis.

Foucault attempts to identify the initial center of *Las Meninas*: the only rectangular object on the wall is not a painting but a shining mirror in which the painter's original object is reflected. In Foucault's reading, it becomes "the perfect duplication" and mirrors what it should according to the laws of physics.[45] Although hardly noticeable, the two sovereigns are in the artist's (as well as the rest of the figures') focus, and in effect, the "entire picture is looking out at a scene for which it is itself a scene."[46] If we follow the interpretation of the two sovereigns

---

[43] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2002) 18.
[44] Foucault 17.
[45] Foucault 8.
[46] Foucault 15.

being the object of the painting, it must be emphasized that though their presence is not discarded completely, it is considerably sidelined. The picture creates an illusion in which the gaze of the painted figures appears to be fixed upon us. Foucault provides a different, self-aware reading.

Las Meninas exposes its artificiality by breaking several ontological horizons. Foucault asserts that the painter's gaze is fixed towards "that space in which we are, and which we are" and consequently, we as onlookers cannot evade his gaze, since "it runs through the real picture and emerges from its surface to join the place from which we see the painter observing us."[47] The objects within the painting (and the painting itself) are aware of being watched (by implication, of their own artificiality) and manifest their knowledge of this fact by peering in our direction. The painting disregards the ontological layer designated for the work of art, and departs from its original position to intrude upon the recipient's reality to interact with it.

Foucault hypothesizes another instance of breaching of the ontological levels. He contends that "[w]e are observing ourselves being observed by the painter" (although not visually represented) and most importantly that we are "made visible to his eyes by the same light that enables us to see him."[48] The illuminating light is shared both by the artistic representation and the recipient's realm. It is the same light that brings into focus the objects of *Las Meninas*: the gazes of the painted figures, which appear to be fixed on us, the observers. The light coming in is natural. There is no artificial light in the form of candles and there are no chandeliers in the room, almost as if to let the rest of the paintings be illuminated by natural light, leaving them in relative obscurity. One can only trace the shape of their frames, but not the actual paintings. By blurring them, their existence is acknowledged, but only as a distraction

---

[47] Foucault 4.
[48] Foucault 7.

to be disposed of. To represent the finished painting is to represent the mimesis of product. Velázquez probes into the mimesis of process instead.

The two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Even if one chooses to refuse the self-conscious reading, he or she cannot dismiss its implications. The reading has already coerced the recipient into interpreting the work of art in a certain way. In the case of the self-conscious reading, it has undermined the well-established dichotomy of reality and work of art by questioning the viability of the ontological layers (through their subsequent breaching): the meaning of the work of art cannot be so easily identified or classified. Foucault's reading of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* can be linked to Jacques Derrida's concept of decentered texts.

Dealing away with the notion of a single-centered meaning (taken to be the author's "message" to the reader), the reader arrives at an infinity of meanings. Derrida's conceives of the text as "a world of signs without fault" where there is no truth nor origin—such a world is "offered to an active interpretation."[49] Derrida claims that the reader is no longer asked to choose just one possibility. If there is no center and consequently no authority, the recipient can fully appreciate the text itself, the pleasure and amusement that arises from acknowledging its multiple meanings as moveable, rather than stable entities. Not only can the reader enjoy the multiplicity of the meanings, but also the freedom to choose (and conversely, not to choose).

Las Meninas achieves this multiplicity by neither confirming nor disproving the recipient's conjectures. One is free to follow the more conventional interpretation of being at the back side of a transparent mirror, or that the gaze of the figures is indeed strong enough to penetrate the ontological boundary between their and the recipient's realms. In his analysis, Foucault appears to favor two foci: the boundary between the two ontological realms, and the painter's canvas. He refers to it as "stubbornly invisible" as it "prevents the relation of [the

---

[49] Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978) 278-294. 292.

figures'] gazes from ever being discoverable or definitely established."[50] A potential meaning of *Las Meninas* lies in the absence of one definite meaning. It is not merely relocated (the sidelined sovereigns), it is dislocated and in effect multiplied.

Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas* is not only an investigation into the possible meanings of Diego Velázquez's painting. By choosing *Las Meninas*, a visual work of art, Foucault demonstrates self-aware tendencies in art in general. It is a painting that represents a representation in the process of creation, a mimesis of a mimesis. Although dealing with mimesis, Foucault's analysis was used as a point of departure for the present study, which focuses on textual representation of diegesis. Its visuaflity facilitates the recipient's understanding of self-awareness in other forms of art, including narrative fiction. Artistic self-consciousness varies in its degree, and is used in the mimetic as well as in the diegetic mode.

1.3   From Structuralist to Poststructuralist Narratology

Monika Fludernik provides a critique of the structuralist exorbitant reliance on binaries and structural dichotomies. The most notable one is Genette's "panoply of binary oppositions" wherein he "takes three categories and turns them into a hierarchy of binaries": homodiegetic vs. heterodiegetic, extradiegetic vs. intradiegetic, internal vs. external focalization.[51] The narrator is either a character in the story or an entity outside it; he or she is either inside or outside the story; the focalization takes place either internally or externally. Genette's theory therefore leaves very little space for narratives disregarding the conventional narrative structures, be it deliberately or unintentionally.

---

[50] Foucault 5.

[51] Monika Fludernik, "Structuralist Narratology: The Rage for Binary Opposition, Categorization, and Typology", *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 38-59. 38.

Mieke Bal, herself a structuralist, identifies the most problematic area of structuralist narratology: it strives to create a model that is "so abstract that it may be considered universal", a model that is then contrasted with the investigated text and either "rejected or improved."[52] According to Bal, the goal of the structuralist narratology is not "to force the text into a general model and then to conclude that the text is indeed a narrative", but to examine "doubtful cases."[53] This confrontation creates background for a more precise description. Bal concludes that a perfect instance as well as "any deviations from the basis model can influence the meaning of text."[54]

The structuralist tendency to emphasize "binarism and typology" reflects the two primary aims of structuralist narratology, as defined by Fludernik: "its aspirations to scientificity" and "its ultimately descriptive aims", both striving to provide "guidelines to interpretation uncontaminated by the subjectivism of traditional literary criticism." [55] However, the structuralist theories largely ignore the reader's role in the process and approach the work of art as a stable and isolated entity.

Poststructuralism, on the other hand, embraces the multiplicity of meanings that a single text implies. Instead of focusing on the structures internal to the text, poststructuralist interpretations consider the recipient as an indispensable variable in the process of reading. Ronald Barthes defined this tendency in his seminal essay "The Death of the Author", in which he proposes dethroning the concept of the real-life author for the sake of the reader's interpretative freedom.[56]

---

[52] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999) 188.
[53] Bal 188.
[54] Bal 188.
[55] Fludernik 38.
[56] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image-Music-Text*, Stephen Heath, trans. (London: Fontana, 1977) 142-148.

Furthermore, the openness of a text discloses an essential aspect: its volatile and elusive nature. Poststructuralism reveals that the meaning of the text is unstable, stemming from the poststructuralist understanding of language and its "belief in the incommensurate qualities of language." [57] In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes argues that structuralism is capable of explaining any structure, but requires an interpretation. This interpretation is achieved through the use of "metalanguage"; this "second-order" or "beyond" language is the medium for referring to the "first-order" language, and most importantly, it bridges structuralism and poststructuralism.[58]

Poststructuralist narratology is therefore viewed as a reaction to structuralist narratology, but the two trends are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Although frequently viewed as "old-fashioned" and "quaint" by poststructuralist narratology, James Phelan describes structuralist (or classical) narratology a "stable landing, a theoretical bedrock of the fundamental and unchanging principles on which narratives are built."[59]

Fludernik points out that narratological analyses do not produce new readings of a text, but frequently "highlight *how* the text manages to have certain effects and explain *why* these occur."[60] The popularity of narrative theory lies in this focus. Fludernik contends that it "has performed so well with postmodernist narrative" because of its "instruments", which are "eminently suited to demonstrating how mimetic traditions are being contravened and playfully refunctionalized."[61] The individual classifications and typologies are not an end in themselves, but a useful set of theoretical tools to be employed in the process of interpretation.

---

[57] J. A. Cuddon, Claire Preston, eds. "Post-structuralism", *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin, 1999) 690-693. 691.

[58] Cuddon, Preston, "Post-structuralism" 691.

[59] James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Introduction: Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Narrative Theory", *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 1-16. 1.

[60] Fludernik 39.

[61] Fludernik 39.

Structuralist distinctions are functional in interpreting any complex narrative situation. They are applicable to Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760) as much as they are to Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). One of the aspects to be addressed in this respect is the distinction between the author and the narrator. As Mieke Bal argues, it guides the reader in "disentangl[ing] the different voices that speak in a text" in order "to make room for the reader's input in the relative persuasiveness of those voices."[62] Dividing the work of art into separate structures implies assigning a post for the recipient.

I take the view that the poststructuralist emphasis on meaning is an extension of the structuralist achievement in terms of defining and explaining structures, manifested in fiction in the form of diegetic levels. Monika Fludernik identifies the trend wherein classical narratology moved from the analyses of postmodernist texts as deviations from parameters, both realistic and verisimilar, including the absence of plot, "contradictory character" or "illogical concatenation of action sequence." [63] The objective is to venture beyond mere "description of defamiliarizing device" and head towards the analysis and interpretation of metafictional practices.[64]

In a narrative analysis of metafictional texts the relationship between reality and fiction must be addressed. The following analysis therefore first classifies the primary texts in terms of narrative structures. This classification is used as a point of departure for subsequent interpretation stressing the meaning in relation to the recipient. Therein lies the focal point of the present thesis.

---

[62] Bal 18.

[63] Fludernik 43.

[64] Fludernik 43.

1.4   Aims and Structure

The primary objective of the present thesis is to map correlations between narrative theory and metafiction in a selection of self-reflexive texts. As Mark Currie argues, metafiction is a genre located between fiction and critical writing.[65] This status enables it to thematize the process of artistic creation. This aspect is addressed in a different manner by respective authors. Some of the selected texts overtly refer to the process of writing and include the character of the writer. Other metafictional practices include framing, frame-breaking or addressing the audience. The thesis traces metafictional elements in a selection of earlier texts and contrasts them with a selection of post-War American metafiction.

Chapter two consists in a survey of pre-20th century texts with metafictional elements (*Don Quixote, Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy*). These representatives provide a contrast for the following study of changing tendencies of representation. Chapter three makes use of the metafictional theories and applies them to the selected post-War metafictions. Chapters two and three are used as a point of departure for the Chapter four which attempts to interpret the changing tendencies in representation within the framework of Foucault's epistemes. The chapter also addresses the meaning of metafictional texts in the light of Wolfgang Iser's theory. Chapter five provides a summary of the entire thesis, reiterates its main arguments and discusses its results.

---

[65] Mark Currie, "Introduction", *Metafiction*, Mark Currie, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013) 1-20. 2.

2. Chapter Two: Pre-20th Century Self-Conscious Narratives

2.1 Introduction

The objective of the present chapter is to provide a brief historical survey of pre-20th century texts with metafictional elements, not only from the Anglophone canon (Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760)) but from world literature as well (Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615)). The prose texts are selected as representatives of self-reflexive tendencies in the earlier days of the novel, and most importantly, they provide a point of departure for the contrastive study of historical development of narrative in metafiction in Chapter four.

Patricia Waugh observes that although postmodern philosophies descend from those of modernism, "its formal techniques seem often to have originated from novels like *Tristram Shandy* (1760), *Don Quixote* (1604) or *Tom Jones* (1749)."[1] The analysis of the selected texts focuses on manifestations of narrative self-consciousness, such as the question of authorship, narrative time, extra-linguistic means of expression and the character of the narrator. Chapter three concentrates on the same areas in the selection of post-War American metafictional texts.

From the field of narratology, Chapters two and three draw on Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* and touch upon Franz Stanzel's *A Theory of Narrative*. Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* is used as a frame of reference to the narrative structures in the primary texts. Genette's theory provides a framework for the study of intrusions (metalepses); some of the selected texts include narrative transgressions, wherein a character from one diegetic level

---

[1] Waugh 24.

trespasses upon different diegetic level (typically from the extradiegetic on the diegetic level). Stanzel's *A Theory of Narrative* is used to differentiate between the 'narrator' who is wittingly involved in the story, and the 'reflector', a character whose psyche is the mirror of the events within the novel. Stanzel's distinction is essential for metafiction, since it implies narrative self-awareness.

2.2   Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra's *Don Quixote de la Mancha*

The following paragraphs illustrate some of the manifestations of narrative self-consciousness in the earliest of the selected texts, Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra's *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615). Bran Nicol characterizes Cervantes's magnum opus in relation to postmodernism and argues that it features "layering of authorial frame […], narrative digressions, references to other works by Cervantes and to its developing story" and in effect "parod[ies] the conventions of the novel form […] before it has properly begun."[2]

From the opening, *Don Quixote* exposes the process of creation. In the "Author's Preface", the author-narrator (purported to be Cervantes himself) discusses the character of Don Quixote and voices his fear that his character "shall remain buried in the archives of his own La Mancha" until "Heaven provide[s] some one to garnish him with all those things he stands in need of."[3] In particular, the author-narrator refers to his being "shy and careless about hunting for authors to say what [he himself] can say without them."[4] The first focus of the narrator's analysis are "the sonnets, epigrams, or complimentary verses", which "ought to be by persons of importance and rank"—these could be written by the narrator himself and later "baptise[d]": he is to "put

[2] Bran Nicol, The Cambridge Introduction to Cambridge Fiction (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) 38.

[3] Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Ormsby, (*Project Gutenberg*, 2004) <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/996/pg996-images.html> 15 Jan 2017. 30. PDF.

[4] Cervantes 30.

any name [he] like[s] to them, fathering them on Prester John of the Indies or the Emperor of Trebizond" who "were said to have been famous poets."[5]

It is suggested that the narrator should make use of "aphorisms and sayings", preferably in Latin, as he will be "take[n] for a grammarian at all events" which is "no small honour to profit."[6] The narrator is encouraged to use clichés, such as calling every giant in the story a "Goliath", or mentioning the river Tagus in a platitude-ridden description: "it has its source in such and such a place and falls into the ocean, kissing the walls of the famous city of Lisbon, and it is a common belief that it has golden sand etc."[7]

Patricia Waugh argues that Cervantes "parodied the outmoded conventions of the Romance."[8] The narrator's friend's suggestions are therefore critiques of Romances and overused practices of the obsolete genre. It needs to be emphasized that the parodic effect is achieved by exposing the process of creation. Before its beginning, the narrator discusses the method which he is to employ in the novel. The bulk of *Don Quixote* is evidence that he adheres to these rules, as discussed in the preface. One such manifestation is Cervantes' use of metalepses. Gérard Genette defines metalepsis as the "transition from one narrating level to another" and describes the boundary as "a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds", the first one being "the world *in* which one tells" and the second one "the world *of* which one tells."[9]

In the sixth chapter of the first volume, the curate and the barber decide to eliminate Quixote's books, considered to be "the authors of all the mischief."[10] At first, they are set to browse through them to see if "there might be some […] among them that did not deserve the

---

[5] Cervantes 31.
[6] Cervantes 31.
[7] Cervantes 31.
[8] Waugh 70.
[9] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Ewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 234, 236. Emphasis mine.
[10] Cervantes 50.

penalty of fire", but end up burning virtually all of them, the most prominent exception being "The 'Galatea'" whose author is Miguel de Cervantes.[11] The example involves metalepsis: characters from the intradiegetic level (the barber, the housekeeper, the curate) intrude upon the realm of extradiegetic characters (the author-narrator). The metalepsis is further elaborated on when the two characters discuss the author. The curate refers to him as a "great friend of [his]" and states that "he has had more experience in reverses than in verses."[12]

Though spared of flames, the author of the book is not spared of criticism, as the curate points out that although Cervantes's "book has some good invention in it, it presents us with something but brings nothing to a conclusion."[13] The curate affirms his position in the universe of the author-narrator and by doing so, an interconnection between the realm of the characters and that of the author is brought about. More importantly, the curate anticipates the second part, saying that "we must wait for the Second Part it promises" and goes on to say that "perhaps with amendment it may succeed in winning the full measure of grace that it is now denied it."[14] By commenting on *La Galatea* in hindsight (it was published in 1585, twenty years before the first part of *Don Quixote*), Cervantes violates and problematizes the levels within fiction, but also between fiction and reality.

The passage is a reference to "Author's Preface", in which his friend assures the author that should "any pedants or bachelors […] attack [him] and question the fact" about the veracity of the author's quotations, "they cannot cut off the hand [he] wrote it with" not "even if they prove a lie against [him]."[15] The curate's criticism is related to the author's statement that since the book has been composed by "this sterile, illtilled wit of [his]", it is a "dry, shriveled,

---

[11] Cervantes 50, 53.

[12] Cervantes 53.

[13] Cervantes 53.

[14] Cervantes 53-54.

[15] Cervantes lost his arm in the battle of Lepanto (Edward C. Riley, Anne J. Cruz, "Miguel de Cervantes", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, < https://www.britannica.com/biography/Miguel-de-Cervantes> 22 Jan 2017). The friend's advice alludes to Cervantes's injury. Cervantes 31.

whimsical offspring, full of thoughts of all sorts and such as never came into any other imagination."[16] In addition, its conception was exacerbated by the conditions in which it was written—in prison. In *Don Quixote*, the characters and the author inhabit the same realm and are free to interact with each other.

Linda Hutcheon points out that *Don Quixote* is "one of the self-informing fictions that thematize the power, the consequences, and the very workings of both the creative imagination and the language of literature."[17] This effect is achieved by the protagonist's overinterpretation. Michel Foucault points out that Don Quixote "read so many books that he became a sign", one that is "wandering through a world that [does] not recognize him."[18] The narrative of *Don Quixote* thematizes and problematizes the potential of the language of literature. Fiction becomes reality for Quixote.

Foucault asserts that "[t]he written word and things no longer resemble each other."[19] Their existence blends into a seamless continuum where fact and fiction are no longer recognizable. Foucault observes that

> Flocks, serving girls, and inns become once more the language of books to the imperceptible degree to which they resemble castles, ladies, and armies—a perpetually untenable resemblance which transforms the sought-for proof into derision and leaves the words of the books forever hollow.[20]

The humorous potential of *Don Quixote* relies on the reader's understanding that Don Quixote misinterprets reality and takes it to be fiction.

