

John Barth's Later Fiction:

Intertextual Readings, with Emphasis on LETTERS (1979)

by Aloysia Antonia Sophia Maria Nas

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" ... at the beginning was repetition."

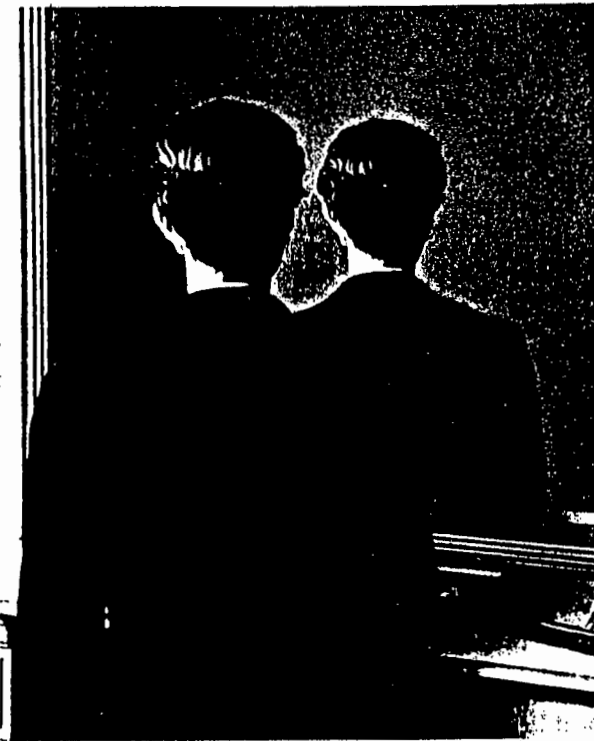
(Jacques Derrida, in Calinescu, 1993: xiii)

"Nothing ahead but repetition or silence?"

(John Barth, TT, 599)

"The spiral reenacts the circle, but opens out ..."

(John Barth, FB, 170)



René Magritte, *Reproduction Interdite* (1937)

Source: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen,
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Synopsis

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter I serves as an introduction to intertextuality; it focuses on John Barth's narrative crisis and discusses structuralist and post-structuralist theories of intertextuality. Chapters II, III and IV discuss the agencies of reader, author and text respectively. Chapter II looks at structuralist and poststructuralist notions of reading and John Barth's parodic play with these notions; it also provides an in-depth analysis of the external and internal readers of LETTERS. Chapter III concentrates on the roles of the reader as re-writer and the author as re-arranger and looks closely at the roles of the different narratorial agents in LETTERS. Chapter IV starts off with a discussion of the discourse of the copy in postmodern culture and moves, via post-structuralist and narrativist mimesis, to different forms of repetition as developed by Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida. Chapter V focuses on John Barth's re-thinking of notions of authorship and author-ity. It first gives an historical introduction to authorship, starting off in the Middle Ages, and then moves, via eighteenth-century Samuel Richardson and nineteenth-century Edgar Allan Poe and Søren Kierkegaard, to twentieth-century notions of authorship as developed by Harold Bloom, Michel Foucault and Jonathan Culler, to end with Jacques Derrida's signature theory.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- FO The Floating Opera (1956)
ER The End of the Road (1958)
SF The Sot-Weed Factor (1960)
GG Giles Goat-Boy (1966)
LF Lost in the Funhouse (1968)
C Chimera (1972)
L LETTERS (1979)
S Sabbatical (1982)
FB The Friday Book (1984)
TT The Tidewater Tales (1988)
LV The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991)

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Preface

One of the guiding principles for the writing of this thesis has been the idea of grafting, as practised by Jacques Derrida in his writing. Derrida's texts and indeed his own way of writing depend very much on the idea of grafting, of inserting something new into a pre-existing host. "Extraction, graft, extension, [...] this is what I call [...] *writing*," says Derrida in Positions, "it is necessary to read and reread those in whose wake I write, the 'books' in whose margins and between whose lines I mark out and read a text simultaneously almost identical and entirely other" (Derrida, 1981: 71). His texts operate in the space split open when his text is inserted into another text, writes Jasper Neel in Plato, Derrida, and Writing: "Without Sollers (or Husserl, or Freud, or Rousseau, or Nietzsche, or Shelley, or whichever text he has chosen to write *in*) Derrida has no text. Like Derrida's texts, however, whichever host text he invades also exists in the spacing of the text it invades, as do those texts too, and the one before them, and so on" (Neel, 1988: 129).

Inspired by Derrida's writings, and by Roland Barthes' dictum in S/Z, "I write my reading" (Barthes, 1990: 10), I consider my writing to be an analogous kind of inserted, grafted reading, an intertextual reading, which has taken the form of transplantations, attaching itself to other texts, displacing,

erasing or inscribing these other texts. Writing this thesis has also followed a pattern of grafting, and as a recording of my reading and thinking my text has been grafted on those of others, of Roland Barthes, Jonathan Culler, Robert Con Davis, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gérard Genette, Martin Heidegger, Sören Kierkegaard, Julia Kristeva, Yuri Lotman, Michael Riffaterre and many others, and especially on those of John Barth.

As an alien body I have invaded John Barth's later fiction, and have inscribed my presence on and in his texts, in much the same way as Barth himself has inscribed himself on and in other texts before him, which texts in themselves had long before also invaded other texts, and so on and so forth. And now my grafts will disseminate themselves in ways beyond my control, as my text will in its turn also be inscribed and thus become part of the spiralling chain of dissemination. This chain of intertextuality is endless.

At every inscription, circles are drawn, concentric and non-concentric, and spirals come into being; as John Barth puts it in "Algebra and Fire": "[...] the Fibonacci instance of the logarithmic spiral - as embodied in the chambered nautilus, for example, and as contrasted with a closed circle - appealed to me [...] metaphorically, because [...] a ground-theme of both Chimera and the novel LETTERS is reenactment versus mere repetition. The spiral reenacts the circle, but opens out - if you're going in the right direction" (FB, 170). This spiralling metaphor of "transcension-by-reenactment" provides us, in a nutshell, with a most apt description of John Barth's radical project.

My intertextual readings and writings focus on John Barth's later fiction, that is, his work since Lost in the Funhouse (1968), with special emphasis on LETTERS, as it is in these later writings that his intertextual project seems to have finally taken shape.

The purpose of this research has been to provide an intertextual scaffolding against the walls of John Barth's house of fiction; I see my readings of his fiction as an effort to make the house more accessible, to allow more visitors inside. After John Barth's rise to fame in the late sixties and early seventies there have been many readers who shied away from his work. His novel LETTERS, the main focus of my thesis, was, when it came out in 1979, considered to be too overwhelming, too abundant, to the point even of illegibility. Ten to fifteen years later the tide seems to have turned, as in the last couple of years a number of monographs, chapters and articles have been published on his later fiction; my thesis aims to be part of and contribute to this renewed interest in the later fiction of John Barth.

My concentration on his work might perhaps be questionable, but in my eyes John Barth is one of the few critical authors in contemporary American fiction, who, having first having diagnosed an exhaustion in the American novel of that time, has creatively pointed the way out of this narrative crisis, while at the same time rendering a creative account of the history of letters until that particular point of crisis.

Nevertheless, my reading of John Barth does not, apart from the theoretical position described above, represent one singular, unified theoretical position, but consists of the grafting of a

number of interrelated theoretical positions onto John Barth's fiction. My theoretical approach is therefore eclectic: whatever was to hand has been used, and it is John Barth's narrative discourse itself that will provide the unifying focus for the different grafts.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the helpful assistance of Jagger Library's Interlibrary Loan staff and the University of Cape Town's generous financial support in the form of research associateships and research fellowships. Furthermore I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof Ian Glenn, Head of Department when I started this research, and my supervisor, Prof J.M. Coetzee, both of the English Department of the University of Cape Town, for their support in my undertakings. I am grateful to Stephen Watson for his close reading of the typoscript. My inexpressible gratitude is reserved for Rolf Wolfswinkel, without whose courage and general enthusiasm we would never have moved to Cape Town and this thesis would never have been feasible. As my first reader and critic he has had a lot more to do with this dissertation than he himself is aware of.

Chapter I

An Introduction to Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a meaning-producing mechanism that is often used in metafictional texts; it can also be a site in which intertextuality is located.¹ It is very much a key concept in reading, understanding and appreciating John Barth's later fiction.

By rewriting his own previous six novels² in his seventh, by using parts of novels five and six in novel eight, by rewriting novel eight and using parts of five and six in novel nine, and by incorporating parts from novels seven, eight and nine in novel ten, John Barth has made an intertextual attempt to rethink notions of authorship, literature and literary form. He has remoulded the traditional concept of intertextuality and transformed it into something new, into a poststructuralist intertextuality of immediate accessibility and availability and has thus offered literary history a narrative solution for the crisis in which, it has been argued, it found itself in the nineteen-sixties and -seventies.

Jonathan Culler in The Pursuit of Signs defines intertextuality as "not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived," but as a wider network that includes "anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost,

that make possible the signifying practices of later texts" (Culler, 1981: 103). This is obviously a move away from the traditional dichotomous conception of intertextual relations between text and source. Instead of being seen as a diachronic (temporal) concept, intertextuality has in contemporary theory come to be regarded in synchronic (spatial) terms. In "The Space of Intertextuality,"³ for instance, Thais Morgan positions intertextuality on the border between modern and postmodern knowledge as a concept to help critical theorists today who are "rethinking literature and literary history in terms of space instead of time, conditions of possibility instead of permanent structures, and 'networks' or 'webs' instead of chronological lines or influence" (Morgan, 1989: 274).

This positioning between the old and the new is a useful one, as it helps the reader to gain a clearer understanding of what Barth has set out to do in his later work, and especially in what could perhaps be called the epitome of intertextuality in American letters today, his seventh novel, appropriately called LETTERS (1979). LETTERS points the way forward to a new way of narration, which was to be developed further in Sabbatical: A Romance (1982) and The Tidewater Tales: A Novel (1988). And in his tenth novel, his latest to date, The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991), Barth has consummated the act of story-telling in yet another reenactment of one of the archetexts of narration, The Thousand Nights and a Night.⁴ I have chosen to focus in this thesis on LETTERS as this novel can be seen as Barth's programmatic statement for the rejuvenation

of letters; the novels following after LETTERS can be seen as this programme put into action.

After a short introduction to intertextuality in Section One of this chapter, Section Two will take a closer look at the narrative crisis in which John Barth found himself at the end of the nineteen-sixties. Section Three will discuss different structuralist theories of intertextuality, while in Section Four forms of poststructuralist intertextuality will be dealt with. Section Five then advances an intertextual approach to John Barth's later fiction and in the last section of this chapter a summarized account is given of the different approaches used, followed by a brief outline of the chapters to follow. This section ends with a tentative evaluation of John Barth's radical programme for the rejuvenation of letters.

I. An Introduction to Intertextuality

Traditionally intertextuality has been looked at along linear lines, that is, it was discussed in terms of "source" or "influence": writer A writes in the tradition of, or is influenced by, writer B, who preceded writer A, and so on. This is, for instance, seen in the crude discourse of the novels' backflap: starting out with the letter A in my bookcase I read on Woody Allen's Side Effects "brilliant flights of fancy [...] by the celebrated stand-up Flaubert," on Lisa Alther's Kinflicks, "it will, as Doris Lessing found, have you laughing at four in

the morning," and on Margaret Atwood's Cat's Eye "not since Graham Greene or William Golding has a novelist [...]," and so on.

Intertextuality was traditionally studied in the context of conscious or unconscious modelling of one discourse on the other, such as in irony and parody; it was looked at in terms of the ability of a writer to incorporate all previous literature in his or her own work, so that the past existed in the present. This is most astutely expressed by T.S. Eliot in his essay on tradition and the individual talent: "We shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot, 1932: 14).

And a few pages further in the same essay: "Someone said: "The dead writers are more remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did." Precisely, and they are that which we know" (Eliot, 1932: 16). In Eliot's conception of intertextuality the writer lives in the present moment of the past. In a way this presence of the past, the simultaneity of literature, anticipates what Derrida would later in his theory of writing, "*écriture*," refer to as "traces."⁵

According to Bertens and D'haen in Het postmodernisme in de literatuur modernist authors, through techniques of collage and montage, introduced elements of spatiality and simultaneity, the concentration of time and space in one single moment, into their texts, abandoning the linear chronological line of classic realism; and postmodernist authors transform this simultaneity into an immediate accessibility and availability of all that is

intertextual (Bertens & D'haen, 1988: 92-93). This results in multiplicity and discontinuity at the same time, and becomes a game of similarity and difference, of infinity and undecidability, in other words of what Derrida has called *différance*.⁶ This play on "differ" and "defer" indicates the endless dissemination of meaning within the text.

What Barth sets out to do in his fiction since Lost in the Funhouse approaches Julia Kristeva's definition of intertextuality:⁷

The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transportation of one (or several) sign-system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources,' we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic - of enunciative and denotative positionality. (Kristeva, 1986: 111)⁸

In an earlier work she had defined the concept of intertextuality as a mosaic of quotations: "[...] every text constructs itself like a mosaic of citations, every text is an absorption and transformation of another text."⁹

By not only recycling his own material, but also that of classical and oriental myths and of canonical literature, Barth's work shows this mosaic pattern of absorption and transformation, or as Kristeva puts it, "*the passage from one sign-system to*

another, [...] an altering of the *thetic position* - the destruction of the old position and the formation of the new one" (Kristeva, 1986: 111).¹⁰ The question remains, however, whether this transformational process has the neutralizing effect Kristeva suggests: "In the space of one text several expressions, taken from other texts, cut across and neutralize each other."¹¹

II. John Barth's Narrative Crisis

What Roland Barthes attempted on a theoretical level in Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes in 1977, was exactly what John Barth has achieved on a fictional level in his fifth novel,¹² Lost in the Funhouse (1968), his sixth, Chimera (1972), seventh, LETTERS, and later in his eighth, Sabbatical, ninth, The Tidewater Tales, and tenth, The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor. In Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,¹³ a collage of photos, autobiographical pieces, music sheets, doodlings, cartoons and "fragments" of writing, a blurring of generic boundaries in other words, the author plays with the notion of *intertexts*, such as works by Proust, as for instance in his description of the old bourgeoisie of Bayonne, Barthes' home town, in the early unnumbered pages of the book, or under the heading "Pause: anamneses" (RB, 107-109); with the notion of *intratexts*, discussing his own theories and style of writing, such as in "he has never stopped writing in brief bursts," (RB, 93), or "Around 1963 [...] he worked up a great enthusiasm for the *metaphor/metonymy* opposition" (RB, 110), and of *autotexts*,

elaborating on his favourite metaphors as expressed in previous works of his, such as S/Z (RB, 47) or Mythologies (RB, 71), and self-quotations, as in "As he said in an article of 1971, 'What is difficult [...]'" (RB, 132). As Barthes himself observes, all these texts are "reactive: the author reacts either to the discourse which surrounds him (intertexts), or to his own discourse (intratexts and/or autotexts)" (RB, 145). This highly self-conscious text celebrates the pleasure and practice of writing and re-writing, which provides a link with John Barth's writing practices in LETTERS.

There are several parallels to be drawn between Barthes' and Barth's very divergent books. In both we find a discussion about the order of the different parts that make up the book: Barthes uses an alphabetical order instead of a chronological one, so as not to connect the fragments into a "single enormous network, which would be the structure of the book, its meaning" (RB, 48). Alphabetical order here leads to a deliberate disorder.

In LETTERS the letters of the alphabet also serve as an ordering element within the chronological order of the calendar: the different letters constituting LETTERS are not ordered alphabetically, as they are all assigned a letter and ordered in an acrosticon, constituting the phrase "An old time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers each of which imagines himself factual" (L, titlepage, vii), as the photocopy on the opposite page shows. Although the order of the seven letter-writers is not changed throughout the novel, as they always write in the same order, their letters are not printed in chronological order, but acrostically. As was the case in Roland

Barthes, this order paradoxically leads, and is meant to lead, to disorder.

Table (1)

A	N	O	L	D	T	I	M	E	P	I	S	T	O	L	A	R	Y	N	O	V	E	L
B	Y	S	E	V	E	N	F	I	C	O	U	S	A	M	O	R	A	M	O	R	A	M
C	T	I	T	I	O	U	S	A	M	O	R	A	M	O	R	A	M	O	R	A	M	O
D	R	O	L	S	E	A	C	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S	H	I	M	A	G	I
E	R	S	E	A	C	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E
F	W	H	I	C	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S
G	I	N	E	S	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S	H	I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S

From LETTERS's titlepage (L, vii)

Furthermore Barthes supplies the reader with discussions of previous (RB, 77, 93, 103, 145) and of projected works (RB, 173); passages about rewriting oneself: "Self-commentary? What a bore! I had no other solution than to rewrite myself [...] here and now" (RB, 142); forgeries as "figures of production, text operators" (RB, 91) and repetition, such as in the form of "Doxa (public opinion), much invoked in his discourse, [...] never defined by its content, only by its form [...] : repetition" (RB, 70), and in "the Doxa is current opinion, meaning repeated as if nothing had happened" (RB, 122), and even Medusa, as Doxa, petrifying meaning (RB, 122); and the specific use of "etc." (RB, 109), all of which textual operators we encounter in one form or the other in LETTERS again. The multiple use of narrative voices in Roland Barthes, a confusion of first and third person perspectives, will return in a different form in the diffusion of narrative voices in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales.

After finishing Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, the naïve reader might feel frustrated, and be left with a feeling, as Morgan puts it, of "lustreless repetition of the same, bringing on an hysterical, clogged feeling of being enclosed in one enormous Text" (Morgan, 1989: 259). Are we lost in the funhouse of language? The Text seems to have turned into a prison-house, when Barthes wonders where to go next in the closing section of the book:

And afterwards?

- What to write now? Can you still write anything?

(RB, unnumbered page)

Literature, or more particularly language, was at the end of the nineteen-sixties and in the early seventies felt to be in a severe crisis. This crisis not only affected creative writing. As Paul de Man points out in Blindness and Insight, it also affected criticism, beginning in 1967: "Well established rules and conventions that governed the discipline of criticism and made it a cornerstone of the intellectual establishment have been so badly tampered with that the entire edifice threatens to collapse" (De Man, 1971: 3). The old had been done away with, but what was the new going to be like? Barthes seems to feel in a state of exhaustion or paralysis in the mid-seventies:

This, then, is the Text, the theory of the Text. But again the Text risks paralysis [...] the Text tends to degenerate

into prattle (*Babil*). Where to go next? That is where I am now. (RB, 71)

Barthes' "now" is the year 1975. Barth's "now" can be located as early as 1968, the year in which Lost in the Funhouse was published, or perhaps even a year earlier, in 1967, when "The Literature of Exhaustion" first saw publication. In both Barth voices concern about the state of literature in general, and that of the novel in particular. As he writes in "Title" in Lost in the Funhouse, echoing Beckett:¹⁴

Go on. Impossible. (LF, 109)

And on the next page:

Goodbye. Is it over? Can't you read between the lines? One more step. Goodbye suspense goodbye.

Blank.

Oh God comma I abhor self-consciousness. I despise what we have come to; I loathe our loathsome loathing, our place our time our situation, our loathsome art, this ditto necessary story. The blank of our lives. It's about over. Let the *denouement* be soon and unexpected, painless if possible, quick at least, above all soon. Now now! How in the world will it ever

(LF, 110)

The last sentence is incomplete, lacking both punctuation and a main verb. Because of this the "now" seems to have taken

the form of an infinite gap, the ultimate blank, so much so that the story literally leaves the reader, almost gasping from exhaustion in having come so far, to the brink of an abyss of emptiness. Has literature at this point indeed reached a Beckett-like end-game?

In his next work, Chimera, published in 1972, Barth continues to grapple with this moment of "exhaustion," yet the text allows flickers of light that seem to point to a certain direction ahead. In "Bellerophoniad" he writes:

What is wanted to restore [the novel's] ancient dominion is nothing less than a revolution; indeed the Revolution is waiting in the wings, the Second Revolution, and will not stay for the bicentennial of the First, than which it bids to be as more glorious as its coming, to a world impatient to be Reset Now of 'science fiction' there is a surfeit; of *scientific* fiction none ... (C, 256)

Barth's own emphasis on "scientific" foreshadows a possible escape from the moment pinpointed by both Barthes and Barth as "now": it self-consciously points forward to Barth's innovative use of intertextuality which he was developing at the time in an attempt to break the deadlock. The "Author" in LETTERS remembers putting aside his work in progress "in pursuit of a new chimera, called Chimera" (L, 49). In Chimera we witness a tentative movement back to myth and oral tradition, the earliest forms of narration. Barth's latest novels, Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales

as well as The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, all further explore these forms of the "already read" and the "already said."

And more specifically, the above quotation could also refer to the novelistic experiments carried out by Jerome Bray on his computer LILYVAC II in LETTERS in an attempt to create a new type of self-generating literature, NUMBERS, which Bray refers to as the Novel Revolution/Revolutionary Novel.¹⁵ I will come back to this in Section Six of Chapter IV.

John Barth himself got trapped in a dead end after having finished Lost in the Funhouse. He was literally caught in his own funhouse and struggling to find a way out. In Chimera's "Dunyazadiad" we read: "He felt that a treasure-house of new fiction lay vaguely under his hand, if he could find the key to it" (C, 19). He discovers "his first light" in 1966, "that he could not after all be a character in a work of fiction inasmuch as such a fiction would be of an entirely different character from what he thought of as fiction." And further on: "[...] in the corpus of fiction as far as he knew no fictional character had become convinced that he was a character in a work of fiction" (LF, 125). Barth discovers that to write about the writer's block is to cure his own writer's block.¹⁶

And in order to find the key to escape from the funhouse, Barth, as suggested above by Kristeva's ideas on the transposition of one text into another, came up with the idea of re-writing, his second light:

[...] he had added to the morass of notes he felt himself mired in, a sketch for a story about a man who comes to realize that the key to the treasure he's searching for is the treasure. Just exactly how so [...] he had no chance to consider, for the instant he set on paper the words *The key to the treasure is the treasure*, he found himself [...].
(C, 19)

Barth discovered the treasure house of fiction, and did not just use the materials of the past, including his own, to overcome his writer's block,¹⁷ as Morris Dickstein insinuates in "Fiction Hot and Kool: Dilemmas of the Experimental Writer":

Barth deliberately directs the three novellas in Chimera at the crisis of self-consciousness that he perceives in experimental writing which had been the problematic subject of Lost in the Funhouse and had subsequently given him his first taste of writer's block. [...] His solution is to [...] return to the earliest myths and legends, like those of Scheherazade and Greek mythology. [...] But nothing could seem further from 'the original springs of narrative.' [...] The stories themselves are pallid and hard to follow, swamped by digression and commentary. Barth babbles on about domestic problems, his writer's block, quotes verbatim from his sources, even delivers a critical lecture on his work to date. [...] For all their comic intent, the three stories betray that fear of inter-

subjectivity which Paul Goodman identified as a prime cause of writer's block. (Dickstein, 1976: 317-319).

Dickstein laments the "absence of deep subjectivity" and the lack of the "unselfconscious simplicity of the storyteller" (Dickstein, 1976: 316), both characteristic of a romantic notion of authorship. He sees Barth's return to the archetexts of literature as underlining the limitations of nostalgia as a solution to the dilemmas of experimental fiction. "Nostalgia really does take the writer backward rather than forward," is his final judgement of Barth's attempts at innovative re-writing.

Dickstein fails to see that Barth's recycling of what Dickstein refers to as "traditional stories," is not a nostalgic yearning for a lost Romanticism, but rather an attempt at literary innovation inspired by an acute awareness of the intertextuality of the postmodern age. I will come back to this in detail in the following chapters. Christine Brooke-Rose, in Interpretation and Overinterpretation, equally misses the point in her dismissal of American postmodernism in general and John Barth in particular:

[...] if American postmodernism has seemed at times to bring new vigour and a breath of fresh air, it is often still too concerned with the narcissistic relation of the author to his writing, which interests no one but himself. The reader, although frequently addressed, is only taken into account with reference to this narcissistic concern in a 'look-what-I'm-doing' relationship. Here I'm thinking

particularly of John Barth [...]. (Brooke-Rose, 1992: 128-129)

Genette, on the contrary, refers to John Barth as one of the pace-makers of postmodern intertextuality, which he, by the way, calls hypertextuality (I will come back to this in the next section of this chapter):¹⁸ "[...] it follows very clearly that there is quite some youth left in generic reactivation, and in hypertextuality in general, which is one of its major resources. Which does not mean, that certain eras do 'not have anything to say': the work of John Barth [...] is a good illustration of the opposite."¹⁹

Intertextual relationships then are not a passive given in Barth's work; instead, they are used as means of transgression and reactivation. In LETTERS this reactivation takes the form of in Barth's own words: "reenactment, recycling or revolution." As he said in an interview, "Taking another look at one's imaginative past, resurrecting old characters, seemed highly appropriate" (Reilly, 1981: 10).

III. Theories of Intertextuality

Before moving on to discussing specific operations of intertextuality in LETTERS, I want to have a brief look at different theories of intertextuality in an attempt to cut a well-defined path in the terminological jungle that seems to obscure this field of study.

In a recent collection of articles on the topic, Heinrich F. Plett refers to intertextuality as "a fashionable term" (Plett, 1991: 3), "a vogue word" (Plett, 1991: 4), and points out that an increasing number of publications on intertextuality have only added to the confusion regarding its definition (Plett, 1991: 3). For this reason he postulates a scale of increasing and decreasing intertextuality, in which he tries to accommodate syntactical and pragmatical semiosis. Hans-Peter Mai, in the same collection, summarizes the problems concerning a definition of intertextuality, thus "the basic disagreement about intertextuality," he writes, "is whether it is to be regarded as a general state of affairs textual or as an inherent quality of specific texts" (Plett, 1991: 31). In its least ambitious definition intertextuality is seen as an allusion in one text to another, the most contentious one looks at intertextuality in terms of poststructuralist thinking. Plett finds the latter "comprehensible only to elitist circles which are devoted exclusively to the study of the masters" (Plett, 1991: 3), referring to Bakhtin, Barthes, Kristeva, Derrida and others. In his dismissal he considers their basic aim to be the dislodging of academic teaching from its traditional moorings (Plett, 1991: 4).²⁰

Thais Morgan, in "The Space of Intertextuality," has identified twelve major theories of intertextuality, not all of which are of relevance to this study. Her own definition of intertextuality, going back to Kristeva's, is semiotic, as she relates the structural analysis of texts to "the larger system of signifying practices or uses of signs in culture" (Morgan,

1989: 239). The semiotic approach seems to be a useful way of penetrating into Barth's labyrinthine use of intertextuality, as it opens the signification of his texts up rather than closes it down. Notions such as the background and the psychology of the individual author, literary authenticity and the relative value of imitation or originality are side-lined in this approach.

Intertextuality is traditionally looked at in terms of "influence" as opposed to "inspiration," the latter considered to be the source of genius of the individual, autonomous author. As we will see later in the chapter on rethinking authorship, this notion of author as individual genius²¹ has dominated literary history from the late Middle Ages until, roughly speaking, the mid-twentieth century.

In the traditional approach then basically two types of intertextual relations are distinguished: the first is called a *positive* intertextual relation, in which an author is influenced by earlier literary texts, in the way James Joyce uses Homer's Odyssey to structure his Ulysses; the second is called a *negative* one, in which the author is inspired by earlier literary texts but transforms their features to suit the characteristics of his or her own work. "Positive" in this context denotes an imitation or borrowing by a later author of features of a text written by an earlier author, whereas "negative" refers to, for instance, an ironic transformation of these earlier features by the later author.²² Barth uses this latter type of intertextuality in his earlier work: both his first novel, The Floating Opera, and his second, The End of the Road, are heavily influenced by European

existentialist texts, whereas his third, The Sot-Weed Factor, is a pastiche of the British eighteenth-century picaresque novel.

A different kind of intertextual relation is described by Harold Bloom in The Anxiety of Influence, in which he argues that the burden of the literary past cannot be escaped, and that "strong" poets feel this burden more sharply than "minor" writers: "The meaning of a poem can only be another poem" (Bloom, 1973: 96). In A Map of Misreading he writes: "Influence, as I conceive it, means that there are no texts, but only relationships between texts" (Bloom, 1975: 3). Bloom's theory of influence is not biographical or historical, as he dismisses traditional studies of influence as the "wearisome industry of source-hunting" (Bloom, 1973: 31), yet his insistence on the centrality of the author shows his concern with issues of literary history and of originality and genius. I will come back to Bloom's theory of influence in "Re-thinking Authorship," in Section Three of Chapter V.

The traditional binary division in intertextuality does not take intratextual relations within the work of one author into account, let alone autointertextual, or to use Lucien Dällenbach's term, autotextual relations.²³ The traditional concepts of influence and inspiration are subverted by contemporary usage of intertextuality. In Derrida's theory of *écriture*, for instance, intertextuality functions as the principle that every text is intertwined with all other texts, because every sign comprises the "trace" of all other signs. Intertextuality has thus come to operate as a dynamic metalanguage that has been

turned into a generative mechanism for the production of meaning. Barth's highly self-conscious use of language calls for such radical approach to intertextuality.

The semiotic approach to intertextuality stresses the systematicity of the "sign."²⁴ The sign is seen as a unit of meaning which can be analysed in terms of a signifier and a signified. Meaning or signification depends on the positioning of the sign in an encoding structure or structures, also known as "text." Text is in this context seen as an "event," which could take the form of either verbal, visual, aural or physical "discourse"; so, when intertextuality is defined as "the structural relations among two or more texts" (Morgan, 1989: 246), this concept could be applied to anything. It implies that culture, or the totality of signifying practices in a society, is "radically intertextual" (Morgan, 1989: 246). The semiotic model of intertextuality is based on the signification system of language, that is, linguistics.

Basically there are two directions in semiotic theory.²⁵ On the one hand we find the structuralists, who assume that "the signification of a text or corpus of texts can be contained and fully explicated by description of elementary units and their systematic or recurrent relations"; and on the other hand, those critical of structuralism, who emphasize "the ambiguity of the basic sign relation (signifier - signified) and the infinite regression or *mise en abyme* of signification" (Morgan, 1989: 247). Thus, paradoxically, intertextuality is seen to operate in two mutually exclusive directions. On the one hand, Lévi-

Strauss developed the notion of intercultural intertextuality: through *bricolage*, which is seen as a form of cultural construction; the *bricoleur* can make a selection from a closed set of intercultural structures that is ultimately universal. Derrida, on the other hand, debunked this structured notion of intertextuality by introducing the concept of deferral. The two elements of the sign, seen as a simultaneous entity in structuralist terms, are uncoupled. He posits that signifier and signified can never be simultaneous (*difference*), and that due to this instability, there can never be one ultimate signified or final meaning (*defferance*): meaning, or the "transcendental signified," will indefinitely be deferred within the sign itself. This indeterminacy of meaning is produced by the free play of what is called "floating signifiers." Intertextuality then in Derrida's view takes the open-ended form of *mise en abîme*, an abyss of endless, self-generating references. In the first camp we would find theoreticians like Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Northrop Frye, Michael Riffaterre and Gérard Genette; in the second theoreticians like the later Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida. Mikhail Bakhtin seems to be situated somewhere midway between the two camps.

Of the insights offered by the work of Bakhtin²⁶ there are four concepts that seem of particular relevance regarding the functioning of intertextuality:

(1) the *dialogical angle* of discourse: there are no *monological* utterances, as every utterance is essentially

dialogical, always directed at somebody or something, past, present or future (Bakhtin, 1973: 150);

(2) the *polyphonic* novel, which as an elaboration of the dialogic principle, insists on the "coexistence and interaction" of different discourses within that novel (Bakhtin, 1973: 20);

(3) the *carnivalization* of literature, which with its emphasis on different cultural codes could be regarded as a theory of intertextuality, paying attention to the dynamics of literature and culture; and

(4) *heteroglossia*, which introduces an element of indeterminacy: "[...] no living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and its speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme" (Bakhtin, 1981: 276). Language seems unable to communicate one denotative meaning; due to its elasticity it will always in spite of itself carry a plurality of connotative meanings. This implies that a text's signification will by definition always be indeterminable: no text has a fully explicable meaning, understandable in the same way by everybody at the same time.

Bakhtin's elasticity seems to offer a bridge between T.S. Eliot's ideas of simultaneity and Derrida's notion of "traces" in the sign. Yet it should be clear that elasticity implies some sort of relationship between signifier and signified, however loose, which bond is clearly severed in Derrida's view. As it concentrates on the dialogical nature of texts, Bakhtin's theory of intertextuality is rather text-centered, whereas Barthes and Kristeva focus on the presence of the subject in an intertextual

context. Kristeva speaks in this respect of the "signifying practice" of the reader engaged with text(s): "[...] whatever the semantic meaning of a text is, the condition of signifying practice presupposes the existence of other discourses."²⁷

In S/Z Roland Barthes develops the idea of a "writerly" ("scriptible") text which forces the reader to actively participate in the process of signification (Barthes, 1990: 4). As the reader no longer consumes the text she is reading, but "re-writes" it, she becomes a co-producer of the text: the meaning of the text is thus constituted by the variety of inter-texts located within that same reader. In this way the subject herself becomes the site of intertextuality. She is not

an innocent subject that is anterior to texts [...]. This 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite, or more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost). (Barthes, 1990: 10)

It almost inevitably follows from this that not only the text and the reader are sites of intertextuality, but that the author should also be seen as yet another site in which intertextuality is located. Herewith we have arrived at the dual signification of the term "intertextuality," being a meaning-producing mechanism as well as a site in which this mechanism is located.

In Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes we have seen the triangular network of intertextual relations between text, reader and author at work, when Barthes literally puts intertextuality into action. But, as mentioned above, Barthes felt slightly uncomfortable with this retreat into narcissism, and wondered "where to go next?" (RB, 71). Kristeva does not seem to share this anxiety about a narcissistic retreat into the self. What she does share with Barthes, however, is a focus on the cultural and literary competence of the reader in deciphering the intertexts and its presuppositions. As she puts it: "we are thus concerned with generalised presuppositions playing among discursive entities, one of which is given, and of which the other (or the others) [...] is to be reconstructed by the reader."²⁸

Consequently the site of intertextuality is located within the subject, the reader; the "productivity" of the subject allows for an infinite play of signifieds, the extent of which is dependent on the identifiability of the intertexts within the reader.²⁹

Both Riffaterre and Genette do not seem to set great store by the reader's ability to identify intertexts, as they are concerned with the signifier rather than the signified of intertextuality. In Riffaterre's view, as expressed in The Semiotics of Poetry and "Interpretation and Undecidability," it is the text itself that directs the reader towards the correct interpretation of the text; it does so along the path of intertextual traces. Intertextuality is seen as a perceiving mode (function), "whereby the text refers not to objects outside of

itself, but to an intertext," which is a corpus affected by this function (Riffaterre, 1981: 228). Thus signification takes place not by referring to things, but by presupposing other texts. In order for the reader to be able to discover the intertextual traces a poem has to be read twice: the first stage of reading would be "deictic" or heuristic, involving the linguistic and literary competence of the reader, her "familiarity with descriptive systems, with themes, with [her] society's mythologies, and above all with other texts" (Riffaterre, 1978: 5); it presupposes that what is ungrammatical in context could be grammatical within the intertext (Riffaterre, 1981: 233). The second stage would be a "retroactive" or hermeneutic reading: the reader performs a "structural decoding" in which the "ungrammaticalities" she noticed in her first reading become "variants of the same structural matrix" (Riffaterre, 1978: 6). Words, phrases and sentences are all units of meaning, but the text is the unit of significance: in other words, the text and the author, and not the reader, are the sites of intertextuality.

In Riffaterre's view intertexts can be either "implicit" or "ideolectic" (Riffaterre, 1978: 133), that is, observable entirely inside the text. Such intertexts can take the form of stereotypes, clichés and "allusions" (Riffaterre, 1978: 134), which could be either identified by the reader or stay buried in the text, as they are implied and "nowhere to be found except within the forever inaccessible psyche of the author" (Riffaterre, 1978: 195, n26). If identification of the intertext takes place, this happens because the author wants it to happen: thus intertextuality in his view can be seen as a closely monitored

closed system. And it is definitely not to be confused with Barthes' definition of the implicit intertext, which is an open system according to which the reader freely and at random associates texts, depending on her cultural and literary background, and to which the degree of pleasure generated by the text is related.³⁰ A complete reading of a poem could even be achieved without the reader actually realizing that she, according to Riffaterre, "has hit the jackpot." When she becomes conscious that "the idiolect is substituting other systems of meaning for the sociolect's system," interpretation is complete (Riffaterre, 1981: 228).

Riffaterre's disciplined reading of a poem is set up along the lines of a triangle: the text (T 1) leads the reader either implicitly or explicitly to a "ghost-text" (Riffaterre, 1978: 94) or intertext (T 2) via so-called "nodal points" or "dual signs" (Riffaterre, 1978: 86), which ultimately results in the interpretant (T 3). The term "dual sign" is actually misleading as it refers to only one sign that has, however, a twofold reference. At first reading the sign looks undecidable, but at second reading it is properly interpreted:

Undecidability does not persist, since each grammatical sign is a syllepsis: it has two meanings, contextual and intertextual (the latter being significance proper). The contextual is unacceptable, hence undecidable; the intertextual one resolves the undecidability. (Riffaterre, 1981: 233)

In other words, the intertext plays the role of interpretant generating significance. So the semiotic triangle does not allow for the abyss of infinite textual relations as proposed by Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida. Deferral of meaning is, in Riffaterre's view, not a permanent, but rather "a passing stage in the reader's progress toward interpretation" (Riffaterre, 1981: 238); it is "part of or stage in the reading process [...], a moment in the reader's perception of the work of art" (Riffaterre, 1981: 228). In Riffaterre's theory, text and intertext(s) seem to offer little room to move within the structural grid put over the text. As Jonathan Culler puts it when he discusses Riffaterre: "We are dealing not with an inexorable textual force but with a convention of reading - more specifically, with a hierarchy of conventions" (Culler, 1981: 95).

In Riffaterre's system this hierarchy takes the form of so-called hypograms: "connections previously established in clichés, descriptive systems and past poetic texts" (Culler, 1981: 95). Signification then is based on the recognition of the codes and discursive associations. Once the reader has recovered the matrix and the hypograms, she will automatically be led to the correct interpretation of the text. Even if the intertexts would have disappeared later from (future) readers' memories, full interpretations can still be achieved, "as the ungrammatical reverse of a sociolectic obverse goes on pointing to this obverse, even after the latter has been effaced by time" (Riffaterre, 1981: 239). A mere postulation of absent meaning would suffice in this

case. The text will still function as the intertext is pre-supposed.

This belief in "constants" (Riffaterre, 1981: 227) or literary universals, clearly places Riffaterre in the structuralist camp. Admittedly, he specifically developed the model for the reading of poetry, yet the principles can be applied to any other genre as well. By encoding the reader's linguistic and cultural competence in the text the theory moves away from the traditional chronological dimension of influence and introduces the spatial element, that is, that of the intertext.

Gérard Genette elaborates on this spatiality in his theory of rewriting, Palimpsestes, and sets up a taxonomy of different types of intertextuality. In his terminology *intertextuality* is only one of the five categories of what he calls *transtextuality*. Intertextual form is narrowed down to restrictive, pure form: "a relationship of co-presence between two or more texts, that is to say [...] the effective presence of one text in the other."³¹ It can take the form of explicit (*citation*) or implicit (*allusion*) literal quotations, or down-right plagiarisms (*plagiat*) using literary forms or quotations as if they are one's own.

Genette's restricted definition of intertextuality is not to be confused with Riffaterre's much broader definition that covers all of literariness (*litterarité*), which is the reason why Genette objects to it: "the intertext, writes [Riffaterre] for instance, is the perception by the reader, of the relationships

between one work and others that have preceded or followed it."³² He prefers to call Riffaterre's intertextuality transtextuality.

Genette also rejects Riffaterre's notion that "intertextuality is [...] the mechanism of literary reading."³³ In Riffaterre's view a text has to be read twice: only in the second (intertextual) reading is meaning (*signifiance*) produced; the first (linear) reading only produces sense (*sens*). Meaning is produced through what Riffaterre calls intertextual "traces" (or "ungrammaticalities") which are to be found on the microstructural level of semantic and stylistic analysis, but which according to Genette are in fact allusions. Instead, Genette prefers to approach intertextuality on the macrostructural level of genre discourse.

In order to achieve a full understanding of a text ("hypertext") and its possible intertexts ("hypotexts") Genette suggests that the reader will necessarily have to resort to her experience of the "archetext," which is the hierarchy of genres and discourses that make up the body of literature.³⁴ Genette's archetext is a set of categories, such as genre, thematics, etc. which determine the nature of each individual text. It is a

relationship of inclusion that links each text to the various types of discourse it belongs to. Here we have the genres, with their determinations that we've already glimpsed: thematic, modal, formal, and other (?). It stands to reason that we should call this the *architext*, and

architextuality, or simply *architexture* [...]. (Genette, 1992: 82)

The omnipresence of the archetext guides and determines the reader's "horizon of expectation" through her generic and discursive perception of the text. Experience and understanding of the archetext is different for every reader, as it is dependent on the extent of literary encounters she has had. The assumption of the presence of an archetext points to Genette's structuralist belief in a set of literary universals, which in turn implies a presence of transcendental signification. Herein lies the main difference between structuralists and post-structuralists.

The three other forms of transtextuality distinguished by Genette in Palimpsestes are:

(3) *paratextuality*, which is anything outside the body proper of a literary text, for instance title and subtitle, illustrations, foot-notes, first drafts, cover, jacket blurb and so on. Genette calls this the pragmatic dimension of the work: "that is to say [...] its effect on the reader, the space in particular of what one likes [...] to call the generic contract (or pact)";³⁵

(4) *metatextuality*, that is commentary "which unites one text with another of which it speaks, without necessarily citing it"³⁶ and

(5) *hypertextuality*, what other theoreticians have called *intertextuality*.

This last category is in a sense the most problematic of Genette's categories of textual transcendence. Hypertextuality is defined as "any relation uniting a text B (which I shall call hypertext) with a prior text A (which I shall call hypotext) on which it grafts itself in a manner that is not like commentary."³⁷ By not elaborating on what he means by "commentary" (is it "critical" commentary, irony, parody?), Genette fails to make the distinction clear between meta- and hypertextuality. Moreover, by emphasizing the anteriority of the hypotext (or pre-text), Genette emphasizes the linear order, the primary importance of which semiotic theory tries to undo.

More appropriate is his image of the palimpsest that is used as a metaphor for the whole process of intertextuality in the broader sense (his hypertextuality). Genette does not want to use Lévi-Strauss' term "*bricolage*" for the superimposition of one text on another, due to its negative connotations. He prefers "the old image of the palimpsest, where one sees, on the same parchment, a text superimpose itself on another text which it does not hide at all, but which it allows to be seen through transparency."³⁸ It is the art of "*faire du neuf avec du vieux*" ("making something new from something old") in order to make a more complex and, as it were, tastier object: "a new function superimposes and mixes itself with an old structure, and the dissonance between the two elements that are co-present gives taste to the whole,"³⁹ which definition recalls Kristeva's *transposition*. The reading of a text then is a palimpsestuous, relational process, a spatial relationship, as the reader is constantly aware of her dealing with two or more intertexts at

the same time. Thus reading could work in two directions, which Genette calls a form of "open structuralism" (Genette, 1982: 452): it could on the one hand lead to the closure of the text and a decoding of internal structures, or on the other it could lead to the structuralism of Barthes' "already read," "where one sees how a text (a myth) can [...] read another therein."⁴⁰ But it could also be looked at in terms of a "game" ("jeu") or "playfulness," in which text and reader are both playing and being played with: "the hypertext is at its best an undefinable mixture, and unforeseeable in its detail, of seriousness and of game (clarity and playfulness), of intellectual accomplishment and of enjoyment."⁴¹

Genette's hypertextuality is, in other words, a playful practice which includes and informs all literary genres, and which gains from the reader's awareness of its signifying and determining relationship with its hypotext(s). It also has the ability to catapult the hypotexts into new and different environments of signification turning them into "undefinable mixtures." Yet Genette's view of the element of play is somewhat limited as he limits himself to literary genres and modes only.

