

# Historiographic Metafiction

## Parody and the Intertextuality of History

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Il y a plus affaire à interpreter les interpretations qu'a interpreter les choses, et plus de livres sur les livres que sur autre sujet: nous ne faisons que nous entregloser.

-Montaigne

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.

-Foucault

What we tend to call postmodernism in literature today is usually characterized by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality. In fiction this means that it is usually metafiction that is equated with the postmodern. Given the scarcity of precise definitions of this problematic period designation, such an equation is often accepted without question. What I would like to argue is that, in the interests of precision and consistency, we must add something else to this definition: an equally self-conscious dimension of history. My model here is postmodern architecture, that resolutely parodic recalling of the history of architectural forms and functions. The theme of the 1980 Venice Biennale, which introduced postmodernism to the architectural world, was "The Presence of the Past." The term *postmodernism*, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional *and* historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past. In order to distinguish this paradoxical beast from traditional historical fiction, I would like to label it "historiographic metafiction." The category of novel I am thinking of includes *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Ragtime*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and *The Name of the Rose*. All of these are popular and familiar novels whose metafictional self-reflexivity (and intertextuality) renders their implicit claims to historical veracity somewhat problematic, to say the least.

In the wake of recent assaults by literary and philosophical theory on modernist formalist closure, postmodern American fiction, in particular, has sought to open itself up to history, to what Edward Said (*The World*) calls the "world." But it seems to have found that it can no longer do so in any innocent way: the certainty of direct reference of the historical novel or even the nonfictional novel is gone. So is the certainty of self-reference implied in the Borgesian claim that both literature and the world are equally fictive realities. The postmodern relationship between fiction and history is an even more complex one of interaction and mutual implication. Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that effects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the "world" and literature. The textual incorporation of these intertextual past(s) as a constitutive structural element of postmodernist fiction functions as a formal marking of historicity—both literary and "worldly." At first glance it would appear that it is only its constant ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity that distinguishes postmodern parody from medieval and Renaissance imitation (see Greene 17). For Dante, as for E. L. Doctorow, the texts of literature and those of history are equally fair game.

Nevertheless, a distinction should be made: "Traditionally, stories were stolen, as Chaucer stole his; or they were felt to be the common property of a culture or community ... These notable happenings, imagined or real, lay outside language the way history itself is supposed to, in a condition of pure occurrence" (Gass 147). Today, there is a return to the idea of a common discursive "property" in the embedding of both literary and historical texts in fiction, but it is a return made problematic by overtly metafictional assertions of both history and literature as human constructs, indeed, as human illusions—necessary, but none the less illusory for all that. The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction enacts, in a way, the views of certain contemporary historiographers (see Canary and Kozicki): it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but this is a past that can only be known from its texts, its traces—be they literary or historical.

Clearly, then, what I want to call postmodernism is a paradoxical cultural phenomenon, and it is also one that operates across many traditional disciplines. In contemporary theoretical discourse, for instance, we find puzzling contradictions: those masterful denials of mastery, totalizing negations of totalization, continuous attest-

ings of discontinuity. In the postmodern novel the conventions of both fiction and historiography are simultaneously used and abused, installed and subverted, asserted and denied. And the double (literary/historical) nature of this intertextual parody is one of the major means by which this paradoxical (and defining) nature of postmodernism is textually inscribed. Perhaps one of the reasons why there has been such heated debate on the definition of postmodernism recently is that the implications of the doubleness of this parodic process have not been fully examined. Novels like *The Book of Daniel* or *The Public Burning-whatever* their complex intertextual layering—can certainly not be said to eschew history, any more than they can be said to ignore either their moorings in social reality (see Graff 209) or a clear political intent (see Eagleton 61). Historiographic metafiction manages to satisfy such a desire for "worldly" grounding while at the same time querying the very basis of the authority of that grounding. As David Lodge has put it, postmodernism short-circuits the gap between text and world (239-40).

Discussions of postmodernism seem more prone than most to confusing self-contradictions, again perhaps because of the paradoxical nature of the subject itself. Charles Newman, for instance, in his provocative book *The Post-Modern Aura*, begins by defining postmodern art as a "commentary on the aesthetic history of whatever genre it adopts" (44). This would, then, be art which sees history only in aesthetic terms (57). However, when postulating an American version of postmodernism, he abandons this metafictional intertextual definition to call American literature a "literature *without* primary influences," "a literature which lacks a known parenthood," suffering from the "anxiety of non-influence" (87). As we shall see, an examination of the novels of Toni Morrison, E. L. Doctorow, John Barth, Ishmael Reed, Thomas Pynchon, and others casts a reasonable doubt on such pronouncements. On the one hand, Newman wants to argue that postmodernism at large is resolutely parodic; on the other, he asserts that the American postmodern deliberately puts "distance between itself and its literary antecedents, an obligatory if occasionally conscience-stricken break with the past" (172). Newman is not alone in his viewing of postmodern parody as a form of ironic rupture with the past (see Thiher 214), but, as in postmodernist architecture, there is always a paradox at the heart of that "post": irony does indeed mark the difference from the past, but the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm-textually and hermeneutically—the connection with the past.

When that past is the literary period we now seem to label as

modernism, then what is both instated and then subverted is the notion of the work of art as a closed, self-sufficient, autonomous object deriving its unity from the formal interrelations of its parts. In its characteristic attempt to retain aesthetic autonomy while still returning the text to the "world," postmodernism both asserts and then undercuts this formalistic view. But this does not necessitate a return to the world of "ordinary reality," as some have argued (Kern 216); the "world" in which the text situates itself is the "world" of discourse, the "world" of texts and intertexts. This "world" has direct links to the world of empirical reality, but it is not itself that empirical reality. It is a contemporary critical truism that realism is really a set of conventions, that the representation of the real is not the same as the real itself. What historiographic metafiction challenges is both any naive realist concept of representation and any equally naive textualist or formalist assertions of the total separation of art from the world. The postmodern is self-consciously art "within the archive" (Foucault 92), and that archive is both historical and literary.

In the light of the work of writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Salman Rushdie, D. M. Thomas, John Fowles, Umberto Eco, as well as Robert Coover, E. L. Doctorow, John Barth, Joseph Heller, Ishmael Reed, and other American novelists, it is hard to see why critics such as Allen Thiher, for instance, "can think of no such intertextual foundations today" as those of Dante in Virgil (189)' Are we really in the midst of a crisis of faith in the "possibility of historical culture" (189)? Have we ever *not* been in such a crisis? To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox.