In one episode Quixote's niece and housekeeper fabricate a story about the sudden disappearance of Don Quixote's library. To succeed they accept the language and logic of the

---

[16] Cervantes 29.
[17] Hutcheon 37-38.
[18] Foucault 53.
[19] Foucault 53.
[20] Foucault 52.

chivalric romance. The housekeeper informs Quixote that it was "the devil himself", while the niece suggests that it was "the Sage Munaton."[21] After a minor correction (Don Quixote states that the sage's name was "Friston"[22]), he is willing to accept their story. The niece and the housekeeper provide Don Quixote with evidence that the fictional world of romance is actual reality. To attribute his apparent gullibility to madness alone is to miss an essential implication: Quixote believes them because they reach out to him in his own code, in the code of the chivalric romance. *Don Quixote* begs the following question: are there any limits for us as readers in our participation in the process of interpretation? When we co-create the fictional universe, are we still to distinguish between fiction and reality?

Metalepses as used in *Don Quixote* imply problematic authorship. In "Author's Preface", the author-narrator refers to himself as "the stepfather of *Don Quixote*", although he hints at his unreliability by confessing that he merely "pass[es] for the father."[23] On a different occasion, Don Quixote's fight with the gallant Biscayan is interrupted. The narrator announces that Quixote's "delightful history came to a stop" in which "the valiant Biscayan and the renowned Don Quixote with drawn swords uplifted" were ready to strike one another.[24] Having reached a halt in the narration, the narrator inserts a digression describing the acquisition of the missing part.

Wandering through "the Alcala at Toledo", the narrator chances upon a script written in Arabic, which happens to be a manuscript of the missing exploits of Don Quixote.[25] The interpreter confirms that the text is indeed about Don Quixote by translating: "This Dulcinea del Toboso so often mentioned in this history, had, they say, the best hand of any woman in all

---

[21] Cervantes 56.
[22] Cervantes 56.
[23] Cervantes 29.
[24] Cervantes 62.
[25] Cervantes 62.

La Mancha for salting pigs."[26] The interpreter's laugher is the same as the reader's: he recognizes the discrepancy between his and Quixote's misunderstanding of reality. Moreover, this remark is "written in the margin of the book"[27], a device recommended to the author-narrator in the preface. The chapter is inserted between two chapters which form a part of Quixote's narrative. By exposing the circumstances of the story's origin, the position of the chapter widens the gap between fiction and reality, which is further corroborated by the narrator's miraculous discovery of the story.

Noticeably, the narrator does not refer to the adventures prior to Quixote's fight with the Biscayan and continues from the interrupted moment. The author of the book is said to be "Cid Hamete Benengeli, an Arabian historian", and his account is translated by an unnamed "Morisco."[28] The original text is first translated from Arabic into Spanish, and then edited by the author-narrator. The self-consciousness of the narrative is further bolstered by the editor's intrusions on the narrative, such as his commentary on Cid Hamete Benengeli's "asseveration, 'I swear as a true Catholic!'"[29] In his study of *Don Quixote*, John Parr argues that "one voice undermines its predecessor", thus "subverting its authority" in order to "have the process reinforce itself in a regress until all narrative authority, and implicitly the authority of the printed page itself, is called into question."[30] The problematized authorship in *Don Quixote* emphasizes the convoluted and sometimes indiscernible relationships between different levels of fiction, as well as between fiction and reality. To write about the mad Quixote, the narrative becomes mad as well.

When Don Quixote speaks to Gines, the former learns that the imprisoned author is writing a book about himself, entitled "The Life of Gines de Pasamonte". Gines stresses the

---

[26] Cervantes 62.
[27] Cervantes 62.
[28] Cervantes 63.
[29] Cervantes 405.
[30] James A. Parr, *An Anatomy of Subversive Discourse* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta: 1988) 9.

veracity of his account, stating that "it deals with facts, and facts so neat and diverting that no lies could match them."[31] Similarly, the author-narrator of *Don Quixote* repeatedly emphasizes that the book he is writing is 'a true history', as is propounded even in the titles of some chapters, e.g. "*one of the rarest Adventures in this veracious history.*"[32] In the preface to the second part of *Don Quixote* it is stated that the Knight is "at last brought to his death" so that "nobody may presume to raise any more stories of him."[33] The idea of killing Quixote to finish his story (and thus preventing other copies to be published) echoes Quixote's discussion with Gines. When asked whether the book he is writing about himself, "The Life of Gines de Pasamonte", is finished, the imprisoned author retorts: "How can it be finished, when my life is not yet finished?"[34] Gines and the author-narrator share the obsession with the veracity of their respective accounts.

In the second part of *Don Quixote* one of the characters, Samson Carrasco, introduces the first part to Quixote and Sancho Panza themselves. The passage includes commentaries on receptions of the novel. Carrasco states that some readers "swear by the adventures of the windmills", while others by "that of the dead body on its way to be buried in Segovia."[35] The narrative reaches its peak in terms of self-reflexivity: the characters become fully fictionalized, fact and fiction completely indiscernible. Foucault observes that "[t]he first part of the hero's adventures plays in the second part the role originally assumed by the chivalric romances."[36] In the first part of *Don Quixote,* the eponymous character experiences the adventures in his highly subjective way and in the second part, he is presented the ultimate proof of the veracity of his

---

[31] Cervantes 125.
[32] Cervantes 128.
[33] Cervantes 292.
[34] Cervantes 125.
[35] Cervantes 303.
[36] Foucault 53.

vision of reality. For Don Quixote the first book is the confirmation that his exploits were indeed 'a true history'.

2.3 Henry Fielding's The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling

Franz Stanzel juxtaposes two narrative extremes: narrator and reflector. To fully differentiate between the two concepts, Stanzel introduces the concept of 'mediacy'. In case of the reflector character, the events are reflected on his or her mind. Since he or she does not narrate, the reflector does not verbalize his or her thoughts.[37] The events are presented "*in actu*" and the narrative establishes an illusion of immediacy.[38] In other words, the reflector character is not aware of being in the story, of his or her fictive status. One of the implications is that he or she cannot comment on the story and anticipate its future development. In contrast, the narrator's status allows him or her to comment on the story, and in case of omniscient narrator, to foreshadow events yet to happen.

As is argued below, the narrator of *Tom Jones* is strongly self-aware. Creating an 'illusion of immediacy' is not required and would have detrimental effect on the narrative strategies of the story. Using the authorial narrator, the narrative in *Tom Jones* repeatedly refers to the act of narration, comments on the story and discusses the role of literature. This is perceptible from the opening chapter to which the narrator refers to as "a general bill of fare to our whole entertainment."[39] Literature is likened to feasts: "An author ought to consider himself […] as one who keeps a public ordinary, at which all persons are welcome for their money" and like "the master of the ordinary" it should attempt to "prevent […] giving offence to their customers by any […] disappointment."[40] The conceit is down-to-earth; the narrator does not "disdain to borrow it or wisdom from any man who is capable of lending [him]" and has "condescended to

---

[37] Franz K. Stanzel, *Teorie vyprávění*, trans. Jiří Stromšík (Praha: Odeon, 1988) 180. Paraphrased by the author.
[38] Stanzel 178.
[39] Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1992) 1.
[40] Fielding 1.

take a hint from these honest victullers."[41] He goes on to pursue the metaphor by comparing "true nature" in with the authors to "the Bayonne ham, or Bologna sausage."[42] The chapter concludes by the narrator stating that he "shall proceed directly to serve up the first course of [his] history for [the readers'] entertainment."[43]

From the opening the narrative establishes a link between a work of fiction and consumption. This link is parallel to the fictional world of the characters and the material world of the readers. Linda Hutcheon argues that in *Tom Jones*, "[t]he presence of an authorial narrating figure served as mediator" and that "the act of narration oriented the reader temporally and spatially in the fictive universe."[44] The narrator's metaphor approximates the fictional universe to that of the reader by concentrating on a shared point of interest. The narrator announces that chapters such as the first one are to be prefixes to the individual volumes. It is stated that he "shall give the reader particular bills to every course which is to be served up in this and the ensuing volumes."[45] Apart from the mundane connotations of food consumption, the narrator refers to a "feast." Literature is both everyday and festive.

From the total of eighteen, every book of *Tom Jones* is prefaced by an introductory chapter. The regular alternations are an example of Franz Stanzel notion of 'narrative rhythm', or alternations between the narrator's involvement and inactivity in the story.[46] Joan Douglas Peters points out that in early novels, including *Tom Jones*, "the authors use their prefaces straightforwardly to assure readers and patrons of their proper moral intentions."[47] From the variety of other possible motivations for the introductory chapters, the most relevant one for the

---

[41] Fielding 1-2.

[42] Fielding 2.

[43] Fielding 3.

[44] Hutcheon 44.

[45] Fielding 1.

[46] Stanzel 83.

[47] Jean Douglas Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002) 37.

present discussion is that it enables the narrator to disclose the gap between literature and real life. By doing so, the narrator establishes an intimate relationship between the reader and himself on the basis of shared knowledge. Hutcheon points out that in *Tom Jones*, "it is almost as if the reader's primary relationship were meant to be with the guiding narrator-writer, rather than with the characters."[48]

The link between the narrator and the reader is created outside the introductory chapters as well. Later in the novel, the narrator points out that "the reader may have hitherto concluded" that "[t]he coach which had brought the young lady and her maid" was "her own" but it was in fact "a returned coach belonging to Mr King, of Bath."[49] Mr King, the narrator tells us, was "one of the worthiest and honestest men that ever dealt in horse-flesh" whose "coaches we [the narrator] heartily recommend to all our readers who travel that road."[50] Apart from the humorous effect (an advertisement in a novel), the narrator exposes another instance of shared elements between the fictional universe and the reader, as he suggests that the reader "may, perhaps, have the pleasure of riding in the very coach, and being driven by the very coachman, that is recorded in this history."[51] This phenomenon is further examined in Chapter four.

Tom Jones includes opposite tendencies as well. Patricia Waugh contends that the practice of the speaking names (e.g. Squire Allworthy) "is deployed explicitly to split open the conventional ties between the real and fictive worlds rather than to reinforce them by mapping out a moral framework", as "what is referred to has been created […] through a 'naming' process."[52] As a result, "[i]n metafiction such names remind us that, in *all* fiction, names can describe as they refer."[53] Speaking names therefore serve to undermine the realism of the novel.

---

[48] Hutcheon 27.
[49] Fielding 36 (2nd part).
[50] Fielding 36 (2nd part).
[51] Fielding 36 (2nd part).
[52] Waugh 94.
[53] Waugh 94.

The position of the narrator has similar effect. He is a mediator between two worlds. This status ostensibly establishes a connection between the two different realms (that of the characters, and that of the readers), but in fact it widens the gap between them. The narrator affirms his supreme status over his fiction when he proclaims that he is not "accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever" since he is "in reality, the founder of a new province of writing" and therefore is "at liberty to make what laws [he] please[s] therein."[54] He claims that his characters, "whom [he] consider[s] as [his] subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey [these laws]", only to contradict himself immediately by saying that he does not "imagine that they are [his] slaves, or [his] commodity", and concludes that he is "set over them for their own good only."[55]

The narrator's alleged omniscience is in stark contrast with recurring avowals of not knowing. After Tom's full recovery, the eponymous character ventures to look for his sword and the narrator openly admits that he does not know the motivation why the "centinel" fired at Tom: "Whether fear or courage was the occasion of his firing, or whether he took aim at the object of his terror, I cannot say."[56] Through his self-awareness as a mediator between the fictive universe and the reader, the narrator underscores the problematic link between them.

F. Kaplan contends that "Fielding's prefaces not only embody his concern about the problems of fiction he must confront in the writing of the novel, but also the problem of how to write about the problems."[57] Kaplan's observation can be illustrated by the narrator's discussion of intertextuality. The narrator points out that he has "often translated passages out of the best antient authors, without quoting the original, or without taking the least notice of the book from

---

[54] Fielding 38.
[55] Fielding 38.
[56] Fielding 294.
[57] F. Kaplan, "Fielding's Novel about Novels: The 'Prefaces' and the 'Plot' of Tom Jones", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Rice University 13.3 (1973): 538, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/450005> 18 Jan 2017.

whence they were borrowed."[58] He then complains that "by suppressing the original author's name" he has been "suspected of plagiarism than reputed to act from [an] amiable motive."[59] The narrator claims the right to use freely the writings of "Homer, Virgil, Horace, Cicero, and the rest" and concludes: "I absolutely claim a property in all such sentiments the moment they are transcribed into [his] writings, and [he] expect[s] all readers henceforwards to regard them as purely and entirely [his] own."[60]

The narrator's discussion anticipates the modern problems of copyright. He argues that appropriating the works of ancient authors is legally legitimate, but should he borrow "any of that little of which [his contemporaries] are possessed" he swears to "put their mark upon it" so that "it may be at all times ready to be restored to the right owner."[61] Kaplan asserts that Fielding foregrounds the "poet, novelist, painter […] of the nineteenth and twentieth century whose self-conscious concern with himself and his art is a measure of the intense importance with which he invests his role."[62] Equally modern is the employment of intratextuality. In the beginning of Book III, the narrator states that

> The reader will be pleased to remember, that, at the beginning of the second book if this history, we gave him a hint of our intention to pass over several large periods of time, in which nothing happened worthy of being recorded in a chronicle of this kind.[63]

The relation of *Tom Jones* to the 20th century fiction is discussed in depth in Chapter four.

Tom Jones is narrated using the first-person narration. However, narrators who are fully involved in the story need to be distinguished from those who do not directly partake in it. In case of *Tom Jones*, it is the latter: the narrator is peripheral to the story and it is this narrative

---

58 Fielding 99 (2nd part).
59 Fielding 99 (2nd part).
60 Fielding 100 (2nd part).
61 Fielding 100-101 (2nd part).
62 Kaplan 549.
63 Fielding 69.

distance allows him to voice his observations on the story. The introductory chapters frequently include literary discussions, such as the observation that "every book ought to be read with the same spirit and in the same manner as it is writ."[64] The narrator refers to literature in general, as well as to his own writing. He is aware of the literary status of his own work.

The title of the chapter is equally self-conscious, as it alludes to its own material properties: "Containing five pages of paper."[65] As is discussed above, the narrator's detachment from the story allows him to anticipate events of the story. Gérard Genette discusses the "avowedly retrospective character" of the first person narration and argues that it "authorizes the narrator to allude to the future […] situation."[66] He refers to such instances as "advance mentions" and "insignificant seeds" whose "importance as a seed will not be recognized until later, and retrospectively."[67] One of the implications is that the narrator is free to manipulate the order of the story and that of narration (Shklovsky's *fabula* and *sujet*, Genette's *histoire* and *discours*).

The name of the introductory self-conscious chapter is "Showing what kind of a history this is; what it is like, and what it is not like."[68] It announces that the narrator will take considerable liberties in terms of selecting events that he deems important and the ones that he does not: "When any extraordinary scene presents itself […], we shall spare no pains nor paper to open it at large to our reader", but should the case be opposite, such as "if whole years should pass without producing anything worthy his notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history."[69]

---

[64] Fielding 97.
[65] Fielding 97.
[66] Genette 67.
[67] Genette 75-76.
[68] Fielding 37.
[69] Fielding 37-38.

As has been pointed out above by Linda Hutcheon, the narrator establishes a relationship between himself and the reader. The reader is to trust the narrator, as the latter bears the reader's good in mind. Not to bore him or her, he "shall hasten on to matters of consequence" and leave uneventful periods "totally unobserved."[70] The narrator supremely affirms his fictional status when he proclaims that he "was created for [the use of his characters], and not they for mine."[71]

2.4 Laurence Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman

Having reached the end of the sixth volume (from the total of nine), the eponymous narrator of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* states that he is now "beginning to get fairly into [his] work" and hopes to continue his and his uncle Toby's story "in a tolerable straight line."[72] As an illustration of his narrative strategies, Tristram provides a sketch of the first four volumes for the reader:
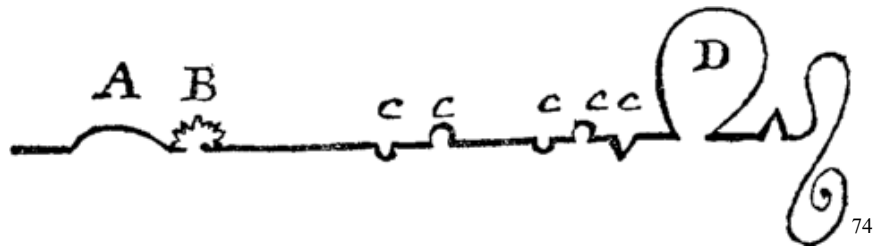
Inv. T. S.   Scul. T. S.
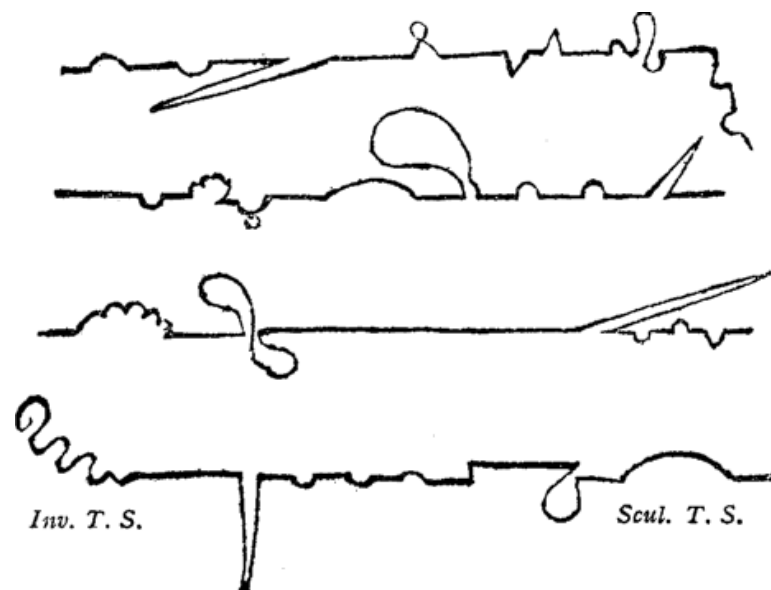
[73]

It is contrasted with the graphic representation of the fifth volume:

---

[70] Fielding 38.
[71] Fielding 38.
[72] Sterne 391.
[73] Sterne 391.

