CHAPTER ONE
Modes and Forms of Narrative
Narcissism: Introduction of a Typology

Allow me a touch of McLuhanesque glibness: the product is the process. Language and literature must revive their true identity— as the cutting edge of perception. Creativity and the critical spirit must achieve a new harmony and interdependence.

David Caute

A few years ago, René Wellek wisely wrote:

Art is "illusion," "fiction," the world changed into language, paint or sound. It seems to me an oddity of our time that this simple insight into the aesthetic fact is construed as a denial of the relevance, the humanity and significance of art. The recognition of the difference between life and art, of the "ontological gap" between a product of the mind, a linguistic structure, and the events in "real" life which it reflects, does not and cannot mean that the work of art is a mere empty play of forms, cut off from reality. The relation of art to reality is not as simple as older naturalistic theories of copying or "imitation" or Marxist "mirroring" assume. "Realism" is not the only method of art. It excludes three-quarters of the world's literature. It minimizes the role of imagination, personality "making."

Art has always been "illusion," and as one might surmise, it has often, if not always, been self-consciously aware of that ontological status. This formal narcissism is a broad cultural phenomenon, not limited by art form or even by period. The mirror studies of Velasquez and Picasso, and the perplexing self-reference in Escher's "Drawing Hands," find their musical counterparts as early as Cimarosa's eighteenth-century "Il maestro di musica" and as late as Richard Strauss's opera, Capriccio, or Ralph Vaughan Williams' "Serenade to Music." There are those who assert that similarly in fiction—and not just in modern radical texts—a work is apt to produce within itself a dramatized mirror of its own

narrative or linguistic principles. The origins of the self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might well lie in that parodic intent basic to the genre as it began in *Don Quijote*, an intent to unmask dead conventions by challenging, by mirroring. The self-consciousness of Cervantes' text has been handed down, through the likes of Sterne and Diderot, to the Romantic artist-hero of the *Künstlerroman* as has been discussed already in the Introduction.

From novels about the growth of the artist came novels about novels, apparently, reflecting their own genesis and development, challenging, this time, the period-concept of nineteenth-century realism that threatened to become entrenched into the definition of the entire novel genre. If novels such as *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, and the early *nouveaux romans* seemed "arty" when they appeared, it may be for any number of ideological or sociological reasons, but art, as Wellek remarked, has not changed: literature has always been an ordered fictive construct in language. And is not the urge to create coherent worlds, or even just to pattern or to organize the chaos of experience, as natural an impulse as the desire to "imitate" Nature? Aristotle was certainly of this opinion: for him *mimesis* was balanced by *harmonia*.

Self-informing narrative does not signal a lack of sensitivity or of humanitarian (or human) concern on the part of the novelist. Nor is it a mark of crisis, of the asphyxiation of fiction by an overworked critical intellect, or by an excessive curiosity about writers, or by the novelist's loss of faith in his work, or by cubism, film or any of the other possibilities suggested by its detractors. If self-awareness is a sign of the genre's disintegration, then the novel began its decline at birth, as the ironic reading of the Ovid in the Introduction suggested.

An increasingly large international band of writers of novels and short fiction -Borges, Barth, Sanguineti, Fowles, Sollers-does indeed often transform the formal properties of fiction into its subject matter. Perhaps this is because they have discovered that these literary entities are as real, or unreal, as any external, empirical raw materials. Yet, this realization is part of the novel's origins and development as well, and its traces can be seen from *Tristram Shandy* through Pirandello's Serafino Gubbio (who allegorically and parodically resolves the novelist's formal difficulties with naturalism) and on to Maurice Blanchot's works, in which allegories of the writing consciousness replace realistic narratives.

What we today refer to as this kind of literary formalism has always existed; the more modern textual self-preoccupation differs mostly in its explicitness, its intensity, and its own critical self-awareness. This progression is likely connected to a change in the concept of language,

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as Michel Foucault has suggested. It is perhaps also a matter of finding an aesthetic mode of dealing with modern man's experience of life as being unordered by any communal or transcendent power - God or myth - and his new scepticism that art can unproblematically provide a consolatory order.

The classic realistic novel's well-made plot might give the reader the feeling of completeness that suggests, by analogy, either that human action is somehow whole and meaningful, or the opposite, in which case it is art alone that can impart any order or meaning to life. The modern, ambiguous, open-ended novel might suggest, on the other hand, less an obvious new insecurity or lack of coincidence between man's need for order and his actual experience of the chaos of the contingent world, than a certain curiosity about art's ability to produce "real" order, even by analogy, through the process of fictional construction. This latter possibility is particularly suggestive in partially accounting for the new need, first to create fictions, then to admit their fictiveness, and then to examine critically such impulses. This is as true of the short story today as it is of the novel. It is narrative in general that is narcissistic.

It is tempting to speculate on the possible relationship - that explicitly suggests itself in metafiction by John Barth and John Fowles, among others - between the subjectivity of perspective in modern existentialism and the concern of self-conscious fiction to assert some mimetic life-art connection in the face of its obviously introspective orientation. These novels and the existential perspective both deny illusion, falseness. Fiction is obviously fiction; as Borges has shown us, life is fictive, of our making, as well. Existential man is "free" so he too can bear no illusions about his mortality and about the limited nature of his perspective. For real "authenticity" there can be no absolute truths. Similarly narcissistic fiction can only be judged in terms of its own internal validity: "truth" has no significance in art.