The theoretical exploration of the "vast dialogue" (Calinescu, 169) between and among literatures and histories that configure postmodernism has, in part, been made possible by Julia Kristeva's early reworking of the Bakhtinian notions of polyphony, dialogism, and heteroglossia—the multiple voicings of a text. Out of these ideas she developed a more strictly formalist theory of the irreducible plurality of texts within and behind any given text, thereby deflecting the critical focus away from the notion of the subject (here, the author) to the idea of textual productivity. Kristeva and her colleagues at *Tel Quel* in the late sixties and early seventies mounted a collective attack on the founding subject (alias: the "romantic" cliché of the author) as the original and originating source of fixed and fetishized meaning in the text. And, of course, this also put into question the entire notion of the "text" as an autonomous entity, with immanent meaning.

In America a similar formalist impulse had provoked a similar attack much earlier in the form of the New Critical rejection of the "intentional fallacy" (Wimsatt). Nevertheless, it would seem that even though we can no longer talk comfortably of authors (and sources and influences), we still need a critical language in which to discuss those ironic allusions, those re-contextualized quotations, those double-edged parodies both of genre and of specific works that proliferate in modernist and postmodernist texts. This, of course, is where the concept of intertextuality has proved so useful. As later defined by Roland Barthes (*Image* 160) and Michael Riffaterre (142-43), intertextuality replaces the challenged author-text relationship with one between reader and text, one that situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself. A literary work can actually no longer be considered original; if it were, it could have no meaning for its reader. It is only as part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance.

Not surprisingly, this theoretical redefining of aesthetic value has coincided with a change in the kind of art being produced. Post-modernly parodic composer George Rochberg, in the liner notes to the Nonesuch recording of his String Quartet no. 3 articulates this change in these terms: "I have had to abandon the notion of 'originality,' in which the personal style of the artist and his ego are the supreme values; the pursuit of the one-idea, uni-dimensional work and gesture which seems to have dominated the esthetics of art in the aoth century; and the received idea that it is necessary to divorce oneself from the past." In the visual arts too, the works of Shusaku Arakawa, Larry Rivers, Tom Wesselman, and others have brought about, through parodic intertextuality (both aesthetic and historical), a real skewing of any "romantic" notions of subjectivity and creativity.

As in historiographic metafiction, these other art forms parodically cite the intertexts of both the "world" and art and, in so doing, contest the boundaries that many would unquestioningly use to separate the two. In its most extreme formulation, the result of such contesting would be a "break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida 185). While postmodernism, as I am defining it here, is perhaps somewhat less promiscuously extensive, the notion of parody as opening the text up, rather than closing it down, is an important one: among the many things that postmodern intertextuality challenges are both closure and single, centralized meaning. Its willed and willful provisionality rests largely upon its acceptance of the inevitable textual infiltration of prior discursive

practices. Typically contradictory, intertextuality in postmodern art both provides and undermines context. In Vincent B. Leitch's terms, it "posits both an uncentered historical enclosure and an abysmal decentered foundation for language and textuality; in so doing, it exposes all contextualizations as limited and limiting, arbitrary and confining, self-serving and authoritarian, theological and political. However paradoxically formulated, intertextuality offers a liberating determinism" (162).

It is perhaps clearer now why it has been claimed that to use the term *intertextuality* in criticism is not just to avail oneself of a useful conceptual tool: it also signals a "prise de position, un champ de référence" (Angenot 122). But its usefulness as a theoretical framework that is both hermeneutic and formalist is obvious in dealing with historiographic metafiction that demands of the reader not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done-through irony-to those traces. The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and the limitation of that inescapably discursive form of knowledge, situated as it is "between presence and absence" (Barilli). halo Calvina's Marco Polo in *Invisible Cities* both is and is not the historical Marco Polo. How can we, today, "know" the Italian explorer? We can only do so by way of texts-including his own (*Il Milione*), from which Calvino parodically takes his frame tale, his travel plot, and his characterization (Musarra 141).

Roland Barthes once defined the intertext as "the impossibility of living outside the infinite text" (*Pleasure* 36), thereby making intertextuality the very condition of textuality. Umberto Eco, writing of his novel *The Name of the Rose*, claims: "I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told" (20). The stories that *The Name of the Rose* retells are both those of literature (by Arthur Conan Doyle, Jorge Luis Borges, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, among others) and those of history (medieval chronicles, religious testimonies). This is the parodically doubled discourse of postmodernist intertextuality. However, this is not just a doubly introverted form of aestheticism: the theoretical implications of this kind of historiographic metafiction coincide with recent historiographic theory about the nature of history writing as narrativization (rather than representation) of the past and about the nature of the archive as the textualized remains of history (see White, "The Question").

In other words, yes, postmodernism manifests a certain introversion, a self-conscious turning toward the form of the act of writing itself; but it is also much more than that. It does not go so far as to "establish an explicit literal relation with that real world beyond itself," as some have claimed (Kirernidjian 238). Its relationship to the "worldly" is still on the level of discourse, but to claim that is to claim quite a lot. After all, we can only "know" (as opposed to "experience") the world through our narratives (past and present) of it, or so postmodernism argues. The present, as well as the past, is always already irremediably textualized for us (Belsey 46), and the overt intertextuality of historiographic metafiction serves as one of the textual signals of this postmodern realization.

Readers of a novel like Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* do not have to proceed very far before picking up these signals. The author is identified on the title page as "a fourth-generation German-American now living in easy circumstances on Cape Cod (and smoking too much), who, as an American infantry scout *hors de combat*, as a prisoner of war, witnessed the fire-bombing of Dresden, Germany, 'The Florence of the Elbe,' a long time ago, and survived to tell the tale. This is a novel somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales of the planet Tralfamadore, where the flying saucers come from. Peace." The character, Kurt Vonnegut, appears in the novel, trying to erase his memories of the war and of Dresden, the destruction of which he saw from "Slaughterhouse-Five," where he worked as a POW. The novel itself opens with: "All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true" (7). Counterpointed to this historical context, however, is the (metafictionally marked) Billy Pilgrim, the optometrist who helps correct defective vision—including his own, though it takes the planet Tralfamadore to give him his new perspective. Billy's fantasy life acts as an allegory of the author's own displacements and postponements (i.e., his other novels) that prevented him from writing about Dresden before this, and it is the *intratexts* of the novel that signal this allegory: Tralfamadore itself is from Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*, Billy's home in Illium is from *Player Piano*, characters appear from *Mother Night* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. The *intertexts*, however, function in similar ways, and their provenience is again double: there are actual historical intertexts (documentaries on Dresden, etc.), mixed with those of historical fiction (Stephen Crane, Celine). But there are also structurally and thematically connected allusions: to Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East* and to various works of science fiction. Popular

and high-art intertexts mingle: *Valley of the Dolls* meets the poems of William Blake and Theodore Roethke. All are fair game and all get re-contextualized in order to challenge the imperialistic (cultural and political) mentalities that bring about the Dresdens of history. Thomas Pynchon's *V.* uses double intertexts in a similarly "loaded" fashion to formally enact the author's related theme of the entropic destructiveness of humanity. Stencil's dossier, its fragments of the texts of history, is an amalgam of literary intertexts, as if to remind us that "there is no one writable 'truth' about history and experience, only a series of versions: it always comes to us 'stencillized'" (Tanner 172). And it is always multiple, like *V.*'s identity.