In the chapter, Tristram analyzes his own narrative method and argues that "[i]n the fifth volume [he has] been very good."[75] He describes every curve with the corresponding divagation, stating that except for these exceptions, he has "not taken the least frisk of a digression."[76]

Tristram completely disregards the chronology in his story with the reader in mind, because "when a man is telling a story in the strange way [he does his]", he is inevitably "obliged continually to be going backwards and forwards to keep all tight together in the reader's fancy."[77] As Patricia Waugh argues, Tristram's free use of narrative time exemplifies the difference between Shklovsky's terms *fabula* and *sujet*. By being a "novel about itself", *Tristram Shandy* is "thoroughly aesthetic in Shklovsky's use of the term", since it is "a novel about the transformation of its 'story' into 'plot'."[78] Tristram compliments himself on his progress and proclaims that he "may arrive […] at the excellency of going on even"[79], as a perfectly straight line:

[80]

---

[74] Sterne 392.

[75] Sterne 392.

[76] Sterne 392.

[77] Sterne 383.

[78] Waugh 70.

[79] Sterne 392.

[80] Sterne 392.

Linear time measured by the clock is referred to from the opening of the novel, when the conception of Tristram was interrupted by his mother asking his father: "*Pray, my dear* […], *have you not forgot to wind up the clock?*"[81] The narrator attributes his misfortunes precisely to that moment, "because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand-in-hand with the *HOMUNCULUS*" and whose task it was to have "conducted him safe to the place destined for his reception."[82] In his endnotes based on the Florida edition, Melvyn New argues that Sterne relied greatly "arcane learning" when writing *Tristram Shandy* and that "the animal spirits" were "intended to account for the interaction of mind and body."[83] Given the power that the narrator attributes to the obsolete knowledge and symbolism, it could be argued that he is conceived under the sign of stopped clock. If the reader accepts Tristram's logic, it influences his idiosyncratic and self-reflexive handling of narrative time.

Walter Shandy attributes equal significance to the narrator's name. As has been argued above in relation to *Tom Jones*, in fiction, "names can describe as they refer" but by doing so, they undergo a "naming process" which "split[s] open the conventional ties between the real and fictive worlds."[84] Susannah the servant misremembers the propitious name of Trismegistus and delivers 'Tristram' instead.[85] Accepting the Shandean logic, even the naming process was under the influence of "the animal spirits." Although his parents conceived Tristram physically, he conceives himself artistically: he writes himself. In addition to being his own biographer, Tristram interprets the events of his life. What appears to be a misattribution of the influence of his name or of "the animal spirits" (being devoid of causal links) is an integrated part of Tristram's understanding of reality, a reality that he himself constructs.

---

[81] Sterne 6.

[82] Sterne 6.

[83] Melvyn New, in Sterne 546.

[84] Waugh 94.

[85] Sterne 235-236.

The last of the three sketches above includes a commentary on the medium of its creation. It was written by "a writing-master's ruler […] borrowed for that purpose."[86] In contrast with the previous two schemata, the last one seems to be sterile, "turning neither to the right or to the left."[87] It lacks Tristram's subjective perspective, marked by the meandering narrative. The commentary is one of many instances in which the narrator refers to the physical medium used for writing. Tristram's proclamation that his "[l]ife follows his pen"[88] is a subversion of the genre of autobiography. The implication is that by narrating his life Tristram writes himself. He is his own creator. On a different occasion, Tristram states that he is "confident of [his] own way of [beginning a book]", which is at the same time "the most religious" as he "begin[s] with writing the first sentence—and trust[s] to Almighty God for the second."[89] The pen that Tristram as the creator of his own life follows is also influenced by what he believes to be a deity. The implications are discussed below.

In a letter to Dr. John Eustace, Sterne referred to the walking stick of his friend: "Your walking stick is in no sense more *shandiac* than in that of its *having more handles than one*"; the parallel between the two "breaks only in [that] in using the stick, every one will take the handle which suits his convenience."[90] Sterne continues that "[i]n *Tristram Shandy*, the handle is taken which suits [the readers'] passions, their ignorance or sensibility."[91] In passing the metaphorical walking stick to the reader, the author not only bestows the right to interpret on the reader. It is a demand: the reader must assume a stance, or drop the stick. As the narrator writes, the "truest respect which [one] can pay to the reader's understanding is to halve this matter amicably" which would "leave [the reader] some things to imagine in his turn, as well

---

[86] Sterne 392.
[87] Sterne 392.
[88] Sterne 571.
[89] Sterne 450.
[90] Laurence Sterne, *Letters of Laurence Sterne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935) 411.
[91] Sterne, Letters of Laurence Sterne 411.

as [to the author]."[92] Reading and writing is a joint enterprise: the author provides the material and the reader interprets it.

When the narrator recalls the death of Yorick, he includes the description of his friend's grave, followed by two black pages.[93] Melvyn New's endnote states that "Sterne's black page may reflect an earlier elegiac tradition in which words were printed with white letters on black paper."[94] However, Tristram does not include an inscription. Arguably, the narrator deliberately avoids any linguistic medium, thus relying on purely extra-linguistic means of expressing his grief. Similarly, when uncle Toby and Corporal Trim discuss the advantages of celibacy, the latter states: "[w]hilst a man is free" and instead of finishing the utterance, the narrator provides another extra-linguistic feature:
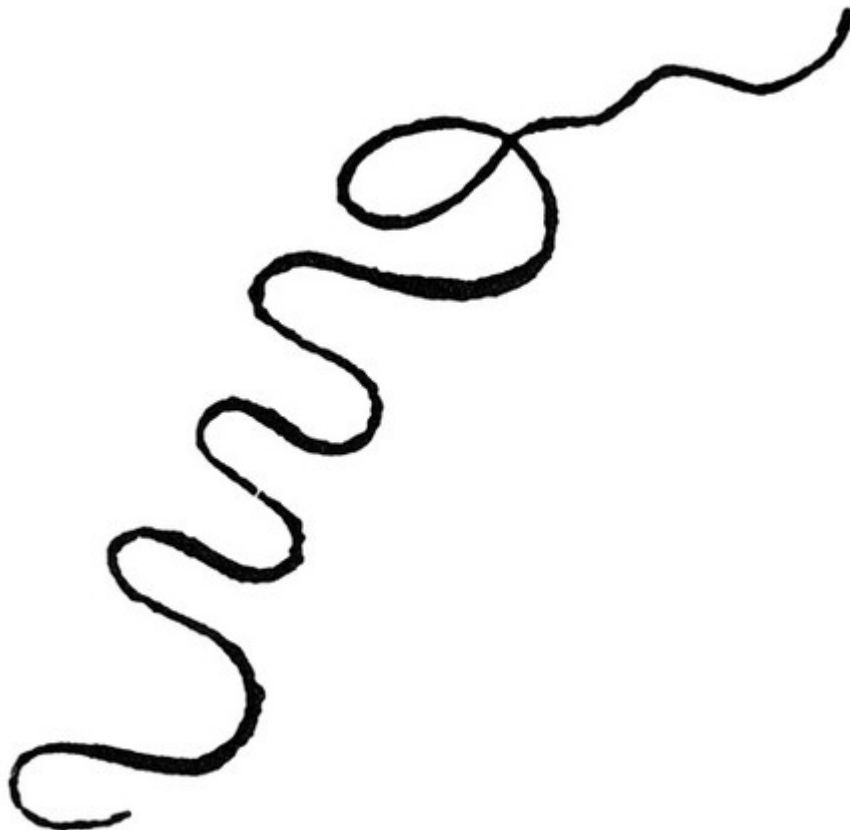
[95]

---

[92] Sterne 88.
[93] Sterne 29-30.
[94] New, in Sterne 553.
[95] Sterne 506.

The narrator chooses an allegedly straightforward feature to disambiguate: "A thousand of [his] father's syllogisms could not have said more for celibacy" and immediately contradicts himself when the stick becomes a "wand" with which Trim "had unwarily conjured up the Spirit of calculation" and had to "conjure him down again with his story."[96] Instead of preventing a potential ambiguity, the extra-linguistic sign produces a digression. The flourish reaches outside the text and generates double-meaning in relation to the recipient as well. As Melvyn New argues, "Trim's flourish seems to resemble eighteenth-century illustrations of the motions of a spermatozoon."[97] Even an illustration used to simplify the communication between the reader and the narrator complicates the process.

At its most extreme, the narrator includes a blank page. Hutcheon asserts that "Fielding tells his reader […] how to read" since he or she is "the consumer of his wares", a notion parodied in *Tristram Shandy*: "in order to show the respect for his reader's imagination" the narrator leaves blanks as a means of "promot[ing] active reader involvement."[98] The blank page calls for contrast with a different extra-textual medium, illustration. Illustration serves as a graphic representation of an event in the story, but it is already mediated through the perception of the author.[99] When 'reading' an illustration, the reader is interpreting not only a different medium but an already existing interpretation of the original. The blank page, on the contrary, is devoid semantically, and demands the reader's participation in the process of interpretation.

The narrator encourages the reader to imagine the widow Wadman who was more "concupiscible" than "any thing in this world."[100] Providing the reader with a blank, the narrator urges the recipient to "call for pen and ink" and "paint her to [the reader's] own mind—as like

---

[96] Sterne 506.

[97] New, in Sterne 658.

[98] Hutcheon 142.

[99] The authorship and degree of mediacy of illustrations are problematized in the works of Kurt Vonnegut, who authored them in his own books. It is discussed in Chapters three and four.

[100] Sterne 388.

[the reader's] mistress as [the reader] can" and "as unlike as [his] wife as [his] conscience will let [him]."[101] Whether the narrator means painting the widow Wadman figuratively or literally is unimportant: the emphasis is on the interpretation, not on its form. Following the blank page, the characters react as if there were an actual illustration of her or her description: "Was ever any thing in Nature so sweet!---so exquisite!"[102] The chapter is concluded by the narrator's commentary in which he confirms the self-conscious nature of his narrative: "Thrice happy book! thou wilt have one page, at least, within thy covers, which MALICE will not blacken, and which IGNORANCE cannot misrepresent."[103] As the quotation shows, granting the reader the interpretative freedom implies transference of responsibility. It is the reader who is responsible for the final image, not the author or the narrator.

Tristram conceives of literature as of a dialogue between the narrator and the reader. He states that "[w]riting, when properly managed […] is but a different name for conversation" and claims that the reader "may be sure [Tristram] think[s his] is."[104] Tristram's stances towards the reader vary and the range is wide: one extreme is the amiable Tristram, who takes the reader to be a friend and equal partner in the process of interpretation and creation (as discussed above in relation to the reader's interpretative freedom), an attitude propounded from the beginning of Book I:

> As you proceed further with me, the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is at fault, will terminate in friendship.—O diem praeclarum!—then nothing which has touched me will be thought trifling it its nature, or tedious in its telling.[105]

---

[101] Sterne 388.
[102] Sterne 390.
[103] Sterne 390.
[104] Sterne 88.
[105] Sterne 11.

The other extreme is that of a superior who rebukes the reader: "Read, read, read, read, my unlearned reader, read."[106] On a different occasion, the narrator explains the narrative steps to the reader: "'Tis for an episode hereafter; and every circumstance relating to its in proper place, shall be faithfully laid before you."[107] Hutcheon contends that *Tristram Shandy* anticipates modernism and postmodernism. Her assessment is partially based on these addresses, though not on the direct ones, but instead "through the characters who act as surrogates for the reader, anticipating his various interpretative responses."[108]

These surrogate characters are called "narratees". Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines narratee as "the agent addressed by the narrator" who is "sometimes fully personified, sometimes not."[109] Similarly to the narrators, narratees can be extradiegetic or intradiegetic (i.e. outside or within the story, respectively).[110] *Tristram Shandy* includes instances of both. The narrator's frequent addresses to the reader are examples of the extradiegetic narratee (a term which coincides with 'implied reader'[111]). The text is rife with instances of the intradiegetic narratees, such as the frequent references to a member of the fictional audience, which are very specific. For instance, the narrator distinguishes between the sexes ("Sir" or "Madam"). Rimmon-Kenan points out that similarly to narrators, narratees can also be reliable or unreliable. An example of the latter that she provides comes from *Tristram Shandy*: "—How could you, Madam, be so inattentive in reading the last chapter?"[112] Rimmon-Kenan contends that "[i]n addition to undermining the separation between narration and story, *Tristram Shandy* also places narratee and story on the same level."[113] By including a fictional audience, the narrator

---

[106] Sterne 184.
[107] Sterne 55.
[108] Hutcheon 142.
[109] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2002) 106.
[110] Rimmon-Kenan 107.
[111] Rimmon-Kenan 107.
[112] Rimmon-Kenan 108, Sterne 48.
[113] Rimmon-Kenan 96.

creates an illusion of immediacy—the recipient is not reading the book on his or her own, but in a group of addressees.

3. Chapter Three: Post-War American Metafiction

3.1 Introduction

Using Genette's structuralist approach as a point of departure, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan analyzes narratives within narratives that "create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within which it is embedded."[1] The structure is hierarchical: the highest level, which is "concerned with its narration" is called "extradiegetic", while the events of the story, or the "level narrated by it" is referred to as "diegetic."[2]

Analyzing the narrative structures poses the danger of marginalizing the meaning of the text itself. However, John Barth assumes a disinterested, almost scientific approach to the narrative self-awareness in his *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968). Structuralist distinctions (extradiegetic and diegetic, diegetic and hypodiegetic narrative layers) are vital for discussing the self-conscious author-narrator. The present chapter makes use of those distinctions as a point of departure, and attempts to provide possible interpretations, included in this chapter and in Chapter four, which focuses on interpretation and historical development. In addition to Barth's Lost in the Funhouse, the present chapter introduces the remaining primary texts: Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* (1967) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969).

3.2 John Barth's Lost in the Funhouse

Bran Nicol contends that given the way "writing functions as a separate realm from the real world" the distinction "between the author and narrator" is still "*technically* preserved" in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, but it is "at the closest it can be to being broken down."[3] This is the case in the eponymous story "Lost in the Funhouse", where the author-narrator's

---

[1] Rimmon-Kenan 94.

[2] Rimmon-Kenan 94.

[3] Nicol 76.

commentaries freely cooccur with the text of the story itself. Ambrose likes "Magda G_____",

who "lived not far from them on B_____ Street in the town of D_____, Maryland."[4] The author-

narrator provides his commentary, thus transgressing from the extradiegetic onto the diegetic

level: "Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century

fiction to enhance the illusion of reality."[5]

Despite his efforts to convince the reader otherwise, the author (possibly authors) in

Barth's stories is not a real person, but a literary construct. The character of the author is further

problematized in *Lost in the Funhouse* by the author's forewords, "*Author's Note*" and "*Seven

Additional Notes*."[6] The authorial commentary in them does not seem to be different from the

commentaries of the author-character in the stories. The complex narrative queries: in what way

is the author-character different from the actual author, apart from being a literary construct?

Barth replies to this question himself in his seminal essay, "Literature of Exhaustion". He

argues that his own novels are "novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who

imitates the role of Author."[7] Turning away from realism, a "used-up" form[8], Barth rejects to

imitate life in his writings and imitates the Novel instead, turning a representation of real world

into a representation of a representation. Having reached its limits, literary realism has

exhausted itself. The response for Barth is to turn the medium into part of the message and

follow the example of Jorge Luis Borges who "doesn't merely exemplify an ultimacy" but also

"employs it."[9] Barth turns the medium into part of the message. The self-consciousness of his

---

[4] John Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse", *Lost in the Funhouse: Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice* (New York: Doubleday, 1988) 72-73.

[5] Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse" 73.

[6] Barth, "Foreword" v-viii, "*Author's Note*" xi-xii, "*Seven Additional Notes* 203-204.

[7] Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion", *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 62-76. 72.

[8] Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion" 64.

[9] Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion" 71, 68.

fiction is not the end, but the means. Using it as an instrument, Barth leads the reader to the core subject matter of his fiction: the "used-upness" of literature.[10]

The commentary originating on the extradiegetic level is not the only narrative interaction that John Barth utilizes. Rimmon-Kenan asserts that "[n]arration is always at a higher level than the story it narrates": the "diegetic level is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator, the hypodiegetic by a diegetic (intradiegetic) one."[11] For the sake of clarity, narratives within narratives generally contain a limited number of narrators, e.g. *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones*.[12] Brian McHale likens this structure to "a set of Chinese boxes or Russian *babushka* dolls" and argues that such "recursive structures" are the result of performing "the same operation over and over again" with "each time operating on the product of the previous operation."[13]

Barth exaggerates the number of frame stories in "Menelaiad", where the narrator inserts stories within stories. The second part concludes: "After an exchange of pleasantries we settled down and drank deep in the dark while I told the tale of Menelaus and his wife at sea:"[14]

"' Seven years, '" I say et cetera […].[15]

To facilitate the reader's navigation between the individual recursive layers, each one appears in a separate subchapter. This also bolsters the narrative self-consciousness, as it is aware of its own divisions based on the narrative levels. The third part ends by setting frame for the next one: "Nothing for it but rehearse the tale of me and slippery Eidothea:"[16]

"' " ' Troy was clinkered […].[17]

---

[10] Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion" 64.

[11] Rimmon-Kenan 94-95.

[12] Frame stories in general and in relation to *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones* are discussed in greater depth in Chapter four.

[13] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 112.

[14] Barth, "Menelaiad" 139.

[15] Barth, "Menelaiad" 139.

[16] Barth, "Menelaiad" 144.

[17] Barth, "Menelaiad" 145.

Until arriving at the extreme framing:

" ' " ' " ' " Love!" ' " ' " ' "[18]

"Menelaiad" then proceeds in the opposite direction and recedes from the last narrative layer until the narrator reappears at the former extradiegetic level. The quotation marks serve as a reminder to the reader that he or she is reading a series of frame stories. They are a visual device asserting the self-consciousness of the story.