On the other hand, in Structuralism in Literature, Robert Scholes sees the work of these modern writers, whom he calls "fabulators," as a rejection of existentialism and its ethic of freedom. He interprets their stress on system as proof that metafiction is structurally inspired (in its assumption that man exists in a system "not necessarily arranged for his benefit"). However, the emphasis on system in these works is on an intramural textual level, whereas the freedom which is so constantly thematized and theorized about by texts ranging from Robbe-Grillet's to Nabokov's is the extramural freedom of the reader. These writers, then, have not so much moved from existentialism to structuralism as

effected a sort of synthesis through that revealing of (not to say revelling in) system which itself demands of the reader new freedom- and new responsibility. Scholes himself admits indirectly that there is a problem in his metafiction-structuralism linkage and that it lies precisely in the rejection of the notion of subject in the latter and the stress on the role of the reader in the former. His further connecting of these two modern phenomena with cybernetics and with Norbert Wiener, in particular, brings at once to mind, however, an archetypal structuralist text which ironically attempts to limit the reader's freedom to operate within the tight system that is the novel-Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49.*

What narcissistic narrative does do in flaunting, in baring its fictional and linguistic systems to the reader's view, is to transform the process of making, of *poiesis,* into part of the shared pleasure of reading. Novelist John Gardner, despite his ambivalence toward self-conscious literature as a whole, sees this as one of the major attractions of the form. Its "gimcrackery," he fears, does suit "our for the most part childishly petulant contemporary mood- our self-congratulating self-doubt, our alienated, positivistic pessimism. . . . And it suits, also a nobler quality of contemporary life: our delight in discovering how things work, our pleasure in seeing objects for themselves, enjoying their colors and textures."5

John Barth has called this fiction a "literature of exhaustion"; similarly, Ortega y Gasset refers to the "dehumanization of art." Yet neither of these terms is as negative a description as its immediate associations might suggest. Both are linked to parody and to an attempt to exhaust literary possibilities- without succeeding. Borges more cautiously chooses the more neutral term of "baroque" to describe such art as his own.6 In all three writers' views, however, it is the human imaginative process that is explicitly called into action, in both author and reader.

Despite both the hostile accusations of "preening narcissism" of many reviews, and the increasing number of self-reflective novels that appear, very little systematic study has been devoted thus far to determining the types, much less the causes of such literary introversion. Perhaps the negative connotations of the very language we have been forced to use here-narcissism, introverted, introspective, self-conscious- suggest a strong desire to keep criticism as a separate domain; fiction which constitutes its own literary analysis is, to the critic, naturally somewhat suspect. However, there have been a few auspicious beginnings such as the related work of Robert Alter and

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Lucien Dällenbach, already mentioned. Another important start is Robert Scholes's early enthusiastic work on *The Fabulators* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). In analyzing works by six modern English and American metafictionists, Scholes traces the revival of rhetoric, romance, the picaresque, satire, and allegory in fiction which he describes here simply as "more verbal," "more fictional," "less realistic," "more shapely," than earlier works. In a later article entitled "Metafiction," he separates these texts more precisely into four categories, in each of which emphasis is laid on one of the following: the formal, structural, behavioural or philosophical aspects of the text. This breakdown, however, relies totally on an acceptance of Scholes's four initially postulated, parallel categories of (fiction's) forms and ideas, and (being's) existence and essence. These become roughly paralleled again to four categories of fiction-romance, myth, novel, and allegory. Another problem with this system in its application is that Scholes limits himself to collections of short pieces, suggesting that the mode he investigates cannot be expanded successfully. His earlier book tends to belie this, however. Scholes concludes that Barth and Barthelme are merely chroniclers of our "despair over the exhausted forms of our thought and our existence." But Coover and Gass, on the other hand, "are reaching through form and behavior for some ultimate values, some true truth." Yet where is the *meta* in this metafiction? Is the fiction not also a form of art which works within a literary code-as well as a more generally existential or behavioural one?

On this more literary level, however, the only extensive theoretical or typological work is that done by Jean Ricardou, who conveniently provides us with a horizontal and vertical auto-representational cross on which to crucify-systematically-metafictional modes. Ricardou's analysis is the more methodical, yet because of its appealingly neat, *a priori* structuring, presents problems for specific textual analysis, problems that Scholes's work tries carefully to evade. Ricardou presents a system which is structured on two types of self-reflectiveness, or, to use his term, auto-representation-vertical and horizontal. The vertical variety is *inter*dimensional, operating between the "fiction" (what is said) and the "narration" (how it is said). Horizontal autorepresentation is *intra*dimensional. There are two sub-groups within these types, yielding four separate modes: (1) "auto-représentation verticale, descendante, expressive": here the "fiction" is in control of the "narration," as it is traditionally in realistic texts in which the referential dimension dominates; (2) "auto-représentation verticale, ascendante, productrice": this is in operation when it is the "narration" that controls, or at least influences, the "fiction." This is what Ricardou

7 *Iowa Review* 1 (Fall 1970), 100-115.
8 "La Population des miroirs," *Poétique* 22 (1975), 212.
earlier had labelled as a "littérature du faire" or "scripturalisme," for the text points to itself allegorically or metaphorically as a written text, as an active production of writer and reader; (3) "auto-représentation horizontale, référentielle, productrice" operates on the level of the "fiction" only, in the form of structural event repetition, *mise en abyme*, or perhaps microcosmic sabotages of chronology and suspense; (4) "auto-représentation horizontale, littérale, productrice" functions on the "narration" level alone and indeed the "narration" becomes the "fiction."