Patricia Waugh notes that metafiction such as *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *The Public Burning* "suggests not only that writing history is a fictional act, ranging events conceptually through language to form a world-model, but that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design" (48-49). Historiographic metafiction is particularly doubled, like this, in its inscribing of both historical and literary intertexts. Its specific and general recollections of the forms and contents of history writing work to familiarize the unfamiliar through (very familiar) narrative structures (as Hayden White has argued ["The Historical Text," 49-50]), but its metafictional self-reflexivity works to render problematic any such familiarization. And the reason for the sameness is that both real and imagined worlds come to us through their accounts of them, that is, through their traces, their texts. The ontological line between historical past and literature is not effaced (see Thiher 190), but underlined. The past really did exist, but we can only "know" that past today through its texts, and therein lies its connection to the literary. If the discipline of history has lost its privileged status as the purveyor of truth, then so much the better, according to this kind of modern historiographic theory: the loss of the illusion of transparency in historical writing is a step toward intellectual self-awareness that is matched by metafiction's challenges to the presumed transparency of the language of realist texts.

When its critics attack postmodernism for being what they see as ahistorical (as do Eagleton, Jameson, and Newman), what is being referred to as "postmodern" suddenly becomes unclear, for surely historiographic metafiction, like postmodernist architecture and painting, is overtly and resolutely historical-though, admittedly, in an ironic and problematic way that acknowledges that history is not the transparent record of any sure "truth." Instead, such fiction



corroborates the views of philosophers of history such as Dominick LaCapra who argue that "the past arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders-memories, reports, published writings, archives, monuments, and so forth" (128) and that these texts interact with one another in complex ways. This does not in any way deny the value of history-writing; it merely redefines the conditions of value in somewhat less imperialistic terms. Lately, the tradition of narrative history with its concern "for the short time span, for the individual and the event" (Braudel 27), has been called into question by the Annales School in France. But this particular model of narrative history was, of course, also that of the realist novel. Historiographic metafiction, therefore, represents a challenging of the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history through its acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality. As Barthes once remarked, Bouvard and Pecuchet become the ideal precursors of the postmodernist writer who "can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (*Image 146*).

The formal linking of history and fiction through the common denominators of intertextuality and narrativity is usually offered not as a reduction, as a shrinking of the scope and value of fiction, but rather as an expansion of these. Or, if it is seen as a limitation-restricted to the always already narrated-this tends to be made into the primary value, as it is in Lyotard's "pagan vision," wherein no one ever manages to be the first to narrate anything, to be the origin of even her or his own narrative (78). Lyotard deliberately sets up this "limitation" as the opposite of what he calls the capitalist position of the writer as original creator, proprietor, and entrepreneur of her or his story. Much postmodern writing shares this implied ideological critique of the assumptions underlying "romantic" concepts of author and text, and it is parodic intertextuality that is the major vehicle of that critique.

Perhaps because parody itself has potentially contradictory ideological implications (as "authorized transgression," it can be seen as both conservative and revolutionary [Hutcheon 69-83]), it is a perfect mode of criticism for postmodernism, itself paradoxical in its conservative installing and then radical contesting of conventions. Historiographic metafiction, like Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gunter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (which uses both of the former as intertexts), employ parody not only to restore history and memory in the face of the distortions of the "history of forgetting" (Thiher

202), but also, at the same time, to put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality.

When linked with satire, as in the work of Vonnegut, V. Vampirov, Christa Wolf, or Coover, parody can certainly take on more precisely ideological dimensions. Here, too, however, there is no direct intervention in the world: this is writing working through other writing, other textualizations of experience (Said *Beginnings* 237). In many cases *intertextuality* may well be too limited a term to describe this process; *interdiscursivity* would perhaps be a more accurate term for the collective modes of discourse from which the postmodern parodically draws: literature, visual arts, history, biography, theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, and the list could go on. One of the effects of this discursive pluralizing is that the (perhaps illusory but once firm and single) center of both historical and fictive narrative is dispersed. Margins and edges gain new value. The "ex-centric"-as both off-center and de-centered-gets attention. That which is "different" is valorized in opposition both to elitist, alienated "otherness" and also to the uniformizing impulse of mass culture. And in American postmodernism, the "different" comes to be defined in particularizing terms such as those of nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation. Intertextual parody of canonical classics is one mode of reappropriating and reformulating-with significant changes-the dominant white, male, middle-class, European culture. It does not reject it, for it cannot. It signals its dependence by its *use* of the canon, but asserts its rebellion through ironic *abuse* of it. As Edward Said has been arguing recently ("Culture"), there is a relationship of mutual interdependence between the histories of the dominators and the dominated.

American fiction since the sixties has been, as described by Malcolm Bradbury (186), particularly obsessed with its own past-literary, social, and historical. Perhaps this preoccupation is (or was) tied in part to a need to find a particularly American voice within a culturally dominant Eurocentric tradition (D'haen 216). The United States (like the rest of North and South America) is a land of immigration. In E. L. Doctorow's words, "We derive enormously, of course, from Europe, and that's part of what *Ragtime* is about: the means by which we began literally, physically to lift European art and architecture and bring it over here" (in Trenner 58). This is also part of what American historiographic metafiction in general is "about." Critics have discussed at length the parodic

intertexts of the work of Thomas Pynchon, including Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (McHale 88) and Proust's first-person confessional form (Patteson 37-38) in *V*. In particular, *The Crying of Lot 49* has been seen as directly linking the literary parody of Jacobean drama with the selectivity and subjectivity of what we deem historical "fact" (Bennett). Here the postmodern parody operates in much the same way as it did in the literature of the seventeenth century, and in both Pynchon's novel and the plays he parodies (John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, John Webster's *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, and Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, among others), the intertextual "received discourse" is firmly embedded in a social commentary about the loss of relevance of traditional values in contemporary life (Bennett).