The same theorist's terminology might be somewhat idiosyncratic and therefore confusing, and even more so after his redefinition of his own terminology three years after Introduction à l'Architexte in Palimpsestes, but, as Still and Worton point out, he is himself aware of this problem and "amusingly alerts his readers (Genette, 1982: 7, 11) to the problems posed by critical 'jargon.' As a solution Genette suggests that his own (and others') terms can be genuinely useful as long as they are

"sufficiently defined by each individual critic-theorist" (Morton & Still, 1990: 22).

So, I will not use the term "intertextuality" in Genette's restricted sense, nor will I use his neologism "hypertextuality." However, other Genettian concepts will be very useful in determining and classifying the strategies Barth has followed in his construction of LETTERS, as we will see in the next two chapters on the agencies of reader and author. In these chapters I will introduce two modified Genettian schemes, one for the narratee agent and one for the narrator agent.

IV. Poststructuralist Theories of Intertextuality

The undefinable mixture that Genette talks about in the above quotation on hypertextuality, is what LETTERS is all about, being serious and playful at the same time. In his recycling of the materials of the past, of form as well as of content, Barth has succeeded in transposition, a new articulation of the old, by moving beyond the original and creating new literary life. In a 1981 interview with Charlie Reilly, he said:

One of the things that I, a man who by temperament is more of an orchestrator than anything else, found beguiling in my researches was the fact that the epistolary novel, the form that established the novel as the most popular form in literature, was also the first novelistic form to die. So, given the fact that I was not only a novelist but a

novelist who had muttered about the possibilities of novelistic exhaustion, I regarded it as part of my literary function to administer a kind of artificial resuscitation to this apparently exhausted form. (Reilly, 1981: 5)

This seems to be totally in line with Genette when the latter observes in Palimpsestes: "But man, who uninterruptedly discovers meaning, can not always invent new forms, and he will have to invest new meanings into ancient forms."⁴²

Not only ancient forms, but also ancient themes and myths are "re-cycled" by Barth, as well as the history of America of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Apart from the canonical texts mentioned above, his intertexts include among others the myth of Perseus, the British eighteenth-century epistolary novel, and works by H.G. Wells, Thomas Mann, James Joyce, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and James Fenimore Cooper, all of them being part of an infinite body of texts, which Genette has called the "unfinished Book"⁴³. This book is permanently being re-read and being re-written. Barth's rewriting is a form of what Robert Con Davis has called "poststructuralist mimesis"⁴⁴ rather than what Northrop Frye sees as an eponymic rendering of characteristic "sacred" texts, like the Bible, the Odyssey, and the Iliad, parts of which have also been rewritten by Barth.

"In its largest extension," Alan Thiher writes in Words in Reflection, "intertextuality implies that every text reproduces the library of Babel" (Thiher, 1984: 183). With the investment of new meaning into old forms Barth seems to follow Jorge Luis

Borges who said in Enquêtes that literature is inexhaustible for the simple reason that it is one single book.⁴⁵ Like Pierre Menard in the Borges' story of the same name, Menard must not only reread Don Quixote, but rewrite it as well, literally. Genettian hypertextuality is one of the forms this continuous circulation can take, which links up with the Borgesian notion of the functional circularity of memory in reading. When Barth aspires to a "New, the Second Revolution, an utterly novel revolution" (C, 254), the reader sees him execute this idea catachrestically as he literally enacts a "revolution" in LETTERS.

Genette had argued that an intertextual understanding of the hypotexts will almost automatically lead to signification. However, once the internal structures of LETTERS have been decoded, the already reads and the already saids located, the text will, instead of leading to signification, on the contrary lead to an opening up into an infinite *mise en abîme*. Barth's own formula for LETTERS, "Epistles + alphabetical characters + literature [...] = LETTERS" (L, 768), can be seen as an indication of this. Barth's use of intertextuality forces us to acknowledge that there is more involved than mere playfulness. To prove this point will be one of the major tasks of this thesis.

To give only one example from LETTERS of such infinity: the history of the American Second Revolutionary War of 1812 is rewritten by A.B. Cook IV in letters to his unborn child, whose version of that war is retold in letters to the Author of LETTERS by A.B. Cook VI, whose filmscript of that war forms the basis of

the re-enactment of that war for the sake of a movie being made of that war. And this film is, because of its repeatability, of course an infinity in itself. The echoes, re-cyclings, repetitions, and re-enactments that make up the core of LETTERS thus question the status of text, reader, and author, placing Barth's later fiction in the middle of the poststructuralist debate.

In his essay on the role, function and achievements of the imagination, "The Limits of Imagination,"⁴⁶ Barth argues that the limits of what has been achieved by the human imagination are defined "by certain literary-artistic images [...] of such extraordinary imaginative power [...] as to be larger than the works that contain them, or fail to contain them" (Barth, 1988: 284). These images from the archetext, with the image of which "we may be quite familiar even though we're unfamiliar with its source," are the "very compass-points of his own narrative imagination." They are images taken from four intertexts from the canon of world literature:

The short list, in my shop, comprises just four such images: In literary-historical order, they are Odysseus, striving homeward from Troy across the wine-dark sea; Scheherazade, yarning through the night to save her neck; Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chatting their way across the plains of La Mancha; and Huckleberry Finn, rafting down the heart-waters of America. [...]

In my personal pantheon, those four are the regnant deities, there is no fifth, yet. (Barth, TT, 284-285)

For Barth, these four touchstones of human imagination at the same time paradoxically constitute the limits of human imagination. For him literary imagination entails intertextual re-creation, or, to use his own term, re-enactment, of these four "profound, multi-faceted, transcendently appealing narrative icons," which "4,500 years of writing have produced [...]: about one every eleven centuries" (Barth, 1988: 285). The 1001 Nights is, for instance, recreated in Chimera, The Tidewater Tales and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, and Odysseus, Don Quixote and Huckleberry Finn are re-enacted in The Tidewater Tales.⁴⁷

V. An Intertextual Approach to Barth's Later Fiction

In a letter to Ambrose Mensch, one of the alter egos of the author of LETTERS, the character called "the Author, John Barth" writes, "like yourself an official honorary Doctor of Letters, I take it as among my functions to administer artificial resuscitation to the apparently dead" (L, 654). John Barth attempts not only to bring exhausted forms of literature, like the epistolary novel, back to life by re-cycling these forms in his fiction, his drive for re-usage and re-invention can at the same time also be linked to his ideas on arbitrariness. These ideas already found an early expression in The Floating Opera, where Todd Andrews towards the end of the novel comes to the

conclusion that "[n]othing has intrinsic value [...]. There is, therefore, no ultimate reason for 'valuing' anything" (FO, 218), and "The truth is that nothing makes any difference, including that truth" (FO, 246). This nihilistic notion of arbitrariness links up with Derrida's concept of signs floating free from their referents.

In Derrida's view intertextuality is the principle that every text is intertwined with all other texts, because every sign necessarily comprises the "trace" of all other signs. In the indefinite play of *différance* all signifiers, in their free play, eventually refer to other signifiers. Therefore a text's signification is mobile; it can never reflect any extra-linguistic reality, because reality can only be reflected through and in language, through and in signs, the exact meaning of which can never be pinned down. Although a text may seem to refer to reality as if it were non-linguistic, reality can still only be approached through text, and thus will always be intertextual. In Derrida's most famous words: "*There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside text; il n'y a pas de hors-texte]*" (Derrida, 1976: 158). As for literature this means that its frame of reference will always be literary; a literary text will always be read against the background of, and in a continuous dialectic relationship to those other "texts" that make up the cultural system within which that text is located. Consequently, as Vincent B. Leitch says in Deconstructive Criticism, "intertextuality, a text's dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts,

appears here as an abysmal ground and as a strategic instrument, which can effectively combat the old law of context" (Leitch, 1983: 161). It may be evident that Leitch's definition of intertextuality is, like mine, characterized by duality.

Closely linked with this concept of dissemination of meaning is Derrida's notion of "citation." In "Signature Event Context" we read:

Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written [...] can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. (Derrida, 1988: 12)

The question raised here is one of context. Does the context limit the sign, the text? Or does the sign limit the context? When Lady Amherst quotes from Hamlet, "she cited Prince Hamlet's scribbling in the grip of his emotions, "A man may smile and smile," & cet" (L, 297), "& cet" will have to do as a citation, as the author does not even bother to repeat the already said. The text is in this way broken up and opened up into numberless other fields of discourses. Leitch has actually developed a formula for this:

The total history of citation (repetition) of each word multiplied by the number of words in a text, equals the quantity of intertextuality. (Leitch, 1983: 60-161)

Allen Thiher follows this same route: he sees intertextuality as "a form of play, one buttressed by theories of meaning as ludic activity or the play of *différance*," a "mode of composition" and "practice of montage and quotation," which has resulted in "texts in which all writing is citation. Writing has thus lost its referential function. Literature has become a mechanical process - a writing machine, perhaps - as the author has liquidated himself. He has become a machine for reading other texts" (Thiher, 1984: 183-184). In this extreme notion of intertextuality every form of individual accomplishment is done away with, and authorial intention has been abolished. Intertextuality has reduced language to a sheer textual play with quotations and contexts. John Barth seems to endorse the same view in "The Literature of Exhaustion," when he argues that all writing is intertextual repetition of what are necessarily past texts. Literature is always an imitation, that is, quotation, or repetition, of texts always already inscribed in literature.

In Rereading Matei Calinescu looks at this literary play from the perspective of the reader and constructs "a poetics of ludic (re)reading" (Calinescu, 1993: 127) out of such highly intertextual texts such as Vladimir Nabokov's Pale Fire. In texts like this literary reading becomes "a sort of unpredictable (inter)textual game of chess" (Calinescu, 1993: 126), a literary game which "consists of strewing the text of a work with recondite allusions and clues (sometimes misleading) to the work's sources, parodic parallels, and more inclusively, key intertexts" (Calinescu, 1993: 125).

Derrida questions the nature of contexts, margins, frames and borders in his interrogation of the notion of *parergonality*, or framing. To briefly state what defines the *parergon*, in The Truth in Painting he states that it is an accessory, foreign, or secondary object, a supplement, an aside or remainder. The *parergon* is neither simply an outside or simply an inside; besides, the *parergon* comes up against, and in addition to the *ergon*. Two other important considerations of the *parergon* concern the notion of lack, or absence, and the energy of the *parergon*. What constitutes the inside of a work of art, a text, what the outside? Does the frame of a painting, for instance, by setting off the work, merge into the background, or does it, by setting off the work from the background, merge into the work? And do the same mechanisms operate in the context of quotations? If a quotation were to be regarded as a framed intertext, does it operate as *ergon* or *parergon*? Does the quotation frame the context or does the context frame the quotation? Does the context limit the sign, or open up new fields of discourses, as in Lady Amherst's "& cet."? In Section Five of Chapter V I will come back to the notion of *parergonality*.

In Derrida's view a word or sign can be cited in an infinity of times and places; he calls this "iterability" (Derrida, 1988: 7). The citation breaks the sign loose from its old context and creates and enters into a limitless number of new contexts that all have their mobile intertextual background. All signs carry within them all contexts in which they have been used before; and they likewise also carry with them all possible contexts in which they could be used. With this effect of multiplication

representation seems impossible and "& cet." will indeed have to do.

It is true that there is a certain tension between the idea of multiplication of contexts and the restrictive nature of contexts. A context supposedly frames and thus limits the text or sign. But Derrida undermines the whole idea of context by saying that a written sign always breaks from its original context, which is the moment of its inscription, because the producer of the sign who was present at the moment of inscription is forever absent after the moment of its production. Yet in spite of this absence, the sign is still capable of functioning, "by virtue of its essential iterability" (Derrida, 1988: 12). As a text can inscribe itself into any context, it can create an infinity of new contexts and is therefore limitless, "repeatable" or "iterable" (Derrida, 1988: 7). So meaning and truth will be forever dispersed. The idea of repeatability and the infinity of intertextuality establish the poststructuralist picture of intertextuality.

VI. Approaches

Having reviewed different conceptions of intertextuality, it seems clear that there will be a number of conflicting tendencies in any intertextual analysis of Barth's programmatic project. Likewise, there cannot be any one specific theory that could be satisfactorily used as a structural grid to dissect Barth's highly complex use of intertextuality. As suggested

already in the Preface, because of its eclectic use of theoretical positions, this thesis has itself become an intertextual *bricolage*.

But what, then, are the conflicting tendencies this thesis will attempt to reconcile in its grafted readings?

(1) A restrictive structuralist approach: Genette's (1988) taxonomic classifications are useful in determining the different levels on which a highly complex text like LETTERS operates. A modified Genettian scheme has been made use of in Chapters II and III on the agencies of reader and author. In Chapter II the role of the reader and the way she is encoded in fiction as a site of intertextuality are investigated, and Chapter III looks at the role of the author as re-orchestrator and "imitator of the role of Author."

(2) A Bakhtinian approach: a probing of the dialogical angle of discourse on micro- and macrotextual levels, which takes the form of Linda Hutcheon's double-coded discourse (1989), an "underlining and undermining" of existing and interacting discourses in the novel, making use of repetition, metafictional parody and historiographic metafiction. This approach has been helpful in Chapter III on a further analysis of authorial agency.

(3) A restricted semiotic approach: Lotman's illuminating insights (1990) into the memory capacity of language have been

applied to the frequent use of autocommunication in LETTERS, which is also part of Chapter III on authorial agency.

(4) A broader semiotic approach: text, reader and author alike are all seen as meaning-producing sites of intertextuality, as sites of the already saids and already reads in the sense developed respectively by Kristeva (1986), Barthes (1973) and Culler (1981). Due to its pluralising nature this approach has enabled the text's signification to open up rather than close down. The investigation into the role of the text as repository of the archetext in Chapter IV has gained from these insights on intertextuality.

(5) An historical approach: Barth's encyclopedic attempt to reenact the history of letters in LETTERS has called in the first sections of Chapter V on rethinking authorship for a short historical excursion into the writing practices of the Middle Ages and the historical period thereafter.

(6) A poststructuralist approach: this is the most problematical position in the sense that it deals with the (non-) interpretability of the signifying pluralisation processes, touching on more literary-philosophical aspects and questioning the truth claims of the previous approaches. In Chapter II on the agency of the reader, for instance, the "impossibility" of reading and the dislocation of the reader in poststructuralist theory are discussed, after which a structuralist reading of the agency of external and internal readers of LETTERS follows. The

notion of poststructuralist mimesis, introduced by Davis (1985), and Derrida's ideas on iterability (1988) have been used of in Chapter IV on the discourse of the copy, whereas Chapter V on John Barth's re-thinking of authorship has benefitted especially from Derrida's signature theory.

It is argued that John Barth's replenishment of literature is a major contribution to literary history. By focussing on his later fiction, and in particular his seventh novel LETTERS, this thesis aims to substantiate this claim and to contribute to our understanding and appreciation of Barth's project.

Heide Ziegler has called Barth an "experimental realist" (Ziegler, 1982: 14) and LETTERS "a return to realism" (Ziegler, 1987: 16). Nevertheless, this novel is, as she goes on to say, "as far removed from contemporary narrative norms as possible" (Ziegler, 1987: 17). As we have seen above in Section Two of this chapter, in 1967 Barth had voiced his concern about the exhausted possibilities of highly aesthetic forms of literature, which he called, "more chicly, the literature of exhaustion" (FB, 62-76).

Going back to the origin of the genre, Barth observes in the same essay that the novel began as a form of imitation. When writing a novel the contemporary novelist must make sure, says Barth, that his imitation is carried out with ironic intent, otherwise it will be an embarrassment. The novelist must take into account, "where we've been and where we are" (FB, 69).⁴⁸ The past must, in other words, be revisited "with irony, not innocently," as Umberto Eco said (1985: 67).

In 1980 a complementary essay followed, "The Literature of Replenishment." Here he outlines his recipe for the renewal or replenishment of letters: in his definition of a postmodernist programme a writer has "one foot always in the narrative past [...] and one foot, one might say, in the Parisian structuralist present" (FB, 204). Barth's own programme encompasses a self-conscious return to the springs of narrative, which almost as a matter of course has taken the spatial form of a re-interpreting and re-writing of the narratives of the past, his own included. In "Getting Oriented" he writes:

In other words [...] the key to the treasure may be the treasure. The tuition for that sort of lesson can be very high. Retracing one's steps -"becoming ass a kindergartener again," as the goat-boy puts it -may be necessary for a fruitful reorientation, but one runs the risk of losing oneself in the past instead of returning to the present equipped to move forward in the future. (FB, 137)

Perseus, the protagonist of "Perseid," in Chimera, understands this re-orientation, although he is not sure what to do with this understanding.⁴⁹ In his sixth work, Chimera, Barth re-writes the Greek myth of Perseus, who slew Medusa. In his seventh, LETTERS, we see Ambrose Mensch re-writing the myth of Perseus. He discards the manuscript, which is found by author John Barth and published as one of the stories in Chimera. In his eighth novel, Sabbatical, Barth seemed to have taken a new self-conscious realistic narrative route, which presupposition,

however, was to be undermined six years later by his ninth novel, The Tidewater Tales, which re-enacted the narrative of novel eight. In this ninth novel Barth also gives apocryphal answers to questions like what happened to Odysseus after he got home?⁵⁰ What happened to Scheherazade after the thousand and one nights?⁵¹ What happened in the third part of Don Quixote?⁵² And in his latest novel, The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, Barth offers us a fine example of postmodern writing by presenting us with a contemporary-protagonist narrator, who has set out to retrace the legendary voyages of Sindbad the Sailor. Lost in medieval Baghdad the contemporary narrator finds his way back into twentieth-century Maryland by challenging Sindbad to a story-telling marathon.

Barth's later fictions structure themselves around the theme of doubles and echoes, of repetitions and re-orchestrations, establishing a bottomless *mise en abime* of the already reads and the already saids. His texts establish themselves as imitations, not of reality, but as a product of the mimetic act, imitating the already reads and the already saids: this is known as post-structuralist mimesis, one of the ultimate forms of intertextuality. By redefining notions of origin and originality, by rethinking traditional concepts of authorship and literary form, Barth has creatively pointed to a way out of the narrative crisis of the nineteen-seventies.

In "Getting Oriented," Barth explains how he came to regard the story of Scheherazade "as a kind of metaphor for the

condition of narrative artists in general" (FB, 135), "in other words, as Dunyazade and Scheherazade and the Author come to learn [...], the key to the treasure may be the treasure" (FB, 137). And he continues, "all these retracements, recapitulations, rehearsals, and reenactments really would be simply regressive if they didn't issue in reorientation, from which new work can proceed" (FB, 139).

This replenishment found its first full expression in LETTERS, which novel inter-, intra- and autotextually proclaims and creatively enacts Barth's radical programmatic manifesto for the rejuvenation of letters.

Chapter II

The Agency of the Reader

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the traditional relationship between author and text is challenged in contemporary theories of intertextuality. Meaning is no longer considered to have its origins within the author. On the one hand, Riffaterre and Genette both rely on the text to guide the reader to signification; on the other, Kristeva and Barthes focus on the active presence of the reader who inscribes herself as a co-producing subject in the intertextual context. Matei Calinescu introduces the notion of *rereading* as a phenomenon of intertextuality, not in the Riffaterrean sense as discussed in the previous chapter,¹ but in the sense of what happens after reading: rereading deals with the "expectations, assumptions and guesses of someone who returns to a known text" (Calinescu, 1993: xiv). In addition, in poststructuralist theory the reader and the act of reading have come under scrutiny in Paul de Man's theorization of the "impossibility" of reading (De Man, 1979: 245) and Derrida's paradoxical notion of "*transcendent reading*" (Derrida, 1967/1976: 160).

In this chapter I want to take a closer look at the agency of the reader and the way she is encoded in the text as a site of intertextuality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I want to reconcile two conflicting tendencies in my discussion of the

reader in and of John Barth's fiction. In Section One I will look at poststructuralist notions of reading, which will be followed in Section Two by a discussion of structuralist thinking on the role of the reader. The following Sections consist of a discussion of the external and internal readers in and of LETTERS: in Section Three I will propose two modified Genettian models for the analysis of John Barth's parodic play with the role of narrative agents, one for the narratee agent and one for the narrator agent; Section Four will look in more detail at the construction of the external reader, paying attention to the temporality of reading, whereas Section Five will look specifically at the construction of the internal readers of and in LETTERS. Where appropriate, I shall refer to internal and external readers in and of Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor.

I. Poststructuralist Notions of Reading

The reader! You, dogged, uninsultable, print-oriented bastard, it's you I'm addressing, who else, from inside this monstrous fiction. You've read me this far, then? Even this far? For what discreditable motive? How is it you don't go to a movie, watch TV, stare at a wall, play tennis with a friend, make amorous advances to the person who comes to your mind when I speak of amorous advances? Can nothing surfeit, saturate you, turn you off? Where's your shame? (LF, 123)

Who is addressing whom in this barrage of rhetorical abuse? Is the author addressing the reader, or is he addressing himself as reader? Is the author having his protagonist address his own author as reader or is the author having the protagonist address himself as reader? Whether we have come to a first, second or even third remove from "reality out there", is not really what is at stake in this passage from Barth's "Life-Story." The fact is that the external naive reader feels abused, having read so far. Is she then after all the "you" that is being constructed as the abused reader of Barth's story? If she believes this to be the case, the next paragraph will even more dislodge her, as it will become obvious to her, in reading it, that the so-called reader in the previous paragraph (the above passage) is nothing but a fictional addressee, with the text's author intradiegetically addressing his own reader from within the text. So in a double movement the reader not only constructs the text, but the text constructs the reader.

In his questioning of the subjectivity of the reader Barth purposely dislocates the reader even further in the following paragraph, by first addressing her as "you" again (or alternatively, by addressing himself as reader, or by having his protagonist address him, author, as reader, or by having him, protagonist, address himself, protagonist, as reader?) and secondly, by also inscribing the moment of writing, "this hour of the world *," as an extradiegetic footnote on the same page: "* 11.00 P.M., Monday, June 10, 1966" (LF, 124). The identities of both text and reader seem thus to have been deconstructed into mere signs of deferred presence, of signifiers of *différance*, in

other words. I will come back to this game with the role of the reader in Section Four of this chapter in my discussion of the Author's address to the external reader of LETTERS.

The relationship between text and reader has come under scrutiny in the work of Paul de Man. In Allegories of Reading he suggests that when one reads a text incompatible demands are made on the reader involving a "divergence between grammar and referential meaning [which] we call the figural dimension of language" (De Man, 1979: 270). The reader is led to an abyss, a blank, from which it is impossible to endorse either the grammatical or the referential demands of the text, as both have to be endorsed while being mutually exclusive:

A text such as Profession de foi can literally be called 'unreadable' in that it leads to a set of assertions that radically exclude each other. Nor are these assertions mere neutral constations; they are exhortative performatives that require the passage from sheer enunciation to action. They compel us to choose while destroying the foundations of any choice. They tell the allegory of a judicial decision that can be neither judicious or just. [...] One sees from this that the impossibility of reading should not be taken too lightly. (De Man, 1979: 245)

The resulting undecidability or "impossibility" of reading² destabilizes the reading subject, in much the same way as Barth

had dislocated his reader in the above quotation from "Life-Story."

Derrida likewise questions the possibility of a unified reading subject with his notion of *transcendent* reading. *Transcendent* reading, he says in Of Grammatology, is "the search for the signified which we here put into question, not to annul [sic] it but to understand it within a system to which such a reading is blind" (Derrida, 1976: 160). In an interview with Derek Attridge, in Acts of Literature, Derrida explains what "transcendent" means: "going beyond interest for the signifier, the form, the language (note that I do not say 'text') in the direction of the meaning or referent" (Derrida, 1992: 44). Transcendent reading cannot be negated, as

a text cannot by itself avoid lending itself to a 'transcendent' reading. A literature which forbade that transcendence would annul itself. This moment of 'transcendence' is irrepressible, but it can be complicated or folded. (Derrida, 1992: 45)

Transcendent reading cannot be resisted, as this "would purely and simply destroy the trace of the text" (Derrida, 1992: 47). And since it cannot be resisted, its relation to meaning and reference should be "*suspended*." "*Suspended* means *suspense*, but also *dependence*, condition, conditionality. In its suspended condition, literature can only exceed itself" (Derrida, 1992: 48). This suspension in the act of reading, a resistance to the desire for signification, allows Derrida towards the end of the

interview to say that "by definition the reader does not exist," before the work, as she is "[...] constructed, even engendered, let's say *invented* by the work" (Derrida, 1992: 74). The work forms its own reader, invents an addressee who countersigns and says "yes," which "yes" is at the same time, in Derrida's words, an inaugural performance.

The act of reading constitutes thus both a repetition and an origin; it involves, as Andrew Bennett says in "Reading, in Theory," "the call of the text for a reader both to identify him- or herself with that text - to be true to it - and and at the same time to open a space of reading, to distance him- or herself or differ in reading" (Bennett, 1993: 4).³ Reading can almost never be an "original" experience, as the originary time of reading will almost always be disrupted and deferred by the temporality of reading. Reading will almost always be an act of re-reading, in the sense that "reading always involves a teleological anticipation of future events" (Bennett, 1993: 9): for instance, when a detective story is read, the solving of the mystery is anticipated, in the case of a technical manual the ability to use a technical apparatus, and so on. In this sense all reading is to be seen as a re-reading, a movement of deferral, backwards and forwards at the same time.⁴ This form of double reading has come to be seen⁵ as a distinguishing feature of poststructuralist reading practice, as it opens up the temporal space of reading.

Poststructuralist theory questions the very possibility of reading as an originary experience and as communication, and

dismisses the unified reading subject as posited in structuralist theories of reading and the role of the reader. In reader-response theory, for instance, as we will see below, reading is seen "as an exchange between two pre-established, stable, fixed identities, the reader and the text" (Bennet, 1993: 6). However, poststructuralists argue that, before it can be established whether, and if so, how, signification is arrived at in reading, it should first be established what reading is. If the act of reading is constituted by both a desire for understandability and a simultaneous resistance to it, reading is seen as a process and not a product.⁶

In "Communication and the Work" Maurice Blanchot rejects the possibility of producing an identity for the reader, as reading is "not to obtain communication from the work, but to 'make' the work communicate itself" (Blanchot, 1982: 198).⁷ Reading has in his view, more or less like in De Man's view, become an allegory of reading. What is communicated is the act or process of reading, or form rather than content.

The reading process is, at least in Calinescu's account, the realization of the intertextual game, which is by definition a re-reading, even if a reader would read a text for the first time. As Calinescu writes,

under certain circumstances the first reading of a work can in fact be a *double* reading, [...] [which] consists, naturally of the sequential temporal movement of the reader's mind [...] along the horizontal syntagmatic axis

of the work; but it also consists of the reader's attempt to 'construct' [...] the text under perusal, or to perceive it as a 'construction.' (Calinescu, 1993: 18-19)⁸

It is the reader who recognizes intertexts, myths, conventions and their possible transgressions: "It is only in the complex play of rereading that the multiplicity and indeed the 'infinity' of the text can be discovered" (Calinescu, 1993: 53). Calinescu herewith reverts to Barthes, who, speaking about the voice of reading, had said that "*in the text, only the reader speaks*" (Barthes, 1990: 151). In S/Z Barthes had relativized the concept of first reading, by saying "there is no *first reading*," by postulating that every reading is simultaneously a re-reading, a form of play, "the return of the different," in order to obtain [...], not the real text, but a plural text: the same and the new" (Barthes, 1990: 16). Because the meaning of the text is constituted by the variety of intertexts that are located within the reading subject, she has become one of the sites of intertextuality; and in order to arrive at signification, she has to play a dynamic role in activating these intertexts, as reading "is no longer consumption, but play" (Barthes, 1990: 16).

When literary innovation itself becomes the subject of the novel, as is especially the case in LETTERS, the reader is to play an even greater active role in the desire for signification, in the construction of meaning. The reader who is to discover and understand the author's literary innovations, is cast by that author into a role of cooperative co-producer: she thus becomes

a real, or what I would prefer to call, implicated reader.⁹ This implicated reader, who is not constructed as a "pre-established, stable, fixed identity," but rather as a dynamic co-producer, operates on a metadiegetic level. As we will see later in this chapter, she clearly differs from what in reader-response theory has come to be known as the "implied reader," who does not operate on this metadiegetic level, but on the extra- and intradiegetic levels.¹⁰

In his attempt to rethink literary forms, Barth has provided us in his play on the role of the reader on all diegetic levels with the readers in and of LETTERS with a fine example of postmodern parody. His parody sets up a dialogical relation between identification with structuralist models of the role of the reader and a dislocation of those models. And this is how the two conflicting tendencies in my discussion of the reader in and of John Barth's fiction can be reconciled.

In order to appreciate what Barth has set out to do in LETTERS, it is necessary to take a look at structuralist thinking on the role of the reader, before looking in more detail at how Barth first appropriates and then undermines these models. Linda Hutcheon, speaking in The Politics of Postmodernism from a model of postmodern architecture, argues that postmodern art, including literature, is art that is

fundamentally paradoxical in its relation to history: it is both critical of and complicitous with that which precedes it. Its relationship with the aesthetic and social past out of which it openly acknowledges it has come is one

characterized by irony, though not necessarily disrespect.

(Hutcheon, 1989: 119)

Barth uses his "insider" knowledge, as a professor of literature and as a highly self-conscious author, in a parodic, but certainly not disrespectful way, by not only inscribing and fictionalising himself into his fiction as Author of that fiction, but also by overtly inscribing and fictionalising the reader and himself as a reader of his own fiction into that same fiction.

Why do you suppose -you! you!- he's gone on so [...]? Why has he as it were ruthlessly set about not to win you over but to turn you away? Because your own author bless and damn you his life is in your hands! He writes and reads himself; don't you think he knows who gives his creatures their lives and deaths? (LF, 124)

Barth's realisation in 1966 that "the world is a novel" (LF, 116), and that he himself was actually a fictional personage in that world, allowed him to simultaneously fictionalise himself as author and reader. This paradoxical relationship finds its sublimation in Barth's ongoing narrative fascination with Scheherazade and her role as reader and teller directly in Lost in the Funhouse and The Tidewater Tales and indirectly in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor.¹¹

II. Structuralist Theories of the Role of the Reader

According to Wolfgang Iser in The Implied Reader, the writer can claim control over the way readers perceive the text through the use of mutually understood conventions:

[The term implied reader] incorporates both the pre-structuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process - which will vary historically from one age to another - and not to a typology of possible readers. (Iser, 1974: xii)

The implied reader fulfils a normative role, and is part of the fictional structure. The reader, implied by the text, is stimulated by both author and text into certain activities, although these activities must not be spelled out in front of her: "The formulated text must shade off, through allusions and suggestions, into a text that is unformulated though nonetheless intended" (Iser, 1974: 31). The difference between Iser's implied and my implicated reader is that the first is addressed on an implied or abstract level and the latter on a real or concrete level, as she is literally asked by the author to perform specific physical tasks. Or to put it differently, the implicated reader is the "addressee," or narratee, of a fictional narrative, whereas Iser's implied reader is, as Wallace Martin says in Recent Theories of Narrative:

simply one of the several standpoints that provide perspectives on its meaning [...]. 'The reader' is not the fictitious figure addressed by the implied author, the real person reading, or some combination of the two; rather the reader is a transcendental possibility, not yet realized, that exists and changes only in the process of reading. (Martin, 1986: 161-162)

The appeal to active reader-participation in the production of meaning during the reading process has received a lot of critical attention in structuralist theory, so much so that a whole spectrum of reader-text interaction has been created, varying from the "actual reader", "super-reader", "informed reader", "ideal reader", "model reader", "virtual reader", "authorial reader", "implied reader", "encoded reader", "mock reader", "extrafictional reader", to "authorial audience", "narrative audience" and "public narratee."² S. Rimmon-Kenan summarizes these poles thus in Narrative Fiction:

At one extreme the concept is of a real reader, whether a specific individual or the collective readership of the period. At the other, it is a theoretical construct, implied or encoded in the text, representing the integration of data and the interpretative process 'invited' by the text. (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 119)

Since the introduction of the notion of implied author by Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction, a popular communicative

narrative model with three narrative "agents" has evolved: *author-narrator-reader*, in which emphasis has been placed on the role of the narrator. Seymour Chatman refined this model in Story and Discourse by incorporating Iser's implied reader, and by extension the implied author, within the boundaries of the text, indicated by square brackets:

Table (2): Chatman's narrative model

Real	-	[Implied	-	Narrator	-	Narratee	-	Implied]	-	Real
author		[author						reader]		reader

(Chatman, 1978: 151)

The square brackets indicate the boundaries of the text. The revised "complete" table is given by Genette in 1988:

Table (3): Genette's original narrative model

[Real	-	Implied	-	[Narrator	-	[Narrative]	-	Narratee]	-	Implied	-	Real]
[author		author								reader		reader]

(Genette, 1988: 139)

Rimmon-Kenan objects to the symmetry between narrator and narratee and disputes the false symmetry in the status of extra-diegetic narrator and narratee: the latter could merge with the implied reader, but the former could *not* merge with the implied author.¹³ According to her there is no room in this model for the implied reader, who should therefore be excluded from the text. This proposal meant in fact the invalidation of earlier narrative models, which had included both implied reader and implied author within the boundaries of the text.

In Narrative Discourse Revisited Genette acknowledges Rimmon's claim¹⁴ and also excludes the implied author from the narrative situation: "exit IA," as he puts it (Genette, 1988: 145). Yet he refuses to send the implied reader off, although he is aware of this reader's absence within the boundaries of the text.¹⁵ Therefore he suggests a revised version of the diagram of narrative agents quoted above in table (3):

Table (4): Genette's revised narrative model

RA [IA] -- Narrator -- Narrative -- Narratee -- [PR] RR

(Genette, 1988: 149),

where "RA" stands for real author, "IA" for inferred author, "PR" for potential reader and "RR" for real reader. Genette prefers the term "inferred" above "implied" as different readers can infer different implied authors from the same text.

In Coming to Terms Chatman still defends the presence of the implied author within in the boundaries of a text as "the agency within the narrative itself which guides any reading of it" (Chatman, 1990: 74) as well as that of the implied reader, whom he locates outside the text. The implied reader is the narrative agent that "construes the text upon each reading" (Chatman, 1990: 76).¹⁶ In his model then the implied reader forms the mirror image of the implied author, although the latter is located within and the former outside the text.

As hinted at above, John Barth plays parodic games in LETTERS with the notions of implied author and reader by defying

the exclusion from the text of both implied author and implied reader, individually as well as jointly. The reader of Barthian fiction is clearly implied and even overtly inscribed as a construct in the text, as for instance in "Dear Reader," (L, 42); the author is likewise inscribed, as Author, as for instance in "Mr. John Barth, Esq., Author," (L, 3). The external implied reader enters into the text as a real "intertext," in the same way as "the Author" enters it as a fictionalized version of the implied author. By their entry into the text the ontological boundaries between reader and author on the one hand and characters or protagonists on the other have become blurred. The permutation from implied reader and author to protagonist disallows their exclusion from the text as willed by Rimmon-Kenan and Genette. The margins of the text have been eroded by Barth by allowing their inscription and consequently their presence into the text.

The external implied reader's encoding in LETTERS rises above the extradiegetic level on which the collective of readers mentioned above operate. In this novel the implied reader is not only present on the extradiegetic and intradiegetic levels, but also on the metadiegetic¹⁷ level, which is the very level I have alluded to above as the one on which the implicated reader operates.

My modified scheme for the different levels of the external reader in LETTERS would therefore look as follows:

Table (5): narrative model for the external reader of LETTERS

<i>metadiegetic</i> narratee	-----	the implicated reader
<i>extradiegetic</i> narratee	-----	the implied reader
<i>intradiegetic</i> narratee	-----	the reader without whom there would be no reading process ¹⁸

When Terry Eagleton speaks in Literary Theory of "subject positions," constructed by the literary work (Eagleton, 1983: 119), he also positions the reader within the text. The reader is inscribed in the text as an essential constitutive factor of that text, thus participating in its enunciation. Since there is an endless number of readers, there is also an endless variety of reader-responses to a particular text resulting in an indefinite number of possible readings.

But not only the reader can take up a subject position, so can the text. Sometimes a text itself can perform reading operations that could have been performed by one of its readers. Gerald Prince hints at this possibility in "Notes on the Text as Reader," when he writes that "many a narrative text presents, in part, one of these possible readings" (Prince, 1980: 230). A text reads itself when it explicitly and directly answers questions and comments "pertaining to the nature, the meaning, the role, the appropriateness of its constituent parts" (Prince, 1980: 230). We find a text reading itself especially in metalinguistic passages that comment on words and phrases in the text, as is the case for instance in the eight-pages long postscript of Lady Amherst's first letter to the Author:

But Germaine, Germaine, this is not germane! as my ancestor and namesake Mme de Staël must often have cried to herself. I can do no better than to rebegin with one of her own (or was it Pascal's?) charming openers: 'Forgive me this too long letter; I had not time to write a short.' And you yourself - so I infer from the heft of your oeuvre, stacked here upon my 'early American' writing desk, to which, straight upon the close of this postscript, I will address me, commencing with your earliest and never ceasing till I shall have overtaken as it were the present point of your pen - you yourself are not, of contemporary authors, the most sparing ... (L, 4)

Here we even find the text reading itself in an involutory double movement of literal enactment, taking the form of a *mise en abîme* as the character not only comments on what she has just written, but also supplies extratextual comments on Barth's earlier works.

Other examples of the text reading itself are what Lucien Dällenbach has called "auto-citations" (Dällenbach, 1976: 283), the most extreme form of intertextuality, when the text partly or completely reads and copies itself. I will come back to this in the next chapter. In "Bellerophoniad" we find an early example of this type of auto-citation in the letter of abdication of Napoleon I, dated "Isle of Aix, 12 July 1815," (LF, 252), which includes his appeal to History, written on board H.M.S. Bellerophon. We find an exact copy of this letter in LETTERS, in a postscript of a letter by Jerome Bray, dated 1966 (L, 31) and

in a letter by A.B. Cook VI to his son, we read a "doctored" version of this same letter, now dated "13 July 1815, Rochefort" (L, 598).

III. External and Internal Readers in and of LETTERS

The reader that I have spoken of so far, is the reader who, although paradoxically positioned within the text, also stands outside the text. This reader I shall call the external reader of LETTERS. However, another distinction should be made: that between external (outside the novel) and internal (inside the novel) readers, that is, there are one external and at least seven internal readers, see table (6) on the next page.

The eighty eight letters are sent to twenty different addressees, but the external reader only gets to know the responses of seven of these recipients, which is why they are referred to as internal readers. The other thirteen addressees are not referred to as internal readers since there is no proof that they did indeed receive and read the letters that were addressed to them. The external reader can only gather from the acrosticon, as shown in table (7), that these letters have indeed been despatched.

The internal readers in their turn also receive letters outside the integral eighty-eight which make up the body of the novel: these internal letters are not always fully given, very often their content is reported in indirect speech, although it

Table (6): internal narratee and narrator agents in LETTERS

Senders:

Addressees:	Lady Amh.	Todd Andr.	Jacob Horner	ABCook IV/VI	JB Bray	Ambrose Mensch	Author	Total
Lady Amherst							5(a)	: 5
Todd Andrews			1		2		2	: 4
Jacob Horner			6				2	: 8
AB Cook IV/VI							2	: 2
Jerome Bray							2	: 2
Ambrose Mensch							2	: 2
The Author	24	2	1	1	1	1		: 30
Father Todd		6						: 6
Trustee Todd		1						: 1
Unborn child				4				: 4
Son AB Cook VI				7(b)				: 7
Drew Mack						1		: 1
Parents JBB						2(c)		: 2
Bea Golden						1		: 1
Grandmother JBB						1		: 1
Reader							2	: 2
Yours Truly							6(d)	: 6
AM King							1(e)	: 1
To Whom It MC							1(f) 1	: 2
Total:	24	9	8	12	8	9	18	= 88

Notes:

- (a) one of which is addressed to Germaine Pitt and Ambrose Mensch.
- (b) one of which is addressed to his son and/or prospective grandchild (with postscript to the Author by Henry Burlingame VII).
- (c) one of which is addressed to parents and fosterparents.
- (d) two of which cc. to Lady Amherst.
- (e) and to Lady Amherst.
- (f) and to in particular the Author.

also happens that their contents are fully quoted.¹⁹ So the text not only requires the external reader to struggle to construct a meaning by arranging the textual elements to form one or more interpretations, we also see seven internal readers struggling to construct meaning out of the letters they receive, as well as out of the events of the past as represented in Barth's previous works and the events happening to and around them.

As we have seen in table (5), the external reader is addressed on three levels in LETTERS: that of the real or implicated (*metadiegetic*) reader who is asked to perform certain real tasks, that of the implied (*extradiegetic*) reader who is encoded in the text and that of the internal (*intradiegetic*) reader, encoded with all other internal readers in the novel.

The internal reader is also addressed on three levels, only two of which overlap with those of the external reader. My modified scheme for the different levels of the internal reader would look as follows:

Table (7): narrative model for the internal readers of LETTERS

<i>extradiegetic</i> narratee	-----	characters as letter writers
<i>(intra)diegetic</i> narratee	-----	characters in first degree narrative
<i>hypodiegetic</i> narratee	-----	characters in second degree narrative

All seven internal readers of LETTERS are characters in the first degree on the (intra)diegetic level, as their writing and reading of letters constitutes part of the narrative function. The seven main characters who send letters to each other, as shown in table (6), also receive letters from other persons; these letters I would locate within the second degree on the *hypodiegetic* level.²⁰ The construction of the internal reader will be looked at in more detail in section five of this chapter.

IV. The External Reader in and of LETTERS

One of the fictions of literary narration is duration. Every narrative has a story-duration and a text-duration. Hypothetically the two types run parallel in dialogue form where story-time dictates text-time: a dialogue in spoken form has the same duration as in written form. Genette already pointed out in Narrative Discourse that this potential coincidence of duration is a fiction, as the rate at which the words are uttered and the length of the silences are not taken into account when dialogue is rendered in written form. For this reason he proposes to redefine the relations between duration of story and text in terms of "speed," or constancy of story pace: "By speed we mean the relationship between a temporal dimension and a spatial dimension" (Genette, 1980: 87), that is, duration of the story and length of the text. This modification, however, does not affect the principles of narrative duration.

As we have seen in Section One of this chapter, the signifier "you" in the passage from Lost in the Funhouse quoted at the outset of that section, confused the moment of inscription in the text with the temporality of reading, which confusion did not allow the assumed addressee of that passage to identify herself with the displaced "you" in the text. In LETTERS Barth not only keeps on playing games with the reader, resulting in the destabilization and dislocation of that reader, he also manages to denounce the concept of fictional duration in his deconstruction of the temporality of reading, as the letters from the Author to the Reader show when they also render account of the duration of their being corrected and reread.

As table (6) has shown, the reader is directly addressed in two letters by the Author, the first under the letter L (March), the second under the letter S (September):

'March 2, 1969'

Dear Reader, and

Gentles all: LETTERS is now begun, its correspondents introduced and their stories commencing to entwine. Like those films whose credits appear after the action has started, it will now pause.

If 'now' were the date above, I should be writing this from Buffalo, New York, on a partly sunny Sunday [...] (L, 42)

And:

'Sunday, September 14, 1969'

Dear Reader,

LETTERS reaches herewith and 'now' (the Author outlines this last on Tuesday, July 4, 1978 [...])