There are at least three potential problems with Ricardou's structure here. In the first place, it is hard to see how his initial category qualifies as any kind of *auto*-representation except in his example of alliteration, a not particularly important technique in narrative. He does separate it from the others by its pejorative label of "expressive" (as opposed to the modern "productrice"), but one must still question its usefulness as a category of *auto*-representation. The second limitation of this system lies in Ricardou's lack of distinction between texts which are self-conscious about their diegetic or narrative processes and those which are *linguistically* self-reflective. This causes distinct problems in Ricardou's own analyses of, for example, Raymond Roussel, in which he confuses and combines the author's generative linguistic *procédé* with the different but equally self-reflective structural narrative mirroring, a confusion he senses but does not clarify in his more recent writing on Roussel. Both language and narrative structures are included in his category of "narration," but some texts—such as John Barth's *Chimera*—reveal their own diegetic operations, while others—Ricardou's own fiction—concentrate on their own linguistic functioning. It is true that, in the latter case, language often works to order diegetic modes, but as this is not necessarily so in the reverse instance (that narrative structures determine language), there would seem to be a need for a distinction between the two.

The third difficulty with Ricardou's cross of horizontal and vertical auto-representative categories lies in its very neatness, its *a priori* deductive nature. It has already been suggested that its fearful symmetry is rather questionable in allowing (or rather, requiring) the presence of what he calls the "auto-représentation verticale, descendante, expressive." However, one would still be left with a pleasantly structured triangle of types, were it not for the fact that there seem to be *more* kinds of metafictional self-consciousness than it can account for. There are texts which are, as has been mentioned, diegetically self-aware, that is,
conscious of their own narrative processes. Others are linguistically self-
reflective, demonstrating their awareness of both the limits and the
powers of their own language. In the first case, the text presents itself as
diegesis, as narrative; in the second, it is unobfuscated text, language.

A further distinction must be made, however, within these two modes,
for each can be present in at least two forms, what one might term an
overt and a covert one. Overt forms of narcissism are present in texts in
which the self-consciousness and self-reflection are clearly evident,
usually explicitly thematized or even allegorized within the "fiction." In
its covert form, however, this process would be structuralized,
internalized, actualized. Such a text would, in fact, be self-reflective, but
not necessarily self-conscious. One is left again with a four-part system,
this time of overt diegetic and linguistic types of literary narcissism, and
their covert counterparts, both diegetic and linguistic. In order to clarify
and expand this system and to see its diachronic as well as synchronic
implications, it is necessary to deal with each mode and form in turn.

In its most overt form the self-consciousness of a text often takes the
shape of an explicit thematization-through plot allegory, narrative
metaphor, or even narratorial commentary. This latter possibility opens
up again the entire question of the modernity and origins of recent
metafiction. It has already been suggested that these new manifestations
are rooted in a tradition of literary self-awareness that dates back,
through Romantic inner mirroring to the eighteenth-century garrulous,
guiding narrator to Don Quijote's Cid Hamete Benengeli. That is to say
that there would appear to be a developing tradition of narcissism, rather
than a definite rupture out of which sprang metafiction. Can one really
make the distinction between older, more comfortable "textes de plaisir"
and modern difficult "textes de jouissance," as Roland Barthes suggests
in Le Plaisir du texte (Paris: Seuil, 1973)? Even if such a sharp
differentiation could be made, could the "limit-text," of which Barthes
speaks, perhaps not be more a result of gradual and earlier change in
degree, rather than an abrupt change in kind? Is it, perhaps, another of the
dialectic syntheses that mark the stages in the development of the novel
genre? The reader's role changes with the demands made by Gide and
Woolf before arriving at Sollers' recent concept of "travail." Perhaps it is
even less complex than that: perhaps each novel has always had within
itself the seeds of a "narcissistic" reading, of an interpretation which
would make it an allegorical or metaphoric exploration of the process of
articulating a literary world.

This admittedly appears more convincing a speculation if one does
accept Don Quijote (rather than Pamela, the voyage tale, the fabliaux,
etc.) as the first novel, since its parodic intent is essential to its formal
identity. The Russian formalist concept of parody as an autonomous art,
based on the discovery of "process" would therefore be of interest
to the study of the novel's dialectic growth. Parody, according to the formalist theoreticians, is the result of a conflict between realistic motivation and an aesthetic motivation which has become weak and has been made obvious. The consequence is the unmasking of the system or of the creative process whose function has given way to mechanical convention. It is as if a dialectic were established, as if this parodied material were backgrounded to the new forms and thus a formal synthesis effected. If a new parodic form does not develop when an old one becomes insufficiently motivated, the old form tends to degenerate into pure convention; witness the popular traditional novel, the best-seller.