Just as powerful and even more outrageous, perhaps, is the parody of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in Ishmael Reed's *The Terrible Twos*, where political satire and parody meet to attack white Euro-centered ideologies of domination. Its structure of "A Past Christmas" and "A Future Christmas" prepares us for its initial Dickensian invocations-first through metaphor ("Money is as tight as Scrooge" [4]) and then directly: "Ebenezer Scrooge towers above the Washington skyline, rubbing his hands and greedily peering over his spectacles" (4). Scrooge is not a character, but a guiding spirit of 1980 America, one that attends the inauguration of the president that year. The novel proceeds to update Dickens' tale. However, the rich are still cozy and comfortable ("Regardless of how high inflation remains, the wealthy will have any kind of Christmas they desire, a spokesman for Neiman-Marcus announces" [5]); the poor are not. This is the 1980 replay of "Scrooge's winter, 'as mean as ajunkyard dog" (32).

The "Future Christmas" takes place after monopoly capitalism has literally captured Christmas following a court decision which has granted exclusive rights to Santa Claus to one person and one company. One strand of the complex plot continues the Dickensian intertext: the American president—a vacuous, alcoholic, ex-(male) model—is reformed by a visit from St. Nicholas, who takes him on a trip through hell, playing Virgil to his Dante. There he meets past presidents and other politicians, whose punishments (as in the *Inferno*) conform to their crimes. Made a new man from this experience, the president spends Christmas Day with his black butler, John, and John's crippled grandson. Though unnamed, this Tiny Tim ironically outsentimentalizes Dickens': he has a leg amputated; he is black; his parents died in a car accident.

In an attempt to save the nation, the president goes on televi-

sian to announce: "The problems of American society will not go away . . . by invoking Scroogelike attitudes against the poor or saying humbug to the old and to the underprivileged" (158). But the final echoes of the Dickens intertext are ultimately ironic: the president is declared unfit to serve (because of his televised message) and is hospitalized by the business interests which really run the government. None of Dickens' optimism remains in this bleak satiric vision of the future. Similarly, in *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*, Reed parodically inverts Dostoevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" in order to subvert the authority of social, moral, and literary order. No work of the Western humanist tradition seems safe from postmodern intertextual citation and contestation today: in Heller's *God Knows* even the sacred texts of the Bible are subject to both validation and demystification.

It is significant that the intertexts of John Barth's *LETTERS* include not only the British eighteenth-century epistolary novel, *Don Quixote*, and other European works by H. G. Wells, Mann, and Joyce, but also texts by Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and James Fenimore Cooper. The specifically American past is as much a part of defining "difference" for contemporary American postmodernism as is the European past. The same parodic mix of authority and transgression, use and abuse characterizes intra-American intertextuality. For instance, Pynchon's *V.* and Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, in different ways, parody both the structures and theme of the recoverability of history in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. Similarly, Doctorow's *Lives of the Poets* (1984) both installs and subverts Philip Roth's *My Life as a Man* and Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (Levine 80).

The parodic references to the earlier, nineteenth-century or classic American literature are perhaps even more complex, however, since there is a long (and related) tradition of the interaction of fiction and history in, for example, Hawthorne's use of the conventions of romance to connect the historical past and the writing present. And indeed Hawthorne's fiction is a familiar postmodern intertext: *The Blithedale Romance* and Barth's *The Floating Opera* share the same moral preoccupation with the consequences of writers taking aesthetic distance from life, but it is the difference in their structural forms (Barth's novel is more self-consciously meta-fictional [Christensen 12]) that points the reader to the real irony of the conjunction of the ethical issue.

The canonical texts of the American tradition are both undermined and yet drawn upon, for parody is the paradoxical postmodern way of coming to terms with the past. Given this, it is not sur-

prising that contemporary American literature should abound in parodic echoes of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, the great novel of naming and knowing-concerns that postmodernism obviously shares: Roth's "Call me Smitty" (*The Great American Novel*), Vonnegut's "Call me Jonah" (*Cot's Cradle*), or Barth's less direct, but more postmodernly provisional, "In a sense, I am Jacob Horner" (*The End of the Road*). Novels that deal with historical and technological fact and/or that recount the pursuit of seemingly unconquerable Nature are also bound to recall Melville's text. For instance, in Norman Mailer's *Of a Fire on the Moon* the moon/whale sought after by Aquarius/Ishmael comes alive in a familiar (but here, ironic) language that mixes technical concreteness with transcendent mystery (Sisk).

Somewhat by way of parenthesis, it is worth noting here that, like historiographic metafiction, the nonfictional novel-whatever its claims to factual veracity of historical reporting-overtly structures its report on fictive intertexts: Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* parodies Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Poe's "A Descent into the Maelstrom," and works by Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Arthur C. Clarke (see Hellmann 110-13); Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* recalls *Moby-Dick*, American romances, and the picaresque genre (Hellmann 82-87); another of the intertexts of Mailer's *Of a Fire on the Moon* is *The Education of Henry Adams* (Taylor); John Hersey's *The Algiers Motel Incident* and Mailer's *The Armies of the Night* both parody John Dos Passos's *USA*. Of course a good case might be made for Dos Passos's trilogy itself being an earlier form of historiographic metafiction in its use and abuse of the conventions of history, fiction, biography, autobiography, and journalism (Malmgren 132-42). The fragmented form and the constant play with reader expectations do indeed begin to subvert the authority of those conventions, but perhaps in the end there is more resolution of formal and hermeneutic tensions than would characterize the more open and contradictory fiction of postmodernism.

Historiographic metafiction, like the nonfictional novel, however, does turn to the intertexts of history as well as literature. Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* manages both to debunk and to create the history of Maryland for its reader through not only the real Ebenezer Cooke's 1708 poem (of the same name as the novel) but also the raw historical record of the Archives of Maryland. From these intertexts, Barth rewrites history, taking considerable liberty-sometimes inventing characters and events, sometimes parodically inverting the tone and mode of his intertexts, sometimes offering

connections where gaps occur in the historical record (see Holder 598-99). Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man* recounts all the major historical events on the American plains at the end of the nineteenth century (from the killing of the buffalo and the building of the railway to Custer's last stand), but the recounting is done by a fictive, 111-year-old character who both inflates and deflates the historical heroes of the West and the literary clichés of the Western genre alike—since history and literature share a tendency to exaggerate in narrating the past.

Berger makes no attempt to hide his intertexts, be they fictional or historical. The mythic stature of Old Lodge Skins is meant to recall that of Natty Bumppo—and to parody it (Wylder); the account of his death is taken almost word for word from John G. Neihardt's report of Black Elk's, and Custer's final mad talk is lifted directly from his *My Life on the Plains* (Schulz 74-75). Even the fictional Jack Crabb is defined by his intertexts: the historical Jack Cleybourne and the fictive John Clayton from Will Henry's *No Survivors*, both of them temporally and geographically coextensive with Crabb.