(The Author drafts this in longhand at Chautauqua Lake, N.Y., on Monday July 10, 1978, a decade since he first conceived an old-time epistolary novel [...]) In the interim between outline and longhand draft, as again between longhand draft and first typescript, first typescript and final draft, final draft and galley proofs, he goes forward with [...] rewriting, editing [...]

(He types this on October 5, 1978, in Baltimore, Maryland [...]) the end. (L, 771-772)

Although the letters are unsigned, the Author does not exclude himself from the text, as the entries into the table of contents read "The Author to the Reader. LETTERS is 'now' begun" (L, 42) and "The Author to the Reader. LETTERS is 'now' ended" (L, 771). The actual letters themselves carry a similar heading, and the reader can safely assume that the Author, in spite of his faked absence from the text, is present as the signatory of these letters.

In the first letter, dated March 2, the Author states that a letter has two times, that of its writing and that of its reading, "but that very little of what obtained when the writer wrote will still when the reader reads" (L, 44). In other words, the meaning of the letter changes in the period between its conception and reception. What is called the first time of the

letter, would be the so-called "real" context, with which context the second time breaks. Derrida calls this a *force de rupture* (Derrida, 1988: 9), a breaking force that constitutes the very structure of the written text:

This allegedly real context includes a certain 'present' of the inscription, the presence of the writer to what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention, the wanting-to-say-what-he-means, which animates his inscription at a given moment. But the sign possesses the characteristic of being readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I do not know what its alleged author-scriptor consciously intended to say at the moment he wrote it, i.e. abandoned it to its essential drift. (Derrida, 1988: 9)

Because of its iterability the sign is able to keep on functioning, even though it has broken loose from its original context, which is the moment of its inscription. Barth's second time could be read as a form of Derridean iterability - whenever the letter is read again after its first reading, meaning changes. But Barth adds more layers of time to the written sign in letters:

And to the units of epistolary fictions yet a third time is added: the actual date of composition, which will not likely correspond to the letterhead date, a function more

of plot or form than of history. It is not March, 2, 1969: when I began this letter it was October 30, 1973 [...].

Now it's not 10/30/73 any longer, either. In the time between my first setting down 'March 2, 1969' and now, 'now' has become January 1974 [...].

The plan of LETTERS calls for a second Letter to the Reader at the end of the manuscript, by when what I've 'now' recorded will seem already as remote as 'March 2, 1969.' By the time LETTERS is in print, ditto for what shall be recorded in that final letter. And - to come at last to the last of a letter's times - by the time your eyes, Reader, review these epistolary fictive a's-to-z's, the 'United States of America' may be [...] a mere memory. (L, 44-45)

Barth's "now" is put in quotation marks, as its moment of inscription gives, in Derrida's words, "rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who in a given context, has emitted or produced it" (Derrida, 1988: 9).

The "now" sign breaks with its context which is "the collectivity of presences organising the moments of its inscription" (Derrida, 1988: 9), every time it is literally inscribed into a new context by the real or implicated reader. In other words, the *différance* of the sign is to be located in the ever changing context that refuses to be "tethered to the source" (Derrida, 1988: 20).

The moments of writing and reading a letter are never simultaneous²¹ and meaning necessarily changes from one context

to the other, not only due to the time factor but also due to the different intertextualities of addresser and addressee. But the meaning of a letter can even before its moment of inscription be manipulated, or as Barth says "forged" or "doctored," thereby also destabilizing the so-called "real" context of the moment of inscription.

The enunciation of "now" in the above two letters is similar to that of Derrida's signature, as both imply the "actual or non-presence of the signer" (Derrida, 1988: 20). In his discussion of the signature Derrida calls this sign the ultimate form of iterability. In "Signature Event Context" he writes,

the signature also marks the having-been present in a past *now* or present (*maintenant*), which will remain a future *now* or present (*maintenant*), thus in a general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness/*maintenance*. That general *maintenance* is in some way inscribed, pinpointed in the always evident and singular present punctuality of the form of the signature. (Derrida, 1988: 20)

The "now" in the letters to the Reader functions in a similar way. The reader who is addressed as "Dear Reader," is the extradiegetic narratee, the implied reader, inscribed into the text. But it is the flesh and blood, implicated reader who has to decode the "now", as the Author requests her to "supply date and newsitems" (L, 772) of that particular context herself, every time the letter is read and every time "LETTERS herewith and 'now' reaches [...] the end" (L, 771-772).

The external reader is thus demarginalized and forced by the Author out of a passive reading experience into the intertextual space of the here and now. In this way the "now" of "LETTERS is 'now' begun" and the "now" of "LETTERS reaches herewith and 'now' [...] the end," detached as they are from the "present and singular intention of [their] production," become signs of deferred presence, of *différance*, in ever changing contexts that refuse to be "tethered to the source" (Derrida, 1988: 20).

Barth's use of "now" also links up with Barthes' notion of a textual scriptor, or "producer" of the text, who "is born simultaneously with the text" and only exists in the time of the text and its reading: "there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*" (Barthes, 1977: 145). As an act of performative inscription "now" inscribes the text into a network of infinite intertextualities, activated by the reader.

The external reader fulfils yet another metadiegetic role as she sees the novel literally being composed under her very eyes, and in the process becomes a midwife to the birth of this "self-begetting novel,"²² in which the central action is the process of its own composition. As LETTERS recounts its own creation, the external reader becomes witness to the conception of narrative strategies and themes being decided upon in the novel, for instance when the author as Author asks for and receives advice about its composition from the characters participating in the novel. Some of this advice he rejects, and some he incorporates into his "work in progress" (L, 120).

Heide Ziegler observes in John Barth that "historians tend to interpret letters as documents. They believe that even texts which are admittedly informed by a personal point of view can yield factual results, if analysed objectively. LETTERS defies that notion" (Ziegler, 1987: 70).²³ So even "genuine" historical letters describing events that really happened, will always only be subjective accounts, linguistic constructs, reread and reinterpreted by other than the first readers. With the passing of time the mere physical existence of a historical letter or document will become more important than the actual contents of that letter or document, as "these events gradually lose their ontological relevance" (Ziegler, 1987: 70). The secondary reading has thus taken priority over the first reading. Ideally then it would be the external reader's task in the novel to decipher what is "real" and what is not, but LETTERS ruthlessly undermines this enterprise, by "revealing" the "doctored" status of so-called historical letters or documents. Napoleon Bonaparte's memoirs are a point in case:

His letters [...] tho undeliver'd or unreply'd to, had in fact been addressst less to their addressees than to History. What better chance to bend the world in his favor [...] by writing his memoirs on St. Helena [...]. He had made history: he could now re-make & revise it to his pleasure! (L, 605)

Here the privileged status of historical letters and documents is called into question. The many "doctored" (hypo-

diegetic) letters sent by the Cooks and Burlingames in the novel serve a similar purpose, that is, the destabilization of "reality."

Riffaterre and Genette have observed that it is not a prerequisite for the external reader to recognize literary allusions, citations and conventions in order to construct meaning of the text she is reading: the text will lead the reader to signification, allowing the reader a passive role. But LETTERS undermines this structuralist position as the external reader is forced out of the role of passive consumer, forced as she is to go back to history and to Barth's previous works to check whether what is being said in LETTERS about historical events and the events in earlier works, is in actual fact correct, all this in spite of the fact that the reader is assured by the author in the novel that the text apparently under construction will be readable without foreknowledge of his previous works. In a letter to Todd Andrews, for instance, the Author thanks Todd for his contribution for the current project:

It had not occurred to me to reorchestrate previous stories of mine in this LETTERS novel, only to have certain characters stroll through its epistles. But your ironic mention of sequels tempts me to that fallible genre, and suggests to me that it can be managed without the tiresome prerequisite of one's knowing the earlier books. (L, 191)

The external reader, as an individual subject, is constituted here as an intertextual object by the author, if not the Author, within the discourse of the different narratives in the text. However, as the events in LETTERS are presented as variations upon, extension and inversions of its predecessor texts, this checking becomes a sheer impossible task and the "preestablished, stable, fixed identity" of the external reader has once more been shown to be a fiction.

As in the case of Todd Andrews and Jacob Horner, the Author fills the gaps between the earlier and the present appearances of his characters in order to update the external reader, but this reader is not always quite sure whether or not to trust the update. Even the characters themselves are not sure and have their ontological doubts. Jacob Horner, for instance, supposedly relives his experiences of The End of the Road (1967) in *Der Wiedertraum*, but this reenactment seems to be in his own words, writing to himself, "out of synch, out of focus, perhaps out of control. The world's turned upside down, you Scarcely Recognize yourself; you Begin to Wonder who's writing whom, at whose prescription" (L, 473). Horner seems to have the same doubts as the author of "Life-Story" started to suspect he was a character in his own fiction. So what happens on the intradiegetic level to the internal readers, also happens to the external reader who is intertextually encoded to become a co-producer of the text, but is programmed to fall into the pitless *mise en abîme* of intertextual traces.

Finally, the external reader is put in the same intradiegetic position as the internal readers in LETTERS when they

receive letters from the Author asking them to participate as characters in his "current fictive project" (L, 189). He writes to five of his ex-protagonists and to newly-created Lady Amherst soliciting their cooperation for an epistolary novel, involving, as he writes to one of them, "characters from the Author's Earlier Fictions" (L, 190). On March 30, 1969 he writes to Todd Andrews, his oldest protagonist:

There I've said it, and quickly now before I lose my nerve, will you consent, sir, to my using your name and circumstances and what-all in this new novel...? (L, 190)

As table (6) has shown, all internal readers receive at least two letters from the Author and all but one correspondent respond positively. Jacob Horner refuses cooperation, "As for your work in progress, your inquiries, your proposal, I am Not Interested," (L, 279) he writes to the Author. The complete correspondence of the eighty eight letters constitutes the text of the novel.

The external reader, being an outside observer, can of course not respond to the Author's address to her and thus she is refused participation as a subject in this correspondence; her role is necessarily one-sided in this respect. It is, however, dual on another level, as this non-participation forces the external reader into a position of observation, at the same time reading and critiquing the letters sent by the Author. By allowing the external reader one foot inside and the other outside the text, Barth has given her an additional metadiegetic

dimension, which is absent from Genette's model, in order to parody and thus invalidate this narratological model for its incompleteness.

Barth is not disrespectful towards his external reader. In a 1979 interview with Charlie Reilly, he shows great awareness of and care for the external reader of LETTERS. When asked whom he writes for or who his reader might be, he says he no longer regards that "as a dopey question, although he probably did when he was in his twenties and thirties" (Reilly, 1981: 11). If not "a Swiss watch," LETTERS is "at least a respectable Switzerland cuckoo clock where all the cogs and pendulums actually do engage." He seems to be more concerned for the book to work than for it to be completely understood. It is "the kind of novel where if one is charmed by Lady Amherst and not so charmed by A.B. Cook, one could more or less skim through the Cook passages. You might not get precisely the same assemblage, but I think you would emerge with a sound sense of what is going on in the overall novel" (L, 12).

The easiest way for the reader to move through the novel is linearly, although the events are not in chronological order: the epistolary letters are all assigned an alphabetical letter which are put together to form a grid, spelling L, E, T, T, E, R, S, if read vertically. This is pasted on to a seven-month calendar in the form of an acrosticon, which, if read horizontally, reads "an old-time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers, each of which imagines himself actual" (L, 769), see table (7) below.²⁴ But Barth does "not think much is lost if the

reader devises his own method and sticks to it" (Reilly, 1981: 12).

The best way for the external reader to read LETTERS is, according to Barth's advice, "by beginning with page one, and proceeding to page two, and continuing to the last page" (Reilly, 1981: 12). But as the letters in the novel are not in chronological order and some letters respond to other letters the chronologically reading subject has not seen yet, this "isn't that simple," in Barth's words (Reilly, 1981: 12). Due to its aleatory structure the novel can indeed be read along different routes, such as chronologically, thematically, per correspondent or pair of correspondents, or historically, and it is for the external reader to decide which route to follow, thereby creating ever changing intertextual frameworks.²⁵ The normal linear route of the novel turns out to be only one of many different possible orders. Because of its arbitrary nature the possibility of different reading options, of multiple narrative arrangements within the context of one novel, thus questions the linear causality and teleology of all narrative structure.

And again Barth confronts the reader with the question of who is constructing whom here: is it the reader who constructs the text, or is it a question of the text constructing the reader? The identities of both reader and text are disrupted once more by the act of reading and we seem to have arrived at another instance of the impossibility of signification. By offering the external reader different routes of reading, by making the practice of montage into a mode of composition and inscription, Barth has indeed made rereading, or intertextuality, into a mere

If the external reader reads chronologically and follows the vertical pattern of the calendar, she would have to start at the bottom of the writing order, starting with the letter by the Author to the Reader, dated "2 March, 1969," in which he announces that the novel has started (L, 42). In linear order this is the seventh letter. By allowing the external reader the freedom to opt for a reading pattern of her own choice, the Author paradoxically also projects the external reader as an object in his discourse. The external reader is, in other words, doubly inscribed in the text, by both author and Author.

Another way in which the external reader is constructed by the author is through the dialogic use of multiple focalizations in the network of different narratives. In the letters of the individual correspondents we read about the events as focalized through that particular correspondent whose letter we are reading at that moment, but it often happens that different characters give their own version and interpretation of that same event in their own letters.

In his first letter, dated 7 March, 1969, for instance, Todd Andrews objectively describes the funeral of Harrison Mack, who had fancied himself King George III. Todd, named executor of the Mack estate, was like all the others who attended the funeral, dressed in Regency getup. He writes to his deceased father, "The more accurate his madness became, so to speak, the more he fancied himself, not George III sane, but George III *mad*; a George III, moreover, who in *his* madness believed himself to be Harrison Mack sane" (L, 13). Lady Amherst also gives an account

of that same funeral in her letter to the Author of 10 May, 1969, but from a totally different perspective. Although she had been Harrison's mistress ("Lady Pembroke") for a few years, she was at the funeral more interested in A.B. Cook's son, "the young man whom perhaps I carried in my womb for nine months and five thousand miles, brought into the world and [...] have not seen since" (L, 224).

In this way a dialogic is set up on a macrotextual level between on the one hand the characters among themselves and on the other between the characters and the external reader. The external reader is moreover once more chronologically dislocated in the text by the author with the description of the funeral being linearly more than two hundred pages apart, with twenty four other letters spaced in between.

Barth keeps on playing games with the external reader in his novels after LETTERS. In Sabbatical, for instance, the external reader seems to be refused an identity of her own as she is almost literally taken by the hand and guided through the novel, "Well reader: hence the significance of our sturdy craft's name: a union of contraries prevailingly harmonious indeed but sometimes tense, like the physics of Pokey himself. More on naval architecture on p. 236" (S, 178). The first footnote on the first page of the story, which reads "all shall be made clear, in time" (S, 9), seems to be superfluous as any external reader who starts reading a novel has teleological expectations about its plot, its ending. Its purpose seems to be to dislocate the reader by dislodging her from her linear reading routine; by forcing her

to escape from the narrative frame to read the footnote the illusion of reality is broken. On page 120 we find footnote 36, which refers the external reader to another footnote on page 254; footnote 16 on page 91 refers the reader to footnote 5 on page 139; footnote 20 on page 98 gives the source of the quote from a poem and also urge the reader to check up on this in footnote 1 on page 176, which footnote in itself, in Möbius-strip fashion,²⁶ refers back to footnote 20 on page 98; footnote 23 on page 101 refers the reader to page 139 and footnote 10 on page 17 just reads, "As shall be shown," and so on. At other times, for instance in footnote 25 on page 104, the external reader is even advised to go and read up on a particular subject, as all relevant bibliographical references are given.

The external reader is not only constructed by the text, but also by the narrators, as the reader is given the illusion that the narrators compose their story as they live it and the reader reads it. And as "we beg the reader to bear in mind that [...]" (S, 209) shows, very little, if any, room is left for the reader herself to become a co-producer of that same text: "Got your bearings, reader?" (S, 151). She seems to have been silenced and dislocated by the dual narrators: "None of the dialogue so far in this chapter means what it said. Life-choices are trade-offs, reader, and loving your bargain doesn't make it painless to pay the bill" (S, 180). The dual narrators have taken total control over the narrative by first dislodging and then excluding the external reader from the narrative:

Yet it's our story: it will be our story. What's more - he hopes Susan can take this the way he means it; he knows what the past few days and weeks have been for her - this story, our story, it's our house and our child...

We'll have made it, says determined Fenn, and we'll live in it. We'll even live by it. (S, 293-294)

In The Tidewater Tales the external reader is more and more marginalized, although there is still the occasional address: "Patient reader: To have lost much innocence does not condemn one to losing all" (S, 286), and "Tongue-ticked reader, what do you expect we expect? You're reading The Tidewater Tales: A Novel; we're telling our stories, which are our story, which we're living and have lived from moment to moment, creek to creek" (S, 370). And in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor the external reader has been totally absorbed by the narrative, as there are no more direct addresses to this narratee agent.

V. The Internal Readers in and of LETTERS

Not only is the external reader in LETTERS constituted as an object within the discourse of the Author, and possibly the author, the internal readers, being individual subjects in their own right, are also projected as objects within the discourse in which they are subjects. This becomes evident when they come to realize that their lives have been made objects of earlier novels

written by the same Author who now solicits their cooperation as subjects for his new work.

The letter-writers claim to have been used as real-life models for characters in Barth's earlier fiction, as becomes clear from a letter Jacob Horner writes to the Author: "Sir: In a sense, I Am Indeed Jacob Horner of The End of the Road novel, for which you apologize in your letter to me of May 11" (L, 278), and from a letter by Jerome Bray to the Author: "You think to make us a character in yet another piece of *literature*" (L, 527).

A.B. Cook VI, descendant of Ebenezer Cook, researching the history of his forebears for a mock epic called Marylandiad, after the manner of Cook's poem "The Sot-Weed Factor,"²⁷ comes to know the background of Joe Morgan, one of the protagonists in The End of the Road, at the time employed by the Maryland Historical Society. In LETTERS he finds out about Morgan's and Jacob Horner's involvement in the death of Rennie Morgan and also discovers in 1959 that "it has perhaps already been made use of, in a just-published and little-noticed novel by a young erstwhile Marylander now teaching in Pennsylvania" (L, 364), who later turns out to be named "John Barth." Morgan, however, denies ever having been introduced to the author of that work and claims that "despite the undeniable and disquieting parallels, in most ways [the] fiction *doesn't* correspond to the actual events, not to mention the characters involved" (L, 365). Reality seems to operate on different levels, as "the distinction between Art and Life" (L, 51), fiction and reality, has become blurred.

Even more ontological boundaries are erased as the Author asks Lady Amherst not to be his model, but his fictional creation:

Will you be my 'Lady A,' my heroine, my creation?

And permit me the honor of being, as in better-lettered times gone by, your faithful

Author. (L, 53)

It can be inferred from all of the above that the correspondent-protagonists not only read the letters sent to them, but also read their own lives and thus literally become their reading other. The exception in this is Lady Amherst, whose life as a protagonist only comes to be written in LETTERS. In order to constitute herself as a character and to establish herself among the other fictitious characters of Barth's earlier works, she reads all his previous works over the months March through September in the novel. In March she starts The Floating Opera, "I hold your first novel in my hand, eager to embark upon it" (L, 11), and in May she finishes The Sot-Weed Factor, which she enjoyed reading: "*Mes compliments*" (L, 252). She reads one book per month, and in August she writes to the Author:

P.S.: Speaking of authors: I have I believe now gone quite through your published oeuvre, sir, per program: a book a month since March. What am I to read in August? In September? (L, 556)

Life and art are indeed muddled when life becomes an imitation of art. Lady Amherst suspects as much when she wonders whether the resemblance between the "fictitious 17th-Century intrigant and the Burlingame-Castine-Cook line of 20th-Century Ontario [...] is either pure coincidence or the impure imitation of art by life" (L, 252-253). Notice her deliberate misreading of the name "Cooke" after having finished The Sot-Weed Factor, which name she deliberately spells without an "e."²⁸ This can in itself be read as an affirmation on her part of her identity as a real character, as an attempt at warding off her awareness of being only a fictional character in Barth's fiction. That she suspects this to be the case becomes obvious when she writes to the Author:

In latter March I read your Floating Opera novel, having been introduced earlier by Ambrose Mensch to the alleged original of your character Todd Andrews. I enjoyed the story ... but felt a familiar uneasiness about the fictive life of real people and the factual life of 'fictitious' characters -familiar because, as I'm sure I've intimated, I've 'been there before.' (L, 58)

The internal readers, as we have seen above in table (6), all receive letters, some more than others: Lady Amherst receives five, Todd Andrews four, Jacob Horner eight, A.B. Cook IV/VI two, Jerome Bray two. Of these twenty-five letters sixteen are sent by the Author. All receive letters from the Author: five for Lady Amherst; two for each of the other correspondents. Only Todd

Andrews receives letters from other correspondents than the Author: two from Jerome Bray, one from Jacob Horner. In addition to the two letters that he receives from the Author Jacob Horner sends six letters to himself. The Author receives most letters, thirty in all: twenty-four from Lady Amherst, two from Todd Andrews and one from each of the other correspondents. All in all the seven protagonists send each other fifty-five letters.

Apart from the fifty-five letters that are exchanged between the seven main characters, another thirty-three letters are sent to other recipients: Todd Andrews sends six letters to his deceased father, and one to his trustee; A.B. Cook IV sends four letters to his unborn child, and A.B. Cook VI seven to his "lost" son; Jerome Bray sends five letters, to Drew Mack, his parents and foster-parents, Bea Golden and his grandmother. Ambrose Mensch sends six to Yours Truly, one to himself as Arthur Morton King, his pseudonym, and one to To Whom It May Concern. The latter also receives one letter from the Author, who also sent two letters to the Reader, as referred to above.

Apart from the eighty eight letters that are printed verbatim in LETTERS, Barth has included in this restoration of the epistolary form an intertextual range of references to historical and literary letters, such as Mme De Staël's "uncommonly confidential" eighteenth-century letters which she used as "trial draughts for her more serious epistles," which letters are later edited by Lady Amherst for a scholarly publication; the "notorious John Henry Letters" (L, 110), allegedly forged by the Cooks/Burlingames in order to manipulate

American history, as A.B. Cook IV writes to his unborn child, "Wee Jamie Madison has sent the Henry Letters to Congress - that is, my fair paraphrase of the fourteen cipher'd originals" (L, 111); Napoleon's letters from St. Helena, which his family "reject as forgeries letters" (L, 615) and "Goethe's novel-in-letters, The Sorrow of Werther" (L, 283). Other intra-epistolary (or hypodiegetic) letters include Marsha Blank's "Bombshell Letter" (L, 580) to her former husband, Ambrose Mensch, about the parenthood of his daughter Angela and letters to Marsha Blank from Jerome Bray, apparently containing a drug called "honey dust" to be administered to her by Bea Golden, as Jerome Bray writes to the latter, "she will share with you its coma-clearing contents" (L, 638).

One of the specific functionings of the epistolary novel is the dialogic or communicative element: addressers send letters to addressees who write letters in response, or, if they do not return a response in writing, at least acknowledge the attempt to dialogue by accepting and/or reading the letter sent to them.

However, Barth parodies and thus destabilizes the assumedly stable structuralist model of communication, by assigning most addressees in LETTERS a passive role as reading subjects or addressees, as their failure to respond so obviously shows. They are unable or refuse to react to the letters received and are thus, in spite of their inscription into the text, by their silence simultaneously excluded from that same text. Paradoxically it is in this defiance of presence that they are absent. In The Post Card Derrida speaks of letters "that can

always not arrive at their destination" (Derrida, 1987: 515), implying that messages only constitute themselves as messages at the moment of arrival at their destination. As long as the sender of the message is not sure whether the letter has arrived, the message is caught up in the possibility of non-arrival, or *différance*, in other words.

Most attempts at epistolary dialogue seem to turn into monologues in the novel: instead of establishing an exchange the letters gradually take the form of confessions, in which the writers either talk to themselves or to an absent other. I will come back to this type of communication in more detail in Section Four of the next chapter on the agency of the author.

For the purpose of the present section on the internal reader, however, it will at the moment suffice to realize that the internal writers in the novel have almost by default become their own reading other. Reading, as Paul Ricoeur says in a recent interview, always involves a necessary otherness or alterity. In "World of the Text, World of the Reader" he says:

When a reader applies a text to himself, as is the case in literature, he recognizes himself in certain possibilities of existence - according to the model offered by a hero, or a character - but, at the same time, he is transformed; the becoming other in the act of reading is as important as is the recognition of the self. (Ricoeur, 1991: 492-493)

For want of an internal reader the internal letter-writers in LETTERS necessarily turn into their own reading other as the identity of the addressee of the letters is collapsed by Barth in his dislocation and dislodging of the identity of the reading subject. Todd Andrews, for instance, yearly writes to his deceased father, "Brrr! Old fellow in the cellarage, what gripes you?" (L, 12) on the anniversary of his death, "I'm late with the letter for your 39th death day," (L, 12) and addresses these letters to Plot No. 1 in the municipal cemetery. The reading subject in this case has in typical parodic Barthian fashion been catachrestically dissolved.

Lady Amherst's internal reader, the Author, also seems to dissolve as he, after initial responses, gradually, over the course of months, retreats into silence. Her letters, for lack of a reader, therefore turn into confessional monologues and allow her to merge with her reading other:

Mon cher (encore silencieux) B.,

I write this - sixth? eighth? - letter to you once again from my office [...]. I wonder, not having heard from you on the then urgent queries in my last, why I continue to write, write, write, into a silence it were fond to imagine pregnant. (L, 206)

Do you pray too, silent author of the novel I am still in the midst of? (L, 238)

Silent sir (you who mock me not only by your absence from this 'correspondence' but by your duly reported presence, even as I write these words, just across the Bay. (L, 345)

Eerier yet your absence -as well say nonexistence!- and my presence here amid the caricatures of your characters. (L, 353)

[...] and I need once more to write to you, not only whether you reply or not, but whether or not you even read my words. (L, 362)

Your silence has drawn so many words from this pen [...] 'twere pity to break it with conversation. (L, 449)

Lady Amherst's attempts at filling the Author's absence with his presence by inscribing him into her letters are matched by Ambrose's attempts to annihilate his own absence in and from Lady Amherst. By filling her with his semen, Ambrose, who, as Lady Amherst confesses, "has filled me full, if not fulfilled me, as I've filled these pages" (L, 206), tries to write his own body onto hers while she is writing her own body into fiction. In the end Ambrose's attempts at fertilization seem to have been successful as Lady Amherst's periods have stopped and she appears to be pregnant.

In an analogous way the Author fills the space of his absence as internal reader by finally breaking his long silence

at the end of the novel. Lady Amherst pretends to be upset by the Author's letter to Ambrose and his refusal to respond to her letters. As she writes to the Author: "On the matter of your writing to *him* [Ambrose], after half a year's silence, I shall not speak" (L, 660), but at the same time she has to acknowledge that the Author's "rejection of [the] honorary doctorate and [his] subsequent silence [...] played no small part in bringing [Ambrose] and [her] together" (L, 676). And in a final play of the reversal of absence into presence the Author breaks his silence and acknowledges his identity as an internal reader of her life by sending bride and groom his wedding wishes in response to an earlier announcement of their wedding plans.

The bride, however, in her turn, has delayed reading the Author's letter containing these wishes, aware as she is of the damaging consequences, and when she reads the Author's wishes, she draws the inevitable conclusion: "[...] at last reading your surprised blessing. Thank you and Amen to it!" (L, 689), for the Author's writing to Lady Amherst, whom he tellingly addresses as Germaine Pitt, and not as Lady Amherst, will paradoxically cause her presence to be reversed into absence again. She comes to realize that she is only a character in the Author's fiction after all. She will cease to exist once he will stop writing her and she will consequently have to stop reading him. For this reason she decides to take matters into her own hands and takes the initiative herself to stop writing, "Amen to it!," therewith consciously renouncing her presence. She once more crosses ontological boundaries when she proclaims herself to be the Author's again:

As I remain - though, you having after so long silence spoken, you shall hear no more from me - ever,

Your

Germaine (L, 692)

In a similar way as the Author has filled his absence with presence, Ambrose Mensch has been filling in blanks ever since he found a message in a bottle:²⁹

On May 12, 1940, when I was ten, I found a note in a bottle along the Choptank River shore just downstream from where I write this ... on a top line was penned in deep red ink TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN; on the next-to-bottom, YOURS TRULY. The lines between were blank - a blank I've been trying now for 29 years to fill! All my fictions, all my facts, Germaine, are replies to that *carte blanche*. (L, 39)

Ambrose thus starts his writing career as a reader,³⁰ as a reader of blanks with a desire to fill these blanks.³¹ This could be seen as a Barthian parody on the notion of creative reading, which is a form of deep, meditative reading, or mental re-writing, as developed by Barthes in "On Reading," where the latter sees reading as a "a conductor of the desire to write" (Barthes, 1976: 40).³² J. Hillis Miller speaks in this respect of deconstructive or revisionistic re-writing.³³ I will come back to this in the next chapter.

Ambrose keeps on dumping water-bottled messages addressed to Yours Truly in the Choptank in response to the mysterious anonymous letter that washed ashore in 1940, signed by "Yours Truly." Yours Truly fulfils the same role as Marsha Blank, Ambrose's first wife, in the sense that both refuse to be inscribed or read by Ambrose. Yours Truly sends a second water-message, this time a total blank, however, "found to consist this time wholly of body, without return address, date, salutation, close or signature" (L, 765), and Marsha's daughter turns out to be his brother's offspring. Ambrose is, in other words, thus denied an identity as internal reader, and through these blank messages he is even disallowed a merging with his reading other.³⁴

Jacob Horner literally becomes his own reading other as he addresses his letters to himself. These letters take the form of a therapeutic rewriting, called "scriptotherapy" (L, 19), which is at the same time a retreat into history as well as an advance into the future as this inscription of the self forms the basis for the reenactment of his life in *Der Wiedertraum*. When his remobilization is completed and he is back on "the Road of [a] New Life," he stops writing and consequently reading himself: "nor is it my Intention to Record (ever again) our Passage down it [...]. I Am, sir, Jacob Horner" (L, 745). Only once he has discontinued writing his life down in letters to himself, and turns from object into subject, he is able to inscribe and write himself again; he has, in other words, turned from a reading subject into a writing subject. The tentative absence in "In a sense, I am Jacob Horner" in The End of the Road (ER, 1) has

become the fully acknowledged presence of "I Am, sir, Jacob Horner" in LETTERS.

Both A.B. Cooks fail to establish contact with their children whom they write letters to. Here we are confronted with two other silent reading subjects, who are either unable or refuse to acknowledge the roles constructed for them by the addressers of these letters. Silence is established as A.B. Cook IV's letters are sent to his unborn child, whereas A.B. Cook VI's letters are addressed to his "lost" son, who refuses to answer, although Lady Amherst has proof that he has received the letters addressed to him. As A.B. Cook VI writes to his son:

Where are you, Henry? Better your suspicions, your rude interrogations, your peremptoriosities, than this silence. Why can I not share with you my amusement at writing this [...]? My appeal to you last week, to join me here in Maryland for good and after so many years, nay generations [...] seems to have been as futile as Andrew IV's postdated postscript to his 'widow.' [...] *Et cher fils, où es tu?* (L, 495)

In an attempt to write themselves into history both A.B. Cooks doctor away at the family chronicles in letters to their absent children, establishing their presence as writing subjects in spite of the silence of the addressees, the reading subjects. In spite of this the act of writing, together with its other, the act of reading, form the constitutive act that engenders life, allowing it to become the act of being. Only if events can be

written down and read, they seem to exist and have truth value. As A.B. Cook IV writes to his unborn child, "[Fenimore] Cooper questioned not the verity, but the verisimilitude - that is the plausability as fiction - of my account of all this" (L, 300). Whether one writes in or onto an emptiness, and whether what one has written is read now, or later, seems irrelevant for the construction of being, as writing and its inseparable other, reading, both constitute being.

Jerome Bray also writes into an emptiness from which there is no response, thereby also by default establishing himself as his reading other. His addressees are either deceased or too involved in drugs- or revolution-related activities to reply:

No reply! We begin to wonder! *Où et who êtes vous* etc? Et why have you forsaken us? *Vous* whom all our *Leben* we've thought our allies & protectors; whom our lifework has been but une long letter to, and who we have believed responded *s'il vous plait*. (L, 639)

What say, folks? we asked you. No reply! (L, 642)

R.S.V.P.! No reply! Ma! Da! (L, 644)

Last call, Ma, Da! (L, 645)

Although most letters fail to be responded to, the senders do take the addressees' possible responses into account: the reactions of the silent partners in dialogue, whose shadows loom

over the discourse as a presence in absence, are often anticipated and preread in an attempt to ward off the silence of the other:

Your old letter Ms or Mr Truly - that blank space which in my apprenticeship I toiled to fill, and toward which like a collapsing star I'd felt my latter work returning - was it after all a call to arms? (L, 333)

Lady Amherst likewise pre-reads, or inscribes, the Author's reaction in anticipation to his response:

But see how in the initial sentence (*my* initial sentence) I transgress my vow not to go on about myself, like those dotty women 'of a certain age' who burden the patience of novelists and doctors. [...] Already you cluck your tongue, dear Mr-B.-whom-I-do-not-know (if indeed you've read me even so far): life is too short, you say, to suffer fools and frustrates [...].

And yet bear on, I pray. I am ... what I am [...]: old schoolmarm rendered fatuous by loneliness, indignified by stillborn dream, I prate like a 'coed' on her first 'date' - and this to a man not merely my junior, but ... No matter.

I *will* be brief! I *will* be frank! (L, 4)

Frank she is, brief she is not. Her confessional monologues fill up the ever expanding space created by the silent absence

of the Author, until the moment he breaks the silence, and inscribes himself into and Lady Amherst out of presence.

The lack of presence in the dialogic can also take the form of deliberate forgetfulness, a denial of the events that happened in the past, a refusal, in other words, to become an internal reader. Jane Mack, wife of Harrison Mack and, with her husband's consent, Todd Andrew's erstwhile lover in The Floating Opera, has in LETTERS turned into a successful businesswoman who opts to forget she ever had a love affair with him. Todd Andrews:

Did she remember, God damn it? That this was the bedroom she'd strode naked into on the afternoon of August 13, 1932 [...] to fuck me while Harrison went for ice? Did she remember that we'd been lovers from that day till March of the following year, and again from July 31, 1935 [...] till the Dark Night of June 21 or 22, 1937? God damn it, did she not recall that Jeannine Patterson Mack Singer Bernstein Golden was very possibly my daughter? [...]

As for All That Stuff: of course she remembered, most of it anyhow, at least now I'd reminded her. Really though, some of it she thought I'd made up over the years, or got from That Novel. I was such a romantic! [...] Come on, now. The thing was, not to make a big thing out of it. (L, 463)

What are truthful memories to Todd Andrews, are read as fictitious events by Jane Mack. Later, when Todd seduces her daughter Jeannine and thus possibly commits incest, he opts for

the ability to live in the past, to reread the past, and forget the present as "Jeannine became her-mother-back-in-May all over again" (L, 695). In this way he, merging with his reading other, has become an internal reader of his own life, the text of which seems to be reading itself. But on the other hand his life also seems to be writing itself, as the "Second Cycle" of his life turns out to be a reenactment of the first half: "Something tells me, you see - lots of things - that my life has been being recycled since 1954, perhaps since 1937, without my more than idly remarking the fact till now" (L, 256).

When he draws up a list of events in his life and notices the parallels between them, he exclaims he feels "like the principal in a too familiar drama, a freely modified revival featuring Many of the Original Cast" (L, 256), which mimetic movement is in its turn cast in another *mise en abyme* when the author of The Floating Opera inquires what he'd "been up to since 1954 and whether he'd object to being cast in his current fiction" (L, 255).³⁵

Sabbatical also has its internal readers. In typical Barthian parodic fashion its protagonists Fenwick Turner and Susan Seckler are both professional readers, Fenwick being an author, and Susan being a professor of literature and creative writing, whereas their story, a sailing narrative, itself sails on the ocean of story. As Fenn notes down, "at sea, in all but roughest weather, we read a lot: indeed, like any proper sabbatical, our long cruise has been among other things an immersion, beneficial but not nettle-free, in the sea of print"

(S, 190). The many literary intertexts of their story include the Egyptian papyrus of the shipwrecked sailor, Homer, Virgil, The 1001 Nights, Daniel Defoe, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Joseph Conrad and most of all Edgar Allan Poe.³⁶ Reading for them, has in a Barthesian sense, induced them to writing, and to telling each other stories. The act of narration, with all the delights involved in the telling of stories, is compared to the act of making love. Thus writing, and reading, have both come to constitute "being" in the novel: their interdependence shows that it is only in and through language that the subject can exist.

Barth has often compared the relationship between writer and reader, between teller and listener, to an erotic relationship.³⁷ In Chimera he writes, for instance, that narrative is "a love-relation" (C, 34), that "writing and reading, or telling and listening, [are] literally ways of making love" (C, 32). "The relation between the teller and the told [is] by nature erotic," with the "teller's role [...] regardless of his actual gender [...] masculine, the listener's or reader's feminine, and the tale [...] the medium of their intercourse" (C, 34). This does not mean that the reader's role is a passive or inferior one,³⁸ for as Dunyazade says, a "good reader of cunning tales work[s] in her way as busily as their author" (C, 34). The relationship might be "potentially fertile for both partners [...]. The reader is likely to find herself pregnant with new images," but the "storyteller may find himself pregnant too" (C, 34).

We find the literal sublimation of telling and listening, writing and reading, as acts of being in The Tidewater Tales, when teller and listener, narrator and reader,³⁹ are literally

merged in one narrative voice,⁴⁰ and together address the reader: "What you're reading, reader, is P's and K's story. But what husband and wife are living, and trying rather desperately just now without success to read ahead in, is not their story. It's their life" (TT, 140). Each takes turns, telling and listening, writing and reading, for "a mouth needs an ear, an ear a mouth" (TT, 25). The delight in telling stories is compared to making love. As Peter Sagamore says in The Tidewater Tales:

[...] we enjoy swapping stories [...] as much as swapping kisses from head to foot and around the world by both the equatorial and the transpolar routes.

Sex and stories, stories and sex. Teller and listener changing positions and coming together till they're unanimous. [...]

Stories. Stories. (TT, 114)

The condition for being has for Barth become that of narration: "Stories. Stories," that is, narration with a difference. This is, in a nutshell, Barth's narrative project, his programme for the survival of letters, a recipe that is literally to save the life of protagonist Simon William Behler in Barth's next novel. Like Scheherazade in The Tidewater Tales, who said: "I only tell, tell, tell" (TT, 604), Behler manages "to save his neck" through the act of story-telling.

Chapter III

The Agency of the Author

As discussed in the first chapter, the locus of textual meaning was traditionally situated in the author, whereas in contemporary theory the focus has shifted from author to reader and text.¹ Michel Foucault was one of the first to expose the notion of individuality and show the sovereignty of the subject to be a misconception. In his view the subject no longer functions as centre or source and is therefore "decentered."² Jonathan Culler applies this idea of "decentering" to the notion of author. If the individual is seen as a construct, or in Culler's words in Structuralist Poetics, as "the result of systems of conventions" (Culler, 1975: 29), who "can no longer serve as a source" (Culler, 1975: 30), the author as an individual can no longer be seen as the sole origin and creator of a text. Instead he should rather be seen as a medium through which the text is created. In this way the author becomes the initiator of the textual process as well as the activator of intertextual processes within that same text. "He may no longer be the origin of meaning, but meaning must move through him," as Culler says (Culler, 1975: 30). The author has thus become one of the three productive sites of intertextuality.

As a disruptive force intertextuality consciously breaks and fragments the authorial voice. Since derivation and imitation are

no longer judged inferior,³ they are deliberately used to call the authority of author, text and reader into question. What we are faced with in Barth's re-writings is a demystification of the notion of author. The voice of the author has lost its authority and can no longer be used to authenticate the text. In much the same way the voices of other authors from the intertexts, such as used in quotations of the actual text, can no longer be used as means of authentication of that text. As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is only through the reader that the text can be authenticated, every time anew when she inscribes herself into the text.

In this chapter the agency of the author as one of the sites of intertextuality will be focussed on, whereas the last chapter of this thesis will deal with Barth's re-thinking of the notion of authorship. In Section One of this chapter a closer look will be taken at the differences between European and American versions of intertextuality. In Section Two the notion of the reader as re-writer, the resurrection of authorial agency in intertextuality and the restoration of the author as arranger of *inter-*, *intra-* and *autotextual* spatial relationships will be discussed, whereas Section Three briefly investigates the notion of author as God, as master of the novelistic universe. Section Four introduces Yuri Lotman's autocommunicative model, which allows for a productive investigation into the manipulative activities involved in the authorial production of textuality in LETTERS, and in Section Five Lotman's model and a modified Genettian scheme for the narrator agent will be deployed for the analysis of Barth's parodic play with the role of narratorial

agents in and of LETTERS. Section Six takes a close look at the construction of the *extradiegetic* authors in this novel, and Section Seven at that of the *intradiegetic* authors. Section Eight, finally, will look at Barth's role as author of history. Where appropriate references will be made to intra- and extradiegetic authors in Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor.

As was the case with his play on the role of the reader in Genette's narratee model in the previous chapter, Barth's undermining of the Genettian narratorial model has set up another dialogical relation between identification with a structuralist model, in this case of the narrative agent, and a simultaneous dislocation of this model. Lotman's narrative semiotics have creatively been made use of in this chapter in locating Genette's shortcomings and in providing a powerful tool for the analysis of Barth's parodic play with the Genettian model.

I. European and American Intertextuality

As we have seen in chapter I, the dynamic concept of intertextuality was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in "Word, Dialogue and Novel." She saw the text as a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices had become the focus of analysis. Influenced by Bakhtin's ideas on the dialogic (and consequently spatial) nature of language, she sees each text "as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)" (Kristeva, 1980: 65), "where at least one other text

can be read" (Kristeva, 1980: 66). In her view a text is "as a dialogue among several writings; that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or cultural context" (Kristeva, 1980: 65); a text is "constructed as a mosaic of quotations," [...] it is "the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and a poetic language is read as at least double" (Kristeva, 1980: 66). Writing thus becomes a process of re-writing, as the author, situated within the texts of history and society, inscribes himself into history and society by re-writing the texts thereof. The author's voice is thus stripped of its authority and invested with author-ity.

Kristeva's ideas on intertextuality paved the way for Roland Barthes to proclaim the "death of the author" (Barthes, 1977: 142).⁴ As the text is seen as a site of anonymity, the author's subjectivity is revealed to be no more than a linguistic and ideological construct. Language has become non-referential in his view: "the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death" (Barthes, 1977: 142) and consequently meaning is forever deferred. The author has thus become a medium through which texts pass; and the reader becomes a "scriptor (who) is born simultaneously with the text" (Barthes, 1977: 145). Later, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Barthes was to develop in S/Z the idea of the "writerly" text, which is the practice of rewriting, which "consist[s] only in disseminating [the text], in dispersing it within the field of infinite difference" (Barthes, 1990: 5). John Barth's dynamic use of intertextuality in his later novels can indeed be seen as a form of such writerly textuality.

When we look closely at the role of the author in intertextuality, however, we do not see a dissolution of the author as proclaimed by Barthes, but rather a simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of the author, whereby author and reader alike become operators of the generative mechanism of the text. So in LETTERS the author is not only a medium through which text and meaning move, but he has also been turned into an intertextual agent or activator, or as Barth says, a "re-orchestrator" (FB, 7).