The subtitle of *Lost in the Funhouse* is "Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice". Barth envisions his series of short stories to be narrated in multiple forms. Although the title of the story suggests following the Greek tradition of oral narration, in "*Author's Note*", Barth clarifies that "though suggestive of a recorded authorial monologue" the short story "depends for clarity on the reader's eye."[19] Barth's instruction (whether obeyed or not) eliminates the narrative immediacy that would be achieved by oral narration. Barth concludes that "Menelaiad" is in fact a combination of both spoken and written form, as it "may be said to have been composed for "printed voice"."[20]

Paul Douglass contends that "Menelaiad" "carries the concept of the frame-tale to absurd lengths" in that by the sixth section "the narration has buried itself six levels."[21] Furthermore, Barth's concept of historicity (as exemplified in "Menelaiad") is "always fatal to spontaneity [as] presented multiple times in *Funhouse*."[22] In "Menelaiad", the quotation marks disrupt the act of reading visually, but also force the reader to ponder the narrative levels as he or she reads, thereby enhancing the text and the reader's experience.

---

[18] Barth, "Menelaiad" 155.

[19] Barth, "*Author's Note*" xi.

[20] Barth, "*Author's Note*" xi.

[21] Paul Douglass, "Barth, Barthes, and Bergson: Postmodern Aesthetics and the Imperative of the New", *Pacific Coast Philology* 47, Penn State University Press (2012) JSTOR: 34-51 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41851033> 20th Feb 2017. 43.

[22] Douglass 43.

In the final story of the collection, "Anonymiad", the narrator exposes its fictional status using different metafictional devices. In the opening, he refers to the physical instrument used for recording, the "piebald […] pelt" on which "[he] write[s]", and later mentions the "ink of the squid."[23] The minstrel's inserted text proceeds: "Amphora's *my muse: / When I finish off the booze, / I hump the jug and fill her up with fiction*" only to comment on the act of narration: "I begin in the middle—where too I'll end, there being alas to my arrested history as yet no dénouement."[24] Barth's texts incessantly affirm their fictional status, be it in the form of narrative commentaries or by alluding to the instruments used for recording.This is a tendency manifested throughout the text. The narrator of "Menelaiad" recollects how he told stories before: "Once upon a time I told tales straight out, alternating summary and dramatization, developing characters and relationships, laying on bright detail and rhetorical flourish, et cetera."[25] In "Title", the act of narration is exposed by recurrent references to the grammatical structures. The narrator faces "the final test", which consists in the imperative: "Try to fill the blank" with "words or more words, otherwise I'll fill in the blank with this noun here in my prepositional object."[26]

Rimmon-Kenan refers to "diegesis" as to the 'story', or the events of the story, a level that is "[i]mmediately subordinate to the extradiegetic level."[27] To use the structuralist terminology, the extradiegetic and the diegetic levels merge, with the act of narration (the extradiegetic level) becoming the narration itself (the diegetic level). John Barth's "Title" lacks conventional plot. There are no events, only the act of narration. The story narrates its own narration, that is, the story narrates itself.

---

[23] Barth, "Menelaiad" 168, 171.

[24] Barth, "Menelaiad" 169.

[25] Barth, "Menelaiad" 177.

[26] Barth, "Title" 105.

[27] Rimmon-Kenan 94.

The act of framing is exaggerated to the extreme in the opening "Frame-Tale". Barth refers to it as to "the shortest short story in the English language" with the total of ten words, but at the same time he maintains that its potential is "endless."[28] As the reader delves into the book, an unknown voice dictates that he or she: "Cut on dotted line. / Twist end once and fasten / AB to *ab*, *CD* to *cd*."[29] Barth's experiment tests narrative theory: leaving the nature of the text aside (it reads like instruction, not prose), it is positioned between the title ("Frame-Tale") and the story itself. Narrative interpretation of the story is questionable: Is the instruction a part of the extradiegetic level, with the first round of "Once upon a time there was a story that began"? Or are we to read the instruction as a part of the diegetic, rather than extradiegetic level? Barth exhausts the limits of fiction at the expense of sacrificing the story's plot and content: "Frame-Tale" does not communicate meaning, but creates an infinite chain of hypodiegetic levels. What has been argued above about "Title" can be said about "Frame-Tale": the story narrates its own narration.

Although "Frame-Tale" fails to communicate meaning by means of its content, it does communicate meaning in the context of the entire story collection. Barth insists that *Lost in the Funhouse* is "neither a collection nor a selection", but a "series" which is "meant to be received at once" and in the arranged order.[30] When interpreting it, one must bear the order of the stories in mind: "Frame-Tale", being the opening story, indicates the nature of the whole text and heralds the narrative techniques such as framing ("Menelaiad" and "Anonymiad"), the obsession with narrating stories ("Title"), and the general narrative self-consciousness of the short story collection.

Far more important than its anticipatory function is the interaction between "Frame-Tale" and the reader. It is created by being performed, and it requires the reader's involvement for its

---

[28] Barth, "Foreword" vii.
[29] Barth, "Frame-Tale" 1.
[30] Barth, "Foreword" xi.

performance. The existence of "Frame-Tale" as a work of art relies on the repetitive performance, possibly by the reader's physical interaction with the book, although the note at the bottom of each page states "(*continued*)"[31], which suggests that the reader is to turn the pages back and forth rather than to create the Möbius strip by cutting into the book and gluing its ends together. In addition, the performance of the story may be carried out in the recipient's psyche as a thought experiment.

The narrator frequently makes use of blanks to be filled by the reader (as discussed above in relation to "Lost in the Funhouse"). Blanks appear in different forms. At the end of "Ambrose His Mark" the narrator refers to the measure that his mother took before naming him by leaving a blank on his birth certificate.[32] According to Hutcheon, Barth "directs the reader's attention to the conventions of traditional realism-verisimilitude, dialogue, factuality" and goes as far as "the actual printing" including "the use of italics for emphasis or the legalistically cautious blanks."[33]

"Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction" includes a different type of blanks. The narrative voice cuts the narrative off by stating that since "Dad among his other failings failed to end me when he should've", he (or she) will "turn [himself or herself] off if [he or she] can this instant."[34] After a blank the narrative voice observes that he or she is not capable of doing so and begs the recipient to "do us both a kindness", after yet another blank he comments on the fact that the reader didn't do so.[35] The narrative voice interacts with the recipient. At first, it begs the reader to end the suffering of the narrative voice (to perform a narrative *coup de grâce*) by ceasing to read. If the story ceases to be read, it ceases to exist. The narrative

---

[31] Barth, "Frame-Tale" 1, 2.
[32] Barth, "Ambrose His Mark" 34.
[33] Hutcheon 52.
[34] Barth, "Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction" 38.
[35] Barth, "Autobiography: A Self-Recorded Fiction" 38.

emphasizes the importance of the interaction between the text and the reader. Should the reader obey, the following lamentations would not take place and could not be interpreted.

The narrative utilizes similar methods in "Life-Story". After the narrator insults the reader in a series of bouts of aggression, he exploits the linear character of the text, when he wonders: "You've read me this far, then? Even this far?"[36] Barth's fiction relies on the reader's interpretation as a means of sustenance. This is achieved through exposing and foregrounding the relationship between the recipient and the interpreted text. Other forms of interaction are discussed in Chapter four, in contrast with the rest of the primary texts.

3.3 Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*

Robert Scholes describes John Barth and Donald Barthelme as the chroniclers of the current "despair over the exhausted forms" of "our thought" and of "our existence."[37] Donald Barthelme deals with the same problematic area of exhausted forms of literature through the medium of metafiction, albeit in a fundamentally different manner from John Barth. In his *Snow White* (1967), Barthelme presents an idiosyncratic retelling of a story well rooted in the Western tradition. The act of "recycling" of a well-known story is symptomatic of the artistic problem of "used-upness", as expressed by Barth in his essay "Literature of Exhaustion", and also bears similarities to Barth's method in "Menelaiad". The character of Snow White questions the existence of Paul (the prince figure equivalent) and allows for the possibility of having projected him "in the shape of [her] longing, boredom, ennui and pain"[38], thus underscoring the fictionality of the narrative.

Barthelme transposes the fairytale into modern day America. The metafictional nature of *Snow White* relies precisely on the self-conscious inversion of the original. The fairy tale was

---

[36] Barth, "Life-Story" 127.
[37] Hutcheon 21.
[38] Donald Barthelme, *Snow White* (New York: Atheneum, 1978) 102.

of interest to the structuralists, most notably to Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928)[39] who tried to reduce the genre into its most fundamental structures. Barthelme innovates the genre by disregarding such structures and prescribed characteristics. Instead of being a divine innocent being, the eponymous character is a highly sexualized attractive modern woman, who engages in sexual intercourse with the seven males. This is made evident in a series of her thoughts while having a shower, as she refers to the "anti-erotic" Clem whose ideas of "sexual congress" and "Western confusion between the concept" of "pleasure" and "increasing the size of the herd" she finds highly disinteresting,[40] or in a later scene in which she reflects on her naked body.[41]

The same applies to the seven male characters. Their professions are adjusted to the 20th century—apart from "washing buildings", they make living by making and selling "baby food, Chinese baby food."[42] One of them, Bill, talks openly about sex (similarly to Snow White). He states that he is fond of her because "when sexual pleasure is had, it makes you fond, in a strange way, of the other one, the one with who you are having it."[43] Equally subversive is the alternative plot line in *Snow White*. Instead of the happy ending, Paul (the potential prince figure) drinks the poisoned drink, "a vodka Gibson on the rocks"[44] that Jane (analogous to the evil stepmother) prepared for her. Snow White describes Paul's death in a literary, unnatural and self-aware language:

> And look at all that green foam coming out of his face! And look at those convulsions he is having! Why it resembles nothing else but a death agony, the whole scene! I wonder if there was anything wrong with that drink after all? Jane? Jane?[45]

[39] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas, 2001).
[40] Barthelme 34.
[41] Barthelme 144-145.
[42] Barthelme 18.
[43] Barthelme 36.
[44] Barthelme 174.
[45] Barthelme 175.

By rewriting a narrative so firmly ingrained in Barthelme's culture, the author rejects the convention of happy ending, as well as the well-arranged world of fairytales where the good prevails. These inversions are indispensable for the narrative Barthelme's *Snow White*.

The fictionality of the narrative is further unveiled in discussing the characters as literary concepts and abstract entities. While singing the father hymn, the characters, as well as the "words of the hymn" notice that father was not "very interesting" and the narrative states that it is "explicitly commented upon, in text".[46] Paul questions the existence of the people standing under his window, asking: "Why are all these people existing under my window?"[47] Those people seem to him "as palpable as [he himself]", since they are "as bloody, as firm, as well-read."[48] In becoming a monk, Paul breaks the convention of the prince figure and as a result is capable of seeing Snow White as a human being. While spying on her from under the tree, Paul recalls the "dancers one sees from time to time on Bourbon Street."[49] He breaks the convention as he likens the idealized Snow White to the down-to-earth dancers.

The voyeuristic moment marks the breakaway from the boundary between Snow White as a literary character and what Paul understands to be a human being. The narrative depicts it directly: "Paul has never before really seen Snow White as a woman."[50] Paul therefore becomes the prince figure, but by sexual urge. When Snow White is described as letting her hair go outside the window, the narrative voice refers to it as another one in the series of literary conventions: "This motif, the long hair streaming from the high window, is a very ancient one, I believe, found in many cultures, in various forms" and then declares to repeat it "for the astonishment of the vulgar and refreshment of [his] venereal life.[51] However, the reiteration

---

[46] Barthelme 19.
[47] Barthelme 55.
[48] Barthelme 55-56.
[49] Barthelme 148.
[50] Barthelme 150.
[51] Barthelme 80.

does not take place and the statement could be interpreted as an instruction for the reader to reread the passage. Similarly to Paul, Snow White breaks away from the literary conventions by asserting her free will: "From now on I deny myself to them."[52]

Bran Nicol maintains that in *Snow White* Donald Barthelme exploits "a self-conscious use of the fairy-tale form" in order "to explore contemporary social issues such as liberation of women."[53] Barthelme grants the modern-day Snow White something that has been denied to her fairytale counterpart: education. The narrator enumerates the college courses that Snow White has taken: "*Modern Woman, Her Privileges and Responsibilities*", "*Classical Guitar I*", "*English Romantic Poets II*", "*Theoretical Foundations of Psychology*", "*Personal Resources I and II*", "*Realism and Idealism in the Contemporary Italian Novel*."[54] On a different occasion, Hogo comments on education of women, stating that with the "spread of literacy you now tend to get girls who have thought and feeling" and who "will probably belong to the Royal Philological Society or something" and "have their own 'thing'", which "must be respected", only to subvert it by admitting the irony of his statement: "just as if you gave shit about all this *blague*."[55]

Barthelme's Snow White enacts the role of a servant of the seven males. After her epiphany, she pledges not to work as a "horsewife" anymore.[56] After Snow White's decision, the seven male characters descend into alcoholism, which leads some of them to evaluate their situation and reflect on society. For instance, Clem states: "What is troubling me is the quality of life in our great country, America", where everyone seems to be "deprived."[57] Clem comments on the historical context, claiming that "[e]galitarianism precludes princeliness."[58]

---

[52] Barthelme 135.
[53] Nicol 73.
[54] Barthelme 25-26.
[55] Barthelme 75.
[56] Barthelme 135.
[57] Barthelme 140.
[58] Barthelme 141.

As a consequence, Snow White is deprived of her Prince. Barthelme exploits the limits of a "used-up" form to address some of the ailing social issues of his time, as opposed to the self-absorbed short fiction of John Barth, which focuses solely on its own form and content. Barthelme appropriates the text of the fairytale, similarly to the president who appropriates the nationality of the characters: "And they are Americans, Bill, Hubert, Henry, Kevin, Edward, Clem, Dan and Snow White. They are Americans. My Americans."[59]

Paul Maltby contends that through examination and exposure of the "processes of its own composition" Barthelme's fiction reveals "its meaning as the construct of so many literary codes and conventions."[60] Throughout the novel, the narrative disobeys such conventions. In a non-sequitur, Kevin inquires: "Where is the figure in the carpet? Or is it just … carpet?"[61] It is an intertextual remark referring to Henry James's novella, "Figure in the Carpet", in which the unnamed narrator becomes obsessed with the meaning of Hugh Vereker's novel.[62] Striving to discover its meaning, the narrator of "Figure in the Carpet" fulfills the meaning of Vereker's novel: the existence of the enigmatic work of art is perpetuated through interpretation. The narrator of "The Figure in the Carpet" never learns the hidden meaning and the meaning the narrator sought for eludes the reader too. The character's unease reflects the frustration ensuing from the inability to interpret a work of art, applicable to Barthelme's character as well.

The author renounces his authority and transfers the interpretative responsibility onto the reader. Barthelme explores this possibility in *Snow White*, notably in one of the dialogue sections, where both Jane and Snow White react to an "apelike hand" reaching through the mailbox. While Jane is adamant to find out its meaning, her stepdaughter advises her to "[t]hink

---

[59] Barthelme 81.

[60] Paul Maltby, *Dissident Postmodernists: Barthelme, Coover, Pynchon* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1991) 42.

[61] Barthelme 129.

[62] Henry James, "Figure in the Carpet", *Figure in the Carpet and Other Stories*, Frank Kermode, ed. (London: Penguin Classics, 1986) 355-401.

nothing of it" and not "give it another thought" since it is "just an ape that's all."[63] Snow White reproaches Jane, urging her not to "go reading things into things."[64] The scene is an implicit critique of readers who "read things into things", and in particular to those who "dismiss these things too easily", which is shown in Snow White's circulatory argument: "It means what it means."[65]

This dialogue and Jane's reaction to the apelike hand are parallel to the interaction between the reader and *Snow White*. The narrative relies on the fact that the reader will "read things into things" and attempt to interpret the meaning of Barthelme's collage. At the same time, Jane's urgent search for meaning reflects the dread of meaninglessness of one's existence: she sees the existing hand, but fails to comprehend its meaning.

At the end of the first part, the reader is presented with a questionnaire with a series of predominantly unrelated questions, ranging from "Do you like the story so far? Yes ( ) No ( )" to "In your opinion, should human beings have more shoulders? ( ) Two sets of shoulders? ( ) Three? ( )"[66] As Hutcheon argues, in one of the questions, "Do you stand up when you read? ( ) Lie down? ( ) Sit? ( )", the recipient is brought back "to his concrete nondiegetic identity outside the text."[67] By referring to the physical aspects of the act of reading, the narrative acknowledges its own fictional status and widens the gap between the fictional world and the reader's reality.

In narratological terms, the locus of the narrative is transferred from the individual diegetic levels to a location outside the text, to the recipient's physical world. This boundary between individual realms is violated when the reader is asked about his or her opinion about

---

[63] Barthelme 107.
[64] Barthelme 107.
[65] Barthelme 107.
[66] Barthelme 82-83.
[67] Hutcheon 143. Barthelme 83.

the copyright problems of the "Authors Guild", or when asked to evaluate *Snow White* based on his or her cultural experience: "Holding in mind all works of fiction since the War, in all languages, how would you rate the present work, on a scale of one to ten, so far?"[68] The questionnaire invokes the reader to interact with the book physically, most notably in the last of the quoted questions, by asking him or her to circle the answer. Its relation to the narrative and to the reader is questionable. Arguably, it is located between the diegetic realm of the characters and the material world of the reader. Barthelme disregards the narrative levels and such dichotomies to enhance the reader's experience: the importance of the questionnaire lies in its interaction with the reader, as it forces him or her to partake in the act of interpretation.

Moreover, *Snow White* challenges the concept of literary parallels: would the parallels be strong enough without the assistance of the title and number of the seven male characters? The text itself inquires: "Have you understood, in reading to this point, that Paul is the prince-figure?" or "That Jane is the wicked stepmother-figure?"[69] In case the reader has ignored the analogies between the version of *Snow White* he or she is most familiar with and Barthelme's *Snow White*, he or she is now coerced into drawing parallels between the fairytale archetype and Barthelme's rendition, such as is the case with Paul (the prince figure) or Jane (the evil stepmother figure). The text is aware of the deficiency of these analogies and self-consciously draws the reader's attention to it. Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* deconstructs the typical fairytale characters as classified by Propp in his distinction. In addition, Barthelme's text represents a constant confrontation of the archetypal fairytale set of themes. This indicates the possibilities of variation of the archetype and reflects Barthelme's treatment of the "used-up" form.

---

[68] Barthelme 83.
[69] Barthelme 82.