It is not just literature and history, however, that form the discourses of postmodernism. Everything from comic books and fairy tales to almanacs and newspapers provide historiographic metafiction with culturally significant intertexts. In Coover's *The Public Burning* the history of the Rosenbergs' execution is mediated by many different textualized forms. One major form is that of the various media, through which the concept of the disparity between "news" and "reality" or "truth" is foregrounded. The *New York Times* is shown to constitute the sacred texts of America, the texts that offer "orderly and reasonable" versions of experience, but whose apparent objectivity conceals a Hegelian "idealism which mistakes its own language for reality" (Mazurek 34). And one of the central intertexts for the portrayal of Richard Nixon in the novel is his famous televised Checkers speech, the tone, metaphors, and ideology of which provide Coover with the rhetoric and character of his fictionalized Nixon.

Historiographic metafiction appears willing to draw upon any signifying practices it can find operative in a society. It wants to challenge those discourses and yet to milk them for all they are worth. In Pynchon's fiction, for instance, this kind of contradictory subversive inscribing is often carried to an extreme: "Documentation, obsessional systems, the languages of popular culture, of advertising: hundreds of systems compete with each other, resisting assimilation to anyone received paradigm" (Waugh 39). Perhaps.

But Pynchon's intertextually overdetermined, discursively overloaded fictions both parody and enact the tendency of all discourses to create systems and structures. The plots of such narratives become other kinds of plots, that is, conspiracies that invoke terror in those subject (as we all are) to the power of pattern. Many have commented upon this paranoia in the works of contemporary American writers, but few have noted the paradoxical nature of this particularly postmodern fear and loathing: the terror of totalizing plotting is inscribed within texts characterized by nothing if not by overplotting and overdetermined intertextual self-reference. The text itself becomes the ultimately closed, self-referring system.

Perhaps this contradictory attraction/repulsion to structure and pattern explains the predominance of the parodic use of certain familiar and overtly conventionally plotted forms in American fiction, for instance, that of the Western: *Little Big Man*, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, *Welcome to Hard Times*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. It has also been suggested that "the one thing the Western is always about is America rewriting and reinterpreting her own past" (French 24). The ironic intertextual use of the Western is not, as some have claimed, a form of "Temporal Escape" (Steinberg 127), but rather a coming to terms with the existing traditions of earlier historical and literary articulations of Americanness. As such, obviously, parody can be used to satiric ends. Doctorow's *Welcome to Hard Times* recalls Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel" in its portrayal of the power of money, greed, and force on the frontier: through intertextuality it is suggested that some noble myths have capitalistic exploitation at their core (Gross 133). In parodically inverting the conventions of the Western, Doctorow here presents a nature that is not a redemptive wilderness and pioneers who are less hardworking survivors than petty entrepreneurs. He forces us to rethink and perhaps reinterpret history, and he does so mainly through his narrator, Blue, who is caught in the dilemma of whether we make history or history makes us. To underline the intertextual intertwining of discourses, he writes his story in the ledger book where the town records are also kept (see Levine 27-30).

Ishmael Reed's parody of the Western in *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* is even more ideologically "loaded." Loop Garoo Kid is both the ironically black cowboy hero and a parody of the Haitian Congo spirit Bacca Loupgerow (Byerman 222). The genre's traditional assumptions of the long (good) hero fighting lawless evil and corruption are here inverted as the demonic, anarchic cowboy must combat the repression and corruption of the very forces of

law and order. Reed uses other generic parodies to similar critical effect. In *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* he transcodes the American success-story (Horatio Alger) plot into scatological terms to underline his theme of human waste. In *Mumbo Jumbo*, Papa LaBas parodies the American detective in his climactic unveiling of the history of the motives behind the crime—but here the crime is aboriginal and the motives go back to prehistory and myth. The detective tale's plotting, with its reliance on rationality, becomes another plot, another oppressive, ordering pattern.

Reed's fiction clearly asserts not just a critical American "difference" but also a racial one. His parodic mixing of levels and kinds of discourse challenges any notion of the "different" as either coherent and monolithic or original. It draws on both the black and white literary and historical narrative traditions, rewriting Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison as easily as Plato or T. S. Eliot (see McConnell 145; Gates 314), while also drawing on the multiple possibilities opened up by the folk tradition. Implicitly opposing community and heterogeneous voicings to single, fixed, homogenizing identity, these folk materials are "historical, changing, disreputable, and performative" (Byerman 4)—a perfect postmodernist vehicle for a challenge to the universal, eternal, ahistorical "natural."

Reed's *Flight to Canada* "signifies upon" or parodies the historical and literary versions of the slave narrative—as written by both blacks and whites (i.e., *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). As Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has shown at great length, *Mumbo Jumbo* is an extended and multiple parodic polemic, and one of its major intertexts comes from a poem by Reed, itself a parodic response to the epilogue to Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which asserts that men [*sic*] are different, that "all life is divided," and that such division is healthy. Reed replies in "Dualism: in ralph ellison's invisible man" (*Conjure* 50):

i am outside of  
 history, i wish  
 i had some peanuts, it  
 looks hungry there in  
 its cage.

i am inside of  
 history. its  
 hungrier than i  
 that.

Here Reed is obviously serious, as he always is, beneath his parodic play. It is this seriousness that critics have frequently been blind to



when they accuse postmodernism of being ironic-and therefore trivial. The assumption seems to be that authenticity of experience and expression are somehow incompatible with double-voicing and/or humor. This view seems to be shared, not only by Marxist critics (Jameson; Eagleton), but by some feminist critics: Elaine Showalter seems to see Virginia Woolf's parody in *A Room of One's Own* as "teasing, sly, elusive" (284). And yet it is feminist writers, along with blacks, who have used ironic intertextuality to such powerful ends-both ideologically and aesthetically (if the two could, in fact, be so easily separated). Parody for them is more than just a key strategy through which "feminine duplicity" is revealed (Gilbert and Gubar 80), though it is one of the major ways in which women both use and abuse, set up and then challenge male traditions in art. The link between gender and genre is clear in *Orlando's* parodic play with biographical conventions, and Monique Wittig has re-en-gendered the male epic (*Les Guerilleres*) and the patriarchal filiative *Bildungsroman* (in *L'Opoponax*).

In fact, the *Bildungsroman* has been a most obvious and popular parodic model. Marge Piercy's *Small Changes* inverts the male narrative pattern of education and adventure to offer a radical feminist escape from (rather than integration into) the patriarchal state (see Hansen 215-16). Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* uses a traditional male protagonist but parodically inverts the usual focus on the individual in the world to make us consider the community and the family in a new light (Wagner 200-1). In a similar way, Alice Walker calls upon ironic versions of familiar fairy tales in *The Color Purple*: Snow White, the Ugly Duckling, and Sleeping Beauty. But the significance of the parodies is not clear until the reader notices the gender and race reversal effected by her irony: the world in which she lives happily ever after is a female and black one (see Byerman 161).