Making use of Culler's distinction in The Pursuit of Signs between Barthes' impersonalism and Bloom's personalism in intertextuality (Culler, 1981: 108), Susan Stanford Friedman distinguishes between two geographical varieties of intertextuality: on the one hand an anonymous, antihumanist French (Kristeva, Barthes, Foucault) intertextuality of infinite and anonymous citations, which rejects the transcendental ego, and on the other a dyadic, finite American (Bloom) variety, an intertextual construct, comprehensible only in terms of other texts, which is characterised by "an appropriation of the discourse of the Self" (Friedman, 1991: 156). In Friedman's view the French notion of the anonymity and the death of the author ties in with a general (French) poststructuralist critique of transcendentalism in Western thought.⁵ On the other hand, American poststructuralism keeps emphasizing, as American culture has always done, the ideology of individualism, leading to a different model of intertextuality, one in which the "concept of the author's agency is central" (Friedman, 1991: 157).

Christopher Norris has also observed a difference between the American and the European varieties of poststructuralism in Contest of Faculties, but he blames the "irrational leanings of 'American deconstruction' on the fact that it sidestepped any serious involvement with the structuralist enterprise" (Norris, 1985: 223).⁶ My argument in this thesis is that the achievement of Barth's project is exactly this, that his work has managed to bridge the gap between the narrative semiotics of structuralism on the one hand and poststructuralism on the other. He has succeeded in creating a rapprochement between these two different leanings by focussing on the dynamics of narrative exchange, by forcing the external reader to move away from the formalistic notions of author, text and reader into an acceptance of and participation in the dynamics of literary production, whereby reader, author and text alike have become productive sites of intertextuality.

The issue of the author's agency has especially been taken up by feminist critics, such as Monique Wittig and Nancy K. Miller. The article by Friedman, referred to above, also deals with "the (re)birth of the author," as its subtitle indicates,⁷ yet with a difference, this difference being that the multiplicity of interpretations of a text does not allow the signifier intertextuality to "collapse into a single signified controlled by an authoritative source, its originator" (Friedman, 1991: 155). In "Changing the Subject" Miller writes that

the position that the Author is dead, and subjective agency along with him, does not necessarily work for women and prematurely forecloses the question of identity for them. Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women have not (I think collectively) felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito, etc. (Miller, 1986: 107)

She accepts the idea of the text as an intertextual weaving of other cultural and historical texts (Barthes' "already reads" and "already said"), but dismisses the idea of anonymity of these texts. In Getting Personal⁸ she elaborates further: the death of the author is not necessarily shared with jubilation by feminist critics (Miller, 1991: 69), she argues, as the task of feminist studies today is to reconcile the contradictions of the present moment in feminist and literary studies, with on the one hand "the doxa proclaiming the death of the author," and on the other "a commitment to revising the canon by rethinking the work of women writers" (Miller, 1991: 47). For her this involves the remapping of literary space, "in which to read the complexities of gendered authorship" (Miller, 1991: 47).

But, as Friedman rightly points out, in order to "interpret the mark of the historical, political and figurative body of the writer, we must separate the concept of intertextuality from the death of the author" (Friedman, 1991: 159). Not only in feminist writing I would argue, but also in John Barth's rewritings, we witness the restoration of the subjective agency of the author; not in Bloomian terms, nor in its original French anonymous form

as suggested by Kristeva, Barthes and Foucault, in which the agency of the writer is suppressed, but as somebody who actively operates as both "initiator and activator of intertextual processes within that same text." The resurrection and simultaneous restoration of the author, I would claim, are possible only in the active form of intertextuality, in other words when intertextual writing strategies have become a conscious intention on the part of the author. The passive form of intertextuality would in this poststructuralist paradigm of textuality be the (im)possibility of a reading strategy, also with a difference, which is, as we have seen in the previous chapter, located within the reader.

American intertextuality, argues Friedman, as opposed to the French variant, "has insisted on a dialogic weaving of intertextuality with a concern rooted in American history and culture for the agency of the author" (Friedman, 1991: 160). What better illustration of the American variety of intertextuality with its reinstatement of authorial agency with a difference than John Barth's epitomizing intertextual re-weaving and re-writing of American history and letters in LETTERS?

II. The Reader as Re-writer and the Author as Re-arranger

We have seen in the last section of the previous chapter that reading can lead to an intertextual process of creative writing, not only in the sense that reading can create the urge in oneself to start writing, as Barthes has described in "On

Reading," but reading can also turn the external reader into a critic, a re-writer. In contemporary theory the attention has shifted from the quest for elusive authorial intention to the productive process of reading culminating in writing "beyond the narrow boundaries of the aesthetic and the text-in-itself," as E.D. Hirsch says in "The Politics of Theories of Interpretation" (Hirsch, 1982: 246n). Jonathan Culler speaks in On Deconstruction of writing as the reader's activity to make the structure and the meaning of the work emerge, "to speak of the meaning of the work is to tell a story of reading [...]" (Culler, 1982: 35). And in a move away from Culler's semiotics J. Hillis Miller, in The Ethics of Reading, defines criticism, critical re-reading, as an ethical form of re-writing: "Criticism as re-writing is truly ethical and affirmative, life-giving, productive, inaugural" (Miller, 1987: 120).⁹ For him it is "the force [...] of the latent law of the text" that determines the productive force of his writing: critical re-reading has thus become a form of creative re-writing, but evidently within clear bounds.

John Barth's re-writings, however, are characterised by a different intertextual dynamics, as he not only re-thinks re-reading and re-writing as a critic, a professor of letters, but, as it is argued in this thesis, as a creative writer he is at the same time also responsible for a productive demystification and re-thinking of the notions of author, reader and text. John Barth's deconstructions of this traditional triptych have resulted in a poststructuralist reorientation in narrative semiotics.

Barth has often referred to himself as an adapter or reorchestrator, as in the metaphor of musical arrangements in jazz, for instance. In an interview with Charlie Reilly he describes himself more as "an arranger than [...] a composer," and his work as "a reorchestrating of old conventions and old melodies. I'm tempted to well, reconstruct an old story - something to the effect of 'Let's run it through again, but in another key'"¹⁰ (Reilly, 1981: 11). Since Barth aspired to be a jazz musician before he started writing,¹¹ it comes as no surprise to us that he sees his imitations as re-runs in another key.¹² "For better or for worse, my career as a novelist has been that of an arranger," he repeated in another interview five years later (Plimpton, 1985: 148). "My imagination is most at ease with an old literary convention like the epistolary novel, or a classical myth - received melody lines, so to speak, which I then orchestrate to my purpose" (Plimpton, 1985: 148). And in The Friday Book he says that his "chiefest literary pleasure is to take a received melody - an old narrative poem, a classical myth, a shopworn literary convention, a shard of my experience, a New York Times Book Review series - and improvising like a jazzman within its constraints, reorchestrate it to present purpose" (FB, 7).

As in the jazz metaphor, Barth's re-writing takes the form of a continuous circulation; he aspires to what he referred to in Chimera as a "New, the *Second* Revolution, and Utterly Novel Revolution" (C, 254). We see him execute this idea catachrestically as he literally enacts a "revolution" in his later fiction. In an interview with Heide Ziegler Barth says about

LETTERS: "On one level, there is nothing original whatsoever; that is, it is a novel which is conspicuously assembled out of old literary conventions. On the other hand I regard it as a very original novel" (Ziegler, 1980: 173). The same idea is expressed in the interview with Reilly, "One of the things you might think of recycling [...] is recurrences in history: repetitions, echoes, reverberations, second cycles of human lives. In that context, taking another look at one's imaginative past, resurrecting old characters, seemed highly appropriate" (Reilly, 1981: 10). The author's role, as Barth has re-thought it, has clearly become that of arranger of inter-, intra- and auto-textual spatial relationships rather than that of initiator of linear ones, although he remains of course the genetic locus of the narrative.

Barth's recycling of materials from the past, of form as well as of content, his own material as well as that of others, is his "one foot in the narrative past," the one leg of his programme for the renewal or replenishment of letters. Once the internal structures of his texts have been decoded and the "already reads" and "already saids" have been located, one would expect the text to lead to signification. But the text does not; on the contrary, it purposely refuses to do so. Instead, it leads to an opening up into an infinite *mise en abime*. This then is the other leg of Barth's programme for rejuvenation, his "other foot," not put down in the Parisian structuralist present, as he said in "The Literature of Replenishment," but rather in the Parisian poststructuralist present. Barth's rewritings are an illustration of Derridean dissemination, they are quests for

"presence," for referents outside the realm of language. But these referents are only able to anchor themselves in linguistic reality, in the space of the already said.

His rewritings are thus a form of what Robert Con Davis has called "poststructuralist mimesis," whereby the text exists solely as an imitation, not of reality, but as a product of a mimetic act, imitating other works. Barth's recyclings move beyond traditional forms of mimesis which lead out to "reality" as a referent, and move into an acceptance of repetition, which is inherent in mimesis. "The escape from mimesis," as Davis says, "will itself be mimetic," so that what we end up with in post-structuralist mimesis is a "round-robin continuation of the mimetic process" (Davis, 1985: 59-60). Self-imitation, or autotextuality, as practised by Barth, is, of course, a next logical step in this continuous spatial process of imitation. I will come back in more detail to the concept of poststructuralist mimesis in Section Two of the next chapter.

In the light of the above it is no wonder that Barth sees himself as an imitator. In "The Literature of Exhaustion" he describes The Sot-Weed Factor and Giles Goat-Boy as "novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author" (FB, 72). Going back to the origin of the genre, he says that the novel indeed began as a form of imitation, "with Quixote imitating Amadis of Gaul [...] or Fielding parodying Richardson" (FB, 72). However, the contemporary novelist must make sure, he argues, that the imitation is carried out with ironic intent, otherwise it becomes awkward. Were, says Barth,

Beethoven's Sixth to be composed today, it would be an embarrassment, as the composer would have failed to have taken into account "where we've been and where we are" (FB, 69). This same feeling is expressed in Jorge Luis Borges' story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," in Labyrinths:

To compose the Quixote at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable undertaking, necessary and perhaps even unavoidable; at the beginning of the twentieth, it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Among them, to mention only one, is the Quixote itself. (Borges, 1964: 68),

Umberto Eco said the same in Reflections on The Name of the Rose: "the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited; but with irony, not innocently" (Eco, 1985: 67).

That Barth is in line with both Borges and Eco is obvious when he uses Karl Marx's "celebrated, usually misquoted observation of History's farcical recyclings" (L, 385) from his essay The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1869). Marx, Barth has Lady Amherst say, does not mean to say that history repeats itself as farce, but that its repetition often takes the form of a farce. Repetition is seen as something new which "may be quite serious and passionate despite its farcical aspect" (FB, 72). Barth's continued rewritings of the story of Scheherazade, for instance, in Chimera, Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales and The

Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor should be seen in this light. I will come back to Barth's specific use of repetition in Sections Four to Six of the next chapter.

Barth's use of different forms of intertextuality, of texts and codes of the past, is not reactionary or aimed at ossification or reification of the past. The past, or rather the texts of the past, his own as well as those of others, are dynamically used as means of transgression and re-activation, erasing and replacing, instead of consolidating, the past in the context of the present, undermining, instead of corroborating, the author's prior inscription as a source of meaning in the text. They have indeed become Barthesian writerly texts.

In "*La stratégie de la forme*" Laurent Jenny argues that the literary work always enters into a relationship of realization, transformation or even transgression of other works, and it is this intertextual relationship that determines the meaning of the literary work. Sometimes this intertextuality takes on a palimpsestuous form that shows its relation to other texts, such as in imitations, parodies, quotations, montages, and so on. At other times this intertextual form might not be so transparent; nevertheless, Jenny argues, the literary work cannot exist outside the system. This also implies, according to Jenny, that the reader as decoder of the text must of necessity also be part of the same intertextual system (Jenny, 1976: 257-258).

Like Yuri Lotman, of whom more will be said in Sections Four and Five of this chapter, Jenny claims that text, and consequently also author and reader, will always serve as a dynamic

generative mechanism of production of meaning. As the voice of the author has lost its authority in intertextuality, it can no longer be used as a means to authenticate the text. In much the same way the voices of other authors from the intertexts, such as used in quotations of the actual text, can no longer be used as means of authentication of that same text. As was argued in the previous chapter, it is only through the external reader that the text can be authenticated, every time anew when she inscribes herself into the text.

Hence Barthes was justified in claiming "the death of the author," mind *not* of the writer, and the birth of the "reader-scriptor" (Barthes, 1977: 146). The writer, like a midwife almost, responsible for the coming-into-being of the text, causes the not-yet-written to be written; the author, having lost his authorial authoritative voice and having been already written as an ideological construct, becomes the vehicle for the voice of the already said, like a treasure house or repository of other literary voices that have preceded it.

In this way John Barth can allow Lady Amherst to literally inscribe herself as "The Fair Embodiment of the Great Tradition" (L, 39). In exactly the same way as Pierre Menard rewrites Don Quixote in the Borges's story of the same title already referred to above, she literally rewrites the opening passages from a number of canonical novels by Herman Hesse, Thomas Mann, H.G. Wells, Evelyn Waugh, James Joyce and George Orwell (L, 68).¹³ Having allowed herself in her earlier days in the literary salons of Paris, to be physically written on by the "old masters of modernist fiction" (L, 40) - she had for instance been

"deflowered" by H.G. Well's fountain pen¹⁴ and Sinclair Lewis had been "introduced into" (L, 71) her - Lady Amherst has in 1969,, the year in which the story is set, become the voice of the "already said." So when Ambrose forces her physically rewrite these modernist authors, she in effect becomes "Literature Incarnate" (L, 40).

Furthermore, by having her add to these passages "the opening words of 'Arthur Morton King's' own fiction-in-progress: a retelling of the story of Perseus, of Medusa" (L, 68), Ambrose positions himself among these already saids, as Arthur Morton King is his pen name. And with him his alter ego, John Barth, is also positioned among the already saids, as Barth was at the same time as Ambrose Mensch also working on a retelling of the story of Perseus. This rewriting was actually as "Perseid," one of the stories in Chimera, published in 1972. The authority of the voices from the past is thus invoked, broken, erased and inscribed again, just as in Edward Said's definition of the signifier "authority." I will come back in more detail to this signifier in the next section of this chapter.

Moreover, by forcing Lady Amherst to make love to him while she is rewriting the opening passages mentioned above, as she writes to the Author, "he makes me recite passages from the works of my earlier, more famous lit'ry lovers whilst he rogers me ..." (L, 67), sexual and textual processes actively fuse into one another as she holds "an instrument in each [...]; my faithful English Parker Pen [...] must yield to his poky poking pencil pencil pincel penicellus penicillus peeee" (L, 71).¹⁵ The production of literary texts has thus been put on a par with the

production of life. Thus both processes become one generative mechanism for the production of meaning, as they merge in the metaphorical relationship between pen and penis. This ultimately (and this establishes Barth's project) results in the engendering of new life for letters, when Lady Amherst seems to have fallen pregnant and Ambrose seems to have discovered a new formula for writing: "Epistles + alphabetical characters + literature [...] = LETTERS" (L, 768).

Intertextuality is being physically and literally enacted as an equation of writing and being; and narrative is offered as Barth's programme for living. "If I speak lightly," writes Lady Amherst in a letter to the Author, "it is for the same reason that I speak at all: to drown out your thundering silence, to delay my going mad" (L, 348). Writing, speaking, telling is the only way to stay alive. In Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales we will indeed see the protagonists overcome their existential crises by living "in" and "by" their story.

III. The Author as God

LETTERS distances itself from the conventions of realist writing through the metaleptic alteration of narrative levels, as we have seen in the previous chapter. This takes the form of an intrusion of the extradiegetic narrator into the diegetic story-line, as the Author becomes a "fictitious droll and dreamer" character himself among the other "fictitious drolls and dreamers" (L, 49) in his fiction. The narrative manipulation of

the different levels also becomes evident when Barth's earlier works of fiction become objects of discussion within the novel itself. In "Life-Story" the author had come to the insight that "the old analogy between Author and God, novel and world, [could] no longer be employed unless deliberately as a false analogy" (LF, 125). This insight made possible the author's three conclusions: (1) fiction must acknowledge its fictitiousness; (2) fiction must deny its relevance if it chooses to ignore the question of its fictitiousness and (3) some other, acceptable relation had to be established between itself, its author, and its reader. "I'm regarding the universe [...]," Barth writes in "How to Make a Universe," "as a novelist reading another fellow's novel" (FB, 24). In this new relation where the author sees the universe as a novel and himself as a character in that novel, the fictionalisation of the author as Author in LETTERS is consequently a logical next step.

Verisimilitude is further eroded in LETTERS when the meta-diegetic interpenetrates into the diegetic as the intradiegetic characters discover that their lives are those of the characters of the author's earlier novels and they tell their life-stories to the Author. Lady Amherst, for instance, surmises all this when she starts doubting her own existence: "I have chosen to trust you as an author, I do not know you as a man. But I know (so far as I know) that I am real, and I beseech you not to play Modernist tricks with real [...] people" (L, 199). She begs the author to stop playing games with reality, realizing that the ontological boundary between reality and fiction is not clear-cut.

When she meets Jacob Horner, she thinks he is "a spook, a vacuum, an ontological black hole" and asks him whether he is "actually the original of the Jacob Horner in the novel." To which he replies: "In a sense" (L, 359), which words, as we have seen above, are a direct reference to the opening line of The End of the Road. Ontological boundaries are once more broken. And when the author, calling himself "your faithful Author" (L, 53) asks her to be his "Lady A," his creation, it dawns on us that the author has indeed taken on the role of master of the universe and that Lady Amherst exists in and through language only.

In The Tidewater Tales the contemporary author takes this play even a step further when he meets seventeenth-century Don Quixote: "After providing Don Quixote with many more particulars both about the author of Don Quixote [...] and about the kind of sailing vessels best suited for singlehanded passagemaking [...] the American presently bids his elder friend good-bye. It is spring; he has spent a long winter immersed in his four favourite stories [...]" (TT, 493).

The reconstruction of the subjective agency of the author coupled with the dislodging and rejection of the "real" author as the origin of meaning for utterances and texts also signifies a rejection of the existence and authority of God as author and origin of the world.¹⁶ Conversely it also implies the ironic acceptance of the author-ity of God, as the Author of the universe, an idea that Barth has overtly played games with ever since his discovery in 1966 of the world being a novel (LF, 116),

referring to "God the novelist" (L, 256), "that other Author" (L, 471) and "the Author of us all and I" (L, 562).

As in classic realist fiction, God is seen, at least in Todd Andrews' letters, as the manipulating master of the universe, an "awkward Realist" (L, 256), a "Sentimental Formalist" (L, 278) who is, rather like Barth himself in this novel, involved in "tying up the loose ends of His plot" (L, 278), the only difference being that life as shaped by God is no longer seen in terms of transcendental signifiers, but in narrative terms. As Todd writes in his draft codicil, "Jeanine, Jeanine: what has our Author done with you? And if your little cruise with me furthered His plot, can you forgive me?" (L, 735). Life is seen as a "plot," as part of an all-encompassing fiction, in which endless "crude scenarios" are available and death is seen as the final "dénouement" (L, 562). Being stripped of their authority, the creators of both the real and the fictional universe have thus become invested with author-ity that allows them to manipulate both life as fiction and fiction as life, thereby blurring boundaries between art and life. If the fictional and the real world out there can be looked at in the same terms, it logically follows that the human world is essentially a linguistic universe.

It is interesting to note in this respect that both above connotations of the signifier "author," that is, initiator and activator of textual processes, can actually be traced back to the original meaning of this signifier. "Author" is derived from

the past participle *auctus* of the Latin verb *augere*, meaning to increase or to augment. "Author" carries several clusters of meaning, as pointed out by Edward Said in an early paper for the English Institute, entitled "Molestation and Authority" (Said, 1971: 48-49). It literally means founder, originator, a person who gives existence to something (as in begetter, father, ancestor, writer), but also increaser. "Authority" is also derived from *augere* and denotes production, invention, cause and a right of possession. It also means continuance or causing to continue. The different meanings that "authority" carries (inauguration, augmentation by extension, possession and continuity) all provide meaningful connections with the privileged position claimed by Author and author alike, for it is after all they who initiate and activate the textual processes that operate in life and in fiction.¹⁷

One of the conventions of classic realist writing is the idea that literature is a representation of reality "out there." The characters in the realist novel belong to an order that has been imposed upon them from the outside, by an author who is often likened to an omniscient God. The novelist is said to create his own fictional universe in the same way as God has supposedly created the real universe. In God the Artist Jan Gorak investigates the idea of the godly maker, or *deus artifex*, as a model of the novelist's activity.¹⁸ He argues that when John Barth says that "the novelist's trade, like God's, is manufacturing universes," "we recognize the presence of an idea as old as literature itself, an idea that makes the artist a kind

of god and his work a kind of world" (Gorak, 1987: 3). But Barth sees the novelist, being more apt at the craft of fiction than God, rise above God, as the novelist's universe might even be "more orderly, meaningful, beautiful and interesting than the one God turned out." And what is more, continues Barth in "How To Make a Universe," "in the opinion of many readers of literature, he sometimes succeeds" (FB, 17).¹⁹ If the realist, or "naive," novel is seen to be an imitation of reality, the self-conscious novel as practised by Barth can be seen as an imitation of an imitation, because of its nature as a conscious artefact. The self-conscious novel is thus a representation twice removed, and does away with the notion of the "naive" novel, as the latter pretends to be a representation of lived reality and the first does not.

The character who calls himself "capital A-Author" (L, 655) and who is addressed by others as John Barth, interpellates and conflates the distinction between fiction and history and between "Art and Life" (L, 51), in such a way that "what had been fiction becomes idle fact, invention history" (L, 52) in a transgression of real life in fiction and fiction in real life, creating a limitless accretion of spiralling movement round an empty shell (L, 654).²⁰ In many ways LETTERS, Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor all show a tendency towards the self-conscious metatext, operating as the process rather than as the product of the narrative act. In Barth's last three novels the narrative is seen floating on the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay, like the ancient frame-tales

in The Ocean of Story. In LETTERS there is the epistolary form, which is of course preeminently suited to an enactment of the fictionalising process. The presence of the "Author" as one of the fictitious drolls and dreamers in the narrative reinforces this metaleptic manipulation of different narrative levels.

IV. Lotman's Autocommunicative Model

Let us now have a closer look at the author's roles as initiator and activator of the textual processes. A productive way of looking at the manipulative activities involved in these simultaneous processes can be found in Yuri Lotman's adaptation of Jakobson's original communicative model.²¹ Since this section deals with the role of the author as intertextual re-orchestrator, the following section will discuss how the memory function of language is manipulated by the external author. Since LETTERS is an epistolary novel, consisting of eighty-eight letters, written by seven internal authors, it will also be necessary to focus on how the internal authors in LETTERS operate as addressers.

In order to appreciate Barth's play with and parody of the structuralist narratorial model Lotman's narrative semiotics have proved a powerful tool, particularly as a means to locate Barth's dislocations of Genette's narratorial model. Before entering, in the next three sections, into any detailed analysis of these dislocations, it will be necessary first to grasp the purport of Lotman's insights.

Lotman's model of autocommunication has been used in this section as another intertext that allows the external reader of LETTERS to better understand Barth's parodic disruptions of the Genettian model. It is thus instrumental in setting up another dialogical relation between identification with a model and a simultaneous dislodging of that model.

One of the functions of language other than the informational and the creative, says Lotman in Universe of the Mind, is that of memory. A text not only generates new meanings whenever it is read again, as we have seen in the section on the role of the reader, but also preserves and accumulates within itself the memory of its previous contexts.

The text's memory is the sum total of the contexts in which the text has been interpreted, which total has been incorporated into that same text. These texts and what Lotman calls their "meaning-space" surrounding the texts enter into a relationship with the cultural and literary memory that is always already present in an ideal reader's consciousness. In this way the text becomes a meaning-generating mechanism. Any text, he says, which keeps on being read over the course of time shows this capacity for memory, which he defines as a capacity to accumulate information (Lotman, 1990: 18).²²

As Lotman sees the reading process as a process that moves in the opposite direction of the writing process, it will lead the reader, as we have seen in the Riffaterrean and Genettian models of intertextuality in Chapter One, back to the original intention of the author (Lotman, 1990: 78).²³ Lotman's focus on

the text as bearer of meaning clearly reveals his structuralist position. Yet his ideas on the semiotic actualization of the text's meaning do not detract from the value of his model of "I-I" communication for our understanding of John Barth's parodic play and his innovative use of inter,- intra- and autotextual repetition in LETTERS.

In his treatise on this manipulative process Lotman turns to Jakobson's communicative model, in which a message is sent by an addresser to an addressee. The addresser is the "I," the subject of communication, and the addressee is the object of communication, either a second or third person, indicated as "s/he" (Lotman, 1990: 21). In most common situations the first person, the "I", possesses information and transmits this to the "s/he", who has no knowledge of the message at the moment of transmission. Lotman refers to this most typical situation as the "I-s/he" direction. However, he says, this is not the only direction in which a message is transmitted, for an "I" can also send a message to him/herself, being a person who already knows the message. This is schematically described as the "I-I" direction.

In this "I-I" situation, we should not think of messages one directs at oneself as a sort of reminder, as having a mnemonic function, for in this specific case the second "I" would take up the same position as a second or third person. Just as in the "I-s/he" situation, the mnemonic "I-I" message is transferred in space, whereas the real "I-I" situation is one of time, within oneself. Examples of this latter form of autocommunication are

diaries or texts written for auto-psychotherapeutic purposes, both of which an author can use to get a clearer perspective on his or her own inner state and/or motives.

Messages transmitted through this "I-I" system are not wholly redundant, whereas messages of the mnemonic type transmitted through this system are - that is, they carry no new information. By virtue of the accumulative memory function of language a non-mnemonic "I-I" message acquires supplementary information.

How is this accumulative effect in Lotman's model achieved? In the "I-s/he" system of the "I-I" message, the message and code are constants, whereas addresser and addressee are variables - that is, they are interchangeable. In the "I-I" system the addresser and addressee are constants and the message is variable, that is, it acquires additional information. We are faced with a paradoxical situation: although the message is known, it is yet unknown, for in its reformulation it changes and gets new meaning. Lotman ascribes this accumulative effect to the introduction of a supplementary, secondary code to the original message (Lotman, 1990: 22). As the message is recoded, it acquires the features of the new message.

The contextual situation of a message along the "I-I" channel, however, is not a self-sufficient situation, as supplementary codes are brought in from the outside. In contrast to the primary code this secondary supplementary code has no semantic value, that is, the new meaning that is given to the message is of a purely formal order. The meaning of the original message

that is known to both "I"s, who are one and the same person, changes in its reformulation due to the accumulative capacity of memory. Apart from the semantic value (in primary code) of the "I-I" message, it also acquires an a-semantic value as attention is drawn to its syntagmatic construction. The message could be cryptic and have value only for the person who already knows its semantic value. As Lotman says:

the 'I-I' text has a tendency to build up individual meanings and takes on the function of organising the disordered associations which accumulate in the individual consciousness. It reorganizes the personality who engages in autocommunication. (Lotman, 1990: 28-29)

When we turn to LETTERS, we witness this type of auto-communication happening in extreme form in Jacob Horner's seven letters to himself: "In the evening of October 4, 1955 [...] as an exercise in Scriptotherapy you Began an account of your Immobility, Remobilization and Relapse" (L, 19).²⁴ Horner's scriptotherapy exactly serves the auto-psychotherapeutic function referred to above.

For the purposes of this chapter, that is, the agency of the author in initiating and activating textual processes, only the third function of language, that of memory and its accumulative tendencies, is of relevance. As argued above, Barth's texts simultaneously generate and store meaning, thereby becoming a repository of earlier texts and contexts, of those of himself and of others, yet as rewritings of the texts of the past they

paradoxically also erase these earlier texts in a simultaneous movement of authorial destruction and recon-struction.

The secondary codes, brought in from the outside, which are a-semantic, yet add to the meaning of the message, take the form of different kinds of formal structure. Structures mentioned by Lotman are primarily of a spatial nature, such as patterns, rhythmical series and repetitions, all of which are superfluous from the point of view of "I-s/he" communication. Therefore the addressee of the message has to decide whether the text is a *code* or a *message*: "functionally speaking," Lotman says, "a text is used as code and not message when it does not add to the information we already have, but when it transforms the self-understanding of the person who has engendered the text and when it transfers already existing messages into a new system of meanings" (Lotman, 1990: 30).²⁵

When we look at the extradiegetic level of LETTERS,²⁶ we will notice that all main internal authors are in one way or the other engaged in forms of "I-I" communication:

(1) Jacob Horner writes letters to himself in an attempt at self-discovery. His autopsychotherapeutic writings form the basis of the manuscript of Die Wiedertraum, which is an autobiographical reenactment of his life, later re-reenacted in Reg Prinz's movie FRAMES;

(2) Ambrose Mensch writes to To Whom It May Concern, which character could also include himself, about his life, thereby trying to create a sense of individual existence;

(3) Todd Andrews starts the Inquiry into his father's suicide in The Floating Opera and continues this in LETTERS in an attempt to elucidate his own inner self and understand his own motives for committing suicide;

(4) Lady Amherst writes to the Author on Saturday mornings, but "her confessional installments go unreplied to: scribbled in silence, into silence sent, silently received" (L, 69); only in her last letter can she acknowledge receipt of reply from the Author, albeit that his wedding wishes are not addressed to her as Lady Amherst, but to "Mr and Mrs Ambrose Mensch" (L, 678);

(5) in an attempt to bring about a Novel Revolution through his LILYVAC computer programme Jerome Bray is also engaged in autocommunication as he addresses himself through manipulation of the RESET button on his keyboard: "in a word we've been reset. Repeat. We said in a word we've been RESET. Gotcha Hum. [...] Let's get things straight. Attacomputer" (L, 525).

Although the letter from which this passage is lifted, is addressed to ""John Barth" "Author"," this letter, like Bray's seven other letters, is created in a movement of self-communication; in fact all (computer-)writing occurs in first instance through an "I-I" movement as one reads and re-reads while writing. Kristeva's words "the one who writes is the same one who reads" (Kristeva, 1980: 86) seem highly applicable here. Bray's writings ultimately aim to result in a computer programme that will autogenerate his "perfect & final opus," a novel called "NUMBERS" (L, 757);

(6) the two A.B. Cooks at first sight also appear to be writing into silence as A.B. Cook IV writes prenatal letters to

his unborn children and posthumous letters to his widow; A.B. Cook VI writes letters to his lost son. No reply is expected from the addressees, yet the letters are not constructed along the "I-I" channel of communication. And although the letters, and especially so the intradiegetic letters by A.B. Cook IV, are written in code, referred to as "the simple family cipher" (L, 480), they are intended as messages along the "I-s/he" channel, as they document the family history;

(7) and finally, we also see the author writing himself as "Author."²⁷ This form of autocommunication takes place on the extradiegetic level. But on another level, the metadiegetic level, Barth's rewritings can also be regarded as texts constructed in an "I-I" language, as his fictional work ultimately turns into a dialogue with itself about itself.²⁸ Just as his characters reenact and rewrite their own lives, the Author also reenacts and rewrites his own work. And this structure is repeated on a level beyond that of the metadiegetic, as table (9) shows, and as the Author writes to Ambrose Mensch: "[...] never mind that in a sense this 'dialogue' is a monologue; that we capital A-Authors are ultimately, ineluctably, and forever talking to ourselves. If our correspondence is after all a fiction, we like, we need that fiction: it makes our job less lonely" (L, 655).

Lotman provides us in Universe of the Mind with some features of the autocommunicative system. One of them is a reduction of words, as for instance seen in abbreviations as used in notes to ourselves, understandable only to ourselves. Only

when one knows beforehand what has been written, do these words, or rather indices of words, make sense. Jerome Bray's letters, for instance, can only be understood by himself and those who have access to the code, as words have been replaced by numbers. In a letter to Drew Mack he writes for instance:

I.e., no NOVEL no NOTES but a swarm of numbers exclamation point Merope and we looked into each other's RESET On and on 12 1 18 7 1 12 5 6 1 25 then a string of 55's and 49's alternating page after page after RESET Not all the chinks out of the ointment 17 rules for the comma et cet push PUNCT Point No Stop No (L, 325)

This text certainly does not serve as a mnemonic device; it is part of Bray's experimental cryptographic programme of literature, which he, not surprisingly, calls numerature. As we read before in Chimera, this Revolutionary Novel is "to dispense with 'character,' 'plot' and for that matter 'content,' 'subject' and 'meaning' [as] attributes of particular novels [...] like the coded NUMBERS it will represent nothing beyond itself, have no content except its own form, no subject but its own processes. Language itself will perhaps eschew" (L, 266). Regression of this type could ultimately lead to silence, as The Tidewater Tales shows, where protagonist Peter Sagamore writes a reductionist short story that only consists of a repetition of its title, "B flat" (TT, 38).

To the intradiegetic addressee of the letter quoted above, Drew Mack, the message will probably make no sense at all.²⁹ Yet

to the external reader this passage *does* make sense as she has access to the code through prior intratextual knowledge of Bray's attempts at numerature, as recorded in his earlier letters in the novel to other intradiegetic characters, and possibly from having read "Bellerophoniad" in Chimera.

This particular letter to Drew Mack and all other letters written by Jerome Bray operate along two channels, that is, both in the "I-I" and the "I-s/he" system. On the *metadiegetic* level where Bray and the external reader fuse into a single "I" as persons with prior knowledge of the message as well as on the *extradiegetic* level, where Bray seems to be communicating with himself in a literary computer experiment, we see the "I-I" system in operation, whereas on the *intradiegetic* level, the letter operates within the "I-s/he" system, as the content of the message is unknown to the addressee. The *message*, in other words, has been turned into a code in the "I-I" system as part of the process of autocommunication, for Jerome Bray who is the actual letter-writer and for the external reader who inscribes herself into the text while reading it.

The ubiquitous textual gaps and blanks in LETTERS, which in the previous chapter were looked at from the point of view of the reader, can also be accounted for and made sense of in terms of Lotman's narrative "I-I" system. These gaps and blanks are not only to be found in Bray's letters, such as in "we ourself programmed LILYVAC to make no mention of _____, always to say blank or blank instead of blank" (L, 526), but also in the blank

message washed up in a bottle on the Choptank shore, as first recorded in "Water-Message" in Lost in the Funhouse. This bottle is retrieved by Ambrose Mensch:

The paper was half a sheet of coarse rule stuff, torn carelessly from a tablet and folded thrice. Ambrose uncreased it. On a top line was penned in deep red ink:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

On the next-to-bottom:

YOURS TRULY (LF, 53)

On finding the above enigmatic blank message Ambrose, as it was argued in the previous chapter, starts his writing career as a reader, as he attempts to appropriate and inscribe himself into the blank by pursuing a career as writer: "with that water-message, began my vocation and my trials as *homme de lettres*: still laboring to fill in the blanks, still searching for an exit from that funhouse, a way to get the story told" (L, 188).³⁰

Ever since that first message washed ashore in 1940 Ambrose keeps sending messages in no-deposit bottles back to the original sender. But Yours Truly never replies. Like the other characters in the novel Ambrose sends his missives to an absent addressee, thereby establishing a dialogue in the "I-I" system with himself through the channel of autocommunication.³¹ He keeps on dropping these bottled messages into the Choptank, as he realizes that

"that water message must be replied to" (L, 188), hoping that his labours will one day reach Yours Truly, the sender of the original blank message.

In his missives he turns his "back on Realism, having perhaps since long turned it on reality" (L, 151), "abandons "personal" literature" (L, 188) and becomes reenamored with "that most happily contaminated literary genre: the Novel," but "not the Art Novel, certainly not those symbol-fraught Swiss watches and Schwarzwald cuckoo clocks of Modernism" (L, 151). With his bottled attempts he tries to inscribe himself not into "the exhausted medium" (L, 527), but into a rejuvenated letters, as becomes obvious from the blank he tries to fill:

I examined the history and origins of the novel, of prose narrative itself, in search of reinspiration; and I found it - not in parodies, travesties, pastiches, and trivializations of older narrative conventions, but
(L, 152)

The line ends in a gap, which is waiting to be filled, to be inscribed by both Ambrose and his alter ego, John Barth, the Author. "Novels," argues Edward Said in Beginnings, "are aesthetic objects that fill gaps in an incomplete world: they satisfy a human urge to add to reality by portraying (fictional) characters in which one can believe" (Said, 1978: 82). Writing as practised by Ambrose and Barth can be seen in terms of the filling of that gap (and creating it in the first place). It is by the way, as we have seen in the previous chapter, no ironic

that remains constant for the duration of the act of communication; and on the other hand the "I-I" system, where we see a transmission of a code, rather than a message. If we take Barth's rewritings to be codes of what has already been written, the connection with the concept of poststructuralist mimesis, as defined in section two of this chapter, is easily made. The processes of recoding, transformation and reformulation that occur in "I-I" communication, could be regarded along the same lines as the processes involved in the mimetic act, resulting in an acceptance of a repetition of the already said. The text thus starts reading itself and so becomes a meaning-generating mechanism, initiated and activated by the reconstructed agency of the author and subsequently received and reactivated by the reconstructed agency of the reader.

Looking at LETTERS in terms of the "I-I" model we recognise more and more formal structures that are clearly present in the text as secondary, syntagmatic codes, having no semantic meaning of their own. Lotman suggests treating structures like these as "external codes whose effect is to restructure verbal communication" (Lotman, 1990: 25). For the system to work, he continues, there has to be a simultaneous confrontation and interaction between primary and secondary codes, between "the message in one semantic language and the intrusion of a purely syntagmatic, supplementary code" (Lotman, 1990: 25). LETTERS abounds with these codes: the novel is in fact constructed and structured around the themes of doubles and echoes, repetitions and re-

orchestrations, all of which could in formalistic terms be seen in the light of Lotman's "I-I" system.

On the *metadiegetic* level Lotman's secondary or syntagmatic codes are to be found in the numerous inter-, intra- and autotexts within the novel. On the *extra-* and *intradiegetic* levels one can think of the use of earlier characters, numbers, the alphabet, the prefix "re-", the use of "ditto" and "etc." and the doubles and cancer metaphors. All of these will be discussed in more detail in Section Five in the next chapter.

V. Narratorial agents in and of LETTERS

In order to assess the addresser's play with the memory capacity of the text we should not only look at the effect on the external reader, the external addressee, who, as we have seen above, is implicated³⁴ by the external author out of a passive into an active reading position, urged as she is to actively participate in the text.³⁵ We could ask ourselves whether the same positioning forces are at work on the other narratorial levels. What we are looking at then is the manipulations of the memory capacity of the text, a process initiated, activated, operated and controlled by the different authors inside and outside the text.

LETTERS thus operates on several levels, as there are addressees on at least four different levels.³⁶ The variety in addressees creates a duality in the addresser whose message works

in both the "I-I" and the "I-s/he" system at the same time. If a text is directed at a person one knows, Lotman argues, the memory capacity of the message will differ from when it is directed at an addressee whom one does not know: the first type tends to be more intimate and elliptic as it appeals to the addressee's private memory; the second type is more broad, and appeals to a general memory capacity. An author can, however, manipulate the use of private and common memories by putting an unknown addressee into a position of intimacy with the addresser, assuming a shared, private memory, and conversely, by positioning the known addressee as an unknown subject, for instance by addressing her in the third person.

We have seen above that a text can function as either a code or a message on different narrative levels and through different narrative channels. In his manipulations of the memory capacity of language Barth has offered the external reader a dazzling enactment of poststructuralist writing. In the next sections a closer look will be taken at how Lotman's narrative semiotics can be applied to the different authors in and of LETTERS in order to help us assess Barth's destabilization of structuralist narrative models. Making use of Lotman's insights this section will specifically focus on how Barth's parodic play with the role of narratorial agents in and of LETTERS invalidates the Genettian scheme for the narrator agent.

In the same way as there are internal and external readers, or reading subjects, in and of the novel, a distinction should be made between internal and external authors, or writing

subjects, in operation in LETTERS. As we are dealing with an epistolary novel, we shall for the sake of argument read authors for narrators or narrator agents here.

Whereas the readers operate as addressees or narratee agents on the *meta-*, *extra-*, *intra-* and *hypodiegetic* levels, as we have seen in tables (6) and (7) in the previous chapter, the *intra-textual* (inside the text) authors operate as addressers or narrator agents on the first three levels only:

- (1) on the *metadiegetic* level we have the implied author;
- (2) on the *extradiegetic* level the seven correspondents, among whom the "John Barth" "Author" character, who presents himself as one of the seven letter-writers;

- (3) and on the *intradiegetic* level the authors of the letters that are indirectly quoted or referred to, that is, the authors positioned within the letters of the seven letter-writers. Examples of these are Pascal's, Mme de Staël's, Consuelo's and Napoleon's letters, the Henry letters, and so on.

The external reader, that is, the reader-scriptor, and the John Barth that we see on the backflap picture of the novel should in this framework be seen as *extratextual* (outside the text) authors on the *metadiegetic* level.³⁷ My complete diagram of the narrator agents can be found on the next page in table (9).

Barth undermines the Genettian narratorial model by playing with the ideas of implied and real author, as he introduces himself into the text on two levels, first as the implied author and secondly as a narrator-character among the other *extradiegetic* narrators. Through a *metaleptic* alteration of narrative

levels the extradiegetic narrator intrudes into the intradiegetic story-line, as the Author becomes a "fictitious droll and dreamer"-character himself among the other "fictitious drolls and dreamers" in his own fiction. This necessarily calls for the insertion of an additional narrative level above that of the metadiegetic, a case for which Genette had failed to make room in his narratorial model.³⁸ As was the case with Barth's destabilization of Genette's narratee model, he has thus also succeeded in dislodging Genette's scheme for narratorial agents.

Table (9): external and internal narrator agents in LETTERS³⁹

	<i>internal</i>	<i>external</i>
<i>hyperdiegetic</i>		real author
<i>metadiegetic</i>	implied author	backflap John Barth + reader-scriptor
<i>extradiegetic</i>	first degree letter- writers incl. Author	
<i>intradiegetic</i>	second degree letter- writers	historical letter- writers

VI. Extradiegetic Authors in and of LETTERS

The eighty-eight letters, constituting LETTERS, are penned by seven extradiegetic narrators, as table (6) in the previous chapter has shown. The Author explains his narrative strategy in a letter to To Whom It May Concern:

They will write always in this order: Lady Amherst, Todd Andrews, Jacob Horner, A.B. Cook, Jerome Bray, Ambrose Mensch, the Author. Their letters will total 88 (this is the eighth), divided unequally into seven sections according to a certain scheme: see Ambrose Mensch's model, postscript to Letter 86 (part S: 770). Their several narratives will become one; like waves of a rising tide, the plot will surge forward, recede, surge farther forward, recede less far, et cetera to its climax and dénouement. On with the story. (L, 49)

The linear writing order of these seven correspondents is *intratextually* determined by the order in which Barth's works have been published. The narrative sequence is opened by a new character, Lady Amherst, whose life comes to be constructed in LETTERS, and is closed by the Author. Todd Andrews we remember from The Floating Opera (1957),⁴⁰ and Jacob Horner from The End of the Road (1958); A.B. Cook's forebears populated The Sot-Weed Factor (1960), as did Jerome Bonaparte Bray's Giles Goat-Boy (1966), whereas Lost in the Funhouse (1968) rendered account of the genesis and youth of Ambrose Mensch. The latter two are allegedly the authors of "Dunyazadiad" and "Perseid," two of the stories published in Chimera (1972). The author, communicating on the *metadiegetic* level with himself rather than with the reader, also includes himself in an *extradiegetic* dialogic "I-I" movement as "Author" among the recycled versions of his fictitious characters, introducing himself herewith as rereading subject into the narrative, as we have seen in the previous

chapter, by giving another fictionalized version of himself, as he had done before in Lost in the Funhouse and Chimera. The author's present work can thus said to be *intra-* and *auto-*textually structured through his past work.