3.4 Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five

Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* opens with a framing introductory chapter, in which the author-narrator quotes the following song:

> *My name is Yon Yonson,*
> *I work in Wisconsin,*
> *I work in a lumbermill there,*
> *The people I meet when I walk down the street,*
> *They say: "What's your name?"*
> *And I say, My name is Yon Yonson,*
> *I work in Wisconsin ..."*[70]

And then comments on its repetitive nature: "And so on to infinity."[71] The self-perpetuating nature of the quoted excerpt is reminiscent of Barth's "Frame-Tale." Similarly to Barth's opening story, the song appears in the introductory chapter and anticipates the narrative method of the entire book. Despite the similarities in their metafictions, Kurt Vonnegut presents a very different relationship between the author-narrator and his fiction in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) and *Breakfast of Champions* (1973).

From the opening chapter the narrator draws the recipient's attention to the blurry boundary between fiction and reality: "All of this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true."[72] The narrative is based on true events, which complicates the relation between fiction and reality, and it also reflects the cultural context. Bran Nicol observes that this style of "self-reflexive historical reconstruction" was widespread in the 1970s and 1980s, which saw the tendency favoring "staging a confrontation between metafiction and history."[73]

---

[70] Kurt Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death (Dial Press Trade Paperback, 2007) epub file, 9-10.

[71] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 10.

[72] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.

[73] Nicol 100.

Using *Slaughterhouse-Five* as one of her examples, Linda Hutcheon defines "historiographic metafiction", one of the metafictional sub-branches.[74] The extent to which the presented events are real or not is debatable, in particular "the war parts", but it is impossible to dismiss them as pure fabrication. Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodern theory and art challenges the "separation of the literary and the historical" and that "recent critical readings of both history and fiction have focused more on what the two modes of writing share than how they differ." [75] Historiographic metafiction therefore involves practices symptomatic of metafiction, as well as of historical fiction.

The text questions: why does the author-narrator choose fiction as a medium of expression? The query becomes more prominent after the narrator comments on "what this lousy little book cost [him] in money and anxiety and time."[76] He makes it clear that in the beginning, he indeed had the intention to write a factual report of his war experience and "thought it would be easy for [him] to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all [he] would have to do would be to report what [he] had seen."[77] The narrator himself disbelieves that the book could possibly have a positive impact on society after being discouraged by his friend, Harrison Starr, who likens the potential of an anti-war book to an "anti-*glacier*" one.[78] It is concluded that "there would always be wars" which would be "as easy to stop as glaciers."[79]

Bran Nicol asserts that the introductory chapter makes use of "the device of fictionalizing the past", which is not disguised, "as it might be in a more realist version of the same novel" but, it is "always foregrounded" instead. [80] Nicol's reading consists in viewing the act of

---

[74] Linda Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction: The Pastime of Past Time", *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 105-123.
[75] Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction" 105.
[76] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.
[77] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.
[78] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.
[79] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.
[80] Nicol 89.

narration as "fictionalizing the past", an act correspondent to the "displacement exercise" in psychoanalysis: the narrator approaches his traumatic experiences through fiction, and in this "indirect way" protects "the psyche from unbearable material." [81] The narrator on the extradiegetic level creates a character on the diegetic level (Billy Pilgrim), whose abduction by the Tralfamadorians allows for at least two readings. Pilgrim's encounters with the aliens can either be taken at face value, or as a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (he is hallucinating). In terms of narratology, the latter involves creating an additional narrative level (hypodiegetic).

Patricia Waugh provides a reading based on the distinction between fiction and reality and refers to the individual levels in *Slaughterhouse-Five* as "real", "fictive" and "ultra-fictional."[82] The narrator creates a fictional realm in which his character creates an "ultra-fictional" realm. To conceive the fictive realm costs the narrator considerable effort (both financial and mental, as he informs in the opening chapter). Billy Pilgrim, on the contrary, fabricates the fictional Tralfamadorian universe unaware, as a subconscious defense mechanism. Waugh asserts that despite its fictional status, the diegetic level in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is still considerably "more 'real' than Tralfamadore."[83]

Waugh's assertion implies that the process functions in the opposite direction as well: the diegetic level is less real than the extradiegetic one. Both Billy Pilgrim and the author-narrator respond to the same traumatic experience (their experience as prisoners of war, and their witnessing the firebombing of Dresden), and they do so in a similar fashion, by fabricating a fictional realm (a form of escapism). Billy's hallucinations are parallel to the framing of the

---

[81] Nicol 89.

[82] Waugh 128.

[83] Waugh 129.

author-narrator: the frame story of Billy Pilgrim allows for another frame story within the former one, that of his abduction by the aliens.

The relationship between the individual ontological levels is complex, marked by narrative intrusions. Carol Gluck contends that Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* "mixes eyewitness accounts of war and shards of the firebombing of Dresden with a science-fiction narrative, inaccurate facts, and naïve, even reluctant author-narrator."[84] As has been argued, the introductory chapter anticipates the nature of the entire narrative, which disregards linear arrangement. This is announced by the author-narrator, although the anticipation takes place more implicitly too.

When the narrator mentions Gerhard Müller's mother, he proclaims the mantralike "So it goes."[85] The narrator utters the omnipresent "So it goes" seven times before Billy's explanation of the Tralfamadorian concept of time. Whenever an extraterrestrial sees a corpse, he does not merely see the dead person at that moment. He sees that "the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments"; the person "does not die" but only *appears* to die."[86] The narrator therefore acquires Billy's method of coping with death, who in turns acquires it from the Tralfamadorians. In terms of narratology, the phrase advances from hypodiegetic level (Billy's fantasy) to the diegetic and extradiegetic levels.

Already in the epigraph it is made evident that the narrator accepts and makes use of this conception of time. The novel is written "somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore."[87] The fragmentary nature of the narrative is also reflexive of the Tralfamadorian notion of time. Billy Pilgrim is "unstuck" and "spastic in time", which

[84] Carol Gluck, "Infinite Mischief? History and Literature Once Again", *Representations* 124.1 University of California Press (2013) JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2013.124.1.125> 19th Feb 2017. 128.

[85] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.

[86] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 25.

[87] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 6.

means that he "has no control of where he is going next."[88] Other possible readings of Billy's time travels are discussed in Chapter four.

To follow Billy in his time travels the narrative assumes equally fragmentary quality. Billy's time travels take place in the wake of traumatic moments. After the American soldiers give up, Billy wakes up to find himself back in the hospital[89]; or before the plane crash, "knowing the plane was going to crash pretty soon", he "closed his eyes, traveled in time back to 1944."[90] The narrative commentary suggests that Billy's psyche unconsciously fabricates time travelling as a way of coping with traumatic experience. As a result, the narrative is disconnected and disregards linearity. The author-narrator describes the book in the preface as "so short and jumbled and jangled" because "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre."[91]

Patricia Waugh asserts that the author-narrator of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a "personalized figure who is given a spatio-temporal dimension within the fictional world."[92] The narrator reappears in the narrative, as a character of flesh and blood, rather than as an abstract concept. The narrative refers to an "American near Billy" who "wailed that he had excreted everything but his brains" before saying "There they go, there they go."[93] The author-narrator identifies himself in that moment, stating "That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book."[94] The narrator's intrusion can be interpreted as a means of fictionalizing his own existence, a process by which he decreases the impact of the horrendous war experience. This process is parallel to Billy Pilgrim's subconscious fabrications. He also invents a realm and places himself in it to alleviate his war experience and his mental condition. At the same time, the author-

---

[88] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 23.
[89] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 74.
[90] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 101.
[91] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 20.
[92] Waugh 133.
[93] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 84.
[94] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 84.

narrator intrudes upon the world of his characters: an extradiegetic character appears in the diegetic realm.[95]

The author-narrator's appearance in his own narrative reinforces the reader's awareness of the book's fictional status. Patricia Waugh asserts that such frame-breaks, "while appearing to bridge gap between fiction and reality, in fact lay[…] it bare."[96] The reader is aware of this breaching of the narrative levels. The narrator's appearance, instead of forming a continuum between the fictional and the reader's realm, disrupts the flow of reading. At the same time, the established relationship between fiction and reality allows the author-narrator to interact between them. Bran Nicol points out that the "indirectness of *Slaughterhouse-Five*'s convoluted metafictional form thus packs a profound emotional punch."[97] In addition to the possibly therapeutic effect, the narrator's appearance also has the potential to deconstruct. Waugh contends that it "provides the essential deconstructive method of metafiction", which is one of the methods of "showing the function of literary convention" and "of revealing their provisional nature."[98] Metafiction, such as *Slaughterhouse-Five* questions and challenges the conventional boundaries delineated for fiction and reality. The diegetic level reflects the hypodiegetic one.

In a dialogue with Maggie White, Kilgore Trout fabricates a law dictating that every author must include in his or her books facts only: "If I wrote something that hadn't really happened, and tried to sell it, I could go to jail" and defines it as a "*fraud*."[99] Trout's ironic remark thematizes the problematic relationship between fiction and reality. Through its self-awareness, Trout's statement points to the opening sentence of the novel: "All of this happened,

---

[95] This interpretation takes the author-narrator as an extradiegetic narrator, rather than as a character on the diegetic level. His appearances are scarce and he takes considerable liberties when referring to Billy's psychological processes and approximates the omniscient narrator in this respect.

[96] Waugh 33.

[97] Nicol 89.

[98] Waugh 31.

[99] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 111.

more or less."[100] Kilgore Trout, himself a production of the author-narrator, comments on the truth status of fiction.

Kilgore Trout reappears in Vonnegut's following novel, *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). After receiving a letter from Eliot Rosewater, the infuriated author refers to a "body bag", which triggers a chain of associations in the author-narrator's brain: "I do not know who invented the body bag. I do know who invented Kilgore Trout. I did."[101] The author-narrator acknowledges the fictional status of the fictional writer, an impression bolstered by his unusual name, and by the reference to the process of artistic creation.

Patricia Waugh defines Kilgore Trout as "a trans-textual being" who reappears frequently in Vonnegut's fiction.[102] Although a minor character in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, he is a major one in *Breakfast of Champions*, in which the process of artistic creation is given much more prominent role. Dwayne Hoover takes Trout's fiction to be literal truth, similarly to Maggie White in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Misreading reality and fiction is a permeating motif in *Breakfast of Champions*. For instance, the author-narrator comments on gun violence in America, stating that "the reason [why] Americans shot each other so often" was that it "was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books."[103] Creation leads the author-narrator to one of the prominent themes of the novel, that of free will. In Trout's *Now It Can Be Told*, a book that "turn[s] Dwayne into a homicidal maniac"[104], The Creator is amused and intrigued by the free will of his creation, The Man. The former "never knew what [the latter] was going to yell" and sometimes yelled "Cheese!", other times "Wouldn't you rather drive a Buick?"[105]

---

[100] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.

[101] Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday!* (Dial Presstrade Paperbacks, 2006) epub file, 29.

[102] Waugh 131.

[103] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 132.

[104] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 111.

[105] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 112.

The content of *Now It Can Be Told* is parallel to the ending of *Breakfast of Champions*, where the author frees Kilgore Trout, his creation. Before liberating him, the author-narrator exerts his creative powers and transports Trout to "the Taj Mahal and then to Venice and then to Dar es Salaam and then to the surface of the Sun, where the flames could not consume [Kilgore Trout]—and then back to Midland City again."[106] The author-narrator sees his creations as his loyal servants, and finding himself in similar circumstances as the "spiritual conditions" of Count Tolstoi when he "freed his serfs" or Thomas Jefferson when he "freed his slaves" decides to let Kilgore Trout go free.[107] Facing the ultimate freedom, Trout's face morphs into the face of the author-narrator's father and Trout begs him in his father's voice to make him young again.[108] The ending is enigmatic and it is not clear whether Trout affirms the newly acquired free will or whether he is still under the control of the author-narrator.

The reader's confusion is analogous to that of Trout. Waugh asserts that "an apparently autonomous world is suddenly broken into by a narrator [...] who comes explicitly from an ontologically differentiated world."[109] However, the ending of *Breakfast of Champions* includes a description of the author-narrator's regression "through the void", his "hiding place."[110] The "void" appears to correspond to the extradiegetic level, where the narrator returns from the diegetic one, thus terminating the frame break. The narrator had to undergo this journey to interact successfully with his characters. The author-narrator's decision to do so can be interpreted as an assertion of his own free-will and it reflects the self-reflexive tendencies of the entire narrative. Disregarding the narrative levels allows Vonnegut to pose questions about the problematic relationship between fiction and reality.

---

[106] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 185.

[107] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 186.

[108] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 186-187.

[109] Waugh 133. Waugh discusses the ontological levels in connection to *Slaughterhouse-Five* (and *French Lieutenant's Woman*). The author deems her observation as pertinent to *Breakfast of Champions* as to the earlier novel by Vonnegut.

[110] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 187.

4. Chapter Four: A Contrastive Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

Garry Gutting defines Michel Foucault's concept of epistemes as a series of "systems of thought and knowledge […] governed by rules, beyond those of grammar and logic" which "operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities."[1] The epistemes determine "the boundaries of thought in a given domain and period."[2] However, as Foucault points out in the preface to *The Order of Things*, in using the archaeological method, he is not attempting to prove that human history has been heading in the direction of "growing perfection."[3] This conceptualization enables us to acknowledge the changing trends in representation and to reflect on them in an impartial manner. The transitions from one episteme to another are frequently marked by their abruptness. In such cases, they are not understood as a continuation of their predecessor, but defined against it.

According to Sara Mills, Foucault attempts to pinpoint discontinuities which took and are taking place "at particular historical conjectures", dismissing "the importance of certain great thinkers" and focusing on "radical and shocking changes" in "the global way of thinking" instead.[4] Foucault views literature as a constituent of a broader socio-cultural context and his analysis is therefore applicable to the primary texts of the present thesis. Particularly important is the notion of representation and the role of language in the human endeavor to capture reality. Foucault's framework of epistemes is employed to compare the different tendencies in self-conscious fiction, where representation is brought to the fore.

---

[1] Gary Gutting, "Michel Foucault", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), Edward N. Zalta, ed. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/> 29 June 2017.

[2] Gutting, "Michel Foucault" <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/> 29 June 2017.

[3] Foucault xxiii.

[4] Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003) 27.

The present chapter examines the primary texts in the framework of Foucault's epistemes. A brief theoretical introduction to the individual parts is therefore necessary. The first subsection interprets the earlier texts and traces the shift from similarity as the primary element of the Renaissance episteme to representation as the building block of the Classical episteme. The following part addresses the problematic area of our current episteme in contrast to the Modern one before interpreting the primary post-War American metafiction. Before the conclusion of the chapter, the penultimate subsection deals with Wolfgang Iser's meaning of the text and relates it to framing and frame-breaking.

4.2   The Renaissance and Classical Epistemes

Michel Foucault contends that resemblance played the dominant and constructive role in the knowledge of the Western culture until the end of the sixteenth century: "[p]ainting imitated space" and resemblance "guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts."[5] He ventures beyond the sphere of art and identifies the end of the sixteenth century as the historical moment when "resemblance was about to relinquish its relation with knowledge and disappear […] from the sphere of cognition" and affect the organization of human knowledge as well.[6] Signs and similitudes "were wrapped around one another in an endless spiral"; microcosm and macrocosm were by definition "conceived as both the guarantee of [the] knowledge and the limit of its expansion."[7] Using analogy, such interpretation validated magic to be accepted on the same level as erudition.[8] The birth of modern science gradually abolished those practices. Progress is therefore not understood as a steady process, but as an abrupt rupture from the previous episteme.

---

[5] Foucault 19.

[6] Foucault identifies four major subtypes of similitude: *conventia, aemulatio, analogy, sympathies* (19, 20-28).

[7] Foucault 35.

[8] Foucault 35.

In the Renaissance, language was understood as "ternary". It necessitated "the formal domain of marks, the content indicated by them, and the similitudes that link the marks to the things designated by them."[9] Resemblance was both the form as well as the content of the sign and the three elements were "resolved into a single form."[10] The Renaissance concept of language is key in analyzing representation in *Don Quixote*.

The narrator of *Don Quixote* introduces the unfortunate hidalgo as unkempt and characterizes him by his reading habits. Don Quixote favors complex conceits which "Aristotle himself could not have made out or extracted had he come to life again for that special purpose."[11] From the opening Don Quixote is defined against fiction and literature, which is a tendency that increases in the novel. Combined with the little sleep that Don Quixote gets, it has resulted that "his brains got so dry that he lost his wits."[12] Following the narrator's depiction of Don Quixote as an outdated anachronism both in terms of appearance and intellect, the protagonist of Cervantes's novel is interpreted as a relic of the past.

Don Quixote heralds a new era in the human knowledge; not by setting down its new principles, but by exaggerating the old ones. In so doing, "the old interplay between resemblance and signs" contains "the beginnings of new relations."[13] Don Quixote consults fiction to assess reality and misinterprets the relation between them. He is "the hero of the same" who "reads the world in order to prove his books."[14] The narrator describes the protagonist in the following manner:

> His fancy grew full of what he used to read about in his books,
> enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, wooing, loves,
> agonies, and all sorts of impossible nonsense; and it so possessed his

---

[9] Foucault 46-47.

[10] Foucault 47.

[11] Cervantes 34.

[12] Cervantes 34.

[13] Foucault 51.

[14] Foucault 52.

> mind that the whole fabric of invention and fancy he read of was true,
> that to him no history in the world had more reality in it.[15]

The ontological levels are violated. For Foucault, Don Quixote is no longer a fictional character, but "a sign, a long, thin graphism, a letter" escaping from "the open pages of a book", who has both already been written down and is still writing himself, "wandering through the resemblance of things" in "a diligent search over the entire surface of the earth for the forms that will prove what the books say is true."[16] Fiction invades Quixote's reality and prevails.

The paradoxical tension between being already written down and writing oneself lies in the fact that Don Quixote is not aware of having interchanged reality and fiction. Other characters, as well as readers, are fully aware of the discrepancies between the two ontological levels, as is the case with the translator from the original Arabic manuscript. Being based on the extradiegetic level, the translator's laughter is a result of his ability to discern fiction and reality. The reader understands the situation from a superior position and is conscious of the translator's status as a fictional character. In the context of *Don Quixote*, the translator's commentary is highly self-conscious: a fictional character is judging the fictional status of a different fictional character and his misinterpretations.