The ex-centric in America is not just a matter of gender or race or nationality, but also one of class, for the fifty United States do not really constitute an economic and social monolith. Even within black feminist novels, for instance, the issue of class enters. With intertextual echoes of Ike McCaslin in Faulkner's "The Bear," Milkman in *Song of Solomon* must be stripped of the physical symbols of the dominant white culture and submit to a trial by endurance in order to be accepted. The reason? The blacks in Shalimar perceive the class issue beneath the racial one. They know that "he had the heart of the white men who came to pick them up in the trucks when they needed anonymous, faceless laborers" (269). And in the same novel, the petit bourgeois Ruth, the doctor's daughter, scorns

her nouveau-riche husband. In Doctorow's Ragtime the issues of ethnicity (Tateh) and race (Coalhouse) both merge with that of class. In *Loon Lake* art itself is brought into the equation. Joe feels that it is his social background that prevents his full appreciation of Warren Penfield's poetry: "How could I have been listening with the attention such beautiful words demanded, people from my world didn't talk with such embellishment such scrollwork" (85). Readers may be tempted to equate grammar with class until they notice that Penfield's poetry often lacks punctuation.

Doctorow's fiction, like Reed's, reveals the kind of powerful impact, on both a formal and an ideological level, that parodic intertextuality can have. Under enemy fire in 1918, *Loon Lake's* Warren Penfield, a signaler in the signal corps, sends-not the message desired by his commander, **but-the** first few lines of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." The ironic appropriateness of its themes of past glory and present reality makes Doctorow's point about war better than any didactic statement could have. This novel presents us with all the kinds of intertextual parody that we have seen in American fiction in general: of genre, of the European tradition, of American canonical works (classic and modern), of the texts of popular culture and of history. On the level of genre, Joe is and is not the picaresque hero, both in his adventures on the road and in his narration of them: he usually narrates in the third person when recounting his past life, but often the first-person voice interferes.

Specifically British intertexts abound in the novel, from the Wordsworthian signal message to a parody of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*: like Paul Morel, Warren Penfield grows up in a coal-mining community with a mother who feels he is special, "a rare soul, a finer being" (38). Doctorow demystifies and ironizes Lawrence's serious idealization by making his poet a clumsy, awkward man. And, as with Morel, at the end of the novel it is not clear whether he is, in fact, a real artist or not. The opening of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is recalled in *Loon Lake's* early passages about the infant's relations both to his body and to language. But the parodic element enters when we acknowledge differences: unlike Stephen Dedalus, this child recalls no names and is alone. He cannot place himself in his family, much less his universe. Yet both boys will end up as poets. Or will they? No intertext used by Doctorow is without its cutting edge. His loon may indeed recall Keats's nightingale, but the cliché of "crazy as a loon" is never far in the background.

One of the protagonists, Joseph Korzeniowski, gives up his name to become the nominal son of F. W. Bennett. The use of Joseph Conrad's original name here is, of course, hardly accidental in a novel about identity and writing. But Joe hails from Paterson, New Jersey, a place that has other literary associations for Americans. Places, in fact, resound with intertextual echoes in *Loon Lake*. In American literature lakes tend to be symbols of the purity of nature: Cooper's Lake Glimmerglass, Thoreau's Walden (Levine 66), but here they stand for corruption and, above all, economic commodity. Fittingly, this interpretation is prompted by another intertext: the Bennett estate unavoidably suggests Gatsby's, just as the young, indigent Joe with his dream of a woman follows the trail of the same self-made, self-named American literary hero.

But it is not only the literary canon that is drawn upon in this novel. In fact, the entire portrait of 1930S America is developed from the popular culture of the period: Frank Capra comedies, gangster films, strike novels, James M. Cain's melodramas (see Levine 67). The significance of this is both literary and historical: the novel actually enacts the realization that what we "know" of the past derives from the discourses of that past. This is not documentary realism (if that were even possible); it is a novel about our understanding or our picture of the past, our discourse *about* the thirties. I think this is what Doctorow meant when he said, in an interview, about *Ragtime*, that he could not "accept the distinction between reality and books" (in Trenner 42). For him there is no neat dividing line between the texts of history and literature, and so he feels free to draw on both. The question of originality obviously has a different meaning within this postmodern theory of writing.

The focus of that novel, *Ragtime*, is America in 1902: Teddy Roosevelt's presidency, Winslow Homer's painting, Houdini's fame, J. P. Morgan's money, news of cubism in Paris. But the intertexts of history double up with those of literature, especially Heinrich von Kleist's "Michael Kohlhaas" and Dos Passos's *USA*. Doctorow himself has pointed critics to the Kleist text (in Trenner 39) and much work has been done already linking the *two* (Levine 56; Foley 166, 176-77n; Ditsky). Briefly, the story of Coalhouse Walker has many parallels with that of Michael Kohlhaas (beginning with the naming of the protagonist). In Kleist's tale, Kohlhaas is a medieval horse dealer who refuses to pay an unjust fine to Wenzel von Tronka's servant and so loses his beautiful horses. Doctorow's Coalhouse faces similar injustices at the hands of Willie Conklin, but the

horses have been replaced by his new model T. Failing to obtain legal redress from the Elector of Saxony, Kohlhaas's wife-like Coalhouse's-attempts to intervene and is killed in a manner which Doctorow again updates but basically retains. The strongly implied similarities between the corrupt feudal society and the equally corrupt and unstable modern one are not lost on the reader. In the German novella the hero leads a rebel army and, though his horses are returned, he is executed. Doctorow's novel ironically transcodes this plot into American turn-of-the-century terms, complementing it with echoes of the climax of another intertext, George Milburn's *Catalogue*. In all, we are dealing with people who cannot find justice in a society that pretends to be just. In both "Michael Kohlhaas" and *Ragtime* historical characters mix with fictional ones: the hero meets Martin Luther in the one and Booker T. Washington in the other. But in neither, I would argue, does this imply any overvaluing of the fictional (see Foley 166). It is the narrativity and the textuality of our knowledge of the past that are being stressed; it is not a question of privileging the fictive or the historical.