Another operation is at work in metafictional parody, however, and this the formalists called "defamiliarization." The laying bare of literary devices in metafiction brings to the reader's attention those formal elements of which, through over-familiarization, he has become unaware. Through his recognition of the backgrounded material, new demands for attention and active involvement are brought to bear on the act of reading. This is true in other art forms as well. Standing before Segal's "Diner," one might postulate a parodic modern tie with the Dutch Masters' commonplace scenes; Augustus John's "Symphonie Espagnole" is a modern parody of El Greco. In music, the phenomenon is even more apparent: Vaughan Williams' reworking of "Greensleeves" and other English folk ballads, Mahler's funeral parody of "Frère Jacques" in his First Symphony, Prokofiev's entire "Classical Symphony."

Coming back to fiction, one finds John Fowles's narrator in The French Lieutenant's Woman parodying the conventions of the Victorian novel- but doing so as a means to a new and relevant, modern synthetic form. Yet this play could well be seen as the very essence of the novel genre: Quijote imitates Amadis of Gaul, Cervantes pretends to be Cid Hamete Benengeli, Alonzo Quijano pretends to be Don Quijote. Is, then, the modern concept of "intertextuality" or textual intersubjectivity so very different from the parodic dialectic that appears to be central to the novel? One thinks of John Barth's backgrounded evocations in The Sot-Weed Factor of Rabelais, Cervantes, and the entire eighteenth-century novel tradition, or his parodies in Giles Goat-Boy, of the conventions of the Bible, the animal fable, Science Fiction, allegory, satire, and the epic, not to mention the novel. Is the "intertextuality" of Claude Mauriac's La Marquise sortir à cinq heures not perhaps of the same parodic mode?

Indeed, the techniques of the "littérature citationnelle" can be seen as both parodic and generative. Quotations from one text, when inserted in the context of another, are the same and yet new and differ-

ent, a microcosmic version of T. S. Eliot's concept of "tradition" in literature. The parodic creation of new fiction through the rewriting of old is itself the narcissistic subject of metafictional parody in Borges' tale of Pierre Menard, author of the *Quijote*.

Parody is, therefore, an exploration of difference and similarity; in metafiction it invites a more literary reading, a recognition of literary codes. But it is wrong to see the end of this process as mockery, ridicule, or mere destruction. *Metafiction parodies and imitates as a way to a new form which is just as serious and valid, as a synthesis, as the form it dialectically attempts to surpass. It does not necessarily involve a movement away from *mimesis*, however, unless by that term is meant only a rigid object-imitation or behaviouristic-realistic motivation.*

A text may self-consciously present its own creative processes, perhaps as a model of man's exercise of language and meaning production. And, it may do so, as Jonathan Culler suggests in *Structuralist Poetics*, with an eye to disarming attacks on its *vraisemblance* by admitting its artificiality. However, it might also be done in order to make a specific demand upon the reader, a demand for recognition of a new code, for a more open reading that entails a parodic synthesis of back- and fore-grounded elements.

There is yet another reason, of course, why modern self-informing fiction is not *anti*-mimetic. The "psychological realism" of early twentieth-century fiction, made possible by Romantic self-consciousness, expanded (again through a kind of dialectic movement) the meaning of novelistic mimesis to include process as well as product. For many social or philosophical reasons, Joyce, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Pirandello, Svevo, Gide, and many others began to question the increasingly narrow view of fictional realism that had grown out of the naturalism of the preceding century. Perhaps it is true that they began to doubt the claim of external reality to being real, and chose instead to substitute an inner world of subjectivity and imagination. What is important to the novel, however, is the aesthetic consequence of their doubt.

Their new "subjective realism" had two major effects on the reified novelistic tradition of the preceding century that are significant here, especially for overt forms of narcissism. The once important detailed presentation of external reality became somewhat atrophied or, at least, stylized as the focus of attention shifted to the character's inner processes- imaginative and psychological. Secondly, the role of the reader began to change. Reading was no longer easy, no longer a

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comfortable controlled experience; the reader was now forced to control, to organize, to interpret. He was assaulted from all sides, often by a self-consciously literary text. In his *Journal des faux-monnayeurs*, Gide separates his novel's interest into two parts, into the plot events and the author's efforts to make a novel of them. Within Gide's novel itself, the reader is informed that the subject of Edouard's novel (also, of course, entitled *Les Faux-monnayeurs*) is the writer's attempt to impose order and meaning on events. In trying to free the novel form from the constrictions of nineteenth-century realism, Gide had to give the reader a more active role.

Indeed, much of the final ordering and sense-making labour of what we call modern "stream of consciousness" writing has fallen to the reader. Based in part upon the psychology and epistemology of, among others, William James and G. E. Moore, this fiction constitutes an attempt to render psychic processes rather than empirical products. If the novel is to be concerned with consciousness, it must deal with epistemological issues which in turn are likely to condition aesthetic realization. The writers we are considering felt that the break with the static literary code of nineteenth-century realism had to be deliberate and often they chose to do it overtly, textually, self-consciously. The self-involved experimentation and parody of *Jacob's Room*, for example, seems paradigmatic of the form that fiction appears to take each time a change in the concept of novelistic realism develops. In it, Virginia Woolf concerns herself dialectically with both the processes of consciousness in their relativity and flux, and the empirical objects of that consciousness.

To move from these general psychic processes to the particular creative ones involved in the manufacture of a fictive universe was a natural step for writers such as Proust, Pirandello, O'Brien, and Gide. Their writing narrators added this dimension to the Romantic tradition of the *Künstlerroman*. Their diegetic or narrative self-consciousness was matched by the linguistic awareness of works produced by writers such as Italo Svevo.