Such reading does not view *Don Quixote* as a literary work, but rather as a work of art in a broader cultural context. Cervantes's masterpiece presents an implicit critique of the outdated Renaissance model: no longer reading fiction against his empirical experience, Don Quixote reads reality against his reading experience, against fiction.

Foucault's interpretation of *Don Quixote* goes beyond reading it as a parody of the Renaissance conventions. Being the first modern work of literature in which the Classical notions of language are voiced, it establishes the platform for the upcoming episteme. This abrupt shift from the former to the latter is located in "the narrow gap" between the two parts,

---

[15] Cervantes 34.
[16] Foucault 52.

where Don Quixote achieves what he believes to be his reality. This conviction is brought about by language in itself, and "resides entirely inside the words."[17]

In the second part of *Don Quixote* the eponymous hidalgo no longer reads himself. He reads *about* himself, that is about the linguistic representation of his misreading of reality and fiction. The Classical episteme caused the breakdown of the Renaissance understanding of language. The three aspects of the sign (the formal domain, the content, and the similitude) no longer form a coherent whole. While the relationship between its formal domain and its content still exists, the Classical thinking has abolished similitude and substituted it with representation. The Classical understanding of language does not rely on words-to-world relation but on the "relation woven between themselves by verbal signs": words "have swallowed up their own nature as signs."[18]

The implications are far reaching. Using fiction, Don Quixote first establishes a code which he uses to interpret reality, and then operates in reality as if it were fiction. To him reality *is* fiction. Don Quixote's misunderstanding of the similitude between "words" and the phenomena they mean in the "world" is a death knell for the Renaissance episteme. Language has become self-conscious and self-referential; it is aware of the discrepancies between the object in the real world and the corresponding abstract idea: the relationship between the two is not that of similitude, but of representation. *Don Quixote* ushers in a new epoch of the human knowledge, in which relationships based on similitude become obsolete.

We may now view the reference to Mr King of Bath in Fielding's *Tom Jones* using the framework of Foucault's Classical episteme. Although Mr King may be read as an actual link between the reader and the fictional world, interpreting him as a representation of that link is more fitting. While the author-narrator parades the artificiality of his own fiction throughout

---

[17] Foucault 54.
[18] Foucault 54.

the novel, in this case he displays the relevance of his fiction to the reader's realm. The advertised coaches of Mr King are shared both by the characters in *Tom Jones* and by its recipients, establishing a contact between the two parties.

The short reference to Mr King of Bath perhaps seems indistinct. However, *Tom Jones* contains more solid links between the reader's and the fictional realms. The narrator considers his artistic capabilities insufficient and calls for the skill of "a more able master, Mr Hogarth."[19] William Hogarth (1697-1764) was the first English-born internationally acclaimed artist and a friend of Henry Fielding's.[20] In total, Fielding's novel includes five references to the painter, which frequently parallel the author-narrator's fiction with Hogarth's painting. The comparison tends to view the latter in a more favorable light, as is the case in the following excerpt: "O, Hogarth! had I thy pencil! then I would I draw the picture of the poor serving-man, with pale countenance, staring eyes […]."[21] The narrator acknowledges the artificial status of his creation by contrasting it to a different medium of artistic expression.

The narrator's artistic creations break the ontological horizon and appear to invade the reality of the eighteenth century. As a result, the reader finds out that Miss Bridget had been the object of the painter's interest and has been "lately exhibited by that gentleman in his print of a winter's morning."[22] The violation of the narrative layers bridges the gap between fiction and reality. This instance is far more substantial and applicable, since it is both the link between the fictional realm and England of the eighteenth century (Hogarth as a verifiable historical persona, unlike Mr King), as well as a representation of that connection.

---

[19] Fielding 28.

[20] Susan Elizabeth Benenson, "William Hogarth", *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Hogarth> 16 July 2017.

[21] Fielding 42 (2nd part).

[22] Fielding 28.

Lionel Gossman traces the trend of eighteenth-century fiction authors to distance themselves ironically from their novels. By doing so, they establish a complex relationship between the narrator and the narrative.[23] More importantly, the narrator's professed superiority to his narrative allows for complicity between the narrator and the reader to be set up.[24] Henry Power follows this interpretation and asserts that the narrator makes "his presence felt" and that through the constant lecturing, teasing and cajoling the reader, he "ponders the difficulties of his task and draws attention to his deft arrangement of material."[25] The narrative thus affirms its self-conscious nature. The narrator is aware of the fictional status of his own narrative and continually reaffirms his presence. He asserts the superior position to the fiction he creates and underscores its fictionality for the sake of reader's awareness. The two parties thus establish a relationship of compliance.

Such reading does not dismiss the reader's role in the process of interpretation, the degree of which remains unchanged. It reverses the roles and concentrates on the author-narrator. Coming to the fore as a master of puppets, the narrator (extradiegetic level) asserts his authority to the set of fictional characters (diegetic level) as their creator, and claims his position in the same ontological horizon as the reader. By pointing out to the fictional status of his creation, the author-narrator also points out to his awareness of the nature of fiction. We witness the narrator's assertion of superiority by parading his extradiegetic status, and the attempt to relocate himself to the ontological realm of the reader.

The narrator of *Tom Jones* asserts his superior status to his fiction also in his treatment of the metaphor. He establishes a book-long metaphor based on food and consumption in the

---

[23] Lionel Gossman, "History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification", *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, Robert H. Canary, Henry Kozicki, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961) 3-39. 22.

[24] Gossman 22.

[25] Henry Power, "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of *Tom Jones*", *The Review of English Studies* 61.252 (2010) 749-772. <www.jstor.org/stable/40961116> 24 April 2017. 749.

opening chapter. Timothy D. O'Brien points out that in focusing on food, the narrator asserts "his control over the plot."[26] Furthermore, the author-narrator metaphorically provides food for the characters and the readers. Again, he strives to assert his role in relation to the reader's reality. O'Brien claims that the narrator's extended use of metaphor, as well its nature, reflects the tendency "to make the treatment of the story, rather than the story and its characters, the central concern of the story."[27] Self-awareness is therefore one of the primary properties of the narrative in *Tom Jones* and most importantly, it presents multiple possible meanings. *Tom Jones* then becomes the food for thought to be consumed and contemplated.

The narrator claims his supreme status in the use of a different metaphor as well. In the opening of the second book he explains his idiosyncratic handling of narrative time. To present an "extraordinary scene" the narrator "shall spare no pains nor paper" and conversely, matters of no consequence will be skipped and a "chasm" will appear instead.[28] Using "blanks in the grand lottery of time" the narrator manipulates the story and the direct reference to the act of narration confirms his self-awareness. Through the metaphor, the narrator equates himself with a fraud who influences the result of a lottery in his favor. The narrator thus presents himself as unreliable.

Although formally still falling into the category of the Classical episteme, *Tristram Shandy* adumbrates some of the problematic areas of the upcoming period. Sterne's primary concern consists in presenting the problems of narration. This is reflected in the narrator's frequent intrusive commentaries on the difficulties of constructing the account of his life. Jeffrey Williams argues that Genette's structuralist distinction between *histoire, recit* and *narration* does not hold in a narrative as self-conscious as *Tristram Shandy*, where the "act of

[26] Timothy D. O'Brien, "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 25.3 (1985) 615–632. <www.jstor.org/stable/450499> 28 Apr 2017. 616-617.

[27] O'Brien, "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones" 616.

[28] Fielding 37-38.

narration is inseparable from the narrative" since "it is precisely the narrating or the act of narrative that forms the [*recit*] of *Shandy*."[29]

Williams compares *Tristram Shandy* to *Tom Jones* as an example of a fairly stable narrative recounted in a linear and non-fragmentary fashion. Even in such an organized narrative the relation between the story and the plot is not "exact or mimetic"; it is "proportionate and consistent", the plot "sequentially ordered, in accordance with the chronological order of events."[30] This sequential ordering is the result of manipulating the story, as discussed above, and is interpretable in the light of the Classical episteme. The proportionate ordering is the representation of the narrated events.

Even fiction which is not overtly aware of its fictional status must reflect the difference between time as a measurable entity and its representation. Fielding is aware of the difference between the two when he justifies the freedom he takes in narrating some events while ignoring others. Since it cannot be constricted within a sign, narrative fiction inevitably presents a linguistic distortion of the abstract concept of time. Cervantes is conscious of the difference too and parodies it. As Gines, one of the characters, explains, when writing his life-story he faces an insurmountable obstacle: he cannot finish it since his life itself has not yet been finished[31] (discussed above). Fielding and Cervantes follow the Classical episteme in their respective conceptions of time. They are aware that it is a representation of an abstract entity.

Sterne heralds a radically different approach to temporal relations, which is the most prominent difficulty that Sterne's narrator faces. The use of narrative time reflects Tristram's treatment of the narrated material. Unlike Fielding's narrator, who makes a selection based on the importance of the recounted events, Tristram's seemingly haphazard narration is based

---

[29] Jeffrey Williams, "Narrative of Narrative (*Tristram Shandy*)", *MLN*, 105.5 (1990) 1032–1045. <www.jstor.org/stable/2905166> 14 May 2017. 1034.

[30] Williams 1035.

[31] Cervantes 125.

mostly on associations. In this respect, *Tristram Shandy* anticipates later tendencies of representation. In his defiance of clear structure, linear plot and in his disregarding of narrative conventions, Sterne's method appears to resemble the narration of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut's narrator also stresses the randomness of the plot and challenges the traditional narrative structures in prose (in his case, science-fiction prose). In the case of the latter, this effect is achieved by the idiosyncratic use of "gag" (discussed below).

Similarly to the narrators of *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones*, Sterne's narrator is aware of the fact that the difference between time measurable by clocks and time in fiction is that between the object and its representation. In contrast to them, he exaggerates this discrepancy. Digressions from the expected plotline grow out of proportion and provide material for the narrator to contemplate and present in the form of illustrations. This strategy exerts the distinction between fabula and sujet: the sheer amount and prominence of self-aware narrative commentary overwhelms the actual contents of the plot. Diegesis becomes the object of diegesis.

Dennis W. Allen asserts that the foremost problem of language lies in its instability: words do not refer to the objects themselves, but to their abstract counterparts, which are highly subjective, being grounded in "sensory impressions of an ultimately ineffable empirical reality."[32] As has already been argued, the understanding of knowledge is prone to change, reflected in the understanding of language, and mirrored in the changing attitude to representation. Sterne addressed this inconsistent relation between language and reality, most notably in Walter Shandy's vain attempt to compose the *Tristrapedia*. As Allen contends, Walter Shandy's futile attempt to control language is the result of the struggle to make use of language as a means of recording the truth.[33] Walter Shandy's failure is the result of the unstable nature of words and the unrealizable task to capture reality within a linguistic system.

---

[32] Dennis W. Allen, "Sexuality/Textuality in Tristram Shandy", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 25.3 (1985) 651–670. <www.jstor.org/stable/450501> 4 May 2017. 654.
[33] Allen 658.

Walter Shandy's ineffective process of writing is analogous to Tristram's inefficient and meandering narration, a parallel which implicitly bolsters the narrative self-consciousness. The son reenacts his father's folly: both the father's and the son's attempt to capture reality within a linguistic system is doomed to failure and it reflects the mode of representation of the previous episteme. Just as the narrator of *Tom Jones* distances himself from the characters, so does Tristram the narrator assume a superior position to the narrated events. This step allows him to establish relationship similar to the narrator of *Tom Jones*. They both affirm their complicity with the reader by frequent personal addresses. However, they differ greatly in their respective treatment of temporal relations. From the opening of the novel, *Tristram Shandy* depends on fragmented and non-linear narration.

From Cervantes through Sterne a considerable re-conception of representation has taken place. While Cervantes broke away from the pre-Classical episteme by bringing forth the problems of its representation, Fielding affirmed the foundations the Classical episteme in his self-awareness of representation. Sterne adumbrated later understanding of time through his portrayal of distorted temporal relations.

4.3   Modes of Representation in Contemporary Metafiction

In the following period, in which the Modern episteme was prevalent, man found himself to be paradoxically both the "enslaved origin" and the "observed spectator" who appeared in the ambiguous position "as an object of knowledge and as [the] subject that knows"; consequently, representation ceased "to have validity as the locus of origin of living beings, needs, and words, or as the primitive seat of their truth."[34] If that is the case, how does our current episteme differ from the Modern one, if it does at all?

---

[34] Foucault 340-341.

In "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault elaborates on this proposition and suggests giving up the possibility of "ever acceding to a point of view" which could grant access "to any complete and definite knowledge of what may constitute *our* historical limits."[35] At the same time, he announces the collapse of the Modern episteme. Owing to the "positivity of knowledge" and the scientific achievements of the nineteenth century, man has discovered his own mortality. The human kind traded the accomplishments of modern biology and medicine for the ignorance of the workings of the human body: the knowledge thereof was "given to [man] only against the background of his own finitude."[36] The termination of the Modern episteme implies the inception of a new one. However, one cannot define epistemes that have not been concluded. They lack the temporal and cultural distance necessary for their evaluation.

The human kind is conditioned by historical forces outside its control. Foucault argues that the arrangement of philosophy propounded by anthropology (from Kant to our day) is "disintegrating before our eyes" as "we are beginning to recognize and denounce it, in a critical mode" most prominently for "forgetfulness of the opening" which as a "stubborn obstacle [stands] in the way of an imminent new form of thought."[37] Just as in *Las Meninas* Velázquez visually articulated the Classical mode of representation (heavily reliant on self-consciousness and voiced half a century prior to him by Cervantes), so does René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* (1928-1929) announce the new mode of representation. The caption reads: "This is not a pipe"[38], emphasizing the tension between the signifier and the signified. The picture of a pipe is not the pipe itself, it is its visual representation.

---

[35] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rainbow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 32-50. 47. Italics mine.

[36] Foucault 342.

[37] Foucault 373.

[38] René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images* (1928-1929) <https://www.renemagritte.org/the-treachery-of-images.jsp> 2 July 2017.

The closed system whose demise Foucault announces is reacted against in the postmodern thought. Jean-Francois Lyotard articulates the crux of postmodernism (in his own words an extreme simplification) in defining it as "incredulity towards metanarratives."[39] A variety of approaches is suggested by different critics and theorists.

James Phelan suggests that we may be "undergoing some kind of universal cultural morphing with the emergence of a new episteme", characterized by abandonment of "the grand narratives (Lyotard)" and "an embrace of 'rhizomatic' thinking (Deleuze)."[40] This is reflected in the postmodern conception of the meaning of the text (more precisely, *a* meaning of *a* text), which disregards totality for the sake of multiplicity. This approach is discussed below in relation to Wolfgang Iser's concept of the meaning of the text.

Jacques Derrida proposes deconstructing texts, effectively disposing of the centered notion of a text. By implication, the narrative in metafiction is difficult to assess, interpret, and impossible to categorize. The selection of the contemporary primary texts is a coherent body of work from a particular context in a given period. Despite their apparent unity, the texts evince recalcitrance towards classification. More than by unity in terms of content, they are to be defined against the closed system symptomatic of the previous episteme.

Self-conscious fiction frequently reacts against literary conventions. As the primary texts indicate, metafiction has become increasingly aware of history. In "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (1939)[41], Jorge Luis Borges presents a fictional writer who rewrites segments of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* verbatim. The narrator juxtaposes two identical passages. Cervantes's "catalog of attributes, written in the seventeenth century" is dismissed as a "mere rhetorical

---

[39] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) xxv.

[40] H. Porter Abbott, "The Future of All Narrative Futures", *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 529-541. 531.

[41] The English translation did not appear until 1962.

praise of history", having been "written by the 'ingenious layman' Miguel de Cervantes."[42] In contrast, Menard is William James's contemporary who defines "history not as an investigation of reality, but as its origin."[43] While in the original text, the author engaged in "the provincial reality" of the 17th century Spain, the modern rendition writes of the distant past, of the "century of [the battle of] Lepanto and Lope."[44]

"Pierre Menard" is a meditation on meaning, authorship, the role of fiction in our lives, and how those variables change under the influence of history. The text acquires a radically different status as the historical and cultural contexts change. Borges's reading emphasizes the importance of the reader and his or her reaction to the text. *Don Quixote* is not merely an early 17th century parody of the Chivalric romance, which ushered in the Classical episteme through the exaggeration of the Renaissance mode of representation. It is an indicator of everything that has happened between 1615 and the time of its reception.

To retell a story is not only to rewrite it, it is also to reread it. Similarly to Borges's fictional writer, Donald Barthelme provides such combination of rereading and rewriting, although with profound changes. Barthelme's *Snow White* consists in a continual confrontation with the fairy-tale archetype. In a series of fragmentary episodes resembling a collage, it defies the conventions of the fairy-tale. The author's free use of stylistics reflects the self-conscious violation of the narrative and can be read as a reaction against the conventions of the genre. The reader is required to interact with the text and to reflect on the nature of Barthelme's idiosyncratic and ironic retelling.

Without commenting on John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) in greater depth, Patricia Waugh defines it as metafictional, since it consists in "the form of parody" and "comments on a specific

---

[42] Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote", *Ficciones*, Anthony Kerrigan, ed. Emecé Editores, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 1994) 45-56. 53.
[43] Borges 53.
[44] Borges 51.

work or fictional mode."[45] Gardner's achievement is far greater. Not only does *Grendel* reflect the exhaustion of literary realism as a "used-up form", it is also a recycled story. It is used here to present similarities to Barthelme's *Snow White* as an elaboration of the previous chapter.

It is not only the form but also the subject matter which is exhausted. Gardner questions the Western cultural tradition. In contrast to the animalistic and violent Beowulf, Grendel the character is capable of reflecting on "the pain" and "the stupidity" of his own "idiotic war."[46] As if aware of being created, the monster is shown to possess potential imposed upon him by an entity beyond his comprehension. The monster's strength is shown to cause anxiety in himself, a tendency further corroborated by his repeated failure to form a relationship between himself and a different creature in the novel. Owing to his internal existential doubts Grendel is closer to the contemporary reader than Beowulf, who remains unnamed in Gardner's retelling.