The capital A-Author is one correspondent among the others and claims to be a character just like the other six correspondents. From the same letter to To Whom It May Concern:

Having decided in 1968 that the 'Author' character in LETTERS would be offered an honorary doctorate of letters from a Maryland university, I receive in 1969 just such an invitation in the mail. (L, 48-49)

And from a letter to Lady Amherst:

Some months before the [...] invitation - last year in fact, when I began making notes toward a new novel - I had envisioned just such an invitation to one of its principal characters. (L, 51)

Thus the Author operates on the same *intra-* and *extra-*diegetic levels as the six other letter-writers and -readers; yet in contrast to his fellow protagonists, he also operates on a *metadiegetic* level, due to his having created his fellow-correspondents as characters in his earlier works. "You may have heard of The Floating Opera about a lawyer named Todd Andrews" (L, 189), he writes to Todd Andrews, "something like your Inquiry

and Letters must have turned my original minstrel-show project into the Floating Opera novel" (L, 191). And finally, as table (8) above has shown, the real author operates on the *hyper-diegetic* level.

Although the *metadiegetic* author is fictionalized as the extradiegetic Author, the author's life has not been subject to fictionalization by an outside party within the boundaries of the text, as have the lives of the other characters in the novel.⁴¹ Their lives have been written for them and on them; they have become objects in the Author's discourse.⁴² The author has actually effaced himself by transforming his real identity into the fictionalized role of Author.⁴³ The Author thus writes himself, which can be seen as another form of "I-I" communication.

Yet, although he engenders his fellow-correspondents, the Author still does not enter the text as a father, even though Todd Andrews refers to him as such: "I beg pardon for speaking like [...] a father, when in fact it's you who are in a sense *my* father, the engenderer of 'Todd Andrews'" (L, 97). We are faced with a paradoxical situation here: Todd has fathered his own existence in The Floating Opera, yet starts doubting his own existence, as Lady Amherst did before him, when he realizes that his existence can only be seen as a linguistic activity engendered by the author.

Todd claims that the Author has betrayed his confidence, because a year after they had met at a party where the Author had confessed to Todd that "he had a vague notion of a novel in the

format of the old blackface minstrel show" (L, 83), the Author published The Floating Opera. The Author had "altered names and doctored facts for literary effect" (L, 85) which, as Todd writes, made other people believe the novel, instead of "reality," was the real thing. Yet the novel also worked as a "camera obscura that projected familiar details of life and place" (L, 85), due to which he regained Harrison Mack's friendship. Jane Mack, Harrison's wife, as we have seen above, chooses to forget the past, "your retelling of it notwithstanding" (L, 96), as Todd explains to the Author. "It is in any case as if it had not happened" (L, 96), he writes in an attempt to account for her all too obvious denial of the memory capacity of language. This negation should therefore not be read as a denial, but rather as an affirmation of exactly that memory capacity of language.

The relationship between fiction and fact is a "two-way street" (L, 96) which works in either direction. When Lady Amherst reads The Floating Opera, she feels a "familiar uneasiness about the fictive life of real people and the factual life of 'fictional' characters" (L, 58); the "spooky" coincidences between her own life and the Author's notes towards a new novel unnerve her. Her existence as a reading subject, and consequently as a writing subject, becomes more and more dislocated and boundaries between fiction and reality are more and more erased as both interfere with and efface each other.

Although Todd is aware of his object position as opposed to the Author's subject position, he nevertheless chooses to distinguish between the fictional (object) and the "real life" (sub-

ject) Todd, who is in fact also fictional (object). He recognizes the similarities between the two entities, yet maintains distance by taking up a reversed subject-object position himself, by referring in the same letter to the Author to "your Todd Andrews" (L, 91) and "your Floating Opera story" (L, 95). A further blurring of fact and fiction is achieved when Todd starts "feeling like the principal in a too familiar drama" (L, 256). At a later stage he even re-examines his "old Floating Theatre memoir and its subsequent novelization for clues what might happen next" (L, 396). Fiction and fact operate indeed like a two-way street. Todd is under the illusion he writes himself, yet is doubly written on. The apparent *mise en abime*, dislocating the writing subject, is indeed another destabilization of Genette's supposedly stable narrating agent.

When Barth inscribes himself into the text as Author, he is inscribed not as a "father," but rather as what Roland Barthes calls in "From Work to Text," a "guest":

It is not that the Author may not 'come back' in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a 'guest.' If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic. He becomes as it were a paper-author: his life is no longer the origin of his fictions, but a fiction contributing to his work [...] the *I* which writes the text, it too, is never more than a paper-*I*. (Barthes, 1977: 161)

When the Author becomes a "guest" in his own text, it follows that he has not only lost authority over it, but has also been deprived of author-ity. His inscription into the Text might not be privileged as Barthes says above, but in LETTERS the Author's self-inscription undeniably claims a privileged position, as the Author as a writing subject is able to write himself, whereas the other characters are cast in the position of writing subjects that have been turned into objects that are written on. Ontological boundaries are crossed once more by Barth's presence in the text as both an implied paper and a real-life author.

Looking at the origin of the signifier "guest," Latin *hostis*, we notice that this has also led to the signifier "host." A host is a person who invites guests to stay at his house. Barth's presence in the text complies with both signifieds: on the one hand as the implied author, who invites the characters from his previous novels to take part in his current fiction, and on the other the "paper-I" as a guest in the text, providing space for himself among the other invited guests. The author's invitation to participation leads to ontological uncertainty, not only regarding one's own existence in the text, but also regarding the authorship of the Author's earlier fictions: in other words, are the internal authors hosts of or guests in the Author's earlier fictions? Are their doubts epistemological as well as ontological?

In a letter to the Author dated May 17, Lady Amherst recounts Ambrose's claims to the intellectual property of "Water-Message," a story published by Barth in Lost in the Funhouse:

Briefly: my lover dates his erratic and problematical career in letters from his receipt, at the age of ten, of a cryptic message in a bottle washed up on the Choptank River shore near his present odd establishment. You know the story: Ambrose even told me [...] that you wrote the story, anyhow rewrote and published it with his consent. (L, 234)

In the most explicit example of "I-I" communication in the novel, Jacob Horner writes to himself that his account of his "Immobility, Remobilization and Relapse, entitled What I Did Until the Doctor Came," became

the basis of a slight novel called The End of the Road (1958) which ten years later inspired a film, same title, as false to the novel as was the novel to your Account and your Account to the actual Horner-Morgan-Horner triangle as it might have been observed from either other vertex. (L, 19)

A.B. Cook VI even drives up to Pennsylvania and invades Barth's classroom at Penn State to discuss the backgrounds and sources of the latter's first two novels. On return to Baltimore he tells Jacob Horner, protagonist of The End of the Road, that the author claims "to have derived the story line of The End of the Road from a fragmentary manuscript found in a farmhouse turned ski lodge in northwestern Pennsylvania" (L, 365). And when Lady Amherst queries the Author about The End of the Road, she

wants to find out in one and the same breath about the genesis of The Sot-Weed Factor. She writes to the Author that A.B. Cook VI demands to know whether "you are guilty or innocent in the matter of your sources for The End of the Road, as he means to approach you forthwith to compare his information on Ebenezer Cooke & Co., and his literary project with yours" (L, 365). A.B. Cook VI wants to know from the Author why Barth has not acknowledged his cooperation in The Sot-Weed Factor: "You keep my identity (and my aid) confidential and allegedly fictional" (L, 406).⁴⁴

When the Author invites the other correspondents to participate in his fiction, most agree. A.B. Cook VI is obviously overjoyed when he thinks the Author has invited him "to play the role of Author who solicits and organizes communications from and between characters and embroils himself in their imbroglios" (L, 405) and even offers the Author to help with the "design and theme of our enterprise" (L, 406). He notifies the Author that he, as one of the authors of The Sot-Weed Factor, is happy to cooperate in a reorchestration of The Sot-Weed Factor: "I shall be as happy to be your collaborator in this project as I was in that" (L, 406), but as he himself is too involved practising history, involved as he is in staging the Second Revolution, he has got no time to write himself and invites the Author to write it for him. Boundaries between fiction and life and between language and reality are continuously blurred as Barth denies even himself as author and origin of his previous works.

The most prolific of the seven internal extradiegetic authors is Lady Amherst. All her twenty-four letters are addressed to the Author, as table (6) has shown. Over the seven months' narrative duration, from 2 March 1969 to 26 September 1969 she sends one letter off in the first month, four in April, five in May, five in June, four in July, three in August and two in September. Her very first letter is a message along the "I-s/he" channel, it is an official invitation, addressed to "Mr John Barth, Esq., Author" (L, 3), to accept a Doctor of Letters degree from Marshyhope University. As the addressee is not personally known to her, the letter appeals to a shared common memory, that is, that universities confer doctorates *honoris causa* to well-known authors.

The post-script to this official letter, however, which is more than eight pages long, whereas the invitation itself is only half a page, addresses the Author in the middle of the second paragraph as "dear Mr-B.-whom-I-do-not-know (if indeed you've read me even so far)" (L, 4), and so positions the addressee of the P.S. as having an imaginary private relationship with her as addresser. The effect on the external reader is that she is simultaneously drawn into that same imaginary intimate relationship. The external reader is forced into an object position, but at the same time she takes up a subject position, forced by the addresser to remember things that are not part of her memory.

As "a reader cannot forget the real contents of his or her memory," Lotman says, "the text shapes its readers and at the same time the readers shape the text" (Lotman, 1990: 67-68). We

see this shaping of the reader by the text happening quite literally in one of the many typically Barthian examples of catachresis in the text, when infertile Henry Burlingame III, ancestor of the A.B. Cooks, and his beloved retreat into the woods with "receipt & necessaries" as written down in Henry Burlingame I's Privie Journall, " [...] and Yours Truly was begot" (L, 133). This scene is a clear echo of a similar event in The Sot-Weed Factor. The text in both instances evidently operates as a meaning-producing mechanism, not as an imitation, but most definitely as an engenderer of life.⁴⁵

Lotman's model not only provides for the addresser to be able to simultaneously function along different channels and on different levels, it also provides for a duality within the addressee. The duality present in the addressees, internal as well as external, is also reflected in the dichotomy present within the addressers. This doubleness of authorial agent Genette has failed to recognise in his narratorial model, in the same way as he also fails to provide space for a fictionalized author in the same model.

Barth's parody of Genette's narratorial scheme has, as was the case with his play on the role of the reader in Genette's narratee models, set up another dialogical relation between identification with the structuralist model of the role of the author and a simultaneous dislocation of this model.⁴⁶

Lady Amherst's letters, for instance, can serve as a parodic illustration of this dichotomy within the addresser, overlooked by the Genettian model. Her first letter is signed "Germaine G.

Pitt (Amherst), Acting Provost" (L, 3) as opposed to "Germaine" or just "G." later on in the novel. Already in the P.S. to her first letter we saw a message along the "I-s/h" channel change into a message along the "I-I" channel. This pattern is continued as the Author in the course of the novel refuses to become a reading subject in his failure to respond to her urgent pleas for his reaction. Because of the absence of a response from his side, her letters turn into an "I-I" communication, indicated by such addresses as "*mon cher (encore silencieux) B.*" (L, 206) and "Near But Distant Neighbour" (L, 449). Yet, in spite of this lack of response she keeps on writing into the author's silence: "I write, write, write into a silence it were fond to find pregnant" (L, 206).⁴⁷ Letter writing has become a "habit" for her, her "Saturday epistolary fix," and kicking this habit would cause "withdrawal pains" (L, 450). So writing for her is not only autotherapeutic "I-I" communication, it also provides her as a writing subject with a means to come to grips with her own subjectivity and with "the drama of Germaine Pitt's sore affair with Ambrose Mensch" (L, 539). The act of writing thus establishes her subjectivity.

Here Barth can also be seen to be playing with the Heideggerian concept of "being." Richard Palmer explains the relationship between writing and being, in "The Postmodernity of Heidegger":

Ontologically stated, what a thing is, it is through the openness of language. [...] Language is therefore the "house of being": it is there that being will be found;

being resides in language; being, as the process by which language brings things into the open, is linguistic in nature. (Palmer, 1976: 423)

In her attempts to hang on to life, be it fictional or non-fictional, Lady Amherst is compelled to keep on writing: "If I speak slightly, it is for the same reason that I speak at all: to drown out your thundering silence, to delay my going mad" (L, 348). Once Lady Amherst stops being, when her name changes into Germaine Mensch, as we saw in the previous chapter, she stops her existence as a writing subject: "this will be my last letter to you [...] the last from [...] the former Lady A." (L, 677). Lotman's remark about the text shaping the reader, in terms of the "I-I" communicative model, certainly holds true for Lady Amherst's case, inscribing herself into the absence of the author: when there is no more text to write or read, there is no more being and thus no more writing. Writing and reading, even if only in acts of coded autocommunicative inscriptions, have become the conditions for being.⁴⁸

When Roland Barthes, in The Pleasure of the Text, speaks from a male perspective of the pleasure of the text, he suggests an intimate relationship between *signifiante* and *jouissance*, between signification and eroticism which is characterised by a gap: "Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes? [...] it is intermittence, as psycho-analysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing" (Barthes, 1975: 9-10).

The gap between skin and textile is as Kristeva's textual zero between writer and reader; the text opens up its own gaps. The enjoyment of the text exists in the filling of those gaps, when the reader inscribes herself into the text, in the same way as Barth enjoys filling gaps. Barthes' definition of reading in terms of a phallic orgasm falls short because of my inscription as a female reader into the text, his analogy having been written from a male perspective. Barth's definition therefore, in terms of a one to one relationship, seems to be more to the point in this case. He sees the author-reader relationship as a love relationship, as discussed in the last section of the previous chapter.

Writing, apart from being, is also a form of loving, or love-making. In the same way as one constitutes oneself as a subjective agent in writing, and the other as a subjective agent in reading, one constitutes oneself and the other as autonomous subjects in making love, making loving, like writing, a form of being. Author and reader constitute each other in the act of reading, like lovers do in the act of love-making. The act of reading becomes an erotic act as the relationship between reader and writer is metaphorically consummated in the act of reading. "Author and reader" are, as Lady Amherst writes to the Author, "one to one like lovers" (L, 393). Although "composed in private, to be read in private, at least in silence and virtual immobility" (L, 393), writing and reading paradoxically constitute parts of the same intimate relationship that climaxes when writer becomes reader and reader becomes writer.

In the first story in Chimera, "Dunyazadiad," the Author meets his favourite story-teller Scheherazade who, on meeting him has as yet to tell the stories that the Author confesses to be so enamoured of. The Author then, having been her reader so far, starts telling her on a daily basis the stories as recounted in The 1001 Nights. And in order to save her own life Scheherazade, at first having been a listener, or reading subject, turns into an author, a writing subject, herself when she tells these stories to her husband. "Writing and reading, telling and listening, have literally become ways of making love" (L, 32), the narrator tells us, as both show "similarity between conventional dramatic structure - its exposition, rising action, climax and dénouement - and the rhythm of sexual intercourse from foreplay through coitus through orgasm and release" (L, 33).

The result of this intertextual consummation is often not without consequences. In 1942 Lady Amherst, then Germaine Pitt, went for a swim in an icy lake with Hermann Hesse, who, in his sixties, was "celibate, though less than chaste" (L, 75). In order to bring back life into him, she massaged him, neither of them thinking "he was still fertile. In an orgy of prideful remorse he drafted the ending of his Meisterwerk [...] and consented to appraise my own manuscripts [...] whilst (she) slipped over to Lugano for the abortion" (L, 75). And at an earlier stage she had her baby taken away from her by her then parents-in-law after she had been seized by postpartum depression. Husband Andre Castine's letters urged her back to writing, but she found refuge in silence, as she writes to the

Author about thirty years later: "[...] I couldn't write, I couldn't even read. Our alphabet looked as alien as Arabic; the strings of letters were a code I'd lost the key to; I found more sense in the empty spaces, in the margins, between the lines" (L, 74). Just as the act of love is an act of life, reading is writing is loving is being: story and story-telling thus become the key for living in this world.

The external reader is drawn by the author into an intimate relationship between *intradiegetic* addresser and addressee, amalgamating with both. The act of writing or story-telling, as we will again see in Barth's next novel, has become the basis for living.⁴⁹ If we cease to narrate, we will enter the space of absence and will die, just as Scheherazade will die when she stops narrating. Narrativization has become a necessary condition for living, just as the act of loving is. In Sabbatical the protagonists not only want to live "in" or "by" story, they will "perform" the story: "- this story, it's our house and our child... [...] We'll have made it [...], and we'll live in it. We'll even live by it" (S, 356). In The Tidewater Tales the different characters, "travellers out of fiction" (TT, 612), have become "prisoners of dramaturgy," as Barth's alter ego Djean says, and "they've thrown away the key" (TT, 604). The language used in story-telling is not used to refer to things of the world, but used to live in the world. Language does not represent a reality outside itself. This lands us, as will be argued in Section Three of the next chapter, in the realm of narrativist mimesis. Scheherazade, her sister, the Author, Odysseus,

Nausicaä, Don Quixote and Huckleberry Finn in The Tidewater Tales, and Behler and Yasmin in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor all overcome boundaries of time and place by erasing boundaries between reality and imagination. It needs no further arguing that this dynamic process of intertextual spatialization is only made possible through the agencies of author as well as reader, both operating on the metadiegetic level.

VII. Intradiegetic Authors in and of LETTERS

On the *intradiegetic* level there are several internal authors, and again, as was done for the extradiegetic level, a distinction should be made between internal and external authors, as table (9) above has shown.⁵⁰ Apart from the second degree letters written or received by the extradiegetic internal authors, all of them, including the Author, are themselves in one way or the other therapeutically or professionally involved in serious writing, such as essays or fiction.⁵¹ This becomes clear when four of them, involved in fictionalizing their life-stories, start individual quibbles with the Author on the authorship of and consequently the author-ity over their own lives.

Todd Andrews, as we have seen above, is, for instance, intradiegetically involved in his Inquiry, worknotes for his "memoir" (L, 256) and his diary, Jacob Horner in What I Did Untill the Doctor Came and Die Wiedertraum, from all of which excerpts are quoted. Lady Amherst has written academic treatises on Mme De Staël's letters and is at present involved in editing

the Cook family documents, Jerome Bray is both extra- and intradiegetically experimenting with the Revolutionary Novel.

Both A.B. Cooks are as extradiegetic authors involved in documenting the family's history, written down in letters to their children, copies of which are sent on to Lady Amherst and the Author. A.B. Cook IV rewrites in 1812 his family's early history, in four letters to his as yet unborn children; he bases this history on original, forged and fictitious historical documents that are intradiegetically, either directly or indirectly, present in the text. Two of such documents are Henry Burlingame I's Privie Journall (allegedly written in 1607) and Captain John Smith's Secret Historie of the Voiage up the Bay of Chesapeake (1608). Henry Burlingame is a fictitious name, but Captain John Smith is the name of a historical figure, an English explorer who was reputed to have been captured in 1607 by an Indian chief Powhatan, and freed by his daughter Pocahontas, as related by himself in chapter two of The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles, published in 1624.⁵² Of the Secret Historie, however, no historical evidence is found and it has to be assumed the text is fictitious. Other historical documents are The Sot-Weed Factor, published in 1708, and Sotweed Redivivus (1730), both by Ebenezer Cook⁵³ and of course The Sot-Weed Factor published in 1960 by John Barth.

A.B. Cook IV takes authority over his own existence when he inscribes himself into history as "Jean Blanque" (L, 111), playing his part in what he calls the game of governments. In the absence of documentary evidence he rewrites the family history and therewith the history of America, making use of whatever

material he can find, whether truthful or forged. But even if 'truthful' accounts of historical happenings exist, these would always be biased and "embellisht by literary tradition" (L, 121). A.B. Cook is aware of the paradox that official history is only one version of how "reality" could have been, yet that the only way in which history can be grasped is through writing. For this reason he forges happily away authoring his own version of the family history, quoting from and referring to these intradiegetic "historical" documents.

Even when he writes down a "truthful" version of events, it is the "verisimilitude - that is, the plausibility as fiction" (L, 300) and not the "verity" (L, 300) that should be questioned, as aspiring author Midshipman James Fenimore Cooper, later to become one of America's first realist authors, ironically points out to A.B. Cook. In the same way, he advises Cook, "the acceptance of 'historical' documents as authentic" should also be "an act of faith" (L, 298). Doctored and authentic documents thus obtain a similar status, and any version of history, based on either, is as good as the other. This given leads to hilarious situations, for instance when A.B. Cook IV's father who has been absent for a long time, has to prove his "authenticity" to his wife by showing his ability to forge an "authentic" official letter (L, 483-484). And when Napoleon is imprisoned on St. Helena, he writes home to his mother and uncle, who "reject as forgeries letters from the emperor himself, in his own hand, complaining of his failing health and requesting a new doctor and a better cook" (L, 615).

A.B. Cook IV's descendant, A.B. Cook VI, continues the family history in 1969, summarizing the line of descendants from A.B. Cook IV, in one letter to the Author and seven to his absent son, Henry Burlingame VII. His version of the family history is based on coded posthumous letters by A.B. Cook IV found in the family library. At first he tries to summarize these intradiegetic documents, but gradually narrativization takes over and so it becomes impossible for the external reader to distinguish between what is "authentic" and what is fictionalised. And in the final letter in the A.B. Cook slot the external reader is confronted with a P.S. to the Author by the silent addressee of the letters in which it is claimed that "the whole charade of discovered and deciphered letters [...] is [...] disingenuous" (L, 753), thereby undermining all of his father's undertakings and at the same time once more underlining the subjective agency of any author.

If we look at Ambrose Mensch we see him, just like the other correspondents, established as extra- as well as intradiegetic author in the novel. Ambrose, under the pen name of Arthur Morton King, is not only the author of The Amateur, which abortive fiction, sent to Lady Amherst after the Choptank had washed it up, contains some of the stories later published by the Author in Lost in the Funhouse: "I don't know how to feel about our friend's rereading," Ambrose writes to Lady Amherst, "by far the most extravagant liberty that he's taken with what I gave him" (L, 168), he is also involved in writing the filmscript based on the Author's novels that will form the basis of Reg Prinz' film, moreover he claims to be the author of one of the

stories in Chimera. How are we to take Ambrose's suggestion to the Author to work out the "ground plan for that Perseus-Medusa story I told you of [...]. All that remains is for you [...] to write the story!" (L, 652). Ambrose's relationship to the Author is as ambiguous as is his relationship to Lady Amherst. Has Ambrose authored Lady Amherst as she first seems to suggest and later denies in one of her letters to the Author? Ambrose sat up all night writing, she writes to the Author, "not, praise be, another of those regressive epistles to Yours Truly, but [...] a fiction in the form of a letter or letters to the Author from a Middle-aged English Gentlewoman and Scholar in Reduced Circumstances, Currently Embroiled in a Love Affair with an American Considerably Her Junior" (L, 556), all of which is denied in the following paragraph when she talks of letters from "the pen of our common friend Ambrose Mensch, whose Middle-aged English Et Cetera does not exist!" Ontological boundaries are definitely erased when Ambrose suggests a "design for LETTERS" (L, 767), "an old-time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers" (L, 769). "Author, old comrade and contrary, funhouse fashioner and guide: how's that for your next and seventh?" (L, 766). The question of who is authoring whom arises, as the external reader seems to have entered and become part of a linguistic universe.

VIII. Barth's Role as Author of History

Finally, in this chapter on the agency of the author as re-orchestrator, Barth's role as author of history should be briefly looked at. Barth's role is that of the historiographer, the reading subject in history, who becomes a "novelist of history" (L, 205) when he rewrites the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century America. This historiographer is, however, not concerned with writing history, but rather with creating it, in other words, the historiographer has turned from a reading subject into a writing subject.

The facts of American history (names, dates and places) can be found in encyclopedias and historical textbooks, in which texts also a context for these facts is created. The context and the relationship between historical names, dates and places given in LETTERS, however, radically differs from those given in the history books. In LETTERS historical relationships are reorchestrated by narrativization, or as Theo D'haen puts it in Text to Reader, by "verbalization." History, he writes, "has very little to do with *what* actually happened, but everything with *how* what happened is written. Or, turning things around, for Barth history-writing is equivalent to history-making" (D'haen, 1983: 47, *italics mine*). This is the reverse, says D'haen, of what one character in the novel calls "action-historiography, the making of history, as if it were an avant-garde species of narrative" (L, 72-73).

It should be noted here that Barth takes up a socially relevant position here. If we consider that one of the first acts

carried out during a revolution or *coup d'état* is the capture of television and radio stations, or for that matter, if we only look at CNN's role in the "creation" of the Gulf War in the early nineties, we realize how relevant Barth's point is here as to *who* actually writes history, or *who* has author-ity over history.

At least two incidents in LETTERS illustrate this position: firstly when we witness a literal destruction of letters when Admiral Cockburn "burns down the offices of the National Intelligencer" (L, 510) after having destroyed all the uppercase C's, so that his name can no longer be defamed in this newspaper, and secondly when A.B. Cook IV in that same war of 1812 is dispatched "to snatch the bronze pen from the hand of History and the palm from the hand of Fame" (L, 511) in order to take author-ity over history and rewrite it, which scene is later literally reenacted in Reg Prinz' FRAMES. Also Todd Andrews is aware of the dangers lurking behind the seemingly innocent info- and entertainment provided by the media : "[...] the media's tactic of co-opting the revolution was, so to speak, a coaxial business: they in turn could be co-opted, subverted without their even knowing it. The hearts and minds of the American middle class, especially the kids', could be won in neighbourhood movie theatres and on national networks" (L, 722). The media present a constructed reality as the "real" reality, which awareness again forcefully raises the question of author-ity, and this question brings us full circle to the issues raised in the opening pages of this chapter.

Chapter IV

The Agency of the Text

In his later fiction John Barth carries out acts of appropriation: he consciously copies and appropriates his own earlier work as well as works by others; he also replicates and duplicates archetexts, genres and discourses. Barth's rewritten notion of mimesis has become the key to unlock Barth's duplications, repetitions, revolutions, re-writings and echoes, to use but a few of the rephrasings given to this process in LETTERS. By thus critiquing the modern concept of authorship as it has developed since the Middle Ages,¹ he has consciously positioned himself in the centre of the poststructuralist debate on intertextuality. Playing with the memory capacity of language on all narrative levels, Barth has, as argued in the previous chapter, turned the author into an intertextual re-orchestrator, who "imitates the role of Author," as he himself has said on more than one occasion, and who imitates himself as Author. The notion of authorial originality is thus imploded by the concept of intertextuality, and replaced with that of imitation or repetition. This has, as was also argued in previous chapters, not only led to the demystification of the concept of the author as individual genius, but also led to the discourse of the copy and a re-evaluation of the notion of repetition. This chapter will specifically deal with the agency of the text as meaning-

producing mechanism in Barth's reconceptualization of the three narrative agents involved in the production of textuality.

In this chapter I shall first discuss the postmodern concept of the copy and link that to the concept of mimesis, and in particular poststructuralist mimesis. Section One therefore deals with the discourse of the copy in postmodern culture. In Section Two the traditional and structuralist concepts of mimesis are very briefly hinted at before the concepts of poststructuralist mimesis and repetition are discussed in detail. In Section Three I shall build on Robert Con Davis' article on John Barth and imitation, "The Case for a Post-Structuralist Mimesis: John Barth and Imitation." He distinguishes three different stages in Barth's approach to mimesis, to which I shall add a fourth, that of narrativist mimesis. Section Four investigates in how far these notions can be linked to John Barth's later fiction.

For Section Five Kierkegaard's essay on repetition has proved to be a seminal intertext, the dialectics of which are linked to Derrida's notion of iterability. Section Six shows how both concepts can be constructively applied to the production of textuality in LETTERS. Section Seven, finally, takes a closer look at Heidegger's concept of *Wiederholung* and links this concept to Kierkegaardian repetition and Derridean iterability.

I. The Discourse of the Copy in Postmodern Culture

In Postmodern Currents: Arts and Artists in the Age of Electronic Media, an illuminating study of postmodern currents in the arts, Margot Lovejoy approaches intertextuality and the discourse of the copy from a technological angle: new technologies, such as video, film and computer, she argues, which are "inherently designed for reproducibility," have changed the social function of art and raised fundamental questions about originality and authorship (Lovejoy, 1989: 2). In her view the invention of the photocopier has had the same influence on postmodernist art as the discovery of photography had on modernist art. She bases this premiss on Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"² in which he suggests that the very invention of litho- and photography transformed the entire nature of art, as until these inventions the presence of the original has been the prerequisite for the concept of authenticity (Benjamin, 1974: 615).³ Through the technique of reproduction the reproduced object is detached from its site of production.

Before, as Benjamin argues, photography took over from painting as the medium of mimetic art, painters from the Renaissance onwards had primarily operated in a realistic mode. Thanks to the invention of photography, a different aesthetics was to become possible; hence the rise of non-mimetic modernist art. Romantic concepts such as "the divine genius" of the artist and "the sanctity of hand skills as the only means of making art" came to be undermined.⁴ The painter was challenged to go further

than photography's realism as a modernist aesthetic sought to represent a higher reality, which "led the artist towards the renunciation of all external influence from the outside world - to a stripped down, 'pure,' and highly individualized study of formal aesthetic principles" (Lovejoy, 1989: 16).

The further development of electronic technologies (film, television, video, computer, photo cd and photocopier) led to a questioning of the modernist aesthetic and raised issues already suggested by Benjamin in 1936, such as those of authorship, authenticity, subjectivity and uniqueness of the individual artist. The explosion in the use of electronic media is to postmodernism what the invention of photography was to modernism, claims Lovejoy. Due to technological developments, she argues, the present postmodern age is of necessity intertextual, as electronic images have become "a principal conduit of information, culture and society in the Western world" (Lovejoy, 1989: 17).⁵ Postmodernism, compared to the restraints of forms inherent in modernism, "is a new condition, where the suppression of social and cultural influence is no longer possible" (Lovejoy, 1989: 17), as the invention of electronic technologies and its dazzling implications for representation have so obviously shown.

Thus postmodern photographers such as Sherrie Levine and Barbara Kruger have appropriated works of earlier artists by literally replicating them. Levine, for instance, has re-photographed and thus "appropriated" work by Walker Evans, whose photographs had featured earlier in James Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.⁶ Ironically, Sherrie Levine's photographs

have now come to be seen as "original" works.⁷ By appropriating styles and images of the past and thus critiquing the relationship between "the copy" and "the original," she has placed question marks against traditional notions of originality and authenticity. And when her photographs, which could be reproduced in limitless numbers, were sold as "original Levines," the whole issue of the copy was forcibly brought home.

Barbara Kruger appropriates found images from published sources, newspaper photographs and magazine clippings, for instance, or reproductions of paintings by Michelangelo,⁸ and adds texts to them, thereby not only undermining the "individual genius" of the artist and the value placed on authenticity, but at the same time questioning the whole market system of art works. As Lovejoy points out, her work questions "the value placed on hype about 'genius' and 'originality' in relation to art market value as opposed to the communication value of the art work" (Lovejoy, 1989: 14).

Andy Warhol's silkscreens are another case in point. One of his most famous reproductions is that of the Mona Lisa, perhaps the most famous cultural icon of all time. In 1919 dadaist Marcel Duchamp had already appropriated Da Vinci's Mona Lisa by painting her with a moustache and a beard,⁹ but in 1963 Warhol outdid Duchamp in his creation of an "original" in his silkscreen on canvas, entitled "Thirty Are Better Than One," which consisted of thirty copies of the original Mona Lisa. This particular work, as Lovejoy comments, is "a comment on the power of the reproductive media to promote celebrity" (Lovejoy, 1989: 12). I think Warhol's thirty Mona Lisas go further than this in their

representation of a surface image of Western culture: Warhol's rejection of the idea of an art work as an original creation in a unique time and space clearly has as one of its implications the belief that the image has now become a mechanically reproducible commodity.¹⁰ As Richard Kearney puts it very succinctly in "The Crisis of the Post-modern Image": "Mimesis has returned. But with a vengeance" (Kearney, 1987: 118). When art works refer to other art works in a seemingly endless play of imitation, we have definitely landed up in the realm of post-structuralist mimesis.¹¹

More recently the photocopy machine (black and white as well as colour) has taken over as *the* postmodern instrument of appropriation,¹² producing hundreds of copies per minute.¹³ Lovejoy sees copier technology as the representation of the act of appropriation itself, which "stands out as site for the Postmodern because it addresses directly questions having to do with the copy and the original, authorship and originality" (Lovejoy, 1989: 110).

As Steven Connor points out in Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary this phenomenon also pertains to contemporary music, especially rock music, which seems to have been taken over by what is called "sampling," that is, the "appropriation and re-editing of snatches of music from other songs" (Connor, 1989: 154).¹⁴ The notion of originality is also lost here, as the bits and pieces from other musical compositions are constantly re-mixed and re-arranged. Sampling has like photocopy and video art been made possible by advanced

technology. It is, says Connor, also quite ironical that the success of original "live" performances often depends on the familiarity of the audience with the original performance on cd, record or tape. Just as the live performance is a re-run of the original performance, cd, tape and record are constituted as instruments of appropriation allowing the original performance to be endlessly repeated.¹⁵

In the discourse of the copy the "text" is no longer considered stationary, but as being in constant motion, allowing for and capable of an unlimited play of relationships with other texts, leading to a continuous process of re-positioning and re-invention of meaning: the traditional triptych author/work/tradition has come to be replaced by text/discourse/culture.¹⁶ In this view it is not possible any longer for an author to be entirely original, for he is always seen to operate in an already constituted system of intertextuality as boundaries between copy and original seem to have been permanently erased. As early as 1936 Walter Benjamin had already forecast that the criterion of authenticity in the traditional sense would "cease to be applicable to artistic production",¹⁷ although the market has found, as hinted at above, new means of reinstating concepts like the "original," the authentic, but this time, as Levine and Kruger have shown, with a difference. The discourse of the copy, the act of appropriation, undermining the artist's individual and original voice, is one of the forms of poststructuralist mimesis.

II. Poststructuralist Mimesis and Repetition

Traditionally three forms of mimesis are distinguished: firstly *pragmatic* mimesis, as set forth by Horace, which is an imitation of style in the strict rhetorical sense; secondly *idealist* mimesis (Plato) and thirdly *realist* mimesis (Aristotle).

Since Horace's notion deals with style only, it is of limited value for this particular discussion of the referentiality of mimesis. Underlying all three notions is the issue of "ideal" meaning.

Plato's mimesis can be seen as a "two-state activity that imagines art to duplicate forms and concerns of life 'out there'," whereby "life 'out there' imitates forms of an inaccessible ideal realm" (Davis, 1985: 50). Art is thus seen as an imitation of life, and life is seen as an imitation or reflection of ideal meaning. Ideal meaning is in essence inherent in the forms of the Ideal realm. In philosophy this stance is known as a substantialist or essentialist conception of meaning and reference. Since art is seen as an activity that is "twice removed from the source," reference therefore can only be "a second (or third-) hand and diminished version of true form - form's mere shadow" (Davis, 1985: 50).

Aristotle's mimesis is seen as an imitation of the structural relations of ideal form. In this view art can imitate the structure of human action and therefore can directly refer to the pattern of ideal or "real" forms that give "reality" or meaning to life. As art is directly able to imitate relationships and patterns of real life, we must assume that the sign has an

iconic dimension, that meaning is inherent within structure, and consequently that structural pattern, by containing meaning, is substantialist, just as Plato's mimesis is substantialist.

Crudely summarizing, in contemporary theory a basic distinction can be made between the structuralist and post-structuralist approach to mimesis: the structuralist approach sees mimesis as imitation of the "world" or "reality" (Eric Auerbach, Northrop Frye, Wayne Booth and René Girard), as opposed to the poststructuralist approach, which is non-referential (Jacques Derrida).¹⁸ The difference between structuralist and poststructuralist mimesis is well-illustrated by means of Derrida's critique of Austin's speech act theory in "Signature Event Context,"¹⁹ focussing on the status of a person's signature.²⁰ Austin had argued in How to Do Things with Words that a person's signature, as an essentialist act of communication, is "performative" and "constative" at the same time. Derrida argues that, since a signature by necessity has to have a "repeatable, iterable and imitable form" (Derrida, 1988: 20), it can never be essentialist. The signature "must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production" (Derrida, 1988: 20). The term "imitable" is important in this respect as Derrida seems to assert that the linguistic function of the signature is dependent on imitable form. Reference is, in other words, based on imitation, and not on an existential object; it is in other words non-referential.

In "The Double Session" in Dissemination, part of his examination into the "metaphysics of presence" in Western philosophy, Derrida presents us with a critique of mimesis. The two

fundamental meanings of mimesis, he writes, are the "replicated diminishment of itself as a lost plenum, a lost essence," and "the duplication of a poor forgery that is duplicated in the 'referential' substitution of poorer and poorer forgeries for the initial inexact one" (Derrida, 1981: 193). Both are disclosed to be no more than expressions of the hierarchy of "presence" over "absence," without any justification for this privileging. He counters this substantialism with his own model of non-substantialist mimesis, to which, as Davis quite rightly observes, John Barth's ideas on mimesis come very close.

Derrida's mimesis is a "writing by gesture that repeats only difference in itself and substantially imitates nothing" (Davis, 1985: 68). Mimesis in this context refers of course only to writing (*graphie* as opposed to *logos*), which in Derrida's words is also a repetition: "What is repeated is the repeater, the imitator, the signifier, the representative, in the absence, as it happens, of *the thing itself*, which these appear to reedit [...]" (Derrida, 1981: 111). This Derridean rejection of the notion that anything written imitates or "refers" to something else, particularly that words "refer" to a "reality" outside of themselves (in other words a non-referential mimesis) is also found in Barth's later fiction.

Self-mimesis as in the signifier "signature" links Derrida to John Barth's concern with self-mimesis in his later fiction. Both Derrida and Barth deny the existence of a referent "out there" in a substantialist or essentialist sense. In post-structuralist mimesis then the text solely exists as an imitation, not of reality, but as a product of a mimetic act,

imitating other works. Poststructuralist mimesis is thus re-situated by Derrida "as a language effect that is caught in the folds of fictional self-reference" (Davis, 1985: 62). He uses the term "hymen" to denote these folds. This is an ambiguous term, as it might have a substantialist connotation in the sense that the hymen is the virginal locale of meaning. But on the other hand it can also imply that once the hymen is broken, meaning is forever lost.

Derrida's theory goes back to the non-substantialist Saussurian view in which the components of the sign, that is, signifier and signified, are linked together by chance. For De Saussure the signified is never an existential object, but always another signified; signifiers only exist by the grace of their difference from other signifiers.²¹ This differential relationship clearly negates any direct link between sign and real object, hence non-referential mimesis.

In an article on postmodern Dutch literature Elrud Ibsch also argues that the concept of mimesis is central to postmodern literature: "In modernism a rational-reflective processing of epistemological (including linguistic and ethical) doubt takes place, whereas the processing thereof in postmodernism is of a mimetic nature" (Ibsch, 1989: 351).²² In contrast to Brian McHale's contention in Postmodernist Fiction that postmodernist fiction is dominated by the ontological, whereas modernist fiction is dominated by the epistemological,²³ Ibsch makes a case for a mimetic processing or assimilation of epistemological doubt in postmodern literature. Epistemological doubt has entered

into the narrative structure of postmodern literature, she writes, as the characters no longer deal with its existence on a reflective meta-level, but rather "live" this doubt, or "dramatize" it.²⁴ According to Ibsch we are dealing with the Platonic version of mimesis here, as the characters are not "reflections," but "acting and speaking persons" (Ibsch, 1989: 351). Although I agree with her observation on the mimetic aspects of postmodern fiction, I would hesitate to call this form of mimesis Platonic, as, in my definition of postmodern mimesis, what is "dramatized" is not based on the "real world" out there, but on other mimetic forms. Exactly because of the linguistic aspect of this form of mimesis, poststructuralist mimesis would be a more suitable label. The problematisation of epistemological doubt forms a continuum between modernism and postmodernism. In postmodern fiction it leads to two closely related directions: either to "impossible" worlds or to new "possible" worlds that belie the laws of history and logic.

Nevertheless Ibsch's postulate that a transformation from reflection to mimesis has taken place in postmodernism, even if only to express epistemological doubt, is a useful one. This transformation leads to (fictional) worlds in which the reader can no longer be a passive consumer alongside the characters in the fictional world, as she has to grapple with realities that seem to violate the reference to reality "out there." The reader has to make "sense" of the rewritings of reality which, if only by their linguistic nature, can never refer and have never referred to reality out there as an existential object, but by necessity always only refer to themselves. Thus they cannot ever

be imitations of that reality. In this way "fact" and "fiction" turn from two intertwined and inseparable entities into one linguistic universe.

In the light of this it is no wonder that existing literary genres and texts, factual and fictional, are so often rewritten in postmodern literature. Parody, as John Barth has so convincingly shown in LETTERS, has become the postmodern paradigm that subverts the myth of originality. Appropriation, repetition and mimesis have become the realities of the postmodern world. This world has become the treasure-house of the already said and already written, the reconstructions of our world. In "The Library of Babel" in Labyrinths, Jorge Luis Borges deals with the fictionality of this universe, "which others call the Library" (Borges, 1964: 78), and which we could call the repository of the archetext. The universe is seen as a library in which everything is present, "all that is given to express, in all languages" (Borges, 1964: 81). This makes "the Library [...] unlimited and cyclical" (Borges, 1964: 85). The Library is governed by a fundamental law which is discovered by the librarian-narrator:

all the books, no matter how diverse they might be, are made up of the same elements: the space, the period, the comma, the twenty-two letters of the alphabet [...]. In the vast Library there are no two identical books [...] the Library is total and [...] its shelves register all the possible combinations of the twenty-odd orthographical symbols. (Borges, 1964: 81)

The intertextuality of the universe does not exist in the limited number of the elements at our disposal. As there are so few elements available, repetition of these elements is unavoidable. Intertextuality comes into being once these elements are combined into larger units of words, sentences and texts. A limited number of elements makes a limitless number of combinations possible ("there are no two identical books"), yet the shelves of the library contain all possible combinations.

In this linguistic universe in which everything has been said, all books that have ever been written and still have to be written are present as "examples of variation with unlimited repetition" (Borges, 1964: 81). The world has thus been reduced to a linguistic universe that is made up of duplications and repetitions. Even the mirror in the hallway to the library in Borges' story faithfully duplicates all appearances.²⁵ Epistemological doubt has taken the shape here of a labyrinthine mimetic presence in the Library.

III. Narrativist mimesis

John Barth's concern with the self-referentiality of language can be seen as an attempt to understand the question of mimesis. Davis links Derrida's concept of mimesis, as set out in "The Double Session," to Barth's later fictions: the concept of mimesis is taken to be the central issue in Barth's work. In his re-thinking of this notion Barth has used, re-discovered and indeed gone beyond the traditional categories of mimesis.

Davis distinguishes three different stages in Barth's approach to mimesis, to which I shall add a fourth:

(1) *Realist mimesis*: Barth's early characters in The Floating Opera and The End of the Road are "hard-edged identities, with an interior psychic life [...] moving against middle class American culture of the 1950s" (Davis, 1985: 56) in an attempt to understand that world.

(2) *Mythemic mimesis*: defined as an attempt to "dislodge, to a certain degree, the myths of mimetic realism" (Davis, 1985: 57). Mimetic realism relies heavily on myths or mythic archetypes (as pointed out by Frye).