What, then, is the difference between this type of autorepresentation and what has here been named *modern* metafiction? It is not a matter of date, for William Saroyan's self-consciousness is in the

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14 See *Journal*, p. 74: "chaque nouveau chapitre doit poser un nouveau problème, être une ouverture, une direction, une impulsion, une jetée en avant-de l'esprit du lecteur."
service of traditional realism in stories such as "Seventy Thousand Assyrians" or "Myself Upon the Earth," and it is not quite what has here been called overt narcissism; nor is the even more recent Gidian parody of Milan Kundera's Život je jinde (Life Is Elsewhere). One difference seems to lie in the role allotted to the reader. In its concern about writers and about novels, the "expressionistic" novel focuses on its own idea; the main interest is in the writing process and its product. In both the covert and overt forms of metafictional narcissism, this focus does not shift, so much as broaden, to include a parallel process of equal importance to the text's actualization - that of reading. The reader is explicitly or implicitly forced to face his responsibility toward the text, that is, toward the novelistic world he is creating through the accumulated fictive referents of literary language. As the novelist actualizes the world of his imagination through words, so the reader - from those same words - manufactures in reverse a literary universe that is as much his creation as it is the novelist's. This near equation of the acts of reading and writing is one of the concerns that sets modern metafiction apart from previous novelistic self-consciousness.

It is certainly true that from its origins the novel has displayed an interest in moulding its reader, but few earlier texts will grant or demand of the reader, his freedom. Tristram Shandy constantly worries about his reader's qualifications and needs. 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. Rovani and Manzoni chide their female readers; Diderot is quite amusingly rude to his presumed impatient readers. The epistolary novel form, in general, explicitly places the reader as letter reader within the structure of the novel, a convention neatly parodied by Gide in Les Faux-monnayeurs: everyone in that novel reads the letters and journals of others, forestalling and defamiliarizing many possible reader responses en route.

This earlier kind of thematizing and structuralizing of the reading role is close to that of overt narcissism, but without the necessary mirroring (the reflecting, as of mirrors, in reverse) of the reading process in that of writing. For instance, in Uno, nessuno, e centomila, Pirandello's narrator addresses the reader as if in a soliloquy, bringing him almost onto the stage, as if to invite (but fail at) dialogue. The crisis in human relations that is dramatized in the novel through the characters, is also presented, through the reader, in the form and structure, but the parallelism of the acts of writing and reading is not suggested by Pirandello. Often, as in Gide's Symphonie pastorale, the narrator can learn from the act of reading the text he himself has written, but in the Gidian case at least, there is not really a mirroring of the two processes, but rather a thematized recognition of the consequences of causal and

temporal sequence. Metafiction, however, seems aware of the fact that it (like all fiction, of course) actually has no existence apart from that constituted by the inward act of reading which counterpoints the externalized act of writing.

In the overt form of narcissism, several techniques are employed which are compatible with Ricardou's "auto-représentation horizontale, référentielle, productrice" and also with the "auto-représentation verticale, ascendante, productrice"—that is to say, the use of mise en abyme, allegory, metaphor, microcosm to shift the focus from the "fiction" to the "narration" by either making the "narration" into the very substance of the novel's content, or by undermining the traditional coherence of the "fiction" itself, in the latter case.

The distinction between the two modes of narcissism within this overt form is necessary at this stage. In the diegetic mode, the reader is made aware of the fact that he too, in reading, is actively creating a fictional universe. Often a parodied, backgrounded narrative code will guide his awareness of this fact. In The French Lieutenant's Woman, for instance, Fowles's freedom-granting core plot involving Sarah and Charles is an allegory of the freedom granted the reader, the thematized reader, by another character, the narrator. John Barth's whole novel, The Floating Opera, is a macro-structure of his hero's use of "Adam's Original and Unparalleled 'Ocean-Going' Floating Opera" as a correlative for his own storytelling processes. Todd Andrews imagines too the viewers watching parts of a continuous play as this boat drifts along the river, and having to fill in the parts they miss with the aid of their own imaginations. This image of the experience of both living life and reading texts is further mirrored in the ironic mise en abyme of Todd's futile attempts at boat-building and also "Inquiry" writing. The original ending of the novel, restored in the 1967 reissue, added yet another fun-house mirror: the show aboard the "Opera" begins with Hamlet's soliloquy and ends with the "Great Steamboat Explosion." Meanwhile, Todd was to commit suicide ("To be, or not to be"), destroying the boat by an explosion in the process and ending the reading of the novel, a no longer floating Opera. Other overtly diegetic narcissistic texts, such as Coover's "The Magic Poker," are also explicitly aware of their status as literary artifacts, of their narrative and world-creating processes, and of the necessary presence of the reader: "perhaps tomorrow I will invent Chicago and Jesus Christ and the history of the moon. Just as I have invented you, dear reader, while lying here in the afternoon sun." However, the second mode within this form, the linguistic, operates self-consciously at a somewhat more basic stage. In diegetic narcissism, the text displays itself as narrative, as the gradual building of a fictive universe complete with character and action. In the linguistic mode, however, the text

would actually show its building blocks—the very language whose referents serve to construct that imaginative world. That these referents are fictive and not real is assured by the generic code instituted by the word "novel" on the cover. Mailer's *Armies of the Night* is deliberately schizoid for this reason: it is subtitled both "the novel as history" and "history as a novel." Some linguistic referents in the text will be functional in building up plot and character; others may seem gratuitous but will actually operate towards the creation of what Barthes has called an "effet de réel." One need only regard a fragment of a text such as John Hawkes's "Charivari" to see what might happen if a shared mimetic contract were not explicitly established with the reader: "This was the day when the end of May joined the beginning of December. Sleigh runners cut through trembling grass, fires burned in the white streets and the Maypole dancers of early spring were carolers under lantern light." But even here the reader works to unite the contradicting referents, to balance them neatly into oppositions, as if the dislocation of language brings out the meaning-maker in man.