Again, many critics have teased out the connections between *Ragtime* and Dos Passos's *USA* (Foley; Seelye; Levine). The echoes are thematic (the Lawrence textile strike, the San Diego free speech fight, portraits of events and personages such as the Mexican Revolution and Red Emma), formal (fiction mixing with history; Boy! Camera Eye naively recording events), and ideological (a critique of American capitalism of the same period). But the same critics have been careful to acknowledge serious differences, ones that, I would argue, the very intertextual echoes themselves force us to consider. Doctorow does not share his predecessor's trust in the objective presentation of history, and it is his ironic intermingling of the factual and the fictive and his deliberate anachronisms that underline this mistrust. As Barbara Foley notes, *USA* implies that historical reality is "knowable, coherent, significant, and inherently moving" (171). Doctorow, however, appears to feel, on the one hand, that fiction is as well, and, on the other, that *both* need questioning in regard to these assumptions. Narrativized history, like fiction, reshapes any material (in this case, the past) in the light of present issues, and this interpretive process is precisely what this kind of historiographic metafiction calls to our attention: "Walker's meeting with Booker T. Washington, for instance, echoes the contemporary debate between integrationists and black separatists. Similarly, Henry Ford is described as the father of mass society and Evelyn Nesbit is depicted as the first goddess of mass culture" (Levine 55).

The ideological as well as epistemological implications of intertextuality are even clearer in Doctorow's earlier novel, *The Book of Daniel*. Here, too, we find the same range of kinds of parodic intertexts. The title cannot avoid pointing us to its biblical namesake: the alienation of modern Jews recapitulates their ancestor's fate (see Stark). The first epigraph is from Daniel 3:4 and concerns the king's call for all to worship the "golden image" or be cast in the "burning and fiery furnace." This sets up the fate of those who challenge the new golden image of modern capitalism, and the Jews in this tale will *not* survive in the cold war climate of anti-Semitic and anticommunist suspicion. The king who sentenced the biblical Daniel's brothers to that furnace has become here the more impersonal state, which sentences this Daniel's parents to the electric chair. The Babylonian furnace image is also picked up in the Isaacsons' apartment building's furnace and its outcast black attendant. (The Nazi ovens-which do not have to be mentioned directly-are clearly part of the historical intertext.)

But the intertextual uses of the biblical Book of Daniel are not without their ironies, too. Doctorow's Daniel calls his namesake "a Beacon of Faith in a Time of Persecution" (15). The irony is twofold: the present-day Daniel both persecutes his own wife and child and seeks for faith-desperately. The biblical Daniel is also a marginalized personage, a "minor if not totally apocryphal figure" (21), a Jew in difficult times. He is not an actor in history so much as an interpreter (with God's help) of the dreams of others who remains confused about his own. Such is the model of the writer for Doctorow's Daniel, who also tries to list "mysteries" and then examine them (ziff.) and who, as a survivor, is haunted by nightmares he cannot interpret. The result of the two Daniels' writing is also ironically similar. The modern writer calls the biblical text one "full of enigmas," a mixture of familiar stories and "weird dreams and visions" (15), a disordered text with none of the closure of revelation or truth. So, too, is Doctorow's *Book of Daniel*, in its generic mixing of journal form, history, thesis, and fiction. Both are works *about* the act of interpreting-and then judging. The narrative voices in both move from impersonally omniscient third person to personally provisional first person, but the customary authority of the biblical omniscience is ironized into the modern Daniel's futile attempts at distance and self-mastery.

When their parents were first arrested the Isaacson children were informed of their fate by Williams, that demonic black tender of the furnace in the basement. The text then cites a Paul Robeson song: "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?" (143). But the rhetorical

question of the song is rendered ironic by its immediate context and our knowledge of the ultimate destiny of the parents. Robeson's rally, of course, had offered the young Daniel an important insight into his own father's (Paul's) beliefs and principles. The multiple and complex echoing points to the different possible functions of intertextuality in historiographic metafiction, for it can both thematically and formally reinforce the text's message, or it can ironically undercut any pretensions to borrowed authority, certainty, or legitimacy. "Daniel's Book" (318) actually ends as it began, self-conscious about being "*written in the book*" (319). Its final words are of closure *sous rature* in a way, because they are not its own, but those of its biblical namesake: "*for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end*" (319). The two songs of lamentation and prophecy (Levine 49) come to an end, as their words are opened up by our act of reading.

In a similar sense, the Isaacsons' fate "opens up" the Rosenbergs' case once again. Here the intertexts, for the reader, are the many books written (before and after the novel) on that incident of recent American history, including the one by the Rosenberg children. Time has not resolved the doubts and questions that surround this case even today. Analysts of all ideological persuasions line up to "prove" every possible interpretation. These range from the view that the Rosenbergs were innocent victims of a specific (or general) anti-Semitic (or even Jewish) plot to the view that Julius Rosenberg can only be done proper justice by history if we do accept his identity as a conscientious Soviet spy, with his wife's devotion and support. What many seem to see in the trial and its outcome are the social and ideological determinations of so-called universal, objective justice. It is this that Doctorow enacts in his Daniel's tortured investigation of his "family truth." In Althusserian terms, both the Repressive and the Ideological State Apparatuses conspire to condemn the Isaacsons, and, by implication, perhaps, the Rosenbergs. The intertextual voices of official historical texts and Karl Marx's writings play off against each other in this novel with ironic and doubly undercutting force.

Doctorow himself compared the Isaacson/Rosenberg paralleling to that of Crusoe/Selkirk in Defoe (in Trenner 46), and critics have also noted the intertextual parallels between this novel and *Hamlet* (and through it to Freud): the analytic intellectual trying to deal with emotional and political realities connected to the murder of a parent; the pressure of the past upon the present; the textual self-reflexivity (Knapp). Significantly, Doctorow's version is a postmodern, parodic one because the villain is not one known individual

but the U.S. government and judiciary, perhaps even all of American society. And it is the presence of a major cultural intertext that underlines this difference within the novel: Disneyland becomes the incarnation of a debased intertextuality, one that denies the historicity of the past. Disneyland is offered as a manipulative, consumerist transgression of the boundaries of art and life, of past and present. But, in itself, it is not a critical and parodic transgression that might provoke thought; it is intended for instant consumption as a spectacle void of historical and aesthetic significance. It tames the past into the present. And it is the past of both literature and history that is being trivialized and recuperated: "The life and lifestyle of slave-trading America on the Mississippi River in the 19th century is compressed into a technologically faithful steamboat ride of five or ten minutes on an HO-scale river. The intermediary between us and this actual historical experience, the writer Mark Twain, author of *Life on the Mississippi*, is now no more than the name of the boat" (304). Disneyland's ideological reduction comes at the expense of the complexity and diversity of American society: Daniel notices that there are no hippies, no Hispanics, and certainly no blacks in this fantasy America.