Barth makes use of these myths (among others the quest of the hero) to subvert them (in The Sot-Weed Factor and Giles Goat-Boy); he "dismantles the romantic quest pattern" (Davis, 1985: 57) by imitating the genres specifically associated with these quest forms. Barth realises that in order to be able to subvert and move beyond the myths of Western literature, these myths would first have to be evoked, whereby their existence is in fact reaffirmed. This realization, this inability to shake off the yoke of mimetic realism, was seen by Barth to be a cul-de-sac, as part of the "literature of exhaustion." In this phase Barth calls himself an "imposter, a writer who deliberately imitates the Novel." The first "Novels" known to us are already forms of imitation: Cervantes' Don Quixote was an "imitation and parody of romance," and Defoe's Robinson Crusoe an "imitation of the sea-adventure book and the spiritual auto-biography" (Davis, 1985: 57).²⁶

What are we to understand when Barth says he writes imitations of the Novel? We should, says Davis, like Barth, distinguish between fiction as form and Novel as imitation of fiction. This distinction then offers at least four possible readings of Barth's view of himself as imitator:

(a) If Barth sees himself as an imitator of form in the Horatian sense, he realises that in order to be able to subvert the mythic archetypes associated with this form, these same archetypes are first to be initiated in his fiction, through which process they are unavoidably reaffirmed, before they can be undermined.

(b) If the capital N in Novel refers to the signified, essence or being of Novel, as a transcendental signifier for meaning or reality, being a writer of an imitation of the Novel would mean that one in a Platonic sense can only achieve an imitation of the Novel, as the Novel itself can never be written; almost as if the Novel is put "under erasure."

(c) If the capital N in Novel refers to the Novel as it has already been written, Barth's ten novels to date are parts so far of that quintessential, or metaphoric Novel, which in its totality is as yet unpublished like the books in Borges' Library. In this reading Barth is an imitator of the Novel in the Aristotelian sense, referring to the ideal being of the Novel.

(d) If Barth is not imitating the being of something that is, the Novel, he is imitating an imitation of the Novel that itself has no referent, that is, its referent is linguistic and self-referential; it is contained in itself, and does not refer to a reality outside itself. "Novel" should then be solely

regarded as a linguistic construct without any referent "out there." In this sense Barth has moved beyond substantialist representation. With this last possibility we have landed in the realm of:

(3) *Poststructuralist mimesis*: Barth moves in his later novels beyond traditional forms of mimesis into an acceptance of repetition, which is inherent in mimesis, realising that "the escape from mimesis will itself be mimetic" (Davis, 1985: 59). In "The Literature of Replenishment" Barth argues that the only viable type of contemporary novel is a novel which is "a deliberate imitation of a novel, or a novel imitative of other kinds of documents" (FB, 72). This novel should attempt "to represent not life directly but a representation of life." For the novel to survive its existential crisis it should no longer be an imitation of life, but an imitation of the fiction of life, or even further removed, an imitation of the documents of that fiction. In this way narratives become the documents of man's existence.

And perhaps, when in his latest novels narrative is indeed offered as a programme for living, we have arrived at the final stage in his critique of mimesis, that is, at the stage of:

4) *Narrativist mimesis*: the ultimate form of post-structuralist mimesis. We have seen Sabbatical's protagonists Fenwick and Susan Key overcome their existential crises by living "in" and "by" story (S, 356): narrative has for them become the condition for living. In "Tales Within Tales Within Tales," one of the essays in The Friday Book, Barth, inspired by Tzvetan

Todorov's argument in The Poetics of Prose,²⁷ argues that "narrating almost literally equals living":²⁸

We tell stories and listen to them because we live stories and live in them. Narrative equals language equals life: to cease to narrate, as the capital example of Scheherazade reminds us is to die - literally for her, figuratively for the rest of us. One might add that if this is true, then not only is all fiction fiction about fiction, but all fiction about fiction is in fact fiction about life. (S, 236)

The language used in story-telling is used to live in the world and not to refer to things of the world.²⁹ It does not represent another reality outside itself. Mimesis in this stage is, like Borges' Library, "limitless and cyclical."

At the end of Sabbatical the protagonists have decided to write their own life-story: "If that's going to be our story, then let's begin it at the end and end it at the beginning, so we can go on forever. Begin with our living happily ever after" (S, 301). Their life-story has to be cyclical for it to be able to continue, for them to be and stay alive. The narrators in The Tidewater Tales directly address the external reader, "What you're reading, reader, is P's and K's story. But what husband and wife are living, and trying rather desperately just now without success to read ahead in, is not their story. It's their life" (TT, 140). At this stage life equals story and story equals life.³⁰

This narrativist mimetic device allows Don Quixote in The Tidewater Tales to land up in America to meet Huckleberry Finn and allows the narrator-protagonist of The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor to travel, through story, through different continents and centuries. Both life and story are governed by the same narrative principles, the only difference between the two being that a narrativist mimetic life-story is indeed limitless and cyclical whereas life "out there" is unavoidably limited and thus teleological, as it inevitably heads towards death. And at the end of The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor the reader is invited to follow Scheherazade's avatar into the realm of narrativist mimesis, "Remember how it was? she says, familiar stranger: In the spaceship, weightless, making ready to go Outside? You went first, you always thought, but *I* was the one; *I* went first. I know the way. Follow me, now: Two. One " (LV, 573).

Apart from the "fictional" discourse, says Davis, Barth also stages a "critical" discourse in his novels, a critique of fiction as part of a narrative investigation into the genesis of fiction itself. This confirms my claim for the above fourth mimetic stage.³¹ Barth's later novels could indeed be read as metafictional treatises on the origin of fiction. I will come back to this in detail in the next chapter. In this allegory fiction would suppress the Novel in the "avant-garde performance" of its own "writability" and the Novel would "displace fiction with referential and familiar meaning" (Davis, 1985: 61). In this dynamic between fiction and Novel, between "performance" and "meaning," the locus of meaning is constantly being deferred.

What Barth's fictions achieve is the reversal of fiction and Novel, performance and meaning, in a "theatricalization of mimesis, a representation of mimesis" (Davis, 1985: 61), what I have called narrativist mimesis.

IV. Mimesis in John Barth's Later Fiction

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Barth is quoted as having assembled LETTERS "out of old literary conventions" (Ziegler, 1980: 173). These conventions refer to his return to one of the early forms of English fiction, which is, as he writes in "My Two Problems: 2":

the most venerable and vulnerable of English novel-forms, *the epistolary novel*, - made so popular by Samuel Richardson in the second third of the eighteenth century that it was already worked to death by the third third of the eighteenth century. The jury may still be out on the famous and unimportant question of the death of the novel, but that the novel-in-letters has long since run its course, even Samuel Richardson was declaring by 1759, in a pair of remarkable letters which may well be the first mention of the Novel's demise. (FB, 146)

The epistolary novel was at the time of its conception in the eighteenth century seen as a document. This surprisingly modern idea of the linguistic nature of the novel, of novel as

document, was later, in the nineteenth century, superseded by the idea of novel as mirror of life. Barth's fascination with this early form of imitation is obvious. "For Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and the rest" the novel was an "imitation, a convention for imitating life and [...] a convention for imitating life's documents," he said in the 1981 interview (Reilly, 1981: 3).

Barth's recycling of the old-time epistolary form in LETTERS is exactly the imitational act of poststructuralist mimesis referred to above. LETTERS's "true subject, stated simply, would be Reenactment, or Recycling, or Revolution" (Reilly, 1981: 10). The novel not only recycles old-time literary forms and literary works, it also recycles historical events and characters from earlier fictions. "Taking another look at one's own imaginative past, resurrecting old characters, seemed highly appropriate" (Reilly, 1981: 10). Barth's description of himself as an "orchestrator" or "arranger," as discussed in the previous chapter, who re-orchestrates "old conventions and old melodies," fits in well with that of Borges' librarian who observed that the whole universe was contained in "the space, the period, the comma, the twenty-two letters of the alphabet" (Borges, 1964: 81).

So Barth's poststructuralist mimesis is not an "imitation" of the world, but an imitation of linguistic activity in the form of echoes and re-writings. Official historical documents have in LETTERS obtained the status of mimetic textual substitutes for a past that is forever lost. History has become a "code, which, laboriously and at ruinous cost, deciphers into HISTORY [...]. She is a scattered sybil whose oak-leaf oracles we toil to

recollect, only to spell out something less than nothing: e.g. WHOL TRUTH, or ULTIMATE MEANIN" (L, 332), which, as their misspelling already indicates, can by necessity only refer to a textual reality. The idea of a knowable history has become an impossibility. In Words in Reflection Alan Thiher undermines the idea of traditional narrative history:

Without essentialist foundations the question remains open as to whether history can be more than an arbitrary chronicle (even if defined statistically) or, more interestingly to us, whether history is a form of intertextuality having a status little different from that of fiction. (Thiher, 1984: 195)

In this view history is seen as a function of language: language does not reflect, but re-presents or even shapes the past. The received version of history, as it is known to us from historical documents, is only one interpretation of the facts. This implies that identical facts could lead to an infinite variety of possible interpretations. As Theo D'haen quite rightly observes in Text to Reader, Barth's concern in LETTERS "is not with writing as a means to record the past, but rather with writing as creating the past" (D'haen, 1983: 47). Both "official" and fictionalised history are rewritings, mimetic attempts at the construction of "reality." In Barth's fictions both history and life have become questions of story: narrative has thus become a prerequisite for living in and knowing of this world. We have entered the realm of narrativist mimesis.

In much the same way as Barth calls himself an imitator of a Novelist, his characters in his poststructuralist stage are imitations of figures drawn from literary history, such as Scheherazade from The 1001 Nights in Chimera, LETTERS, The Tidewater Tales and The Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, Odysseus from Homer's Odyssey in LETTERS and The Tidewater Tales, and Don Quixote in The Tidewater Tales. Mimesis in this phase is seen as imitation of imitation, not leading out to "reality," as in the traditional forms of mimesis, as a referent, but as a "round-robin continuation of the mimetic process" (Davis, 1985: 60).

Barth's next logical step in this continuous process of imitation is, as was already hinted at in previous chapters, autotextuality, or, self-imitation. In LETTERS all protagonists but one appeared in earlier novels; characters, plot and structure in The Tidewater Tales imitate characters, plot and structure of Sabbatical; THE AMATEUR, or, A Cure for Cancer in LETTERS imitates the autobiographical sections in Lost in the Funhouse; SEX EDUCATION in The Tidewater Tales imitates "Night-Sea Journey" in Lost in the Funhouse; and the story of Scheherazade's First Second Menstruation and her Unfinished Story imitate "Dunyazadiad" in Chimera.³²

As Ibsch defined the postmodern position, mimesis has thus become a continuous process rather than a product, a tidal flow in which there will never be a stage where meaning will be reached. This process of constant deferral of meaning ties up with Derrida's notion of *différance*, and the metaphor of tidal waters in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales and that of the

voyager through time and space in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor seem particularly apt. The floating tidal waters in the Chesapeake Bay have been turned into a cradle for narrative life.

The story of J. Arthur Paisley's death, ex-CIA-agent, which returns in three of Barth's novels, is another illustration of the notion of Derridean *différance*. From being just one among many incidents in LETTERS, this story forms part of the plot in Sabbatical; in The Tidewater Tales its recurrence even takes on metaphorical dimensions.³³ Is this replay substantialist, as it apparently takes on more meaningful aspects every time it is re-run (which would create a paradoxical situation as Platonic substance is in essence static), does it become less and less "real" in its mimetic reproduction? Or does its significance only lie in its "round-robin continuation of the mimetic process"? The story is certainly used as a Derridean "hymen," its function being no other than language "caught in the folds of fictional self-reference," investigating the relations between fiction and reality.

As has been argued above, Barth's fictions develop an on-going critique of forms of mimesis. But concurrently we see in his later fiction that not only the genesis, but also the viability and survival of fiction as such are major concerns of his. Part of his programme for the replenishment of literature is a return to "the storyteller's art," in the form of narrativist mimesis, a return with a difference to "the springs of narrative," a repetition of the archetexts, or hymen, of

literature. As Barth said in "The Literature of Replenishment": "A true postmodernist [...] keeps one foot [...] in the narrative past, [...] and one foot in, one might say, the Parisian structuralist present" (FB, 204).³⁴ By breaking the hymen of fictional self-reference new texts are generated, fostered in a dialectic, palimpsestuous relationship.

Barth is self-consciously aware of the poststructuralist course he embarks his fictions on, as the interviews he has granted in the course of time so obviously show. Heide Ziegler questioned Barth on his ideas on mimesis. In LETTERS Jerome Bray is trying to create the perfect novel with the aid of the computer Lilyvac II, just as he had been trying to do in "Bellerophoniad" in Chimera. Bray has set out to compose the perfect Novel by means of a sophisticated computer programme to which he has fed canonical fiction and literary theory. Is this the quintessential Novel he attempts to write, "the absolute type, as it were the Platonic Form expressed?," Ziegler wants to know. To which Barth answers: "It's certainly not the Platonic Form expressed, but it certainly participates in the Platonic idea that Bray is speaking of" (Ziegler, 1980: 173). Barth sees Bray's role as a kind of mad limiting case trying to create pure form, in which attempt he fails. To Barth no such thing as creating the ultimate capital N Novel seems possible: "no novel made out of mere words, mere language could ever arrive at Bray's notions of formal perfection and purity" (Ziegler, 1980: 174). What the reader ends up with after first having finished "Bellerophoniad" and LETTERS, is not the novel Jerome Bray has

aspired to compose, but "something that has fallen from Plato, although it participates in Bray's idea" (Ziegler, 1980: 174).

Jerome Bray's ideas of the novel link up with the second possibility expressed above under (b), referring to the essentialist Ideal Novel, which, as Bray's failure to compose it proves, can never be written; this idea of Novel will always remain Novel "under erasure." The novel can of necessity only be a linguistic construct, "mere words, mere language," never able to attain substance or mimesis in the Platonic sense, which in itself is already a third remove from reality, thereby underlining its non-referentiality. For Barth substance, as presupposed in the Platonic ideal realm, does not exist, but what does exist is linguistic form, narrative, the language of non-referential reality.

Towards the end of LETTERS Ambrose Mensch writes to Yours Truly: "*Might (the artist) not as readily, at least as possibly, be imagined as thereby (if only thereby) enabled to love the narrative through the form, the language through the narrative, even the world through language?*" (L, 650). Which does not mean to say that the artist prefers language to the world, the processes of narration to language and the abstract possibilities of form to narrative processes. But if the artist achieves all this, writes Ambrose, "*might he not find himself liberated to be (as he has after all always been, but is enabled now more truly, freely, efficaciously to be) in the world?*" (L, 651).

Todd Andrews is another character who tries his hand at a novel within the novel. He is rewriting the earlier The Original Floating Opera, the manuscript of which he claims to have handed

over to the Author at a party years ago, who in his turn used that as the basis for The Floating Opera. Todd reinterprets his own past in LETTERS on the basis of the earlier texts by himself and the Author by making two columns of events in what he considers to be the two cycles of his life. The left hand column numbers 13 events, from the moment he was born to the moment he decided to commit suicide in 1937; the right hand column numbers 10 events so far, numbers 11, 12 and 13 are blanks as yet. These events do not at that stage have a correlative in the present, or the future for that matter; nevertheless they are present in their absence as Todd anticipates their future happening on the basis of their happening in the past. Not all events match entirely: "Okay, the correspondences are not rigorous, and there are as many inversions as repetitions or ironical echoes" (L, 259), yet to Todd it is obvious that the past manures the future. As the motto of Mack Enterprises, his lover's husband's firm, already indicates, that is "*Praeteritas futuras stercorant*,"³⁵ the past could "(a) fertilize the future, (b) turn into shit in the future, or (c) turn the future into shit" (L, 80-81).

As Todd re-reconstructs his life, he achieves a dialogue with the texts of his past. Obsessed as he is with his own past experiences he becomes almost seduced by them: "Where will my number 11 land me, this second time around? That's all I'm really curious about, now I've seen the pattern" (L, 278). The gaps in the second cycle of his life are going to be filled by the "dialectic of repetition" of the past, to use a phrase deployed by Søren Kierkegaard in Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology (1843).³⁶ In this way Todd becomes an object of

dialectical existence, as he seems to be doomed by the inevitable textual repetitions that identify him. The text not only seems to be writing itself, but also the characters' lives.

Like Todd Andrews, Ambrose Mensch is also obsessed with the cyclical pattern of the events in his life; the text of his life seems to be phylogenetically regenerating itself. Like Todd, he reconstructs his life, as Arthur Morton King, author of THE AMATEUR, and again like Todd, he sees his life partitioned in two cycles: "the First Cycle is rehearsed retrospectively in course of the Second [...]. Such a pattern might even be discovered in one's own, unheroical life. In the stage of one's professional career, for example, or the succession of one's love affairs" (L, 650). The stages in his present courtship of Lady Amherst duplicate the earlier patterns in his relationships with other women. These stages rigorously follow the order of the alphabet: "Ad-mi-ra-ti-on, Be-ne-fi-ci-al, Con-so-la-ti-on, De-cla-ra-ti-on, Ex-hor-ta-ti-on, For-ni-ca-ti-on, Ge-ne-ra-ti-on, followed by Ha-bi-ta-ti-on, In-vi-ta-ti-on, & cet." (L, 765). Can the pattern be broken in the Second Cycle of his life? Or is the pattern to be repeated "logarithmically spiralling out as in a snail-shaped temple" (L, 649) in order to be "more truly, freely, efficaciously [...] in the world" (L, 651)? Likewise, all the Cooks and Burlingames are "in flight from the general Pattern of [their] past and the specific course of [their lives'] 'first cycle[s]'" (L, 586).

The texts of the past also seem to be writing themselves as Ambrose's anniversary view of history attests, or are these rewrites "Portentous Coincidences, or Arresting But Meaningless

Patterns" (L, 384)? Even Ambrose's body seems to be writing itself, as the cells of the cancerous growth inside his body keep on duplicating. He tries to come to terms with the tumour by attempting to literally write it off in THE AMATEUR, the subtitle of which is "A Cure for Cancer" (L, 153). His whole family has been affected by cancerous diseases: his grandfather died of prostate cancer, his grandmother of blood cancer, Aunt Rosa's was in her uterus and Uncle Konrad's in his skin, his mother had a radical mastectomy and his father died of brain tumour. Ambrose's own birthmark rewrites the pattern.

V. Kierkegaardian repetition and Derridean iterability

We could read both Todd's and Ambrose's cases as forms of Kierkegaardian repetition. Both are trapped in a state which comes close to what Søren Kierkegaard in Repetition has suggested is the dialectic of repetition:

The dialectic of repetition is easy, for what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been gives to repetition the character of novelty. [...] When the Greeks said that all knowledge is recollection they affirmed that all that is has been; when one says that life is a repetition one affirms that existence which has been now becomes. When one does not possess the categories of recollection or of repetition,

the whole of life is resolved into a void and empty noise.
(Kierkegaard, 1964: 52-53)

Repetition and recollection are two opposite poles of one and the same axis: recollection seems to be a retreating movement backwards and repetition a movement forwards, anticipating what is to come. Kierkegaard links the notion of repetition to that of irony. The ironical moment is located in the present, between past and future, it is looking in two directions at the same time: "Irony is the beginning, yet no more than the beginning; it is and it is not. Moreover, its polemic is a beginning which is equally a conclusion" (Kierkegaard, 1964: 237).

Is Todd's textual past fertilizing or blighting the future? Todd seems to be trapped in the dialectic of time and identity, in the confines of his self-, Author- and author-constructed subjectivity. As Todd draws up the two columns, he does not deny the authority of the past. Jane, his lover, as we have seen above, does. So far, even before he started yet another repetition of his life, already three literal texts have originated from the text of his past: the Inquiry into his father's death, the Letter to his Father and his version of The Floating Opera. When drawing up the left hand column he once more repeats his life in recollection, turning himself yet again into language. His memory, he rewrites, is not set in motion by events as was Proust's ("O, O, O pale pervert Proust: keep your tea and *madeleine!*"), but rather by smells: "Give me the dainty oils of hair and skin (for all I know it might have been, both then and now, some suntan preparation) to trigger memory and regain lost

time!" (L, 260). The past plays with the present, for the smell of suntan lotion was not only the prelude to 8 L, the event in 1932 when he was "seduced by Jane Mack, with Harrison's complaisance, in their Todds Point summer cottage [...]" (L, 258), it also leads him to speculate on what is going to happen in 8 R in 1969: "We shall come to it. Same emotion, not surprisingly. O, O, O" (L, 258). It is exactly this moment of simultaneous presence and absence, of being and not being, of the blank area in between the left and the right hand columns that irony is located.

In a sense John Barth, the author, is like Todd Andrews, as he himself avoids breaking with his own textual past. In an interview with Annie Le Rebeller in Caliban he said: "the trick is [...] to hold the past in one hand, keep it there and acknowledge it constantly without being obsessed or unduly bothered by it" (Le Rebeller, 1975: 130). The authority of the past cannot be denied. It haunts the A.B. Cooks IV and VI who cannot escape the pattern of history. It haunts Ambrose Mensch who writes: "A curse upon tides [...] that turn, and turning, return like misdirected letters what they were to carry off! Thought well drowned, our past floats back like Danae with infant Perseus, to take eventual revenge" (L, 152-153). The past is compulsive, like the tidal waters that float Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales.

But unlike Todd Andrews and all the other characters, Jane Mack denies the authority of the past, which could be called a movement of negative repetition. When Todd is once more seduced by her in 1969 ("Todds Point was where she'd lived as well as

where she'd 8-L'd me"), she pretends "historical amnesia" and refuses to remember her earlier seduction of him 37 years ago. The ironical echoes of the past are lost on her, as Todd writes to his deceased father: "A fresh *frisson*: had this been, for Jane, no sweet replay after all? Was she still and forever in that left-hand column, doing everything for the first time?" (L, 277). This is an ironic moment because the past is made present in the presence by the dialectic of repetition.

Another instance of this same type of ironic repetition is found in Lady Amherst's letter to the Author, of 28 June, when she writes him the reason why she has been fired from her post in the Faculty of Letters. She had made a carbon copy of one of her weekly confessional letters to Ambrose Mensch to give it "at once a more official and (what have I to lose now?) a more *fictitious* aspect: as if I were a writer writing first-person fiction, an epistolary novelist composing - and editing, alas in holograph - [...] I 'destroyed' the copy (i.e. wadded and waste-canned it), but posted the letter; and Shirley Stickles got to the wastecan before the custodian did [...] and it was too late [...]" (L, 378). Is her reconstructed textual self going to fertilize her future and her palimpsestuous self going to destroy it? In the dialectic of repetition the locus of irony is situated in the space between recollection and repetition, as Kierkegaard argues, in this case between writing paper and carbon as well as in the space of the wastecan. The recollection on the writing paper is the retreating movement backwards and the repetition in the carbon the movement forwards, anticipating its retrieval from the wastecan by curious Mrs Stickles. The ironical moment is also

located within in the presence of the wastecan, between past and future, and is, until it is found, looking in two directions at the same time, "it is and it is not."

In an essay on Kierkegaard and irony Ronald Schleifer³⁷ links the Kierkegaardian notion of repetition to Derrida's iterability: the "repetitions of the past," he writes, "are repetitions with a difference [...]. Irony discovers novelty in repetition and, in so doing, confuses repetition and creation, conclusion and beginning" (Schleifer, 1984: 193). In Derrida's notion of iterability we find the same problematic of repetition as in Kierkegaard. In "Limited Inc a b c ..." Derrida argues that:

Iterability supposes a minimal remainder (as well as a minimum of idealization) in order that the identity of the *selfsame* be repeatable and identifiable *in, through* and even *in view of* its alteration. For the structure of iteration [...] implies *both* identity and difference. Iteration in its 'purest' form - and it is always impure - contains *in itself* the discrepancy of a difference that constitutes it as iteration. (Derrida, 1988: 53)

Each individual element is, while it is being constituted, split into a mark and a remainder, says Derrida; this is iterability itself, "passing between the re- of the repeated and the re- of the repeating, traversing and transforming repetition" (Derrida, 1988: 53). This might also account for the ubiquitous

presence of the prefix re- in the novel, as in "reorchestration" (L, 384), "recycling" (L, 385), "reenactment" (L, 384), "reworkt" (L, 300), "redreaming" (L, 108), "replay" (L, 109), "revolution" (L, 407), "recounted" (L, 405), "revive" (L, 438), "re-remarking" (L, 439), "redream" (L, 474), "reborn" (L, 474), "remobilization" (L, 473), "remark" (L, 474), "reappearance" (L, 474), "re-sumption" (L, 474), "reciprocal" (L, 551), "regressive" (L, 556), "resorbed" (L, 560), "redeposited" (L, 560), "re-retrieve" (L, 570), "renascent" (L, 578), "reworking" (L, 596), "reviewing" (L, 474), "resurrection" (L, 473), "rereading" (L, 438), "re-generation" (L, 473), "recurrence" (L, 473), "rebeginning" (L, 194), "recapitulation" (L, 394), and so on and so forth. The split or break (*coupure*), says Derrida, intervenes from the moment the mark is made and the remainder is set loose. The remainder is not a sure thing, it has no permanence, on the contrary, "the structure of the remainder, implying alteration, renders all absolute permanence impossible" (Derrida, 1988: 54). Iterability has no permanence, repetition becomes "*différance*," deferring permanence and therewith, ultimately, meaning. Where Derrida speaks of *différance*, Kierkegaard speaks of "novelty" and Barth of "remobilization" and "rejuvenation." But in contrast to Derrida's concept of repetition, Kierkegaard's repetition involves permanence: in the latter's ironic movement of repetition types and archetypes are the origin, or the "beginning," of the past. These archetypes are used as modes of explanation of the present and the past. This, says Schleifer, is ironic in itself, as "types and archetypes are 'present' only

insofar as they negate actuality by repeating an ideal realm" (Schleifer, 1984: 192).

Whether the actuality of the ideal realm is accepted or not, both Kierkegaard and Derrida acknowledge the presence of a moment of absence in the dynamics of repetition; Derrida locates it just before the break and Kierkegaard before the ironic movement. This hymeneal moment is like a blank space, a silent passage of time between what is and what is not. In Ambrose's letter of March 31, this blank is even physically present, as he writes to Yours Truly and Lady Amherst: "I examined the history and origins of the novel, of prose narrative itself, in search of re-inspiration; and I found it - not in parodies, travesties, pastiches, and trivializations of older narrative conventions, but " (L, 152). In Todd's letter of May 16, as I have mentioned above, this blank separates the left and right hand column of the events of his life, just as it separates the absence of events R 11, R 12 and R 13 from the presence of R 1 up to R 10 (L, 256-259). As repetition is anticipated, this hymen is about to be broken.

The blank moment waiting to be inscribed, the text waiting to be repeated is referred to by Barth himself as a moment of "dead reckoning." In "Getting Oriented" he writes: "The themes of [my] work in progress I suppose, are regression, reenactment and reorientation [...] one must sometimes go forward by going back. As an amateur sailor and navigator myself, I like the metaphor of dead reckoning: deciding where to go by determining where you are by reviewing where you've been" (FB, 132).

VI. The Production of Textuality in LETTERS

Part of the critique of mimesis in LETTERS is constituted by a play with different forms and concepts of repetition. Kierkegaard's essay on repetition (1843) keeps on attracting a fair amount of contemporary critical attention. Gilles Deleuze, for instance, starts his treatise on difference and repetition in Différence et répétition with a comparison between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and ends with an eleven-page long bibliography of publications on repetition. I will come back briefly to Deleuze in the last section of this chapter.

In 1976 Edward Said wrote "On Repetition," in which he, along the lines set out by Deleuze, distinguishes on the one hand between Marxian repetition as in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1869) and Kierkegaardian as the other. Said discusses these different notions on the basis of Jean-Baptiste Vico's ideas on repetition as set out in The New Science (1744). Vico sees repetition as "the consequence of, [something which] indeed can be identified with, physiological reproduction, how a species, for instance the human, perpetuates itself in historical time and space" (Said, 1976: 141-142).

This comes very close to what Ambrose Mensch in LETTERS, borrowing from Freud, calls the first principle of embryology: "Ontogeny Recapitulates Phylogeny: that the evolutionary history of the individual rehearses the ditto of the race" (L, 38). The history of development of the organism is consequently repeated in the history of development of the individual being. According to Vico "primitive man literally fathers modern man, the latter

recapitulating, in some ways repeating, the former" (quoted in Said, 1976: 143), which implies that the development of the species should be seen in terms of a Darwinian repetition with a difference, that is the "survival of the best reproducers, the best repeaters" (Said, 1976: 144). Like Vico and other eighteenth-century naturalists, Ambrose does not believe that life was "the result of a continuing divine intervention in the affairs of nature" (Said, 1976: 141), but was generated by reduplication, as it had its own internal, self-reproducing organisation. Said applies Vico's ideas on reproduction to literary theory: "for literary theory [...] it is natural to conceive the passing of time as repeating the very reproductive, and repetitive, course by which man engenders and re-engenders himself, or his offspring" (Said, 1976: 144).

In the same way as Vico vacillates between repetition and recurrence with a difference, Said sees the novelistic character on the one hand, especially in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narrative fiction, as the result of the filial device of handing on a story through narrative telling, and on the other, especially in nineteenth-century classic realist fiction, as a challenge to repetition. As an example of the latter he refers to Emma Bovary's refusal to be an ordinary French *bourgeoise* (Said, 1976: 145), which makes her as such a novel character.

Just like Said, internal author Ambrose Mensch appears to apply Vico's ideas to literature, when he uses the biological law of filiative repetition as the "first rule of [his] next fiction: its plot shall be the hero's capitulation, at the midpoint of his life, of his Story Thus Far, the exposition and complications of

its first half, to the end of directing his course through the climax and dénouement of its second" (L, 38).³⁸

In "Repetition (in the Kierkegaardian Sense of the Term)" Arne Melberg argues that the Kierkegaardian form of repetition should, as a movement in time, primarily be seen as a textual phenomenon; moreover, he says, the Kierkegaardian text itself moves in temporality, as its narrative mode changes forward and backward between past and present time. The past has become the realm of recollection and the present that of repetition: phrases such as "back and forth" and "the same movement but in opposite directions" have become the conditions for the framework of the Kierkegaard text. Whereas Schleifer saw a direct link from Kierkegaard to Derrida, Melberg sees Kierkegaardian repetition return in early Paul de Man's "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in Blindness and Insight, in which the latter, like Kierkegaard, insists on the repetitive nature of the ironic break.

De Man sees a discontinuous relationship between sign and meaning in irony, for "the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference" (De Man, 1983: 209). He sees irony in temporal terms as the "prefiguration of a future recovery" (De Man, 1983: 219). In later De Man writings, however, ironic repetition disappears as a concept, to be replaced by a notion of repetition in the sense of mirroring and reflexion; this later conception of repetition functions more as mechanical reduplication, without any hint of irony, as Melberg has pointed out (Melberg, 1990: 85). This in turn links up with Derridean

"iteration" and "*différance*" and the latter's idea of the linguistic sign as an "originally repetitive structure."³⁹ All this leads again full circle to the concept of poststructuralist mimesis as discussed above.

The same textual conditions that govern the Kierkegaardian text seem to govern the Jerome Bray sections in LETTERS, where an attempt is made to manipulate the present by rewriting it as a repetition of the past. This is referred to as the reenactment phase: "with the Muse of the Past we have ever gone to school for present direction (L, 31). Whereas ancestor Napoleon Bonaparte plans a "New, the 2nd Revolution, an utterly Novel Revolution!" (L, 32) to outdo the original Revolution, descendant Jerome Bonaparte Bray is working towards another "restoration," that is, of what he calls the empire of the novel: "what is wanted to restore its ancient dominion is nothing less than a revolution" (L, 33). Napoleon schemes towards a Novel Revolution, Jerome Bray towards a Revolution Novel. To this end Bray has implemented a computer programme called LILYVAC, "capable of mimicking prose styles on the basis of analyzed samples, and even of composing hypothetical works by any author on any subject" (L, 36). The first version of this programme, called LILYVAC I, succeeds indeed in producing a few pages of mimicry, but "the voice of History" wants Bray to work on a grander project, code-named NOVEL, "The Complete and Final Fiction." In order to bring about the Revolution Novel a new programme, LILYVAC II, is loaded into Bray's computer to produce, through "e.g. analyses of all extant fiction, its motifs, structures, strategies, etc.," an "abstract

model of the perfect narrative" (L, 37). This is a "document in the guise of an extended fiction of a revolutionary character." Ultimately this will "in part by means of that document" have to lead to "certain novel and revolutionary changes in the world" (L, 36). In much the same ways as his ancestor tries to rewrite History and therewith Novel, Jerome Bray attempts to rewrite Novel and therewith History in order to achieve a "higher" Hegelian unity. What Said referred to as "ruptures" in the dynamics of repetition, are not only enacted as blanks as argued in Chapter III, but also as "RESET"s in the text.

"RESET" is another form of Kierkegaardian repetition, "between what has been and what now becomes." At first RESET seems to operate as a computer command, similar to the Back-Space-button on an ordinary keyboard. In that sense it would mean restart, that is, back to the beginning of the sentence and start anew by rewriting the sentence. By not erasing, however, the first part of the sentence that is RESET, this part operates like the first original ecriture of the palimpsest, and so the text functions as if "under erasure." It is present and absent at the same time, operating simultaneously in two directions. When Jerome Bray writes to Todd Andrews on 4 March that "we must count on another to RESET Yet we cannot leave this topic without presuming to warn you against Ambrose M." (L, 27), we can safely assume that Bray is drafting and redrafting this letter at the same time in "monologue interieur"-like fashion, as if it were a form of "I-I" communication. The absence of the full stop after RESET would support this idea. Whenever the RESET command is used the aborted sentence is left to be inscribed, by Jerome Bray who

rewrites it, but also by the external reader who tries to reconstruct Bray's original intention by filling in the blank left by RESET. The two sentences then, the aborted and the rewritten, are consequently simultaneously read, "back and forth" in Kierkegaard's terms.

Yet not all RESETs function similarly. In a letter to his revolutionary comrade in disguise, Andrews F. Mack, dated 13 May, Bray has the paragraphs in the first part of this letter end in RESETs. These RESETs are not written over, they are instead followed by gaps in the text, to be inscribed not only by himself and the external reader, but also by his fellow conspirator. In this letter there is evidence that the text is not produced on a text processor, as indicated by Bray's own words: "We must scratch out this report by hand no time for epistolary printouts but you would be surprised what LILYVAC can RESET " (L, 324), followed by a textual gap. RESET has thus become a code, which in itself is a form of repetition, albeit one only for those initiated, those that have already been inscribed into the code. The only way for non-initiated persons to inscribe themselves into that text is by decoding it. So when Bray writes in the same letter that "we urged him to reply to ours of 3/4 and move against B whom we also rewarned to make reparation by Doomsday i.e. 6:13 PM PST 4/4 or RESET No RESET We are going to have to reprogram LILYVAC not to RESET " (L, 325), the internal reader is presumably able to decipher this form of "I-s/he" communication and thus understand the contents of Bray's message; the external reader is presumably unable to do so, and thus, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the message could

also be read as a form of "I-I" communication in which the addressing "we" is to be read as a royal "we," perhaps alluding to his imperial ancestor, signifying the addresser of the letter. As a matter of fact we can see the two types of RESET functioning in this passage. The second RESET differs from the first and third in that it addresses the addresser of the message in a form of "I-I" communication, to be inscribed by Bray and the external reader. The other two are forms of "I-s/he" communication, to be inscribed by the internal and external reader alike. Thus all three function as forms of repetition.

In other instances RESET seems to operate as a coded equivalent for revolution or revolutionary activities, as in "[...] Napoleon has given out the fiction of his death on St. Helena, vive le RESET Peter Minuit has bought Manhattan..." (L, 331) and "[...] while funding is available to us from many sources, the voice of History tells us to RESET This is the final battle On Wisconsin Off the pigs Hail to the Chief O say can you see any bedbirds on me Today [...]" (L, 331). Revolutionary activities can also be regarded as an attempt to appropriate and thus rewrite history.

Likewise similar forms of repetition in rewriting are to be found in the use of figures and ciphers, the latter especially so with regard to sixes and sevens and the Kabbalistic practices of "Scripture-regarded-as-cipher" (L, 330). In his search for the ultimate novel, Bray has loaded LILYVAC II with "Thompson's Motif-Index to Folk-Literature plus the fiction stacks of Lily Dale's Marion Skidmore Library plus Masterplots plus Monarch Notes" (L, 327), etc. etc.⁴⁰ What comes out of it is not the

Revolution Novel, but "reams and quires of single and double digits" (L, 326). This reminds Bray of the Edgar Allan Poe tale "The Golden Bird," in which the protagonist deciphers, or rewrites, a message encoded in numbers. And he is also reminded of the ancient Greek alphabet in which letters were not only used for spelling out words but also for counting. All this leads Bray to think that "the key to the treasure" is to be found in the Kabbalistic tradition of manipulating numerical equivalents of letters.

As Bray explains, there are basically three approaches to Kabbalism: *Gematria*, *Notarikon* and *Themurah*. The first being the search for meaning in the numerical values of the letters, "thus MARGANA [...] has a value of 55 (13 + 1 + 18 + 7 + 1 + 14 + 1), and LE FAY, a.k.a. YFAEL, 49" (L, 330), the second regarding the letters of a word as an acrostic for a sentence or vice versa, such as in the acrosticon of which the title LETTERS is made up,⁴¹ and the third being anagrammatical transposition, as in MARGANA LE FAY signifying "leafy anagram" (L, 331). All three approaches underline the textual nature of Kabbalism, "a Hebrew word for tradition" (L, 327) as Bray writes. Kabbalism is in itself a form of rewriting, as becomes apparent from the definitions given in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: "the oral tradition handed down from Moses to the Rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud," evolving into "the pretended tradition of mystical interpretation of the Old Testament," and "an unwritten tradition" evolving into "mystery, esoteric doctrine or art" (Onions, 1973: 262). Harold Bloom likewise underlines its textual nature as he defines Kabbalah in A Map of Misreading as texts of

interpretation of "a central text that perpetually possesses authority, priority and strength" (Bloom, 1975: 40).⁴²

Bray's intention is "to turn LILYVAC's numbers into revolutionary letters" (L, 329), but all he ends up with is the acrostic MARGANAYFAEL leading via LEAFY ANAGRAM to the "complete, perfect & final opus NUMBERS" (L, 757). The point is that Bray's attempt at the ultimate novel is an attempt to produce a text without any indeterminacy of meaning. For this reason he has to resort to numbers, instead of to elusive textual signifiers. The result would of course be stasis, instead of the dynamics of textual production and signification.

A.B. Cook's ancestors correspond in ciphered letters, such as in "Captain Kidd's code: **47+(**)**8008011+((82+5849+;;52" (L, 584) and once these letters are decoded, the Cookes try to undo what their parents tried to achieve in *their* attempt to rewrite History. Both attempts can also be seen as part of the Hegelian dialectic at work in repetition, so as to culminate through mediation in the "higher" unity of revolution. When Drew Mack uses letters of the alphabet to cause a revolutionary bomb to explode, an attempt is made to literally and physically write (oneself into) History, in much the same way as Admiral Cockburn in 1814 tried to literally prevent History from being written by destroying all the uppercase C's in the printshop of the National Intelligencer (L, 511). In this way he tried to write himself out of History.

The use of doubles and the play with imposture in the A.B. Cook sections, the reenactments in the Jacob Horner sections, the

second cycles in the lives of Todd Andrews and Ambrose Mensch and the omnipresence of the prefix re- can in the Kierkegaardian sense all be seen as repetitions or movements in time and space; re-write, re-enact, re-juvenate, re-cycle and so on are all indicative of a going back in time to what has been. Yet the repetition also makes it into something new, a movement forward as the prefix indicates. Thus the paradox arises that the temporal movement backward is actually a movement forward in time. Repetition is in other words not a repetition of the same, but rather a creative process, which produces while repeating and at the same time producing what it repeats. As Melberg argues:

you cannot re-peat/re-take what has been, since what has been has been. The *now* of repetition is always an *after*. But not only: since the movement of repetition also makes it new, makes 'the new' [...] 'repetition' suspends the temporal order of before-after in or by that *now* previously called 'the instant.' The temporal dialectics of 'repetition' suspends temporal sequence: the *now* that is always an *after* comes actually *before*, it is the *now* of "the instant, the sudden intervention in sequential time, the caesura that defines what has been and prepares what is to become. (Melberg, 1990: 74)

The emphasis on the temporality of repetition indicates the transcendental nature of Kierkegaardian repetition as it privileges "presence," the presence of the *now*. His sense of repetition is thus "existential." In spite of this, Melberg

argues, Kierkegaard has modern relevance as he also sees repetition as "a textual category" (Melberg, 1990: 75). It is textual in the sense that it is temporal, "having grammatical, syntactical, and narratological meaning besides being the very mode for being and becoming [...]" (Melberg, 1990: 75). This provides a link with Derridean theorizing, as argued in Section Five of this chapter.

As is the case with *différance*, which Derrida himself calls "neither a concept nor a word" (Derrida, 1982: 3), Melberg argues that Kierkegaardian repetition, due to its paradoxical movement, could also be seen as a non-concept in that it privileges the now that has already been, which implies that what has been, could always become. In other words, the concept dynamically negates the very presence it simultaneously suggests.

It is interesting to see in this respect how the main characters in the A.B. Cook sections literally act out this interplay of absence and presence by their endless imposturing and games of doubles and duplications. The Protean Cookes and Burlingames have a penchant for political intrigue, they have "alter'd & realter'd the course of history, 'tis devilish difficult to say just how, or whether their intrigues & counter-intrigues do not cancel one another across the generations" (L, 23), as A.B. Cook IV writes to his unborn child in 1812. Their political intrigues have led to "mirror-like reversals & duplications" (L, 113). They even make a farce of Marxian repetition by their farcical pattern of "filial rebellion: since the convergence of the Cooke and Burlingame lines [...] every firstborn son in the line has defined himself against what he

takes to have been his absent father's objectives, and in so doing has allied himself, knowingly or otherwise, with his grandfather [...]" (L, 407). A.B. Cook IV wants this pattern to be broken, and tries to achieve this by undoing in the second half of his life "his 'wrongheaded' accomplishments in the first" (L, 408), ending up where he started from. In 1969 his great-great-grandson, A.B. Cook VI, born in 1918 out of Henry Burlingame VI and Andree Castine, explains in a letter to the Author that this doing and undoing seems to have been the family pattern all along, that is, the practice of "self-cancelling" and "self-refutation" (L, 408), a pattern which he intends breaking by pursuing "activities on behalf of the Second Revolution" (L, 409). But just as "the practice of history is [his] *métier*" (L, 409), so it is his son's, Henry Burlingame VII, who in his turn, like all ancestors before him, is also involved in underground activities: the family history is erased and rewritten every time the pattern is inscribed again. As A.B. Cook VI writes to the Author, the "ancient history lies in the future" (L, 409), and it is exactly this paradoxical movement of undoing or repetition that privileges the *now* that has already been, implying that what has been, becomes. As in the Kierkegaardian model this form of repetition negates the very presence it at the same time suggests. The "classic Pattern" that governs the Cook and Burlingames family history has, in other words, been turned into a sheer textual phenomenon. This pattern has found its echo in the doubling, disguising, coding, decoding and supercoding in the activities of CIA- and other undercover agents in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales, and in the machinations going on at Sind-

bad's court in medieval Baghdad in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor.