In order to comprehend the language of fiction, the reader must share with the writer certain recognizable codes—social, literary, linguistic, etc. Many texts thematize, through the characters and plot, the inadequacy of language in conveying feeling, in communicating thought, or even fact. Often this theme is introduced as an allegory of the frustration of the writer when faced with the need to present, only through language, a world of his making that must be actualized through the act of reading: Hilary Burd is not the only "word child" of Iris Murdoch's novel of that name. Other texts, on the other hand, thematize the overwhelming power and potency of words, their ability to create a world more real than the empirical one of our experience. Paolo Volponi's *La macchina mondiale* is only one instance of this quite common variety of overt linguistic narcissism.

In both the linguistic and diegetic modes the focus is as much on the creative processes of the reader as it is on those of the writer: "Reader . . . we have roles to play, thou and I: you are the doctor (washing your hands between hours), and I, I am, I think, the nervous dreary patient. I am free associating, brilliantly, brilliantly, to put you into the problem. Or for fear of boring you: which?" Overtly narcissistic novels place fictionality, structure, or language at their content's core. They play with different ways of ordering, and allow (or force) the reader to learn how he makes sense of this literary world (if not his own real one). Such texts are not outside the mimetic code. Twentieth-century realism allows for a mimesis of dynamic process, as well as static

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18 "L'Effet de réel," *Communications*, no. 11 (1968), 84-89.
product, or object. And it is not the rise of structuralism that has brought this about, as some feel, but rather metafiction or fiction itself. Critical theory may influence art but in this case the literary tradition of novelistic development seems the more likely general force.

What has always been a truism of fiction, though rarely made conscious, is brought to the fore in modern texts: the making of fictive worlds and the constructive, creative functioning of language itself are now self-consciously shared by author and reader. The latter is no longer asked merely to recognize that fictional objects are "like life"; he is asked to participate in the creation of worlds and of meaning, through language. He cannot avoid this call to action for he is caught in that paradoxical position of being forced by the text to acknowledge the fictionality of the world he too is creating, yet his very participation involves him intellectually, creatively, and perhaps even affectively in a human act that is very real, that is, in fact, a kind of metaphor of his daily efforts to "make sense" of experience.

Morelli, the novelist figure of Cortazar's Rayuela (Hopscotch), considers the possible new role of the reader (one that Sanguineti also presents in Il giuoco dell'oca): "that of making an accomplice of [him], a travelling companion. Simultaneously him, provided that the reading will abolish reader's time and substitute author's time. Thus the reader would be able to become a coparticipant and cosufferer of the experience through which the novelist is passing, at the same moment and in the same form." The reader and writer are engaged in acts which are parallel, if reversed in direction, for both make fictive worlds in and through the actual functioning of language. This is the responsibility, the almost existentialist freedom in responsibility, that metafiction offers and requires of the reader. This is a freedom which operates inside, of course, the bounds of that internalized grammar or code that genre expectations establish. In overtly narcissistic texts, the emphasis is upon bringing both this liberty and this duty to the reader's attention. In the covert form, however, it is assumed that he knows his duty and will respond accordingly. The stress alters subtly from the teaching of the thematized reader to the actualized act of reading in progress.

Texts which are considered overtly narcissistic are usually still admitted, even by the most negative of "Ovidian" critics, to be novels, although no doubt debilitating forms of a moribund genre. Perhaps this is because of their link with the tradition of novelistic self-consciousness dating back to Cervantes and Sterne. To most, however, covert narcissism presents graver doubts. Has Narcissus now died by the pool, lured

by his own reflection? Just as overt narcissism forces a consideration of the origin and "newness" of metafictional technique, so any discussion of this covert form of literary introversion raises the other important question, that of the outer limits of the novel as a narrative mimetic genre. How far can auto-representation go before it becomes non- or anti-representation? In order to answer this the two different modes of covert narcissism must be examined.

On this covert level, the self-reflection is implicit; that is to say, it is structuralized, internalized within the text. As a result, it is not necessarily self-conscious. This alters the form it takes and the form of the analysis. Since Ricardou does not separate the diegetic and the linguistic modes, he would probably have to group both of these under his category of "auto-représentation horizontale, littérale, productrice," for they both operate on the level of his "narration." Since the reader is not usually addressed directly here as he might be in the overt form, it is more difficult to generalize concerning the various shapes these two covert modes might adopt. However, one possible approach would be to take note of recurring structural models found internalized in this kind of metafiction.