The narrative self-consciousness in *Grendel* is very subtle. The reader is presented with Beowulf's story, but from the inversed perspective of the reviled monster. In contrast to the original where the poet invokes the listener's attention, and thus affirms his position within the extradiegetic level, Gardner chooses the more personal first person narration. More than a work of metafiction, *Grendel* is a study in cultural relativism: the monster is no less cruel than the celebrated Beowulf, whose violence is justified by the culture from which he comes, and further affirmed by the mob mentality. Similarly to Borges, Gardner is aware of the historical and cultural load. However, unlike Borges's protagonist Gardner does not narrate the story of Beowulf verbatim, but from a different point of view, whereby he stresses its decenteredness.

Jeffrey T. Nealon argues that Donald Barthelme furnishes the story of *Snow White* with ironic aesthetics, which functions "as compensation for the absence of a transcendental

---

[45] Waugh 4.
[46] John Gardner, *Grendel* (New York: Knopf, 1973) 5.

signified."[47] This transcendental signified is made absent for the sake of a multiplicity of meanings. Nealon characterizes Barthelme's ironic retelling as a manifesto wherein "an ironic and deflating poetics" are "characterized by an appreciation for the necessary failure of all totalizing ordering principles."[48] The question posed is: how should the reader face the absence of a finite meaning?

Snow White stubbornly refuses to provide an answer and prods the reader to interpret it on his or her own, a quality that is consistent with the contemporary primary texts. More importantly, it is a reaction against totalizing structures predominant in the previous episteme. *Snow White* rejects the final moral and instead provides a sarcastic retelling. This is much more suited to the contemporary period in which the fairy tale form can be interpreted as a "used-up" form desperately calling for innovation. The necessitated sense of novelty is achieved through the distinct and self-conscious narration.

Barthelme's treatment of language is equally subversive. In the opening of the novel, one of the characters invents the idiom "to suck the mop", which makes its way to the mental lexicon of other characters (including the narrator), thus disregarding the narrative levels. Reacting to the deficiencies of language, the narrator alters the "graceful cello shape" of Jane's body into "the viola da gamba-shaped Snow White."[49] Other characters comment on and violate the conventional use of language as well. Dan (one of the equivalents of the dwarves) refers to the "blanketing effect of ordinary language", identifying it to "stuffing" and trash before moving on to discuss the average production of actual trash.[50] By doing so, he links an abstract notion (a linguistic description) to a concrete and material thing, based either on the analogy between

---

47 Jeffrey T. Nealon, "Disastrous Aesthetics: Irony, Ethics, and Gender in Barthelme's '*Snow White*'", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 51.2 (2005) 123–141. <www.jstor.org/stable/20058759> 125.
48 Nealon 129.
49 Barthelme 152.
50 Barthelme 96-97.

the two (trash as a byproduct of human activity) or on the association brought about by the word used in the given context.

The narrator of *Snow White* defines the term "dreck" as a possibly irrelevant matter, which "can supply a kind of 'sense' of what is going on" and proclaims that the sense to be obtained from "dreck" is not to be found "between the lines" since "there is nothing there, in those white spaces."[51] As if capable of understanding only the literal meaning, the narrator dismisses metaphorical readings and seeks the referent in the real world. This strategy is parallel to Dan's treatment of 'trash'. The analogy between the shape of a musical instrument and a human body is more direct and palatable; the only thing that remains is to modify the metaphor and make it more accurate. If the reader is unwilling to invest time and energy into the text, the whole text becomes one such blank.

Slaughterhouse-Five is equally subversive and resistant to metaphorical reading. In his reading of the novel, Martin Procházka juxtaposes the narrative and the "event". Event is emphasized in the novel as the "other time", that is the "time of Billy's *experience*, as opposed to his time travel."[52] The event is the main element of Vonnegut's grotesque. Referred to as "gag", it shatters all forms of conventional narrative and prevents all attempts to interlink the individual narrative layers.[53]

The final sentence of the novel is the concluding gag which disrupts any metaphorical interpretation: "One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, *Poo-tee-weet*?"[54] As Procházka argues, the question mark (possibly an indication of rising intonation) "precludes all possibilities of metaphorical reading."[55] In addition, it disables asking questions and "affirms the power of

---

[51] Barthelme 106.

[52] Martin Procházka, "Apocalypticism in American Cultural History 2: Revelations of the Other", *Litteraria Pragensia* (2005) 15.30, 79-106. Word file 16.

[53] Procházka, word file 16-17.

[54] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 139.

[55] Procházka, word file 17.

humor which consists in the difference between designation and signification."[56] Humor in the novel is employed in order to defy traditional narrative structures symptomatic of conventional science fiction.

The narrator reflects on the book's fragmented and random narration in a conversation with his friend. He states that the book is "so short and jumbled and jangled" since "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre."[57] The narrative discards any possibility of metaphorical reading as a reaction to the atrocities that had taken place in Dresden. The world is "supposed to be very quiet after a massacre" with the exception of the bird-singing.[58] The interjection "*Poo-tee-weet*?" therefore cannot be a response to the past atrocities, as the metaphorical reading would suggest. Its humorous potential lies in the mentioned tense relationship between designation and signification. Notably, the bird's signing in *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a linguistic approximation of non-human means of communication.

The lines and flourishes used in *Tristram Shandy* present an extension to the narrator's expression by means of extra-linguistic sign. In the opening chapter of *Breakfast of Champions*, the narrator (signed as "Philboyd Studge") bemoans having no culture and having "no humane harmony in [his] brains" and states: "I can't live without culture anymore."[59] In contrast to *Tristram Shandy,* the extra-linguistic signs in Vonnegut (in the form of drawings) fulfill a different function. Patricia Waugh argues that "[c]rude diagrams replace language in order to express the poverty of the 'culture' which is available through representations of 'assholes', 'underpants' and 'beefburgers'."[60] Facing what the narrator deems a cultural crisis, he resorts

---

[56] Procházka, word file 17.
[57] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 20.
[58] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 20.
[59] Vonnegut, Breakfast of Champions 14, 13.
[60] Waugh 8.

to accompanying his fiction with a series of drawings. No longer a continuation of the artist's expression, they are a sign of his deprivation.

Waugh argues that beneath the narrator's misleading representations "lurks a desperate sense of the possible redundancy and irrelevance of the artist."[61] This anxiety is applicable to *Slaughterhouse-Five* as well. Vonnegut's narrator voices his fear of the inability of art to prevent atrocities from happening. Having witnessed the horrors of war first-hand, the narrator opts for the metafictional mode to demonstrate that his experience can never be mediated directly, but always through the intrusive presence of the narrator. The narrative cannot and does not represent war itself. It represents the subjective experience instead.

John Barth is arguably the most overt of the selected metafictional authors. His work is the most neatly structured from the present selection of primary texts, as has been shown in his experimental attitude to the recursive strategies ("Menelaiad"). In *Lost in the Funhouse* Barth achieves the peak of narrative self-consciousness by completely dismissing the plot ("Frame-Tale") and turning the medium into the subject matter. While diegesis is traditionally taken to be the medium, in this story it occupies the most prominent position.

The exposure of the narrative self-awareness entails the presence of the author. Marjorie Worthington asserts that in exposing the narrative self-awareness, John Barth "directly confronts issues of selfhood and authorship."[62] As a result, Barth's narrators are so painfully aware of their own existence that they can no longer resists the temptation to include themselves (be it by their physical appearance or in the form of a narrative commentary) in the stories they narrate.[63] The prominence of Barth's author-narrators and their respective commentaries form a complex interpretative problem. The commentary itself appears to be more significant than

---

[61] Waugh 9.

[62] Marjorie Worthington, "Done with Mirrors: Restoring the Authority Lost in John Barth's Funhouse", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 47.1 (2001) 114–136. <www.jstor.org/stable/827859> 114-115.

[63] Worthington 114-115.

its content. The structuralist delineation of the narrative levels is destabilized and intruded upon from a different level, which coerces the reader into acknowledging the relationship between fiction and reality and subsequent interpretation of that link.

Paul Douglass points out that in case of John Barth's fiction the drama of self-consciousness originates from "the struggle of life-writing", "the endeavor to push words into life" and "to dislocate their reality into something living and fluid."[64] Barth's metafiction exerts itself into the realm of the reader, most notably through invoking his or her attention and asking for participation. Be it in the form of blanks ("Autobiography"), by including a box to be filled as in a form ("Lost in the Funhouse") or by invoking physical participation by cutting and pasting ("Frame-Tale"), Barth's fiction seems to ask the reader to stop reading, but in fact relies on the opposite. It relies on the recipient's interaction with the text.

4.4 Iser's Meaning of the Text in Relation to Framing

Wolfgang Iser contends that the meaning of a text is not a singularity invested with semantic weightiness by the author, but a dynamic and interactive procedure of the "unfolding of the text as a living event."[65] The lexical choice is essential, with both "unfolding" and "event" implying a process, instead of a single finite happening. Moreover, the text itself is "living", that is, it comes to life by being interpreted. This process reflects the context of its own exegesis. Iser asserts that the text and the reader "merge into a single situation"; the division between the subject and the object is effaced and the meaning "is no longer an object to be defined, but […] an effect to be experienced."[66]

---

[64] Douglass 42.

[65] Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach", *New Literary History*, 3.2 (1972), 279-299. JSTOR < www.jstor.org/stable/468316> 28 June 2017. 296.

[66] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) 9-10.

The reader's involvement in the act of reading is key and the text requires individual participation. The effort to restrict the meaning of a work of art to a single interpretation is futile and detrimental to the process and joy of reading. According to Iser, an interaction between "the textual signs" and "the reader's act of comprehension" takes place during the act of reading; provided the reader's cooperation, the link strengthens and the reader "cannot detach himself from such an interaction"—this connection "induce[s] him to create the conditions necessary for the effectiveness of that text."[67] The necessary conditions vary with each text, depending on its openness to interpretation. Individual reading habits, as well as cultural and social contexts, are also variables to be considered.

Iser does not locate the meaning inside but outside the text: it is brought about by the reader's interaction. This view is applicable to metafiction, which exposes the discrepancy between the literary and the reader's world. These are still experienced in the process of "unfolding" as a "living event". As is the case with non-metafictional texts, the reader becomes encompassed in a fictional realm. The difference is that in the metafictional texts the reader is coerced into acknowledging the text's artificiality. Unlike Waugh, who allows for the reading of all literature being self-conscious[68], Hutcheon defines metafictional texts against literary realism: the former focuses on the "mimesis of process", the latter on the "mimesis of product."[69] Robert Alter, as has been pointed out, argues that self-conscious fiction can hardly be considered a rupture from the convention, since it has existed virtually from the beginnings of fiction.

Brian McHale offers a fundamentally different reading and views the "metafictional gesture of frame breaking" as "a form of superrealism."[70] The author-narrator narrates the story

---

[67] Iser, The Act of Reading 9-10.
[68] Waugh 65.
[69] Hutcheon 5.
[70] McHale 197.

itself (Genette's hypodiegetic level), and at the same time exposes the making of the story (diegetic level) to the reader. In McHale's interpretation, the superrealism of metafiction affirms itself in that the author "foregrounds his superior reality." [71] The reader becomes aware of reading a work of fiction, based on the exposure of the individual ontological layers. The discrepancies between the fictional levels are exposed through the revealed process of artistic creation.

Metafictional texts almost universally include the minimum of two narrative levels. The relationship between the two narrative levels is to be paralleled to the relationship between the reader and the work of art. This effect is frequently achieved in the strategy of frame breaking, which is discussed below.

The idea of relocating the meaning of the text to the relationship between itself and the reader can be linked to the approaches to literature emergent in the second half of the twentieth century. Barthes's distinction between readerly and writerly texts was alluded in the introductory chapter. In contrast to reducing "the plurality of entrances" [72] symptomatic of readerly texts, post-structuralism has shown that such pluralities are to be embraced, and has conceived of the reader as an indispensable variable in the process of artistic creation. This is revealed in revisiting the meaning of the literary work of art. Iser redefines our understanding of a meaning of a text: although he identifies two poles, the author's and the reader's, the meaning is "a general meeting place" where the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader converge.[73]

Iser contends that the "interpreter should perhaps pay more attention to the process than to the product"[74], and thus stresses the same part of the interpretative process as Barthes and

---

[71] McHale 197.

[72] Barthes, *S/Z* 5.

[73] Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response 29, 35.

[74] Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response 18.

Hutcheon. The reader's involvement in self-conscious fiction is essential, since he or she is confronted with a representation of a representation: the meaning is relocated from the text itself to a realm between the text and the reader. Iser's conception views the reader, the author and the text itself as a continuum. Linda Hutcheon provides a similar interpretation and defines the reader as "actively mediating presence" who establishes "the text's reality" by his or her response and who reconstitutes it by his or her "active participation."[75]

The difference between a metafictional and a non-metafictional text is that in the former category, the recipient is a composite identity of the reader, the writer and the critic. Accordingly, all texts are writerly to a certain extent and narcissistic narratives "merely make the reader conscious of this fact of his experience."[76] The difference between a writerly and a readerly text is one of degree, rather than kind, since they both claim their influence on the real world of the reader. Having introduced the concept of the meaning of the text as a moveable entity, the present subchapter now turns to apply the theory to individual instances of framing.

Although treated in a different manner, all primary texts (with the exception of *Snow White*) include frame stories. The device of the frame story is exploited frequently in metafiction. Brian McHale likens the strategy of the "recursive structures" to a (potentially infinite) set of Chinese boxes or Russian *babushka* dolls and asserts that it is domestic to metafiction.[77] Frame stories are parallel to the interplay of narrative levels discussed in the theoretical introduction.

The protagonist of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) is an unnamed student striving to write a book (to be precise, he writes three books at the same time). In one of the stories the characters on the hypodiegetic level—creations of the author-narrator's work—

---

[75] Hutcheon 141.
[76] Hutcheon 138-152, 141.
[77] McHale 112.

conspire to kill Dermot Trellis, their author (on the diegetic level).[78] O'Brien's literal death of an author by the hands of his own creations appears to anticipate Barthes's figurative death of the author. To pursue the metaphor, the extradiegetic narrative (the student writing the books) produces a diegetic level (the Pooka and his fellow characters); this set of characters in turn produces an additional level (hypodiegetic). The most important implication is that the characters on the hypodiegetic level violate the ontological layer and intrude upon the diegetic level (by killing the writer within the book) by means of frame-breaking.

O'Brien exploited the same metaphor in *The Third Policeman* (1967). In a discussion with the narrator, one of the policemen produces a chest that he had made and gives a comprehensive list of objects to be included in it. None of the items is worthy of such a splendid receptacle and responding to the narrator's curiosity, the policeman begins revealing a series of identical copies of the original box, each smaller in size as to fit in the previous one, the last one being almost invisible.[79] The infinite set of Chinese boxes is parallel to the strategy of recursive structures. However, one should question the meaning of the scene. Each frame contains another frame instead of a meaningful content. A potential reading is that of a parody of the practice of frame stories as a senseless narrative tour de force. The meaning is not located inside the frames but within the structure itself.

Although framing is a device frequently employed in metafiction, to identify it as a purely metafictional practice is a simplification. A number of non-metafictional works of narrative fiction include the strategy in question. Charles Marlow, the narrator of Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899), narrates his quest for Kurtz in a frame story to his listeners aboard the Nellie (*The Heart of Darkness*). In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Lockwood

---

[78] Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005).
[79] Flann O'Brien, *The Third Policeman* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007) 72-77.

(the narrator on the extradiegetic level) listens to the events prior to his arrival as narrated by Nelly Dean (hypodiegetic level).

The examples above and the selection of the primary texts from the 17th and 18th centuries show that framing has been thriving for centuries. It is a long-lasting literary practice and its use extends well beyond the Middle Ages (Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*) into antiquity (frame stories in *The Odyssey*). Its tradition outside the Western cultural context is as permanent, with Sanskrit epics such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The situation requires specification: in what ways are the earlier texts different from the later ones? We now turn our attention to a contrast of a selection of narratives containing framing.

The earlier texts tend to be less self-conscious than the later ones. To interpret a work of art one must go beyond analyzing the structural components and question its meanings. The inclusion of the frame story implies a parallel between reading a narrated story and the act of reading, and consequently the parallel between the fictional and the real world, but this relationship is very implicit and internalized.

In contrast, a strongly metafictional narrative thematizes the problematic relationship between art and reality. It exposes the links between what we believe to be reality and the processes of artistic creation. While Conrad's and Brontë's novels include characters narrating to other characters, O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* is far more self-aware, being narrated by the author-character who creates a fictional author. *The Third Policeman* parodies the frame story by demonstrating it in a semantically devoid tour de force. The treatment of the same practice by the respective authors differs radically, as exemplified by the following analyses.

The narrative of "the Man on the Hill" in *Tom Jones* is a frame story embedded in the extradiegetic level. The Man on the Hill narrates his life story and is occasionally interrupted by Partridge's musings, as well as by the narratorial commentary paralleling the events in the

narration to the logical structure of the text. For instance, the Man on the Hill takes a deep breath, which puts an end to the chapter. On a different occasion, the narrator announces that he is about to proceed after giving "a short breathing time to both [himself] and the reader."[80]

The narrator frequently announces chapter and book endings and advocates for their timeliness. At the end of Book XII he leaves Partridge sleeping and surmises that the reader "may perhaps be at this season glad of the same favour" and decides to "put an end to the eighth book of [his] history."[81] The reader's submersion in the fictional world is interrupted by the intrusive narrator who highlights the discrepancies between the two realms. The frame is created only to be broken.

The nature of the commentaries also serves to expose the novel's artificiality, since its division structurally parallels its contents. Partridge and his commentaries are redundant in the discussion following the Man on the Hill's frame story. Consequently, the author-narrator has him sleep through it. Although Tom Jones and the Man on the Hill are both characters on the diegetic level, in their discussion of the frame story (hypodiegetic), Tom Jones assumes a similar position to the author-narrator on the extradiegetic level by commenting on it.

The reflections on the frame-story are more important than the frame-story itself. It represents an alternative to Tom Jones's plotline, and it also furnishes the eponymous hero with the opportunity to articulate his life views and contrast them with a different approach. The main purport of the very implicit narrative self-consciousness of the Man on the Hill's story in the narrative of *Tom Jones* lies in allowing Tom Jones to voice his opinions. By employing the recursive structures, the narrative imitates the relationship between the reader and the work of art.

---

[80] Fielding 362.
[81] Fielding 372.