And it is consistently ironical in this respect that the fate of most members of the Cook/Burlingame family in LETTERS is indeed decided upon by textual or linguistic activities, which phenomenon could be referred to as "letters in action." One such catachrestic example of letters in action may suffice to demonstrate this phenomenon. A.B. Cook VI's grandfather, Andrew Cook V, a closet operative of the Canadian secret service, died in an explosion while committing an act of sabotage on the Niagara Frontier. The secret code to blow up the locks of the canal between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario consisted of all letters of the alphabet, as in the standard typewriter-testing sentence, "THE QUICK BROWN FX JMPD V LAZY G" (L, 418). Stripped of its redundant characters the code was moreover also stripped of the letter "s," as this character was reserved as the common signal which, when transmitted, would detonate the three set bombs. However, this coded initial for the detonator also happened to be the first letter of the international marine distress signal, and it so happened that both naval and merchant vessels shared the same frequency in wireless telegraphy at that time. So when Andrew Cook V blew himself and his comrades in arms up, this could either have been brought about by an accidentally transmitted SOS signal, which might have caused a premature detonation of the explosives, or an act of self-sabotage, because Cook had personally altered the test sentence into "THE QUICK BROWN FX JMPS V LAZY DG" (L, 419). Seen from above, these bomb craters were visually patterned in an apocalyptic, monogrammed

morse-code s in the landscape: dot-dot-dot, an instant of letters having been used in an appropriation attempt to write history and simultaneously rewrite the surface of the earth.

Forms of repetition or texts writing and rewriting themselves through decoding or deciphering abound in LETTERS, the posthumous letters, received by his wife after his death, written by Andrew Cook IV to his wife in the period 1814-1821 in "the simple family cipher" (L, 480) being a case in point. The first letter opened for instance with "SLLORD & SREMAERD" and was "ciphered)0+(+&)(8958(+." His wife Andree Castine knew the code but refused to decipher it. Approximately 150 years later these same letters are found in the family library and transcribed by descendant A.B. Cook VI. "With a little practice," he writes to his absent son Henry, "one can read and write it readily as English. Omit the first step and you have the code cracked by William Legrand in Edgar Poe's story "The Gold Bug" (1843)" (L, 480). The letters are encoded by means of the inversion device, the same as used by Captain Kidd in the Poe story, herewith also setting up an intertextual link on at least two additional levels.

How should both internal and external reader read this reference to the Captain Kidd-code? Is son Henry, whose reaction the external reader does not know, expected to take out the Poe-story and check his father's theory, or is the external reader, or both, supposed to do so? Or is this another case of the text rewriting itself? Does the mentioning of the name Poe serve an internymic function, in the same way as a quotation does, and should the Poe story be read as a metaphor to the Cooke story?

Or is the reference merely based on the device of cryptography as used in "The Gold Bug"? Is it in other words a meaning-generating device?

The protagonist of the Poe story, William Legrand, is an impoverished Southern gentleman who lives with his black servant Jupiter. One day they find a scarab beetle, which leads them to the discovery of a piece of parchment on which a secret cipher is inscribed. This code can only be seen when the parchment is heated. Legrand cracks the code, and finds the hidden treasure of a certain Captain Kidd; now he can reestablish himself as a gentleman. The text on the parchment allows Legrand to reinscribe and thus rewrite himself in society. In Sabbatical Susan's nephew, Edgar Allan Ho, is named after Edgar Allan Poe, as is Katherine's in The Tidewater Tales. Poe takes on interfigural importance as an intertextual reference in both later novels. I will come back to this in more detail in section three of the next chapter. It should be clear, however, that these references can also be considered as forms of repetition, of a text rewriting itself.

VII. Heideggerian *Wiederholung*

From Kierkegaardian dialectics it is an easy jump to Heideggerian repetition. Repetition goes to the heart of Heidegger's ontology of "the circular Being of Dasein," as John D. Caputo argues in Radical Hermeneutics (Caputo, 1987: 82). And in Passionate Virtuosity Charles B. Harris reads LETTERS against

Heidegger's hermeneutical model of repetition, "since the "force" it seeks to recover lies not "in what has already been thought," but "in something that has not been thought and from which what has been thought receives its essential space" (Harris, 1983: 166). Harris sees Barth's reappropriation of the past and the texts of the past in terms of Barth's reinterpretation of that past, in an attempt to lay bare the "presence" of the original "Being" and to see whether all has not yet been bricked up by language and tradition. Through repetition Barth seeks to retrieve "something that has not been thought." This something is the sheer presence of what Heidegger refers to as "Being," the presence of which has in the course of time become obscured through "objectification." That is to say, through representational thinking the thing-as-it-is has assumed the "position of object." Because it has become an object, it exists. "Being," however, is prelinguistic; language reduces it to an object, "being." Heidegger insists that "being" must be unconcealed, and that "this unconcealment is achieved through poetic language. The world exists within the word - not as the structuralists insist, because man is trapped in a prisonhouse of language, but because, in Heidegger's elegant formula, language is the house of Being" (Harris, 1983: 167). If Being precedes language, being is to be found in the crystallization processes characteristic of language.

Heidegger attempts to restore the "truth of Being" by overcoming the "confusion between beings and Being" that arises when language constructs a world. By means of deconstructive repetition the original "being" then is to be fractured and

opened up to "Being." In this way, Harris argues, "Barth rehearses the forms and figures of the traditional novel in order to locate the something that has not been thought in that tradition." Barth's greatest discovery, he continues, is that he "finds concealed or forgotten in the history of his genre [...] *history* itself (as opposed to historiography, a distinction A.B. Cook VI also makes) - that is, the temporality of being" (Harris, 1983: 169).

This insight is not unambiguous: is Barth searching for history, history "under erasure" or History, as he was searching for novel, novel "under erasure" or Novel? If he is, his use of repetition leads to substantialism as the guiding principle of his search, as is argued in Section Three of this chapter; if, on the other hand, he is not, the temporality of being (in a poststructuralist sense) is an imitational and non-referential construction. In this sense being has moved beyond substantialist representation. Harris' postulate that John Barth has found "*history* itself" seems untenable, which in itself, however, does not explode the applicability of Heideggerian repetition to Barthian fiction.

"Repeating is handing down explicitly - that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has been there," writes Heidegger in Being and Time (Heidegger, 1962: 437). This circular movement is called "*Wiederholung*"; as a movement between Dasein's futurity and its having been, it projects forth upon the possible, and comes back to the possibilities that constitute its heritage.

But when one has, by repetition handed down to oneself a possibility that has been, the Dasein that has-been-there is not disclosed in order to be actualized over again. The repeating of that which is possible does not bring again (Wiederbringen) something that is 'past,' nor does it bind the 'present' back to that which has already been 'outstripped.' Arising, as it does, from a resolute projection of oneself, repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by which is 'past,' just in order that it, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. (Heidegger, 1962: 437-438)

It is obvious that although Heidegger's sense of repetition also has a historical dimension to it, it is the recovery of future possibilities that constitutes the link with Kierkegaardian repetition. In both concepts we recognise a movement away from the source or origin, which produces something that was not there before. This movement, as we have seen above, returns in the dynamics of Kristeva's intertextuality and Derrida's *différance*.

Derrida links Being with repetition in his essay on Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. He calls Being another form of repetition, as Being as form is repeated in the word:

For there is no word, nor in general a sign, which is not constituted by the possibility of repeating itself. A sign which does not repeat itself, which is not already divided by repetition in its 'first time,'

is not a sign. The signifying referral must therefore be ideal - and ideality is but the assured power of repetition - in order to refer to the same thing each time. (Derrida, 1978: 246)

In his theatre Artaud wanted to erase repetition, writes Derrida, but even this theatre of non-representation fails to escape from the dialectics of repetition, as the sign, by its nature of repetition, governs everything: "Being is the key word of eternal repetition" (Derrida, 1978: 246).⁴³ As soon as a sign emerges, he writes further on in Writing and Difference, it begins by repeating itself (Derrida, 1978: 297), because without it it would not be a sign. The repetition is, however, no longer exactly the same as the original, since "the ring no longer has exactly the same centre, *the origin has played*. Something is missing that would make the circle perfect" (Derrida, 1978: 296). Thus Derrida distinguishes in the inscription of origin between Being-as-writing and Being-as-inscribed, or between function and locus (Derrida, 1978: 296). As the origin itself is missing in writing, both the act of writing and that of inscribing constitute the form of the eternal return: "the return of the same does not alter itself - but does so absolutely - except by amounting to the same" (Derrida, 1978: 296). By implying that pure repetition does not exist, Derrida is in line with Kierkegaardian and subsequent Nietzschean repetition, whose eternal return is his conception of the same.⁴⁴ Barthian writing could also be seen as a form of the eternal return in the sense that it plays around the centre all the time, being a form of

repetition in which "the self-identity of the origin" (Derrida, 1978: 296) disappears.

J. Hillis Miller argues in Fiction and Repetition that any novel is "a complex tissue of repetitions and of repetitions within repetitions, or of repetitions linked in chain fashion to other repetitions" (Miller, 1982: 2-3). Repetitions, he says, not only internally structure the work, for instance by recurrences within the novel, but also externally, for instance by recurring themes and motifs and elements from other works by the same and other authors. He sees repetition as a meaning-generating mechanism, that is, however, controlled by the external reader into "a valid interpretation" (Miller, 1982: 3). By focusing on the role of the reader, the notion of repetition that is employed here is that as used in the traditional form of intertextuality, for what Miller actually investigates is the effect of repetition without questioning or critiquing its operational methods.

Miller basically identifies two modes of repetition, one of which he calls Platonic and the other Nietzschean. This distinction is based on Deleuze's two opposing formulations of the concept of repetition in Logique du sens: "only that which resembles itself differs," as opposed to "only differences resemble one another" (Deleuze, 1969: 302).⁴⁵ The latter, difference on the basis of similitude, goes back to Plato; the first, similitude based on difference, to Nietzsche. The Platonic model of repetition "defines the world of copies or of representations; it establishes the world as icon," whereas the Nietzschean model "defines the world of simulacra. It presents

the world itself as phantasm" (Deleuze, 1969: 302). The Platonic model, Miller argues, starts from the principle of the archetypal model that is being copied: "the validity of the mimetic copy is established by its truth of correspondence to what it copies" (Miller, 1982: 6). The other model, elaborated upon by poststructuralist theoreticians, starts from the principle of uniqueness, that is, every thing is intrinsically different from any other thing. This type denies the existence of archetypal forms, and speaks instead of "simulacra": "It seems that X repeats Y, but in fact it does not, or at least not in the firmly anchored way of the first sort of repetition" (Miller, 1982: 6). The second type, argues Miller, is "not the negation or opposite of the first, but its "counter-part," in a strange relation whereby the second is the subversive ghost of the first, always already present within it as a possibility which hollows it out" (Miller, 1982: 9). We saw a similar paradoxical movement in Kierkegaardian repetition, negating the very presence it simultaneously suggests, as was argued in the previous section of this chapter. Miller also sees the two forms of repetition interact in the novel; not "as polar opposites, but as differences which remain differences but can turn into one another" (Miller, 1982: 10). Nietzschean repetition could in fact be seen as a reversal of Platonic dualism, says Deleuze in Difference et répétition, when the copy is given preference to the original, that is, "to deny the primacy of an original over a copy, of a model over an image" (Deleuze, 1968: 92).⁴⁶ Deleuze speaks in this respect of "the eternal return," in terms borrowed from Pierre Klossowski: "the eternal return, taken in its strict

sense, signifies that everything only exists in its returning, as a copy of an infinity of copies that does not allow the original nor its origin to subsist."⁴⁷

This is, says Deleuze, why the eternal return is always parodic as it qualifies what it should be (and become) as a simulacrum. The simulacrum is its real character or the form of what is - "being" - whereas the eternal return incorporates "*la puissance de l'Être*," the power of Being. And when the simulacrum takes over, we have arrived at what Umberto Eco in Travels in Hyperreality calls "hyperreality," where "the completely real" has become identified with "the absolutely fake" (Eco, 1986: 7). He refers to "instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake" (Eco, 1986: 8). This brings us back again to the beginning of this chapter on the agency of the text and to the notion of poststructuralist mimesis.

John Barth's appropriations, replications and duplications, repetitions, revolutions, re-writings and echoes in his rewritten notion of mimesis have placed him in the centre of the post-structuralist debate on intertextuality. The author has not only been turned into an intertextual re-orchestrator, who imitates the role of Author, and who imitates himself as Author, he has also become the textual operator, replacing authorial originality with imitation and repetition, thereby re-evaluating the notion of repetition. The text has, in Barth's re-conceptualization of the three narrative agents involved in the production of textuality, been turned into an agent of meaning production, into a meaning-producing mechanism.

Chapter V

Re-thinking Authorship

In this final chapter a look will be taken at notions of authorship, especially as embodied in the conventions of signature, and at John Barth's creative attempts to rethink these notions. But in order to understand and appreciate Barth's preoccupation with the act of writing and his attempts to apply a radical technique of creative writing to the ends of critical thinking about authorship and author-ity, it is necessary first to re-visit the past in order to write the future. As Barth says in Chimera, "my project [...] is to learn where to go by discovering where I am by reviewing where I've been - where we've all been" (C, 18). This he repeats ten years later in Sabbatical, "to go forward, we must go back" (S, 201). And in "Getting Oriented" in The Friday Book he describes his self-conscious literary project in these critical terms: "the general project of orientation - at least the condition of *disorientation* which the project presumes - is my characteristic subject matter, my fictionary stock in trade" (FB, 131).

Barth's re-thinking of the notion of authorship in the late twentieth century seems to signify the demarcation of a period that came into being in the late fifteenth century. I will argue that the tension between John Barth's re-thought notion of author-ship and the crude concept of authorship as put forward

by his public performances,¹ the publishers of his books, the media and so on, is an illustration of this apparent conflict. Knowledge of medieval writing practices not only helps us, through processes of recognition and application, to better understand John Barth's radical re-thinking of authorship, but also provides another basis for his claim of "returning to the springs of narrative."

For that reason a short digression will be made, in Section One, to the writing practices of the Middle Ages. In the Second Section writing practices after the Middle Ages will be briefly discussed. In both sections connections will be made with contemporary writing as practised by John Barth. In Section Three attention will be paid to different concepts of authorship as developed by Søren Kierkegaard and Harold Bloom. Section Four looks at Michel Foucault's author-functions and Jonathan Culler's author as medium, while Section Five discusses Jacques Derrida's signature theory. In all these sections I will show how the different concepts of authorship can be productively applied to Barth's writing, with special emphasis on LETTERS. The last section of this chapter, Section Six, specifically deals with issues of authorship and author-ity in Barth's later fiction.

I. The Writing Practices of the Middle Ages

The concept of authorship in the modern sense developed in the late Middle Ages. "The coming into being of the notion of author," writes Michel Foucault in "What is an Author?,"

"constitutes the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" (Foucault, 1988: 197). With the invention of the printing press in the fourteen-fifties, as Elizabeth L. Eisenstein argues in The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, which "brought about the most radical transformation in the conditions of intellectual life in the history of western civilization" (Eisenstein, 1979: 159), notions of individual authorship and literary property rights came into being, and the medieval scriptural tradition and the notion of collective writership slowly disappeared. Printing hastened the spread of new ideas, as it provided endless possibilities of dissemination which had not been available before, thereby changing the very nature of "the art of writing, in the old scribal sense,"² as this had developed in the Middle Ages.

Eisenstein points out that "many troublesome questions concerning scriptural composition and authorship were new and came after print" (Eisenstein, 1979: 325). It was only after printing that the terms plagiarism and, much later, copyright began to hold significance for the author.³ Likewise, it was also only in the Renaissance that painters started signing their pictures with their own name. The early printers became responsible for the development of new individualised concepts of authorship that were to be profoundly re-thought five hundred years later by contemporary theorists, among them Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida.

Edward Said has already provided part of the etymology of the signifier "author" in Section Three of Chapter III. A.J. Minnis provides further clues in Theory of Medieval Authorship. According to medieval grammarians, he writes, the term *auctor*, which would later yield the signifier "author,"⁴ derived its meaning from four main sources, one of which being the Latin verb *augere* (to grow), also referred to by Said. It is, Minnis claims on the basis of medieval dictionaries, also related to the Latin verbs *agere* (to act or perform) - which notion will be picked up again by Derrida, when he writes that "for a writing to be a writing it must continue to 'act'" (Derrida, 1988: 8) - "and *auieo* (to tie) (*sic*) and to the Greek noun *autentim* (authority)" (*sic*).⁵ Medieval theory of authorship, as Minnis argues, centers on the concepts of *auctor* and *auctoritas*.

An *auctor* (pl. *auctores*) "performed" the act of writing; he brought something into being, caused it to "grow." Poets were seen as *auctores* who tied together their verses with feet and metres. *Auctoritas*, or the idea of authenticity or authoritativeness was associated with ideas of achievement and growth. The term *auctor* was used in the Middle Ages to denote an authoritative Latin writer, like Virgil, Horace or Boethius, whose writings possessed *auctoritas*, that is, "strong connotations of veracity or sagacity" (Minnis, 1988: 10). *Auctoritas* was also used in a more specific sense to refer to an authoritative quotation from the work of an *auctor*. An *auctor* was therefore both "a writer and an authority, someone not to be merely read but also to be respected and believed" (Minnis, 1988: 10).⁶

From late antiquity up to the twelfth century reading and writing were closely related activities, as the academic study of *auctores*, as practised in European medieval class rooms, used teaching methods that were "directed to understanding the authoritative texts, penetrating their depths, assimilating them, and in the fields of grammar and logic, imitating them" (Minnis, 1988: 14, *emphases mine*). In the period referred to most written work took the form of reading or explication of the *auctores*. According to Edward T. Hajnal "university teaching in the Middle Ages was more and more characterized by the practice of writing. It is not strange that from the fourteenth century the practice of writing was considered as constituting the essence of university life [...],"⁷ a practice that seems to have been restored today in view of the explosive growth of critical scholarship in the late twentieth century. The work of early medieval readers of the *auctores* primarily consisted of academic prologues⁸ introducing these *auctores*.⁹

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we see a gradual acknowledgement of the notion of the human *auctor* as an agent engaged in literary activity. God, the Divine *auctor*, was held responsible for content (inspiration), but form came to be seen as the responsibility of the human *auctor*, as he actually generated the text. The authorial role became increasingly important.¹⁰ Thus the individuality and moral integrity of the human *auctor* could become the centre of attention.

This shift made it possible to distinguish between two levels of authorship, the human and the divine.¹¹ Some exegetes saw a triple or even a quadruple efficient cause at work, thereby

in effect distinguishing multiple levels of authorship.¹² Another distinction that came to be made in the thirteenth century was between different literary activities. St. Bonaventure, for instance, subdivided the act of writing into four components: the human *auctor* was distinguished from the respective roles of *scriptor* (scribe), *compiler* (compiler) and *commentator* (commentator). The scribe copied materials produced by others, adding nothing of his own; neither did the compiler, who rearranged materials produced by others; the commentator explained the views of others and thereby offered something of his own, whereas the *auctor* offered statements of his own, drawing on material written by others (Minnis, 1988: 94). As the *auctor* was held accountable for his pieces of writing, he came to be seen as "an agent in both literary and moral activity" (Minnis, 1988: 103).

If the Scriptural *auctores* had described passages that were morally unjustifiable, such as penitent David's earlier sins with Bathsheba (whom he first committed adultery with and later married) and her husband Uriah (whom he had killed), then it was considered the reader's task not to misinterpret the *intentio auctoris* (intended meaning of the author). If the reader, however, did misinterpret the moral point of the story, this was not considered to be the *auctor's* fault, as there was only one preferred and thus correct way of reading and interpreting authorial intention (Minnis, 1988: 109-110).¹³ The increasing importance of the individual is also noticeable in that for the first time in literary history, albeit negatively, the

individuality of the reader is recognised with the acknowledgement of the possibility of misinterpretation.

As in the course of the fourteenth century the idea of the divine *auctor* became discarded in favour of the human *auctor*, more space was created for the contemporary profane writer. Poets started to take personal credit for the production of literary works, often in the form of an acrostic (Minnis, 1988: 170), a practice that, as was argued in Section Four of chapter II, has been adopted for late twentieth century usage by John Barth in LETTERS.

Through the use of the acrostic, the different levels of authorship, the imitational aspects characteristic of medieval writing practice and the recognition of the individuality of the reader, we become increasingly aware of more and more striking similarities between medieval writing practices and John Barth's radical re-cycling of those practices.

Another substantiation for this link can be found in the cases of John Gower (1330?-1408) and Geoffrey Chaucer (1345?-1400). At the end of Vox clamantis, for instance, Gower writes that he should merely be seen as someone "who brought together these verses, which a spirit uttered to me while I was asleep: that night was burdensome. But I have not written as an authority these verses in a book; rather, I am passing on what I heard for you to read. A swelling of my own head did not cause me to write these things, but the voice of the people put them in my ear."¹⁴

Gower constitutes himself here as someone who creatively transmits what others have said to him. He refers to himself as being only a medium, not a creator, which immediately reminds us

of Jonathan Culler's intertextual definition of an author as generator, as a medium through which text moves, as was argued in Section One of Chapter III. It is interesting in this respect to read what Gower's editor G.C. Macaulay writes about Gower's merits as *auctor*, as he argues that Gower not only borrowed from other writers, but plagiarised them like a "schoolboy." In the introduction to Vox Clamantis he writes: "He repeatedly takes not lines or couplets only, but passages of eight, ten and even twenty lines from [other poets], so that in many places the composition is entirely made up of such borrowed matter variously arranged and combined." Arguing from an aesthetic early-twentieth-century viewpoint, he dismisses Gower: "[...] the perpetual borrowing of isolated lines or couplets from Ovid often without regard to their appropriateness or their original meaning often makes the style nearly as bad as it can be" (Macaulay, 1902: xxxii-xxxiii). Did Macaulay miss the point here? Are we perhaps dealing with an early form of Barthesian already reads and already said? The link between Gower's and Barth's writing practices can easily be made.

Yet, at the same time, Minnis argues, Gower's work shows so much consistency, singleness of purpose and essential unity of materials that Gower must have been a good contemporary *auctor*, as he not only wrote his texts, but also probably provided anonymous commentary to accompany his own work in the manner of the ancient *auctores*. This metalinguistic aspect points at a self-conscious use of language that is a new element in this period in literary history, and is another element that will return in late twentieth century writing practice.

As for Chaucer, Minnis argues that he was greatly indebted to medieval compilers, "not only for source material and technical information but also for a literary role and a literary form" (Minnis, 1988: 191). The *compiler* repeated and rearranged the writings of other men, whereas the *auctor* made use of these texts asserting and affirming them (Minnis, 1988: 193), rewriting them in other words. A *compiler* could therefore disavow responsibility for the contents of a text, an *auctor* could not. Perhaps it was for this reason, which freed him from the responsibility of producing only morally correct texts, that Chaucer referred to himself "a lewd compiler."¹⁵

This suggests again another interesting link with Barth's observations in "My Two Muses" in The Friday Book. He refers to himself in this Friday piece as an "arranger," and continues, "[a]nd that's my real bond with the authors of antiquity, for whom originality was chiefly a matter of rearrangement" (FB, 159).¹⁶

The understanding was that if readers would take offence with what was written by the compilers, they themselves should consult the *auctores*, yet again another recognition of the active role of the reader. And in the Prologue to the Miller's Tale Chaucer wrote that if a reader was not interested in a particular tale, he must "turne over the leef and chese another tale."¹⁷ The compiler could not be blamed for things the reader was not happy to read, as the text was based on direct sources taken from the *auctores*. What makes the case of Chaucer so interesting for a twentieth century reader is that his disavowal is not based on authoritative, but on fictional sources, that is, on the

fictionalised pilgrims. This practice of blurring boundaries between fiction and reality marks the beginnings of fictional authorship, a feat which is also seen to return in late twentieth century practice.

The close of the fourteenth century then marks two different conceptions of the role of an *auctor*: Gower was a compiler who assumed an authorial role, whereas Chaucer was an author who pretended to be a compiler (Minnis, 1988: 210). By this time the medieval concept of writing had evolved into a more individualistic concept of authorship stressing the personal qualities of the author. As Minnis summarizes, "at the end of the Middle Ages, *auctores* had become more like men, men became more like *auctores* (Minnis, 1988: 216).¹⁸

We have herewith almost arrived at the modern concept of individualised authorship that is to dominate from the early Renaissance¹⁹ until the late twentieth century. Our excursion into medieval scriptural tradition and the medieval theory of collective writership has provided us with a perspective on the development of authorship pointing to striking similarities to John Barth's concept of authorship. Thus in the late twentieth century we see John Barth, in his attempt to construct a catalogue of notions of authorship in LETTERS, also return to medieval practices of scriptural tradition, albeit with a difference, which can be seen as one of those many instances in his later novels of, as he puts it in Sabbatical, "harking back that turns the key, that is the key, to harking forward" (S, 209).

II. Writing Practices after the Middle Ages

As argued above, John Barth not only provides the external reader with a return to early concepts of authorship, but actually with a kaleidoscopic picture of concepts of authorship from later periods in literary history. Let me at this point furnish a few instances from LETTERS to illustrate this point.

Samuel Richardson's Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740) and its successor Clarissa (1749) were the first epistolary novels in English letters, a move away from the classical world of authoritative texts to the more individualist world of the heart.²⁰ It is significant that John Barth, in his return to "the springs of narrative" and his attempt two centuries later to ward off the demise of the novel, opts for this historic form; he not only parodies its structure and form, by playing, for instance, with the titles of the letters,²¹ but also its sentimental content, by getting Lady Amherst and Ambrose Mensch involved in a highly-charged sexual affair which in spite of its ups and downs eventually ends in marriage.

In the early nineteenth century Madame de Staël, according to Ian Watt in The Rise of the Novel author of "the first important study of the novel in its larger social background, De la littérature, considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales (1800)" (Watt, 1957: 341) commented on this innovative form: "the Ancients would never have thought of giving their fiction such a form" because the epistolary method "always presupposes more sentiment than action" (translated by Watt from her study called De l'Allemagne, 1957: 199). "Madame de Staël,"

argues Watt, "linked the fact that the Ancients had no novels with the fact that, largely as a result of the inferior social position of women, the classical world attached relatively little importance to the emotional relationships between men and women" (Watt, 1957: 152): "The Ancients would never have turned their soul in such a way into a subject of their fiction" (De Staël, De l'Allemagne, 1813: 84).²²

If this is the case, then there is an interesting ironical link between Madame de Staël's romantic theory on why the Ancients did not know the novel form and John Barth's fictional product as the emotional events that govern Madame de Staël's twentieth century reincarnation, Lady Amherst, in LETTERS, ultimately result in a new form of letters being born. It is exactly because of Lady Amherst's emotions described in the postscript to her first letter to the Author that a whole chain of movements is set in motion, eventually in a self-begetting way resulting in a revolutionary new novel form. John Barth deliberately drives this point home by turning Madame de Staël into one of the intradiegetic internal letter-writers in LETTERS.

Another interesting link can be drawn between Samuel Richardson's ideas on the state of letters - he was "the first to speak of the Death of the Novel, it turns out, in a letter to Lady Barbara Montague dated 1758," as Barth says in LETTERS (L, 439) - and Barth's own essay on the literature of exhaustion (1969). What both authors appear to have in common is a determination to ward off the "Death of the Novel" by offering a viable innovative alternative. It is also part of Barth's parodic play that, whereas Clarissa in Richardson's novel, after

having been violated, chooses to die, Lady Amherst's violation is to be rewarded on earth, with life. Clarissa, as Lady Amherst makes clear in a letter to the Author, has become the third member of hers and Ambrose's "ménage à trois" (L, 439). The already read and already said of Richardson's novels thus become part of LETTERS' intertextual network, in much the same way as it had become that of Madame de Staël's: "I recalled," writes Lady Amherst to the Author, "that Clarissa's 'elopement' with Lovelace had been a major event in Mme de Staël's girlhood, when, as 15-year-old Germaine Necker, she had doted breathlessly upon Richardson's novels" (L, 441). The link between Barth's fascination with Madame de Staël's study of the novel, Richardson's experiments with the epistolary novel and his own concerns needs no further elaboration.

Another example from Barth's encyclopedic novel illustrates his investigation of the values placed on personal creativity; in the Ambrose Mensch and Jerome Bray sections of LETTERS he plays around with the Romantic preoccupation with the individual artist as genius. Not only does Barth have Jerome Bray design a computer writing programme for LILYVAC II with the already reads and the already saids of literary theory and history to produce a Novel Revolution/Revolutionary Novel, he also transforms the Romantic author of old into a modern-day counterpart in the film industry, known in contemporary film theory as the *auteur*. In Seymour Chatman's definition in Coming to Terms *auteurisme* is "the idea that single individuals, typically directors, are the true sources of films of quality" (Chatman, 1990: 219).²³ "For

years," writes Peter Wollen in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema, "the model of an author in the cinema was that of the European director, with open artistic inspirations and full control over his films" (Wollen, in Mast & Cohen, 1974: 531). This model, he argues, lies behind the distinction between art films and popular Hollywood productions. Jane Feuer mistakenly assumes in "Genre Study and Television," that all films are *auteur* films. The *auteur* policy, she writes, attempts to

reconceptualize the anonymous products of the Hollywood assembly lines as the creation of individual artists, assumed to be the directors of the films. The author was constructed by attributing unity - whether stylistic or thematic or both - to those films possessing the signature of certain directors. (Feuer, 1987: 117)

Films were originally not seen as authored works as it was often not clear who the organizing principle behind the film was. The *auteur* theory tried to set up a dialectic between the different Hollywood genres and the *auteur* films. The parallels between the multi-authored texts of the Middle Ages and the subsequent rise of private authorship as opposed to the anonymous Hollywood productions and the construction of the *auteur* are self-evident.

Who provides the film's unifying vision? Is it the script-writer, the director, the editor or the producer? The *auteur*-approach adopted by film theoreticians can be seen as an attempt to construct a Romantic author-centered model for film. In

LETTERS we see film director Reg Prinz trying to establish himself as the *auteur* of FRAMES. But the question that is raised by the narrative is who actually authors this film? It is very difficult to pinpoint Reg Prinz as *auteur* of FRAMES, as this notion of authorship gradually dissolves when the narrative of LETTERS literally explodes towards the end. Originally FRAMES was to be a reenactment of Barth's fiction, on the basis of a scenario crafted by Arthur Morton King, or rather his author Ambrose Mensch, but in July, as Lady Amherst writes to the Author,

the *fight* is the thing now, the armature of a drama which has clearly outgrown its original subject. Your fiction is at most the *occasion* of the film these days; perhaps it was never more than that. One would not be surprised if the final editing removed all reference to your works entirely, which are only a sort of serial cues for Prinz and Ambrose to improvise upon and organise their hostilities around. Those hostilities - between 'the Director' and 'the Author' - are the subject, a filming-within-the-filming, deadly earnest for all they're in the 'script' and despite Ambrose's being literally on Prinz's payroll as of Thursday 24th. (L, 445-446)

While the film is being filmed "with his hand-held" by "the Director," the regular camera crew films the filming of the film. A battle between (triplly removed: Author-Ambrose-Arthur Morton King) "Author" (Ambrose Mensch) and "Director" (Reginald Prinz)

ensues, which antithesis, by the way, as Erik Barnouw has suggested, has its roots in the Renaissance.

Erik Barnouw makes an interesting link in Mass Communication (Barnouw, 1956: 13-14),²⁴ between the early Renaissance inventions of the printing press and the *camera obscura*, dissemination being their common denominator, the press dealing with the dissemination of information or ideas, the camera with that of images via different mirrors. Thus it cannot be coincidental that John Barth, "going forward by going back to the roots and wellsprings of his art" (L, 161), has Ambrose Mensch turn his family home into a giant camera obscura, a fascinating device which, as Ambrose writes in THE AMATEUR, "make(s) the commonplace enchanting. What would scarcely merit notice if beheld firsthand [...] [is] magically composed and represented" (L, 155). The camera obscura allows us to "recognize our world and ourselves," by "holding a great mirror up to life" (L, 472). It is appropriate that Barth in his investigation of the origins of the dissemination process, introduces the camera obscura with its mirroring devices into the narrative, yielding a two-dimensional representation, and setting it in opposition to the non-representational two-dimensional aspects of the printing medium.

The antithesis film and literature is already hinted at in the first letter Ambrose Mensch writes to Lady Amherst:

'Did you know,' you asked me once over post-committee coffee in the Faculty Club, 'that James Joyce was terribly interested in the cinema, and had a hand in opening the

first movie-house in Dublin? But of course, his eyesight failed ...' And you added, 'Curious that Jorge Borges, our other great sightless modernist, has always been attracted to the cinema too; I believe he's even done filmscripts, hasn't he?' (L, 40)

Ambrose was at that particular moment wrestling with what he calls "the old rivalry between page and screen," as he was tempted to turn "a certain old friend's new book" into a screenplay. Film director Reg Prinz preempts the authority of this friend, by anticipating the author's work. As Lady Amherst reports to the Author: "Did you know that Reg Prinz has kept his imagination pure by *not even reading your books, any of them?*" (L, 356). In an earlier letter the Author had expressed his reservations to Todd Andrews about the Prinz-Mensch project: "I have no particular confidence that the story will actually be filmed," Reg Prinz is "so antiverbal," he is "said to be an enemy of the written word" (L, 192).

This "Word-versus-Image" rivalry between "Author" and "Director" also finds its expression in the Godard-style scripted statements - "not very meaningful to us lit'ry types," Lady Amherst writes to the Author - that were delivered face-on to the camera, Author and Director standing shoulder to shoulder:

AUTHOR: This film begins with a shot of the opening pages of my novel.

DIRECTOR: The novel opens with a sequence from my film.

AUTHOR: And the Word shall have the last Word.

DIRECTOR: Cut. (L, 682)

Ambrose Mensch's fear on the other hand that the camera is going to be privileged over the printed medium seems to be allayed by his realisation of the fact that both Joyce and Borges have been able to capture "reality out there" in spite of their lack of sight. It thus cannot be coincidental that in The Tidewater Tales Barth has Odysseus put the eyes out of Penelope's lover, the bard Phemius, who would later in the narrative become Homer, who as we know, also was allegedly blind.

The "Author"- "Director" battle in LETTERS takes on the form of a hilarious slapstick between Fiction and Film that comes to a climax in a *tableau vivant* called "the War Between Image and the Word" (L, 662). Again from Lady Amherst to the Author:

Merry B. to represent Fame, as indicated by a great bronze palm; myself to represent History, wielding a similarly impressive pen (these props Cook claims to be the originals, long in his family's possession and much coveted by the Smithsonian). At a certain signal, 'Director' and 'Author' - both of whom have long since been usurped of their functions! - to see which can snatch what. (L, 663)

Reg Prinz jumps the gun and dashes for the pen, but Ambrose is able to snatch it up first, and deals "the Director" a pen-stroke that might have split his directorial head, but luckily only his spectacles are smashed. The pen drops and Lady Amherst is able to grab it. Then "Author" and "Director" declare a truce

(L, 664-665). Ambrose Mensch, in a form of "I-I" communication, writes to Arthur Morton King that "Ambrose Mensch, in *propria persona*, has taken your place as 'author' of what remains of the FRAMES screenplay, authorised to authorship, not by Reg Prinz, but by *his* regents (Bruce & Brice), who seem to us to be being directed now by A.B. Cook" (L, 759). It is this same A.B. Cook VI who eventually turns out to be the "real" "author" behind the scenes as he takes over "what began as a Prinz movie," he writes to his son, "- a film in its own right and for its own sake, however obscure its content and aesthetics - has become the vehicle for something else entirely, a vehicle whose original driver is now barely a passenger" (L, 747). Cook reveals he had taken over authority as he plans to use the occasion of the film "to transcend the fateful Pattern of our history" (L, 747). He is "using 'the media' (in this case Reginald Prinz's film crew; next time the local and network television news people) as well as our 'enemies' (in this case the U.S. Navy; next time the Dept. of the Interior) to our purposes" (L, 746). By authorizing a series of bomb explosions that will bring about the long awaited revolution he attempts to gain author-ity over, and thus rewrite, history. And when the extradiegetic Author takes over in the final letter in the novel, and with him the meta- and the hyperdiegetic authors, as table (8) in Chapter III has shown, the question of who is authoring is once more being raised. It will be obvious that this entire episode explodes traditional notions of authorship.

III. Kierkegaard and Bloom on Authorship

Kierkegaard experiments with pseudonymous authorship in The Point of View for My Work as an Author (1851). In a section called "My Activity as a Writer," he says he writes "without authority" (Kierkegaard, 1962: 151), which implies that the final authoritative word is never given in the text, as it makes the author disappear from the text, or as Schleifer and Markley put it: "text answers text [...] in a repetitious and never-ending movement that precludes 'authority'" (Schleifer & Markley, 1984: 11). To Kierkegaard pseudonymous authors present imaginative constructions: "A pseudonym is excellent for accentuating a point, a stance, a position. It creates a poetic person [...]" (Kierkegaard, 1851: 88). In Mark Taylor's words in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship,²⁵ "the works are supposed to be understood as the creation of the pseudonymous author and not as the creation of Kierkegaard, the author of the authors" (Taylor, 1975: 55). This method moves the focus away from the author toward the reader in a movement of what Kierkegaard himself refers to as "a double reflection" (Kierkegaard, 1846: 68), offering the reader different ways of reading the text. Through the author's use of pseudonyms the reader is invited to actively participate in a Socratic dialogue created by the author.

When Kierkegaard hides in his pseudonymous texts behind multiple authorial roles, he uses a form of experimental authorship, which in its use of a multiplicity of voices is reminiscent of Barth's self-conscious mixing of authorial roles in his later fiction. We have seen the author hiding behind the

multiple voices of the internal letter-writers in LETTERS, and the confusing multitude of narrative voices in both Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales signifies a floating discourse that likewise disowns any claim to authority.²⁶

Kierkegaard's writing "without authority" can interestingly enough also be linked to some of the intertexts for Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales used by Barth, such as Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838). In the "Note" at the end of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym an anonymous author explains why the narrative is unfinished and why Poe, referred to as "the gentleman whose name is mentioned in the preface," is asked to complete the narrative ("fill in the vacuum"), but "has declined the task" due to "his disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narration" (Poe, 1986: 240). Poe's narrative voice in Pym is constituted of competing authorial claims: fictional character Arthur Gordon Pym writes in the fictional preface to the novel that author Edgar Allan Poe had earlier proposed to him "to draw up, in his own words, a narrative of the earlier portion of my adventures, from facts afforded by myself, publishing it in the Southern Messenger *under the garb of fiction*" (Poe, 1986: 44). Pym then states that he consented to that on condition that his name were to be retained. He continues to write:

Two numbers of the pretended fiction appeared, consequently, in the Messenger for January and February (1837), and, in order that it might certainly be regarded

as fiction, the name of Mr Poe was affixed to the articles in the table of contents of the magazine. (Poe, 1986: 44)

Only when Poe's narrative turns out to be a success, Pym actually decides to write the narrative himself, hence The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, which novel, however, has the name of Edgar Allan Poe on its jacket. And to add to the confusion about the authorship of this particular work, Pym writes "it will be unnecessary to point out where his portion ends and my own commences; the difference in point of style will be readily perceived" (Poe, 1986: 45), a narrative technique, as suggested above by the way, also practised by Barth in his later fiction novels, where we again find this (con-) fusion of narrative voices.²⁷ His last three novels are characterised by a diffusion of claims to author-ity, and could be considered to be examples of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of *polyphony* and *heteroglossia*.²⁸

In Authorship and Audience Stephen Railton rereads the canonical texts of the American Renaissance, quite a few of which serve as Barthian intertexts, from a radical new point of view: "as performances" (Railton, 1991: 3). He conceptualizes writing as "a public gesture, not as a private act" (Railton, 1991: 4). In contrast to the self-presentation of the Romantics, he sees artistic creation in nineteenth-century America take place in a public space as "authors enlist an audience's interest in their private fantasies" (Railton, 1991: 203).²⁹ The reading subject has thus become the author's other. The presence of a public audience in the creative process is the *conditio sine qua non* the

author is unable to operate in the dynamics of literary performance. America, says Railton, is in this respect different from Europe, for unlike Europe, it has never known systems of literary patronage.

Railton argues that most of the works of nineteenth-century writers like Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, James Fenimore Cooper and Edgar Allan Poe, have also been engendered in this public space; American authors, Railton claims, are particularly dependent of their audiences. Cooper's initial success, for instance, "resulted from his creative acceptance of the conditions that his audience's assumptions imposed on his imagination" (Railton, 1991: 5). This points at an early indirect form of reader-participation in the creative process. Poe's concern with the *effect* of his stories on the reader also points at an involvement of the reader in the creative process. Kenneth Dauber moreover shows in The Idea of Authorship in America that Poe, by his stealing from other authors, acknowledges "the Others'" public presence. Dauber writes: "Poe's plagiarism lies not in his stealing from others, but in his conceptualization of others as those who are to be stolen from" (Dauber, 1990: 135).³⁰

That Poe's plagiarism is an obvious intertextual precursor to Barth's rewritings, goes without saying. And in a double remove Barth "steals" two ideas from Poe's "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade," the first being that of contemporary protagonist in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor being lost in medieval Baghdad and narrating his life to members of Sindbad the Sailor's household, the second being Barth's interest in

Scheherazade's sister, Dunyazade, who tells her side of the story in "Dunyazadiad" in Chimera, which idea is also derived from Poe.³¹

Interestingly enough, however, Poe's plagiarism was in fact an inverted form of plagiarism as he claimed to base himself on non-existent sources and quoted from passages that could not be found. John T. Irwin, who is, by the way, overtly and self-consciously footnoted by Barth in Sabbatical,³² writes in American Hieroglyphics that Poe plays at least two kind of hoaxes in Pym: "In the more obvious kind he takes false information and makes it look authentic; in the less obvious [...] he takes authentic information and makes it look slightly suspicious" (Irwin, 1980: 198). Heinrich F. Plett calls this in Intertextuality a form of "pseudo-intertextuality" (Plett, 1991: 26), when a text refers to another text that simply does not exist. "In this type of hoax," continues Irwin, "the reader is duped if he fails to take Poe's learning seriously and thus fails to pursue the implication of the data that Poe provides" (Irwin, 1980: 198).

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, which serves as the most important intertext for both Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales, as Barth himself acknowledges in "Still Farther South: Some Notes on Poe's Pym," is played off "as a journalistic scoop - to hoax the great reading public [...]."³³ John Barth, self-consciously aware of his precursor, plays the same games in Sabbatical as Poe had done in Pym, but within the parameters of double-coded parodic discourse, by having some of the extensive footnotes in Sabbatical refer to existing sources,

such as articles from The Baltimore Sun (S, 72 n4, 74 n5, 78 n6, n7, 80, n8, 82 n10, 83, n11, 84 n12, 85, n13 and 254, n19), fictional persons (S, 46, n46-47, 275 n6), or nonexistent sources, such as KUDOVE, "an exposé of the CIA's Clandestine Services Division," authored in 1979 by Fenwick Scott Key Turner (S, 13 n8, 92 n17). And like Poe, "who borrowed from a wide variety of works in creating Pym" (Irwin, 1980: 172), Barth also "recycles" extensively in the construction of his intertextual networks.

In his discussion in The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry of what constitutes authorship Harold Bloom dismisses the idea of originality as constitutive of authorship. He argues that "we need to stop thinking of any poet as an autonomous ego, however solipsistic the strongest of poets may be. Every poet is being caught up in a dialectical relationship (transference, repetition, error, communication) with another poet or poets" (Bloom, 1973: 91).

This author-centered theory does not focus on the study of sources or influence, as Bloom emphatically states:

By 'poetic influence' I do not mean the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets. This is indeed just 'something that happens,' and whether such transmission causes anxiety in the later poets is merely a matter of temperament and circumstances. These are fair materials for source-hunters and biographers, and have little to do with my concern. (Bloom, 1973: 71)

Bloom's concern is with "the anxiety of influence," in Manfred Pfister's words in "How Postmodern is Intertextuality?," "an antagonistic scenario, in which each major poet, suffering from 'The Anxiety of Influence,' works out his own individuality in contradistinction with that of earlier masters, thus engaging in an intensive, though mainly negative dialogue with them" (Pfister, 1991: 209). In other words, no work stands on its own, as it cannot but be seen in relation to another work or works. When what Bloom calls an *ephebe*, or young apprentice, wants to break away from the influence of father-figures and wants to create his own imaginative creative space, the achievement of his precursors has to be deformed, or in Bloomian terms willfully "misread" in an act of "misprision." It is obvious that Bloom's model of the son who sets out to slay his father is inspired by Freud's notion of the Oedipal complex.