On the diegetic level there are many models, or what might be termed paradigms, that are discernible. Among these are the following: 1) The detective story (the written plot and the plot to kill). Based on the general pattern of the puzzle or the enigma, this literary form is itself a very self-conscious one: in fact, the reader of a murder mystery comes to expect the presence of a detective-story writer within the story itself, be it in Agatha Christie (The Pale Horse and many others) or Dorothy Sayers (the Harriet Vane stories). There is almost inevitably within the novel also a conversation about how such events as are then under discussion occur in detective stories but never in real life (that is, in that novel). John Fowles parodies this convention to metafictional ends in his recent story "The Enigma"- as Mike, the police detective, and Isobel discuss the case he is trying to solve and decide that it, unlike this story, has committed "the terrible literary crime of not sticking to the rules." The murder mystery plot also has extremely strong and obvious structural conventions. There is a crime; it will be solved because of both the characters' psychological consistency and the detective's slightly superior powers. The incriminating evidence is within the text; some details might seem in the end irrelevant to the plot, but they are all functional, even if only in leading the reader astray. However, the cerebral intellectual triumphs of a Sherlock Holmes or a Nero Wolfe, who logically interpret the clues and discover the solution to the enig-

23 In Thomas Pynchon's V., one of the characters, Herbert Stencil, has the function of plot-building, linking, connecting. But here, the plot-making instinct reveals itself as paranoia, perhaps another structural metaphor for diegetic narcissism.

24 The Ebony Tower (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 239.
mas, are in effect the reader's triumphs. Agatha Christie even parodies this as Miss Marple and the reader both spend the first third of her novel, *Nemesis*, trying to discover just what crime has indeed been committed and how Miss Marple is to right the subsequent wrong. The hermeneutic gaps of such fiction are explicitly made textually functional. Yet, is this not true of all reading, all attempts to discover meaning, unravel plots—be they of a novel or a murder, or both? The presence of what might be called "mystery modes" (generic self-consciousness, a deliberate hermeneutic model of reading) in the internalized parodic use of the detective-story structure of writers such as Borges and Robbe-Grillet qualifies them as writers of this particular covert kind of narcissism in which the reading orientation is so important. Other such authors will be discussed in Chapter Five. 2) *Fantasy.* Covert narcissistic texts share with all fantasy literature the ability to force the reader (not overtly ask him) to create a fictive imaginative world separate from the empirical one in which he lives. Tolkien's Middle Earth (like, of course, Homer's Troy, Milton's Eden, or Fowles's Victorian England) is as real to the reader as his own world, but it is different, other, a creation of his imagination. Whereas in overt narcissism the reader is explicitly told that what he is reading is imaginary, that the referents of the text's language are fictive, in fantasy (and the covert forms of narcissism for which it acts as model) the fictiveness of the referents is axiomatic. Fantasy literature must create new self-sufficient worlds, but has at its disposal only the language of this one. All writers of fiction create symbolic constructs or fictive worlds; but all writers of fantasy have to make their autonomous worlds sufficiently representational to be acceptable to the reader. As Tzvetan Todorov has explained, fantasy literature is a hesitation or compromise between the empirically real and the totally imaginary. The fact that all writers must impose their fictive worlds on the reader's imagination by sheer presence through language, is an insight displayed openly in metafiction. In fact, it is a knowledge of the axiomatic imaginary character of the literary worlds of both fantasy and covertly narcissistic texts based on this model that is required during the productive act of reading García Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* or Giorgio Manganelli's "Un Re." 3) *Game Structure.* At the Cerisy conference of 1971, Robbe-Grillet claimed that all his work was an attempt to bring to light the structures of "jeu" and the ideology that its gratuity entails. The *nouveaux romanciers* have certainly been the most outspoken in their use of the game model. In their fiction, the concept of codes, or of rules, known and followed in the acts of writing and reading (and which become ends unto themselves) can be found. The following of these rules,
which places the emphasis on the process being enacted and not the
product finally attained, can also be seen, however, as a demand made on
the reader by the narcissistic use- of the actualized game model in
general. This is true in texts which differ radically in effect: from the
baseball game structure of Robert Coover's *The Universal Baseball
Association, Inc. J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* to Sollers' chess board in *Drame*
to Sanguineti's more explicit dice shooting by the reader in order to
arrange the 111 parts of *Il giuoco dell'oca*. In the latter instance, the
reader's work and pleasure in combining and creating unities and making
meaning through the gratuitous codes of the dice game are intended
(according to Sanguineti's comments on the back cover of the 1967
Feltrinelli edition) to allow the reader to enjoy the same creative
processes as those in which the writer had originally indulged. This
shared parallel process is central to the interest of all texts that employ
this model. 4) *The Erotic.* All fictional texts attempt to tantalize, to
seduce the reader. As Roland Barthes has suggested in both *S/Z* and the
more recent *Le Plaisir du texte*, they also seek to escape the desired
possession. The essentially erotic relationship of text and reader or of
writer and reader is one of the overtly thematized subjects of John Barth's
*Chimera*. But the erotic model can be actualized covertly as well. The act
of reading becomes both literally sensual and metaphorically sexual in its
process of uniting "all the polarities" in Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful
Losers*. The ironic resolution of image polarities and of narrative tensions
in the reading of this novel mirrors inversely the deliberate lack of such
solutions in the erotic structure of the fictional world of Edith, F.,
Catherine Tekakwitha, and the narrator, leaving the reader as the ultimate
paradoxically beautiful loser. In *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, William
Gass compares the loneliness of writing to that of sexual encounter. His
"heroine" also invents worlds (and parodies existing literary ones) during
intercourse; she sees herself in Beckettian terms as "imagination
imagining itself imagine." Hélène Cixous' *Tombe* presents the act of
writing as an erotic activity- sperm as ink, phallus as pen, sheets as paper,
bed (lit) as book (livre). (The actual basis, however, of this narrative
structure turns out to be a linguistic play- le lierre: l'hier, lit/erre, lit/hier.)