In *Tom Jones* the embedded story of the Man on the Hill provides a parallel to Tom's story. In this arguably more conventional use of framing, the narrative furnishes additional information by showing an alternative path that Tom might have taken had he followed a similar course of decisions to the Man on the Hill. In *Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales* and *The Heart of Darkness* framing is also used among people who share their stories. It represents a clear structure and a framework for a series of disparate stories, frequently authored by different characters. In *The Wuthering Heights*, framing fills in the gap in the narrative; Nelly Dean recounts the events that had taken place during Lockwood's absence.

In contrast, John Barth approaches framing as a possible answer to literature as a "used-up" form. This can be exemplified by "Menelaiad", whose narrative consists in re-using the subject matter of Greek mythology, which is sidelined in favor of extreme framing. Barth's experimental use of the frame device was discussed in relation to "Frame-Tale" in the second chapter. Unlike the authors above, who use the frame device as a means of providing additional context, Barth foregrounds the structure of framing with profound implications for the recipient.

"Frame-Tale" is a touchstone in the practice of frame storytelling, including only the frames and the formulaic opening of a fairy-tale without any content following it. The semantic void is to be filled by the reader's reflections on the structure of the frame narrative. In addition, "Frame-Tale" has the potential to exist physically in the reader's realm. The implicit presence of the narrator in frame narratives is viable in all texts involving the practice in question, but to a varying degree. Even more important for interpreting the frame narratives is their respective context.

Framing is used to achieve different ends in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The fictionalized version of the author appears in the opening chapter to comment on the genesis of the book. Through fictionalizing it, the narrator addresses his horrific war experience from a

distance. This reading stresses the therapeutic potential of fiction and was examined in the previous chapter.

The author attempts to ground himself in reality by providing a number of details related to the real world, including references to the "Guggenheim money"[82], World War II, or even to the world of consumerism and pop-culture (Frank Sinatra and John Wayne[83]). The imperative "Listen"[84] marks the transition from one ontological and narrative level (the author-narrator's) to another (the fictionalized retelling of his war experience). The author-narrator breaks the ontological layer established in the introductory chapter and settles in the diegetic level to narrate Billy Pilgrim's war experience. The framing is occasionally broken, until the author-narrator reappears in the tenth chapter. He leaves his fictional creations, Billy Pilgrim and Montana Wildhack, on the planet Tralfamadore, and reasserts his superior position by alluding to historical events: assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and to the Vietnam War.[85] He comments on his own war experience in hindsight.

Martin Procházka compares the use of time travel in traditional science fiction and in Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The former is exemplified by Darko Suvin's analysis of H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* and is marked by symmetry and linear development. Time travel takes place "through a linear succession of worlds related on the basis of mirror inversion, or the mathematical rule of proportion."[86] In contrast, Billy Pilgrim "travels in time but in more ways and dimensions than those which can be generated by any structuralist system."[87] The narrative in *Slaughterhouse-Five* defies structural ordering of the plot and follows the manner of Pilgrim's time travel. As Procházka points out, the style itself "prevents us from making any

---

[82] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 9.
[83] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 17.
[84] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 23.
[85] Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five 135.
[86] Procházka, word file 14.
[87] Procházka, word file 15.

symmetrical patterns which would redeem the horror of the scene [of the bombing of Dresden] and assimilate the absolute otherness of death."[88]

Disobeying the narrative levels and frame breaking results in a highly fragmented narrative, in which the author-narrator's reaction to the war experience is reflected. Billy Pilgrim's vision of reality is also distorted and shattered in the wake of the destructive effect of the war experience. The fragmented narration parallels the fragmented reality. This tendency is mirrored in Vonnegut's idiosyncratic use of time travel as well.

4.5   Conclusion

Michel Foucault's investigation into the history of epistemes was used to illustrate the changing attitudes to representation, which is a key concept in metafictional texts. The exaggeration of the ternary concept of language in Cervantes's *Don Quixote* marks the rupture from the Renaissance understanding of language and establishes the upcoming Classical episteme, which emphasizes representation instead of similarity. It was exemplified by Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne takes considerable liberty in his handling of narrative temporal relations, and presents their linguistic distortion in the form of endless digressions.

According to Foucault, one cannot transcend his or her historical, social and cultural limits to evaluate the current episteme. However, it has been suggested that the contemporary period is definable by multiplicity of meanings and more inclusive thinking as opposed to the closed systems symptomatic of the previous episteme.

This trend is reflected in the selected fiction, which stresses interaction with the recipient. In case of Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, the narrative self-consciousness and rejection of metaphorical reading result in a complete subversion of narrative conventions. Vonnegut's

---

[88] Procházka, word file 15.

handling of narrative time is equally subversive. By his use of the grotesque and its main constituent, the gag, Vonnegut's narrator violates the conventional narrative structures in science fiction prose and devaluates metaphorical readings. Barth's method consists in foregrounding the commentary and marginalizing the content of the story and plot.

Although frequent in metafictional texts, framing and frame-breaking is not an exclusively metafictional practice. Acknowledging the interplay of the narrative levels and Iser's understanding of the meaning of the text as a dynamic entity, the third subsection of the present subchapter attempted to locate the meaning of a metafictional text in the discrepancy between the fictional and the reader's realm. This divergence is not located in the content of metafiction texts themselves, but comes to life through the interaction between the recipient and the text. This interaction differs in its effect. While Barth's "Frame-Tale" lacks any meaning outside the structure, Fielding parallels the act of narration to the event in the story and provides an opportunity for Tom to articulate his thoughts. Vonnegut disregards the conventional narrative strategies used in science-fiction in favor of randomness of the plot. The three texts were used to demonstrate the rising prominence of the originally integrated structure.

5. Conclusion

The objective of the present thesis was to examine correlations between narratology and metafiction in a selection of self-reflexive texts. The post-War American metafictional texts examined in Chapter three were chosen as a coherent body of works from a particular period. In contrast, the earlier texts presented in Chapter two were selected as representatives of self-conscious tendencies in fiction from the earlier days of the novel. To achieve this goal, the selection largely ignored their origin. The narratological analyses in Chapters two and three were used as a point of departure for the contrastive interpretation of the changing trends in representation in Chapter four. It is the contrastive approach and emphasis on the process of interpretation that constitute the focal point of this thesis.

The predominantly analytical Chapters two and three made frequent use of narrative theory. As was outlined in the theoretical introduction, structuralist narratology was not employed dogmatically but as a reliable framework for further investigation into the selected metafictional texts and their subsequent contrastive interpretation. The structuralist distinction between individual narrative layers provides a clearly delineated structure, which is indispensable in analyzing any complex narrative situation. The thesis endeavored an interdisciplinary approach and ventured beyond narratological analysis in Chapter four, where its results were employed in a broader historical and cultural context of changing tendencies of representation (using Foucault's theory of epistemes).

Metafiction is a fruitful and rewarding field of study. Drawing on the propounded framework, future researchers could investigate areas that could not be addressed in the present thesis, whether caused by my unfamiliarity with the particular area or the limited extent of the thesis. The framework could be extended to include other theoretical accounts and thus provide a more encompassing foundation. Self-awareness in other forms of art can be examined (painting, film, drama). The different attitudes to representing time deserve an in-depth analysis

of their own as well. Given the extent of the thesis, only a fragment of metafictional texts has been analyzed and interpreted. This sphere of study deserves more critical attention and should be studied in relation to other than Anglophone literatures as well.

The introductory chapter presented the problems of defining metafiction. Based on an analogy to metalanguage, metafiction is understood as fiction including a commentary on its own fictional status. It is therefore defined *against* fiction, on the basis of deviations from narrative conventions. While non-metafictional texts immerse the reader in the fictional world, metafictions accentuate their fictional status and hinder the recipient's submergence in the fictional realm. Deliberate violations of this norm are the defining feature of self-conscious texts.

This effect is achieved through means as varied as discussing the problematic authorship, breaking the ontological horizons, intrusive narrative commentaries, references to the act of writing, framing and frame-breaking, or discussing the effect of the fiction with the narratee. The enumerated items are not limited to metafiction and the list is by no means exhaustive. With more of these practices becoming conventionalized, authors are coerced into innovation. The innovation can take the form of reacting against those conventions, such as parading the fictional status of the work. To provide a solid basis for subsequent interpretations of these elusive aspects, these problematic areas were submitted to narratological analyses.

Understanding metafiction as fiction about fiction is an encompassing definition indeed, albeit with potential drawbacks. If we assume Alter's and Hutcheon's propositions that self-conscious texts evolved in a parallel tradition alongside their non-metafictional counterparts, we run the risk of dismissing the historical and cultural implications. Equally problematic is Waugh's assertion that all literature is inherently self-conscious. The implicit presence of the author is arguably traceable in every text, but there is no evidence within the text itself and it is more likely a construct within the recipient's mind.

The present thesis suggested approaching this interpretative problem using Foucault's theory of epistemes. The proposed framework does not conceive of metafiction as a separate genre of literature but as a constituent of broader cultural tendencies in the human understanding of representation. As Foucault's analyses of fine art, philosophy, medicine or economy demonstrate, the notion of representation is not a matter of narrative fiction exclusively. The increasing degree of self-consciousness in fiction is to be viewed in a broader context of human development.

Metafiction is fundamentally a matter of representation. In contrast to non-metafictional texts, it brings the process of diegesis to the fore and highlights the process of artistic creation. For this purpose, Foucault's analysis of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* was invoked in the introductory chapter. It includes the problems of mimesis in the form of painting and serves as a visual parallel to the problematic area of imitating diegesis in narrative fiction, that were analyzed in Chapters two, three and four.

Foucault traces the transformation from the original focus on similarity to the priority of representation in the Classical episteme, before reexamining the Renaissance concepts in the Modern episteme. Despite Foucault's argument that the current episteme cannot be analyzed without sufficient temporal and cultural distance, it was argued that one of its characteristics is the lack of unifying features. Contemporary theorists react to this absence in their respective accounts (e.g. Derrida, Lyotard, Phelan).

Although the present episteme cannot be delimited, it is safe to conclude that the contemporary primary texts as well as the variety of secondary sources reflect the changing trends in our understanding of representation, such as the increasing amount of self-consciousness. This was exemplified most notably by Barth's "Frame-Tale". It was argued that framing is a literary device used from Antiquity through the Middle Ages until the present day. However, a comparison between a more conventional instance of framing with Barth's

innovative use demonstrates the rising self-awareness and prominence of the initially integrated structure. Framing and frame-breaking is a complex area that requires an examination of its own.

In the analysis of *Don Quixote, Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy* we have witnessed a constant interplay between the object and its linguistic representation, stemming from the artists' conscious disobedience of the conventional distinction between the two. Foucault suggests answering this too strict delimitation with a philosophical, that is partially silent laugh. It is a response to

> all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer to all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection.[1]

Foucault's critique of over-reliance on binaries as well as of the ignorance of interdisciplinarity appears to be symptomatic of the contemporary episteme, which explodes in multiple directions and which is mirrored both in the critical accounts as well as in the selection of the primary texts from the 20th century.

The contemporary approaches emphasize the role of the reader. The present thesis implemented Wolfgang Iser's theory of meaning. Iser conceives of the meaning as a dynamic entity which is relocated from the text itself to the relationship between the text and its recipient. The thesis attempted to link Iser's theory to the selection of metafictional texts and it was argued that potential meanings are to be derived from highlighting the discrepancy between the

---

[1] Foucault 373.

fictional and the reader's realms. This effect is frequently brought about by the practice of frame breaking.

It has been argued that through acknowledging its fictional status metafiction poses questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. The parallels between the ontological horizons have the potential to cause anxiety in the reader. Jorge Luis Borges questions:

> Why does it disturb us that the map be included in the map and the thousand and one night in the book of the *Thousand and One Nights?* Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet?*[2]

Borges's query implies the following: if the fictional characters can be readers or spectators, their readers or spectators can be fictional too. Self-conscious fiction reaches out to the reader using his or her own code (language) in an attempt to breach the ontological horizon designated for fiction. Such reading suggests that by venturing beyond itself metafiction parallels itself to the human endeavor to go beyond oneself and to comprehend one's existence within the cosmos.

To rephrase Borges's observation: we as readers read the characters, but who reads us? There is no answer and there should not be one. The topicality of metafictional texts is perpetuated by the endless quest for the meaning, which is an elusive entity located between the text and the reader. To address this complex interpretative area, the present thesis employed various sources, including narrative theory, Iser's concept of the meaning of the text, and Foucault's epistemes as a framework for the historical survey of changing tendencies in representation. It is my belief that this task should be undertaken in this manner, that is interdisciplinary.

---

[2] Jorge Luis Borges, "Partial Magic in the Quixote", *Labyrinths*, Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby, eds. Emecé Editores, trans. (New York: New Directions Books, 2007) 193-197. 196.

Bibliography:

Primary sources:

Barth, John. Lost in the Funhouse: Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Barthelme, Donald. *Snow White*. New York: Atheneum, 1978.

Cervantes y Saavedra, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*. John Ormsby, trans. *Project Gutenberg*, 2004. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/996/pg996-images.html> 15 Jan 2017. PDF.

Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1992.

Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. London: Penguin Classics, 1997.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday!* Dial Presstrade Paperbacks, 2006. Epub file.

Vonnegut, Kurt. Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death. Dial Press Trade, 2007. Epub file.

Secondary sources:

Abbot, H. Porter. "The Future of All Narrative Futures". *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 531.

Allen, Dennis W. "Sexuality/Textuality in *Tristram Shandy*". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 25.3 (1985) 651–670. <www.jstor.org/stable/450501> 4 May 2017.

Alter, Robert. *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Barth, John. "Literature of Exhaustion". *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984. 62-76.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author". *Image-Music-Text*. Stephen Heath, trans. London: Fontana, 1977. 142-148.

Bal, Mieke. Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Richard Miller, trans. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

Benenson, Susan Elizabeth. "William Hogarth". *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Hogarth> 16 July 2017.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "Partial Magic in the Quixote". *Labyrinths*. Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby, eds. Emecé Editores, trans. New York: New Directions Books, 2007. 193-197.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote". *Ficciones*. Anthony Kerrigan, ed. Emecé Editores, trans. New York: Grove Press, 1994. 45-56.

Booth, Wayne C. "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*". In *PMLA* 67.2. University of Iowa. (1952) JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/460093> 3rd Mar 2017. 163-185.

Cuddon, J. A., Preston, Claire, eds. "Post-structuralism". *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin, 1999) 690-693.

Currie, Mark. "Introduction". *Metafiction*. Mark Currie, ed. New York: Routledge, 2013. 1-20.

Derrida, Jacques. "Letter to a Japanese Friend". David Wood, Andrew Benjamin, trans. *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. Peggy Kamuf, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. 269-276.

Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 1978. 278-294.

Douglass, Paul. "Barth, Barthes, and Bergson: Postmodern Aesthetics and the Imperative of the New". *Pacific Coast Philology* 47. Penne State University Press (2012) JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41851033> 20th Feb 2017. 34-51.

Fludernik, Monika. "Structuralist Narratology: The Rage for Binary Opposition, Categorization, and Typology". *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 38-59.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 2015.

Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*. Paul Rainbow, ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. 32-50.

Gardner, John. *Grendel*. New York: Knopf, 1973.

Gass, William H. "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction". In *Fiction and the Figures of Life*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1970. 3-26.

Gluck, Carol. "Infinite Mischief? History and Literature Once Again". *Representations* 124. 1 University of California Press, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2013.124.1.125> 19th Feb 2017. 125-131.

Gossman, Lionel. "History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification". *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. Robert H. Canary, Henry Kozicki, eds. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961. 3-39.

Gutting, Gary. "Michel Foucault." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014. Zalta, Edward N., ed. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/> 29 June 2017.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Historiographic Metafiction: The Pastime of Past Time". *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988. 105-123.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Iser, Wolfgang. "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach." *New Literary History*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1972, pp. 279–299. *JSTOR*, <www.jstor.org/stable/468316> 28 June 2017.

Jakobson, Roman. *The Framework of Language*. Ann Arbor: Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 1980.

James, Henry. "Figure in the Carpet". *Figure in the Carpet and Other Stories*. Frank Kermode, ed. London: Penguin Classics, 1986. 355-401.

Johnson, Barbara. *The Critical Difference: The Essays in Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Magritte, René. *The Treachery of Images*. (1928-1929) <https://www.renemagritte.org/the-treachery-of-images.jsp> 2 July 2017.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Mills, Sara. *Michel Foucault*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Nealon, Jeffrey T. "Disastrous Aesthetics: Irony, Ethics, and Gender in Barthelme's '*Snow White*'". *Twentieth Century Literature*, 51.2 (2005) 123–141. <www.jstor.org/stable/20058759>

Nicol, Bran. The Cambridge Introduction to Cambridge Fiction. Cambridge: CUP, 2009.

O'Brien, Flann. *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Dalkey Archive Press: London, 2005.

O'Brien, Flann. *The Third Policeman*. Harper Perennial: London, 2007.

O'Brien, Timothy D. "The Hungry Author and Narrative Performance in Tom Jones." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 25.3 (1985) 615–632. <www.jstor.org/stable/450499> 28 Apr 2017.

Phelan, James and Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Introduction: Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Narrative Theory". *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz, eds. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 1-16.

Power, Henry. "Henry Fielding, Richard Bentley, and the 'Sagacious Reader' of *Tom Jones*". *The Review of English Studies* 61.252 (2010) 749-772. <www.jstor.org/stable/40961116> 24 April 2017.

Procházka, Martin. "Apocalypticism in American Cultural History 2: Revelations of the Other". *Litteraria Pragensia* (2005) 15.30, 79-106. Word file.

Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas, 2001.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose*. Trans. Benjamin Sher. Elmwood Park: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991.

Waugh, Patricia. Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction. London: Routledge, 1984.

Williams, Jeffrey. "Narrative of Narrative (*Tristram Shandy*)". *MLN*, 105.5 (1990). 1032–1045. <www.jstor.org/stable/2905166> 14 May 2017.

Worthington, Marjorie. "Done with Mirrors: Restoring the Authority Lost in John Barth's Funhouse". *Twentieth Century Literature*, 47.1 (2001) 114–136. <www.jstor.org/stable/827859>

Scholes, Robert. "Metafiction." *The Iowa Review* 1.4 1970. University of Iowa. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20157652> 4th Mar 2017. 100-115.