Doctorow, of course, is by no means the only American writer to use intertextuality so powerfully. In *The Sot-Weed Factor* Barth both uses and subverts the conventions and implications of the eighteenth-century novel, with its ordered, coherent world vision, and in so doing sets up a parodic inversion of other intertexts—the cultural cliché, for instance, of the virginal wilderness, which instead becomes a place of vice, treachery, and the pox. Here innocence begins to look more like ignorance as Jefferson's America reveals its hidden connections with Eisenhower's. Such a critique goes beyond an urge to "mythopoetize" experience in the face of the loss of traditional values (see Schulz 88-89). Far from being just another form of aesthetic introversion, parodic intertextuality works to force us to look again at the connections between art and the "world." Any simple mimesis is replaced by a problematized and complex set of interrelations at the level of discourse—that is, at the level of the way we talk about experience, literary or historical, present or past. The fact is that, in practice, intertexts unavoidably call up contexts: social and political, among others. The "double contextualizability" (Schmidt) of intertexts forces us not only to double our vision, but to look beyond the centers to the margins, the edges, the ex-centric.

This gaze reveals intertextual parody crossing genre boundaries without reserve: Milan Kundera's play *Jacques and His Master* is sub-

titled *An Homage to Diderot in Three Acts* and represents what the author calls "an encounter of two writers but also of two centuries. And of the novel and the theater" (10). American writer Susan Daitch's recent novel *L.C.* offers an even more complex generic interaction that is directly tied to its dense intertextuality. The core of the novel's narrative is the journal of a (fictive) woman, Lucienne Crozier, witness to the (real) 1848 revolution in Paris. The first of two modern frames for this journal is by Willa Rehnfield, its first translator. Her "Introduction" reminds us of the contradiction of the year 1848 in terms of two symbolic intertexts: *Wuthering Heights* and the *Communist Manifesto*, both published that year. And these are indeed the contradictions of the journal (at least as translated by Rehnfield): Lucienne has strong socialist politics but is rendered ineffective by her marginalization (by the Left) and her melodramatic dying of tuberculosis, all but abandoned by her lover in Algiers. Rehnfield sees Lucienne as formed by "Marxism and fluff" (2)-that is, the feuilletons of the day. But, in fact, the journal reveals her critique of that popular literary form as being unfaithful to the social and economic realities of real life, despite its surface realism of language (136-37). Is this a radicalized Emma Bovary?

In fact, this question is raised by the text itself: "Madame Lucienne Crozier was doomed from the day she married" (207). So, of course, was Madame Bovary, as the title of the novel constantly reminds us. But Lucienne is a parodic inversion of Emma. Though they share a hatred for the provinces, their extramarital affairs and their reading, mutually motivated in both cases, lead them in opposite directions: Emma into fantasy and rejection of responsibility, and Lucienne into political action. In the text there is also an editorial attempt-by means of one word of slang-to link *Madame Bovary* to Marx, through his daughter Eleanor's translation of the novel (124). The clearest political connection, however, is to the journal's second editor and translator, who has taken the pseudonym Jane Amme. This surname is obviously Emma backwards, but this is where the intertextual echoes begin to proliferate: Emma Bovary is joined by Emma Goldman and Jane Austen's Emma. *Jane Eyre* is also not far in the background when a footnote refers (with deliberate modern critical echoes, too) to "the mad woman in the attic, real or theoretical" (1g8n). This frame figure defines herself as "the sort Jane Austen's characters would have called 'a most agreeable and obliging young lady'" (246), at least until her feminist radicalization at the hands of both the sexist male New Left at Berkeley in 1968 and the rapist who attacks her. Rejecting (as Lucienne does as well-at least in Amme's translation) the "mute role



of an automatic participant" (246), she bombs the home of the capitalist "global rapist" who was also her sexual attacker. She writes her story, rejecting muteness for herself and for the other women writers whose intertexts are woven into the fabric of her text. Lucienne's own journal uses visual art in much the same way. Dauterive's satiric works against women enrage her, as does the stand of Delacroix, her lover, against the political reality outside his window: he prefers to paint flowers and compliant women-with his back to that window.

Contemporary Latin American fiction has also turned to art forms other than literature or history and has thereby forced us to broaden what we must consider as intertexts. The various "films" described by Molina in Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* are, on one level, only more verbal narratives; on another level, they are parodic plays with cinematic genres (horror movie, war propaganda, romantic melodrama) that politicize the apolitical (or repoliticize the propagandistic) in terms of gender, sexual preference, and ideology. The English (only) title of Alejo Carpentier's novel *Explosion in a Cathedral* refers to a real painting within the novel-and in reality (by Monsu Desiderio). As Gabriel Saad has shown, the descriptions of Madrid at the end of the novel are, in fact, quite literally descriptions of specific works by Coxa, the ones of the second and third of May 1808 and the "Disasters of War" series. Carpentier uses a double intertext here, and the historical one is activated through the aesthetic one: those works represent the Madrid uprising which went on to spark the Spanish and Latin American wars of independence. In other words, there is an external historical dimension as well as an internal novelistic one to the intertextual reference.

But we do not have to go this far from home to be confronted with intertextual echoing. Many rock videos have tried to recall a filmic or television tradition in their form (Queen's "Radio Gaga" cites Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*) and settings (Manhattan Transfer uses the *I Love Lucy* living-room set in their videos), but the parodic edge that might provoke some critical perspective seems generally to be missing here. In art galleries, though, we can find works such as Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Venus of Rags* and *Orchestra of Rags*, which do suggest ironic critique. Pistoletto uses real rags, the end product of consumption: art represents the detritus of culture within the consumer ethic. His mica reproduction of a classical Venus may parodically represent the static, "universal" principle of aesthetic beauty, but here it faces (and is blocked by) a large pile of those rags. While many have argued that all paintings are intertextually

connected to other paintings (see Steiner), postmodern ones seem more tendentially ironic in their interrelations. Even music, considered by most to be the least representational of the arts, is being interpreted these days in terms of the intertextual linking of the past to the present, as an analogue of the necessary linking of artistic form and human memory (Morgan 51).

Postmodernism is less a period than a poetics or an ideology. It clearly attempts to combat what has come to be seen as modernism's hermetic, elitist isolationism that separated art from the "world," literature from history. But it often does so by using the very techniques of modernist aestheticism against themselves. The autonomy of art is maintained; metafictional self-reflexivity even underlines it. But within this seemingly introverted intertextuality another dimension is added through the ironic inversions of parody: art's critical relation to the "world" of discourse—and beyond that to society and politics. History and literature provide the intertexts in the novels examined here, but there is no question of a hierarchy, implied or otherwise. They are both part of the signifying systems of our culture. They both make and make sense of our world. This is one of the lessons of that most didactic of postmodern forms: historiographic metafiction.

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