These four diegetic models are not intended as exclusive and complete,
but only as four already observed models or metaphoric patterns that are
structurally internalized in self-reflective texts. A case, for example,
could probably be made for just one general category-of a "system"
model- to include also such works as Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and
*V.* Similarly one might advance a paradigm of "parody": John Fowles
structures *The Collector* on a double ironic parody of the fiction of the
"angry young men" and of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. However, as this
structuring principle is also revealed thematically and explicitly (in the
names of characters; in their realization of the literary
parallels), it would seem best to categorize the parodic model as a
generally overt form of narcissism, self-conscious as much as self-
reflecting.

The only type of narcissistic text left to be considered is the covertly
linguistic variety. Here part of Ricardou's intradimensional (at the level
of "narration") auto-representation category ("horizontale, littérale,
productrice") comes into play. The models here are less easily discussed
in generalized non-textual terms. One, however, would be the riddle or
joke, a form which directs the reader's attention to language itself, to its
potential for semantic duplicity. Language can both convey and conceal
meaning. Other generative models are the pun and the anagram. Saussure
felt that anagrammatic play existed in early Latin and Greek texts (for
perhaps ritualistic or mnemonic reasons).27 Such linguistic play can be
found too in Hugo ("Gal, amant de la reine, alla, tour magnanime"
yielding "Gallamant de l'arène à la Tour Magne, à Nîmes") and in Jules
Verne's La Jangada or Bourses de voyage ("Rosam angelum letorum"
yields "Rose a mangé l'omelette au rhum"). But rarely before the "textes
de jeunesse" of Raymond Roussel did anagrammatic play function as the
sole forming model of the "fiction." (In his later novels, however, this
functioning is hidden to the reader and so becomes cryptogrammatic.)
Metafictional texts such as Alejo Carpentier's "El Camino de Santiago"
find their narrative structure in a punning or anagrammatic word play
inherent in the linguistic logic of the text and title.

Joyce's foregrounding of language in Finnegans Wake is perhaps the
real forbear of the nouveau nouveau romancier's creation of "fiction" in
the space between words. In the early Roussel, language begets language
which begets a verisimilar narrative "fiction." In Joyce, as in Ricardou,
language begets language which is the "fiction." The difficulty in reading
these texts bears witness to the increased demands made on the reader.
The creative dynamism and the delight in infinite interpretative
possibilities that once were the property of the writer are now shared by
the reader in the process of concretizin g the text he is reading. In overt
narcissism this new role is taught; it is thematized. In the covert form, it
is actualized.

This mirroring in reverse of the creative process again raises the
important issue regarding the limits of the novel genre. At what stage
does auto-representation become anti-representation? Does Narcissus
drown at this stage? Is the novel dead when the reader actually becomes a
writer, or "producer"? Is it dead when ideological demands convert
novels into "texts"? There does appear to be a definite feeling on the part
of those writers directly involved that the anti-representational "textes" of
Tel Quel, for instance, constitute an entirely

27 See Jean Starobinski, Les Mots sous les mots: les anagrammes de Ferdinand de
Saussure ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1971).
different form from the *nouveau nouveau roman*'s auto-representation.\textsuperscript{28} In the latter, to use Ricardou's terminology, the inner linguistic mirrors are not destructive, but rather the doubling forms the "fiction" itself; the objective is unification, not disruption. Representation is not annulled but turned in on itself, and the "narration" invades and pervades the "fiction."

While extreme forms of this invasion—the devastation of the "fiction"—would signal the destruction of the novel, there does seem to be room still, within the genre, for a movement toward a more productive, active concept of reading, as well as writing. The decentralizing of the traditional realistic interest of fiction, away from the story told to the story telling, to the functioning of language and of larger diegetic structures, is important to the *nouveau nouveau roman*. Language becomes material with which to work, the object of certain transforming operations which give it meaning. There is a self-conscious recognition of the multiple contextual significances yielded by textual selection and organization. As such, this "new new novel" can remain within the novel genre, since these are the very operations or processes that form the link between reading and writing— that is, between life and art, reality and fiction— that seems to be a minimal requirement for a mimetic genre. Metafictionist John Barth has recently stated this same life/art connection in typically lively terms: "Of course form can be passionate; language itself can be passionate. These are not the passions of the viscera, but that doesn't give them second-class citizenship in the republic of the passions.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28} See *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui* 2, 348 (Robbe-Grillet and Ricardou on Sollers) and Thibaudeau's remarks in Michel Foucault (directeur), "Débat sur le roman," *Tel Quel* 17 (Printemps 1964), 25-26.
\textsuperscript{29} In "Hawkes and Barth Talk about Fiction," *New York Times Book Review*, April 1, 1979, p. 32.