Bloom is very much aware of the intertextual nature of literary language; in Poetry and Repression he takes his ideas on anxious influence a step further and even dismisses the idea that a text can stand on its own:

Few notions are more difficult to dispel than the 'commonsensical' one that a poetic text is self-contained, that it has an ascertainable meaning or meanings without reference to other poetic texts. [...] Unfortunately, poems are not things, but only words that refer to other words, and those words refer to still other words, and so on in the densely overpopulated world of literary language. Any poem is an

inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading.
(Bloom, 1976: 2f)

It was bound to happen that Barth's intertextual writing practices were to be linked one day to Bloom's theory of anxiety. In 1992 Patricia Tobin published John Barth and the Anxiety of Continuance, in which Barth's career is read in terms of Bloom's theory: "[...] Barth is an agonist, no doubt about it" (Tobin, 1992: 8). She argues that Barth "conducts his self-inventions within the Bloomian schema of oedipal conflict [...] reinventing himself with each new work of art, as new ephebe to his own precursor, in order that the career might go on" (Tobin, 1992: 9). In her view Barth has provided the external reader of his books with a revision of Bloom: as Barth constantly re-invents himself as his own precursor, his career is "self-contained and self-regulated by a one-on-one antitheticalism" (Tobin, 1992: 10). Bloom's notion of anxious influence has in other words been turned into continuance, and the poem, or work, has been turned into a whole career. It is Barth's anxiety over himself as *ephebe* that has turned his career into a diachronic progress in creative self-revision, or I would add, into a parody thereof, to push the point still further.

Barth, as a professor of literature, is of course aware of Bloom's theory, and, as Tobin says, he seems "to run amok with Bloom" (Tobin, 1992: 8). The occasion is a celebration of Walt Whitman Day in 1976, when Barth was a guest speaker:

Whitman's project of going forward by going *back*, beyond the immediate European conventions of verse and their American imitations, to something older, looser, freer, more epical and rough - there were surely some resemblances there to *my* project of returning to the inventors of the English novel form my long story on Ebenezer Cooke, the misfortunate poet laureate of Maryland, in order as it were to make an end run around Flaubert and the modernist novel. So I discovered in Walt Whitman not a lost father, for better or for worse, but a kind of mislaid literary uncle, who seemed to me to ratify, after the fact - benignly, avuncularly - my own project. (FB, 154)

And a few pages further down in that same address, Barth actually refers to Harold Bloom:

Well. Jorge Luis Borges says in his essay on Kafka that every writer creates his own precursors. This is the opposite of Harold Bloom's argument that great writers as it were were created *by* their precursors - by their struggles against and pacts with their spiritual fathers. Borges also says, in an essay on Walt Whitman, that Whitman, who *had* no immediate precursors, invented himself. (FB, 157)

Tobin argues that Barth not only reaches further back than the past of his uncle to the literary pasts of Homer, Scheherazade, Cervantes, Fielding, where the conflictual dramas between

fathers and sons have no place, he also continuously re-invents himself by taking himself as his own precursor. However, no matter how convincing Tobin's argument may seem, it is too idiosyncratic. In his "Introduction" to The Anxiety of Influence Bloom himself had demarcated the limits of his model: "Poetic influence, or as I shall more frequently term it, poetic misprision, is necessarily the study of the life-cycle of the poet-as-poet" (Bloom, 1973: 7). The aim of Barth's project, it is argued here, carries much farther than that of Barth's own life-cycle. In LETTERS the "Author" instructs Ambrose:

Never mind what your predecessors have come up with, and never mind that in a sense this 'dialogue' is a monologue; that we capital-A Authors are ultimately, ineluctably, and forever talking to ourselves. If our correspondence is after all a fiction, we like, we need that fiction: it makes our job less lonely. (L, 655)

Barth's anxieties are not so much concerned with the limits of Bloom's theory, with the re-inventing of himself, because they have far wider implications, as Barth himself has so often stated. His interest is "how to save and save again one's narrative neck" (FB, 159). He describes himself in "The Limits of Imagination" as "a writer who has spent his professional life monkeying around with the limits of ancient storytelling, setting the bar ever higher on my personal high jump at the risk of ending up with a mouthful of turf" (Ziegler, 1988: 275). He is concerned with the search for a narrative solution for the

apparent demise of the aesthetic novel, so, as a "bona fide honorary Doctor of Letters, [he] makes it a part of his business to administer artificial respiration to the apparently dead, whether the patient is the classical myths or certain exhausted conventions of the novel" (FB, 159-160), and by re-thinking questions of authorship and mimesis actually offers a possible narrative way out of this crisis in the form of narrativist mimesis.

The plot in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, for instance, is literally carried on the ocean of story.³⁴ Twentieth-century journalist Simon William Behler has inexplicably landed up as Somebody the Sailor in Sindbad the Sailor's fifteenth-century Baghdad where he seeks to re-invent, if not recover, his old identity by story-telling. As he cannot remember his past he has to invent the past part of his narrative in a week-long narrative battle with his host who is now known as Sindbad the Still-Stranded. Behler's realistic stories literally merge with the fabulous ones told by Sindbad in such a way that at the end of the novel he has narrated his way out of his predicament, in much the same manner as Scheherazade had done five hundred years before him, finding himself back in contemporary America.³⁵ The narrative of The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor is a clear example of Barth's conviction that a writer "creates his own precursors" (FB, 157), rather than that in Bloomian terms the precursors create him.

IV. Foucault and Culler on Authorship

As was the case in the early Middle Ages with its collective scriptural tradition, the connection between author and text has become more and more separated in contemporary theory -- to such an extent that Roland Barthes, as we have seen in Chapter III, was to declare the author dead in 1968. One year later Michel Foucault in his article "What Is an Author?" declares the notion of the author to be a fiction: "[t]he word "work" and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality" (Foucault, 1988: 199). This does not mean to say that the existence of the individual who writes and invents, is denied; Foucault sees the idea of the author not as a timeless, irreducible category, but rather as play of differences, a function of the discourse overturning the traditional image of the author.

Foucault's author-function has four characteristics, to which I would like to add a fifth. The first function has to do with ownership; it was only at the end of the eighteenth century, writes Foucault, that a legal system for ownership of texts came into being, which meant that discourses became objects of appropriation (Foucault, 1988: 202). Not all discourses require attribution to an author, as we have seen in medieval literary practice, for instance; in today's literary world, however, anonymity of the author is intolerable. It is actually legally required to know where a text comes from, who wrote it, when and under what circumstances (Foucault, 1988: 203). The third aspect is that the author as a function is a projection or construction,

"the result of a complex operation which constructs a rational being that we call 'author'" (Foucault, 1988: 203). The author-function, moreover, does not simply refer to a real individual, but is split up in a "plurality of self" (Foucault, 1988: 205). Foucault acknowledges that analysis could reveal more than these four functions, and this is where a fifth proposed function comes in, that of intertextual reorchestrator or *producer* of texts, or a figure of production, a "text operator," to borrow a phrase from Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1977: 92), as argued in Chapter III.

Three years after Foucault Derrida argues in "Signature Event Context" that "when the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, [... the] writing [...] is cut off from all absolute responsibility, from *consciousness* as the ultimate authority, orphaned and separated at birth [...]" (Derrida, 1988: 8). Jonathan Culler elaborates on this: he sees the connection between author and text to have been completely severed; the author is only seen as a medium through which the meaning of the text moves. In Structuralist Poetics he writes:

The meaning of a sentence, one might say, is not a form or an essence, present at the moment of its production and lying behind it as a truth to be recovered, but the series of developments to which it gives rise, as determined by past and future relations between words and the conventions of semiotic systems. (Culler, 1975: 132)

The production of texts has taken precedence over the creation of them, as evident in the practice of textuality, the rewriting of existing and even non-existing works. In this we are reminded of Heidegger's maxim that we do not speak language, but language speaks us.³⁶ Our words are "understood by others only because they are already virtually contained within the language" (Culler, 1975: 29). The notion of text as productivity rather than as representation or communication reflects the generative, meaning producing ability of language. We saw this dynamic notion applied in an earlier section on Lotman's meaning-generating model of language, and there is no harm at this point in repeating the main argument of my thesis that this notion of textuality is being put into practice in later Barthian fiction.

The notion "author" has thus indeed become, in Foucauldian terms, a function, as it is always constituted by particular operations. It is no longer a "unity," writes Foucault in The Archeology of Knowledge, it is "the result of an operation" (Foucault, 1972: 24). Culler elaborates: "In the case of literature, for example, we can construct an 'author,' label as 'project' whatever unity we find in the texts by a single man" (Culler, 1975: 30), but, even in the case of a single work, the author can never be its source. Foucault again:

The author is not an indefinite source of significations which fill a work; the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free mani-

pulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion. (*italics mine*) (Foucault, 1988: 209)

It does not follow from this that the notion of author can be done away with, since the production of texts takes place *through* the author as the instigator of these intertextual processes of production. The role or function of the author is thus radically re-thought as the process takes priority over the product, or as Barth has Fenwick Turner say in Sabbatical, referring to the roots of the novel: "Cervantes [...] was right: the road is better than the inn" (C, 278).

The text will nevertheless always contain a certain number of signs referring to the author, as Foucault suggests: "these signs, well known to grammarians, are personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and verb conjugation" (Foucault, 1988: 204). These "shifters," like the use of the first person singular, of the present tense, or in Barth's case, of his own name, do not refer to the real author, but point at a more complex system of (in Foucauldian terms) "plurality of self" (Foucault, 1988: 205) or in Derridean terms "effects of signature" (Derrida, 1988: 20).

V. Derrida's Signature Theory

Signature does not refer to a simple concept, but to the knot of problems elaborated under that rubric by Derrida in Signsponge, Glas and The Post Card. It is not my intention to give an analysis of Derridean signature theory here, but to use signature and another closely related Derridean concept, that of parergonality, introduced in The Truth in Painting, as points of entry into understanding the operations of Barthian textuality.

The *parergon* is, like the frame of a painting, neither simply inside nor outside the work or *ergon*; it is much like the signature that signs the text from within as well as from outside the text. The questions that the notion of parergonality raises, have to do with framing: "Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. And its surface between two limits" (Derrida, 1987: 63). And further on in the same essay, "There is frame, but the frame *does not exist*" (Derrida, 1987: 81). In other words, the *parergon* does not signify in itself, but is that which supplements, "the *hors-d'oeuvre* supplement in the work" (Derrida, 1987: 221). What is at stake in the operations of the *parergon* is the notion of inside and outside, of borders and boundaries; and as the letters in LETTERS are embedded in parergonality, we can ask ourselves whether the headings to the different letters in the novel, for instance, are intrinsic or extrinsic to the narrative, can they be detached, or are they ill-detachable, are they, in other words, *parergon* or *ergon*? I will come back to these questions later in this section.

Barth's experiments in textuality, his rewritings and reframings of his own texts and those of others, attempt to reverse the relationship between writing and knowing, by crossing boundaries between the inside and outside of existing texts, which are used as raw material to work with in order to produce adaptations and transformations, and by producing new texts from old ones, through which processes it is revealed how a work generates meaning.

The memory capacity of language was discussed in an earlier section, in which it was argued that memory is one of the three functions of language, the other two being the informational and the creative functions. A text, as was argued in the previous chapters, not only generates new meanings whenever it is inscribed again, but also preserves and accumulates within itself the memory of its previous contexts. The text's memory is the sum total of the contexts in which the text has been interpreted, which total has been incorporated into that same text. These texts, and what is called their "meaning space" (Lotman, 1990: 18) surrounding the texts, enter into a relationship with the cultural and literary memory that is always already present in any reader's consciousness. In this way the text, rather than author or reader, becomes a meaning-generating mechanism: any text which keeps on being read over the course of time shows this capacity for memory, defined by Yuri Lotman as a capacity to accumulate information, as was argued in Section Four of Chapter III.

Derrida, writes Gregory Ulmer in "Sounding the Unconscious," "is fascinated by the truth-effect of the act of signing one's

name, for example signing an academic discourse, a text of knowledge, with all its associated effort to exclude not only error but fiction" (Ulmer, 1986: 57). If the structure of language, as we are all aware of, permits both truth and untruth, does a signature then serve as an index of the work's truthfulness? Here Derrida is in sympathy with Foucault, who had argued in "What is an Author?" that the "author" is indeed the principle of coherence in a text, but Derrida qualifies the operation of the proper name:

Thus the name, especially the so-called proper name, is always caught in a chain or system of differences. It becomes an appellation only to the extent that it may inscribe itself within a figuration. [...] [T]he properness of the name does not escape spacing. Metaphor shapes and undermines the proper name. The literal [*propre*] meaning does not exist, its 'appearance' a necessary function - and must be analyzed as such - in the system of differences and metaphors. (Derrida, 1976: 89)

The signature, inside and outside the text, serves not only as a verbal signifier, as a mode of representation carrying meaning, but also, as Derrida will argue later in "Signature Event Context" as a repository of the remainder, that warrants further investigation. What interests me in this context is the remainder or rest of meaning production, that part of the textual dynamic which exceeds specification in traditional formalist or historicist terms and which finds concise emblemization in the

signature. Effects of signature, writes Derrida in "Signature Event Context,"

are the most common thing in the world. But the condition of possibility of those effects is simultaneously, once again, the condition of their impossibility, of the impossibility of their rigorous purity. In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production. (Derrida, 1988: 20)

Peggy Kamuf points out in Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship that a signature is not a name,

at most it is a piece of a name, its citation according to certain rules [...]. As a piece of a proper name, the signature points, at one extremity, to a properly unnameable singularity; as a piece of language, the signature touches, at its other extremity, on the space of free substitution without proper reference. At the edge of the work, the dividing trait of the signature pulls in both directions at the same time: appropriating the text under the sign of the name, expropriating the name into the play of the text. The undecidable trait of the signature must fall into the crack of the historicist/formalist opposition organising most discourses about literature. Its case is that of the rest, which remains unclassified by either

determinations of agency (biographical, historical, political, economical) or determinations of formal, arbitrary structures of language. (Kamuf, 1988: 12-13)

What is this rest, or remainder of meaning production? Derrida actually provides an answer to this question in Glas when he asks himself the question: "What remains of a signature?" (Derrida, 1986: 4R). He explores the consequences of citing the proper name. Can or must his insight that every sign or mark, when cited, breaks with its context, also be applied to the proper name? The signature is inside and outside the text at the same time; on the one hand, it belongs to the inside of a picture, a discourse, a cheque, a letter, which it is presumed to sign. As it is in the text, it no longer signs, but rather operates as an effect within the object, has its part to play within that which it claims to appropriate to itself or lead back to its origin. Filiation is thus lost, writes Derrida. The signature deducts itself.

But on the other hand, the signature also holds itself outside the text. And in this case, filiation is also lost, as the name of the name of the father or the mother is no longer needed for it to function. (Derrida, 1986: 4R). The remains of the signature are, in other words, in both cases denegated, they cannot be buried and keep on functioning.

In the first case in which the signature signs the text from within the text, the text encloses it and establishes it as a memory; the signature belongs to the inside, and can no longer appropriate the work, as it no longer remembers anything outside

itself.³⁷ In this case we can for instance think of one of the seven main characters in John Barth's novel LETTERS, who is called "John Barth," who writes letters to the other characters in the novel, offering them an appearance in his novel and signing these letters with "John Barth, Author." The signature here clearly belongs to the inside of the novel, and filiation is lost, as the John Barth, Author-character in the novel is only a paper-author, to use Roland Barthes' phrase, a paper-author who, not coincidentally, happens to have the same name as John Barth, real life author, whose name is on the outside cover of the novel.

In the second case in which the signature signs from outside the work, we deal with a form of historicism, in which the work stands apart from the signature, on its own, as if no singular or finite existence has had a hand in its realisation. Yet the signature is still there, and will stay there, if only one thinks of the signature on the cover of the book, the title page or the spine; moreover, the signature cannot be removed from the conceptual system of the book. The author's presence is betrayed by the mark or graft of his signature. The name John Barth, for instance, on the cover of his novels is an indispensable guide to what one can expect inside the cover of the book.

When the signature signs from within the text, it always has to occupy an allocated space, as it never signs in the middle; in novels it always signs the beginning whereas letters, paintings, and cheques are usually signed at the end. John Barth plays with this spatial allocation too, in Lady Amherst's first letter to the Author, for instance, the letter proper that

invites Mr John Barth, Esq., Author to accept the degree of Doctor of Letters has the length of about half a page, whereas the P.S. exceeds eight pages. All letters by the internal authors are signed, but of the Author's thirty intradiegetic letters only two are, one of which is to Lady Amherst, signed as "Author" (L, 53), the other one, the "Author"'s wedding toast to Germaine Pitt and Ambrose Mensch, is only signed with an initial, "B." (L, 770). The external reader assumes the other twenty eight unsigned letters are also the Author's, on account of the presence of his internal signature, and because of the parergonal environment, to which I will come back in the next section of this chapter.

The third modality of the signature deals with the transformation of the name into a productive generic principle. In Signsponge Derrida refers to this as "general signature, or signature of the signature, the fold of the placement in the abyss where [...] the work of writing designates, describes, and inscribes itself as act (action and archive)" (Derrida, 1984: 54). One could in this context, for instance, look at some of the proper names of the intradiegetic authors in LETTERS, such as Lady Amherst's, also known as Germaine Pitt, one of John Barth's alter egos in the text, as indicated by the meaning of "german" or "germane," the definition of which The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives as "closely akin, "own" brother or sister, closely related" (Onions, 1973: 845). Lady Amherst's proper name thus moves from designating a particular individual to become a key to a productive, meaning generating mechanism.

This transfer from the proper noun to the common noun, and from common noun to proper noun, referred to by Derrida as

"antonomasia" (Derrida, 1986: 183R), is the innovative guiding principle in the generation of Derrida's signature text in Glas, in which he elaborates a discourse out of the name "Jean Genet":

The name of the person who seems to affix, append here his *seing* (Genet) is the name, as we know (but how and from where do we know?) of his mother. (Derrida, 1986: 34R)

Genêt names a plant with flowers - yellow flowers [...]; *genet* a kind of horse. (Derrida, 1986: 35R)

Seing is an old term for signature. After having detected the signifiers flower and horse in "Genet," Derrida carries on elaborately in the right hand columns of the page about the nature of these signifiers, thereby constructing his text out of other texts, dictionaries, glossaries and encyclopedias, in a way that is very reminiscent of medieval textual compilations. The words in his new text only refer to other words, not to lived reality, and thus we have landed up in the linguistic universe of rhetorical invention. The proper name, in this case Genet, no longer has a referent, but has been generalised into a flower, a horse: "So it is true that the flower signifies, and rhetoricizes, and further that Genet anagrammatizes his own proper(ty), sows more than any other, and gleans his name over whatever it falls" (Derrida, 1986: 46R). In Signsponge Derrida finds a sponge, "the thing and its (or his) name" in the name of the poet under discussion, Francis Ponge:

the sponge expunges the proper name, puts it outside of itself, effaces and loses it, soils it as well in order to make it into a common noun; it contaminates the proper name on contact with the most pitiful, the most unqualifiable object, which is made to retain every sort of dirt [...]. But simultaneously, the sponge can also retain the name, absorb it, shelter it and keep it within itself. Then, too, it holds clean and proper water as well as dirty water, insatiably. (Derrida, 1984: 64)

Likewise we can find a productive generic principle in Barth's proper name. In the same way as Derrida found a sponge in Ponge's name, we can find a beard in Barth's name,³⁸ which can also be seen as "a signature of the signature," where the work of writing inscribes itself as act. So in Barth's name too we can detect antonomasia in operation as a guiding principle in the generation of textuality. Under the head entry "beard" in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary we can detect several what Derrida refers to as "folds of the placement in the abyss." The signifier "beard" not only yields the hair growing on the face of man or animal, it also yields freshwater shell-fish, perhaps inhabiting the tidal waters of the Chesapeake.³⁹ But more importantly "beard" is also a term used in printing, and signifies "a. that part of the type above and below the face, which allows for ascending and descending letters. b. the horizontal bases and tops added to the letters" (Onions, 1973: 170) and in German "*Bart*," apart from "beard," also signifies "*Schlüsselbart*," the "beard" of a key.⁴⁰ In other words, the key

to the treasure that Barth has been looking for in letters, is actually hidden in his own name. Barth's proper name is the key that holds in itself, and is itself, the key to the treasure. It can therefore be no coincidence that the front cover of the Minerva-paperback edition of The Tidewater Tales carries John Barth's name and the back cover shows a number of keys, with beards. As Scheherazade had already told her sister Dunyazade in Chimera, "the key to the treasure is the treasure" (C, 64), which she has ever since kept repeating, for instance in The Tidewater Tales (TT, 584, 591), in Barth's later fiction we have found the key to the treasure to be Barth himself and his programme for the rebirth of letters.

And when we play around a little more with Barth's proper name we can also detect the activity of ploughing in his signature,⁴¹ the cutting of furrows in the soil and turning them up, as the signifier Barth can be traced back to Greek Bartholomeus, the son of Tholmai (Ptolomeus), who is often referred to as a ploughman. Barth then becomes the ploughman or rearranger of soil, or texts who, as one ploughed by the reading public after Lost in the Funhouse, now ploughs a lonely furrow, ploughing back into the Library what he ploughed through during years of reading from the library.

We could also detect the verb to barter, from Old French *barater*, *bareter*, in the signifier Barth, which yields to cheat, to do business or to exchange, pointing at the poststructural activities in which Barth engages. His business is to barter for texts without bartering the act of story-telling away. By thus converting Barth's proper name into common nouns, using the

literal meanings of the name, the conceptual categories which are the clues to Barth's principles of invention are identified.

The same games can be played with other names from his texts, The Tidewater Tales's Peter Sagamore for instance, who at the beginning of the novel faces a writer's block which led him to write the shortest short story ever written, consisting only of its title. At the end of the novel he has found that the key to the treasure of being is narration, which realisation, more sagas, is conceptually present in his proper name, Sagamore. The name could alternatively also be read as an exhortation to carry on story-telling, to say more, although the collective narrators on duty at that moment in the novel cannot find the word "Sagamore" in their German-English Dictionary: "*Sage mehr* ('Say more'), we wonder, metamorphosed by some immigration clerk like many other new American's name? *Zage mir*? Nobody knows" (TT, 31).

Or his counterpart's name in Sabbatical, Fenwick Turner, whose first signifier refers to a place in a fen, and the second to one who works with a lathe, a joustier, or a translator, which latter signifier yields another story-teller who trans-lates, or trans-fers (Latin *translatus* is the past participle of the verb *transferre*, literally to bring across) from one place to another, who carries stories from the marshy past into a narrative future. The tides of Chesapeake Bay form the Ocean of Story that keep the narrative lives floating in both Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales. Barth himself indicates in a footnote that in spite of the fact that Fenwick Turner's "own portentous name" (S, 208) should be traced back to German signifier "gymnast" instead of English "lathe-operator," the portent should, however, be considered to

be "English and presuppose another: before one can turn a key, one must find it" (S, 208, n4).

Or Ambrose Mensch's for that matter, whose surname signifies person or human being, from Yiddisch *mentsh*, who can be said to strive after immortality, from Greek *ambrotos*, immortal, through story-telling, "Here a confession: Early on I too aspired to immortality" (Barth, 1968: 36), by filling Lady Amherst's (née Pitt) hollow pit with "epistles + alphabetical characters + literature," resulting in "LETTERS" (L, 768). Another hollow that Ambrose had filled before Lady Amherst's was that of Marsha Blank. Ambrose's great ambition, as was argued in previous chapters, was to fill in blanks, and suddenly when he met Marsha Blank, he realised that marrying her, a real-life Blank, was the opportunity to fulfil his "grand objective [...] of filling in the whole world's blanks" (L, 240). Marsha's surname matches her personality and profession. As Lady Amherst reports to the Author:

It was her *name*, Ambrose now maintains, most drew him to her twenty years ago, when he was an undergraduate apprentice and she a young typist [...] *Marsha Blank*, mind and character to match [...]. And her personality matched her face; and there she sat, nine-to-fiving those reams of empty paper through her machine day after day, like a stenographic Echo, giving back the words of others at 25¢ the page plus 5¢ the carbon. (L, 239-240)

Ambrose traces his name back in Lost in the Funhouse to the honeybees that swarmed on his mouth and face when he was a baby. Plato had the same thing happen to him, when he was a kid, which, as Uncle Konrad remarked, was probably where he got his way with words, and likewise Saint Ambrose who had also grown up to be a great speaker (LF, 30-31). The signifier *ambrosia*, story-telling as honey-drink, the food of the gods, is written on their bodies, and thus signs their bodies from within as well as from outside, all this in stark contrast to Jerome Bonaparte Bray's harsh, shrieking *brays* that signify the failure of his literary computer experiment NUMBERS.

Stan Fogel and Gordon Slethaug, in Understanding John Barth, have also noticed this play "with indeterminate meaning and floating signification" (Fogel & Slethaug, 1990: 184) of proper names, but contend that the multiple-naming is a case of many signifiers and one signified, whereas I would rather link this play of indeterminacy and discontinuity to destabilizing Derridean signature theory. A proper name never seems to be able to be "proper," as it does not signify a proper, self-contained identity, but rather allows for the play of *différance*. Fenwick Turner's brother, for instance, whose proper name is Manfred Turner, is called Count by his brother, Manny by his Grandma, Fred by his mother, and to others in the novel he is known as The Prince of Darkness (S, 206, n2). To complicate and destabilize matters further, Barth has, in his next novel, Frank Talbott, a re-write of Fenwick Turner from his previous novel, tell Peter Sagamore, another re-write of the same Fenwick Turner from his previous novel, how he changed the names of the characters in

Fenwick Turners' novel into the names of the characters in the book he is presently writing:

I turned Rick Talbott into 'Manfred Turner,' because Doug Townsend called him the Prince of Darkness after Byron's Count Manfred. Lee and I were 'Fenwick Turner' and 'Susan Seckler.' He smiles at her. Blackeyed Susan, right? My idea of the art of fiction was to make her and 'Mimi' twin sisters and Fenn and Manfred twin brothers. You're supposed to nudge your neighbor and say, 'Fen as in marshland, et cetera.' Carla B. Silver became 'Carmen B. Seckler,' for reasons I am even too embarrassed to tell.

Peter's done stuff like that too, Kath offers consolingly. Admits Peter Yup. (TT, 413-414)

The proper names of Manfred Turner, Fenwick Turner, Susan Seckler, Mimi and Carmen B. Seckler, all from Sabbatical, which novel Frank Talbott claims conceptualization and drafting of in The Tidewater Tales, have been destabilized and made into textual constructs in a quadruple movement of poststructuralist mimesis. Moreover, they have also become characters in The Tidewater Tales, which novel Peter Sagamore is writing in The Tidewater Tales. This becomes clear when he directly addresses the reader: "tongue-tisked reader, what do you expect we expect? You're reading The Tidewater Tales: A Novel [...]" (TT, 370), which in its turn is of course also The Tidewater Tales John Barth has written.

Being named with a proper name displaces the individual's identity, as absolute presence is lost at the moment of naming, for at the moment of naming the individual turns into a signifier, sharing that role with other signifiers. After Ambrose was born for instance, his family looked in The Book of Knowledge for historical "bee"-parallels to what had happened to the little boy, in the hope of finding a naming-sign for him. This looking for a name in a book immediately places the individual in a system of signifiers, where all the names belong to others. But in a playful move to have Ambrose escape from being turned into a signifier, Barth makes it years before Ambrose is being christened as Ambrose: "years were to pass before anyone troubled to have me christened or to correct my birth certificate, whereon my surname was preceded by a blank" (LF, 32). By his inscription into the system of signifiers, Ambrose, "knowing well that I and my sign are neither one nor quite two" (LF, 32), realises that his being given a proper name has at the same time effaced his proper name. The act of naming has thus opened up the possibility of the play of difference.⁴²

The permutation of interlocutor Edgar Allan Poe's name into Edgar Allan Ho, who is the illegitimate son of Eastwood Ho and Mimi Seckler in Sabbatical, is another instance of such floating signification. And so is that of Don Quixote into Capn Don (TT, 653), Donald Quicksoat (TT, 515), Don Key-ho-Tay (TT, 518) or Donkey Ho-Tay dee la Mancha (TT, 532), or Cervantes into Sir Van-Tease (TT, 519), or Huckleberry Finn into Huckleberry Findley (TT, 526), Scheherazade into Scher (TT, 503), or genie, another of Barth's alter egos, into Djean (TT, 585), and so on. But one

of the most productive examples of the generative textuality in signatures is of course the various imposturing games played by different generations of A.B. Cooks in LETTERS, whose main occupation in history seems to be the cooking of documents and letters, in much the same way as their activities focus on the author-ing or cooking up of new versions of history. The most particular register of language there is, the proper name, which designates only one individual in the world, has thus been destabilised by both Derrida and Barth as a device for textual production by its being generalized into a generic formula.⁴³

Another signature effect that serves as a productive mechanism is the play with specific initials patterns in LETTERS. The initials of the different A.B. Cook characters, all of whom are involved in the game of coding and decoding, follow the first letters of the uncoded alphabet in a form of self-representation. Likewise, Barth's initials, the letters "J." and "B.," can, as a mode of self-representation, also be found in Joel Barlow's and Jerome Bray's names.⁴⁴ Although working on very different projects, all three protagonists are interested in a similar outcome; all of them are, albeit in very different ways, involved in re-inventions.

And when the Author in a letter to To Whom It May Concern recounts how he had "three concentric dreams of waking," he mentions it was actually an initial in the second wake - which belonged to "another history, a prior youth,"⁴⁵ - that "one name's initial: bee-beta-beth, the Kabbalist's letter of Creation, whence derived, like life itself from the marsh primordial, both the alphabet and the universe it described by

its recombinations" (L, 47), that inspired him, "faint-fumbling B," to write an epistolary novel. The Author's initial, the mark of "Barth," is the initial of Creation, or as O'Donnell puts it, "the alphabetic origin of the universe as it is reflected in the myriad combinations of written language" is "the imagined, dreamed source of creation, the narrator's writing self, and the narrative which tells the story of creation and self" (O'Donnell, 1986: 58). There is, not coincidentally, an abundance of names in the novel that start with the letter B: Blanque (L, 624), Blank (L, 659), Bruce and Brice (L, 661), Bellerophon (L, 654), Borges (L, 656), Barlow, Barlow, Brant, Burlingame, Benedict, Burr (L, 143), Bernstein (L, 665), Bonaparte, Barney (L, 506), and so on.

Barth's initial is thus not merely a verbal signifier; it not only tells the tale of its own self-creation, but also provides the external reader with a further, supplementary representation of John Barth. Or, as Edgar Dryden puts it in The Form of American Romance, "John Barth" "has come to believe that virtually everyone with his initial" (L, 185) is some version of himself (Dryden, 1988: 185). The three concentric dreams in which LETTERS was conceived, center on the letter B., the "instrument of creation, the mother of letters and the world" (L, 328), thereby turning Barth into his own engenderer. And Dryden even sees the swarming "bees" of the marsh (Dryden, 1988: 185) as a "reduplicated image, punning on ['Barth's'] initial" (L, 113).

If the origin of the universe is signified by the initial B, then its intended apocalypse, as we have seen in Section Six of the previous chapter, is signified by another initial, the

letter S, "the one hallowed by Marconi seventeen years before and by James Joyce as the first in a scandalous novel he'd just begun serializing in The Little Review" (L, 418), which letter visually monogrammed the landscape of the Niagara Frontier after the explosions that were intended to initiate the Second American Revolution. The initial S thus not only signifies the start of a scandalous novel and of telegraphic communication, but also a possible alphabetical cancellation of that same textual universe that another initial supposedly started.

That the letters of the alphabet also serve as an important framing device in LETTERS is obvious, if only from its acrostic title. The different letters of the title of LETTERS, themselves made up of other letters, as the acrosticon in table (8) has shown, provide the alphabetical letter-frame for the production of the text. Words also consist of framed individual alphabetical letters, which letters are in themselves also involved in the act of framing, as they frame the gaps in between the letters, thus, as O'Donnell suggests in Passionate Doubts, "the whole system of a given language, according to John Barth's analogy, derives its significances from the relationships between alphabetical parts" (O'Donnell, 1986: 41). Speaking about one of Italo Calvino's stories from Cosmicomics, Barth observes in an interview that

in the last lines of the story the narrator imagines pursuing [his] rival around the curls of the letters, hiding in the bend of the C or around the loop of the R - [it] raises my hair to hear that, because that's the kind of preoccupation I am involved with, the recognition of

everything we do, everything we express comes around to those empty spaces between the letters. (Glaser-Wöhler, 1977: 240)

It is in the curls of the letters that Barth's proper name in the game of Derridean "antonomasia" is located. And it is in the blanks between the letters that Barth here locates the play of language, the narrative quest for meaning, as the quote above clearly shows. This is corroborated by Carla B. Silver in The Tidewater Tales, who tells Peter Sagamore that Scheherazade had told May Jump, his wife's ex-lover, that "good readers read the lines and better readers read the spaces" (TT, 534). O'Donnell, however, thinks it is fanciful to attribute motivations to initials and alphabetic letters. But as Derrida has so clearly shown, signature effects can be detected in given texts and Barth's literal interest in the materiality and productivity of letters is a clear indication of this as is his play on putting letters into action.

Derrida's investigation of the relationship between words and things has, as we have seen above, resulted in a generative mechanism of intertextual literary production. The double bind of the signature event has absorbed the proper name, and, at the same time, by absorbing it, has lost it. As Ambrose voices "his ambivalent reflections on the phenomenon of proper names" in Lost in the Funhouse: "I and my sign are neither one nor quite two" (LF, 32). Again Derrida in Glas:

A text 'exists,' resists, consists, represses, lets itself be read or written only if it is worked (over) by the illegibility of the proper name. I have not - not yet - said that the proper name exists, or that it becomes illegible when it falls (to the tomb) in the signature. The proper name resounds, losing itself at once, only in the instant of its *debris*, when it is broken, scrambled, jammed, while touching, tampering with the *seing*. (Derrida, 1986: 33R)

By inserting the *seing*, or signature, into the body of the text, it turns into a stony object, becomes petrified, and in doing so, identity is lost, it becomes part of the text. As it signs itself, the proper name loses itself, and as it loses itself, it signs itself. This is the double bind of the signature. And this is exactly what Barth tries to avoid happening, by playing games with the Author's signature in LETTERS, since he, as author, in an overt attempt to escape this petrification, has left twenty-eight of the thirty letters from the Author unsigned.

The play on the authorial signature also takes the form of a play with the different selves of the "Author" in LETTERS and the "author" of LETTERS, both of which are signified by the same signifier "I", as Edgar Dryden points out. The "John Barth, Esq., Author" character in LETTERS is

born out of the exchange of letters between the Author and his characters, an exchange that takes the form of a

fictional history of the works of John Barth, a 'story' of his stories. And as that story is told in LETTERS by letters, we follow the movements of 'John Barth' from Cambridge to Johns Hopkins, to Pennsylvania, to Buffalo, to Baltimore and watch as a 'local lad' makes good and becomes a Doctor of Letters. (Dryden, 1988: 180)

Barth himself admits in an interview that the "Author" in LETTERS "is certainly an authorial chap like me" (Reilly, 1981: 4). Yet the same Author in LETTERS refuses to acknowledge his own existence in the novel by refusing to sign the letters he sends to his fellow-characters. He denies recalling meeting Todd Andrews in the Cambridge Yacht Club in 1954 (L, 191), and likewise denies receiving fictional material from A.B. Cook VI out of which he crafted The Sot-Weed Factor. And Lady Amherst calls him a "Near But Distant Neighbor" (L, 181), who, when she intends visiting him in his cottage at Lake Chautauqau, is not at home (L, 352).

But then, in another double remove, the absence of the signatory within the Author's letters in the text is undone by the parergonality of that same text, since all letters are preceded by explanatory headings by the extradiegetic Author. In spite of the absence of the signature within the text, there is no escape from the signature in the sense that the *parergon* has taken control over the text. If we see the letter as *ergon*, the *parergon*, the frame, could be seen to serve here not simply as the exteriority, or a surplus, but, as Derrida puts it in The Truth in Painting, as "the internal structural link which rivets

[it] to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*" (Derrida, 1987: 59). Like the signature the *parergon* is neither simply inside nor outside the work or *ergon*; like the signature it signs the text from within as well as from outside. It inscribes something, writes Derrida,

which comes as an extra, exterior to the proper field [...] but whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking. It is lacking *in* something and it is lacking *from* itself. (Derrida, 1987: 56)

The *parergon* is an outside called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside -- in other words, in another double bind, similar to that of the signature, the frame excludes as frame and outside the frame.

What is the authorizing signature; authorial identity; what are literary properties? I am not after the specifics of particular texts or authors, in the same way as Harold Bloom was not interested in the study of influence, but I am interested in the basic tenets of deconstruction regarding literary properties and the notion of author-ity, and how signature effects operate in Barth's later fiction. Since, as Derrida suggests, there is nothing outside the text, implying that language has become the model for explaining everything else, signature effects can be used to investigate the construction of authorship and the

author-function in language. As Derrida wonders in Glas, "will one ever know whether the signature has arrived at its text, whether the text itself has arrived at a proper name" (Derrida, 1986: 42R).

Textuality instantiates self-difference and eludes the closure implied by *parergon* and signature, as the signature "can never incorporate the surplus of its performance in what it can say about itself" (Kamuf, 1988: 48). The very performance of the literary intention is grounded in the displacement of the author by the intention of an other. The attempt to assign responsibility for a text's properties to a single author, whose ownership is guaranteed by signature, is inevitably undermined by their own premises. "To give a text an Author," writes Roland Barthes, "is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (Barthes, 1977: 147). It is impossible to attribute a text to any single, full subject, to the signature outside the book. The *a priori* iterability of the signature and of writing cannot be disputed; the authorial intention always entails the inevitability of disfiguration or death of the author within citation by the other (readerly) intention it prefigures.

The signature by the very nature of its repeatable, iterable, imitable form corrupts the singular intention of its production. E.D. Hirsch has observed that a text's meaning must always be what an author intends it to mean.⁴⁶ His basic position in Validity in Interpretation is that literary meaning is absolute and resistant to historical change. Meaning is

something which the author *wills* (Hirsch, 1976: 47). John Searle, in a reply to Derrida's "Signature Event Context," likewise asserts that "there is no getting away from intentionality" (Searle, 1977: 202). Derrida, however, in response to Searle, stresses the necessity of rethinking intentionality in "Limited Inc abc" as "a differential structure within a general iterability or citationality" (Kamuf, 1988: 191). Intentionality is absent from a text as the author is absent from the text: every written text supposes the absence of its author in spite of the presence of the signature. Every time a reader reads a text, she inscribes her own presence, or signature, into that text. This birth of the reader, says Barthes, is of necessity at the expense of "the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1977: 148). Umberto Eco likewise insists that "it is not true that works are created by their authors. Works are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors" (Eco, 1986: 199).

This point is repeated six years later in "Between Author and Text" in Interpretation and Overinterpretation: "[...] I am not speculating about the author's intentions but about the text's intention, or about the intention of that Model Author that I am able to recognize in terms of textual strategy" (Eco, 1992: 69). Eco's Model Author is nothing else than an explicit textual strategy, the opposite of the empirical author, who has read others' critical interpretations of his text, and is aware of the discrepancies between these interpretations (the intention of the text) and his own intention.

Derrida, on the other hand, does not, "invoke the absence, pure and simple, of intentionality" (Kamuf, 1988: 56) nor does he break with intentionality, he rather sees the text questioning the "*telos*" of intention or intentionality. In "Signature Event Context" he says:

For a writing to be a writing it must continue to 'act' and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed, be it because of a temporary absence, because he is dead or, *more generally, because he has not employed his absolutely actual and present intention or attention, the plenitude of this desire to say what he means, in order to sustain what seems to be written 'in his name'.* (Derrida, 1988: 56)

Intention is, Derrida concludes, in other words, "*a priori* (at once) *différance*: differing and deferring, in its inception" (Derrida, 1988: 56).

The effect of the signature is that of the *redistribution of textual agencies*. How does the author-function operate in the age of electronic reproduction, in the age of photocopier and video machines, faxes, computers, e-mail, etc.? Copyright law can be seen as a contemporary attempt to contain the author function, a function that, as shown in the first section of this chapter, only came into being in the late fifteenth century, the late Middle Ages, when we saw a move away from multi-authored texts to a subsequent rise of private authorship.

As I propose in this thesis, John Barth seems to offer a radical intertextual alternative to the institution of authorship, firstly in that he purposely recycles works by himself and by others, and secondly in that he self-consciously engenders himself within his text and has others engender him in that same text. Derrida in his turn also attempts to unnerve discourses about textual ownership, to unsettle the institution of the author's right to some property, by offering in Glas an instrument to unnerve claims of ownership. He writes: "to insinuate the delicate, barely visible stem, an almost imperceptible cold lever, scalpel or stylus in order to unnerve [...] then dilapidate enormous discourses that always end up, even though they deny it more or less, by attributing an author's rights: that comes back to me, the signature belongs to me" (Derrida, 1986: 3R). By being unnerved, the signature becomes removed from the nerve and is thus deprived of force. The signature seems to belong to no one, neither signer nor reader.

Thus the signature displaces and reverses the conceptual order in which it is articulated. As Derrida has shown and I hope to have shown for John Barth's case, rehearsals of *différance* and reversal are inevitable in discussing the author's conflicted relationship to his own authorship. The signature has become a trope in poststructuralist thinking as the representation of the destabilization of meaning.

Just one more example will suffice to underscore exactly this point of destabilization -- that is, the case of Bea Golden from LETTERS. Her full name is at one point in the novel "Jeannine Patterson Mack Singer Bernstein Golden," to which later

the title "Regina de Moninatrix" (L, 644) is added for her role with Jerome Bray and his computer LILYVAC II. Fogel and Slethaug argue that this name-play is "a joke" on Barth's part "in the divorce-oriented contemporary era" (Fogel & Slethaug, 1990: 160), whereas I would rather argue this multiple naming to be an illustration of the inability or displacement of ownership of identity, Marsha Blank Mensch's name, to which a further surname Horner is being added, being another case in point. The impossibility of attributing unified identity to a proper name has become another destabilizing operation in textuality. The act of naming is in poststructuralist textuality no longer an act of appropriation, of taking possession,⁴⁷ in the same way as a husband takes possession of his wife by naming her with his name. Being named, as Neels argues in Plato, Derrida, and Writing, "already places one in a system of signifiers where all names belong to others, where all the names depend on all the other names for their signifying value rather than standing outside those names and founding a separate, whole identity" (Neels, 1988: 231, n34). Barth's investigation of the relationship between words to things, between proper names and individuals, has, like Derrida's, resulted in a generative mechanism of textual production.

When I speak of the inevitability of disfiguration or death, as I did above, I am not referring (but in a sense I suppose I am) to Barthes' pronouncement. After being pronounced dead by Barthes, the author, as was argued in Chapter III, has been resuscitated again by among others feminists critics, inter-

textual practitioners⁴⁸ and by Derrida, as the signature seems to have become one of the most constant preoccupations in his later works. Beside Glas, Signsponge, The Truth in Painting and The Post Card, the signature is again looked at from yet another, this time corporeal, angle in Memoirs of the Blind.

In the same way as the signature focusses our attention on the production of textuality, the marks or lines in drawings and paintings have become foregrounded in discussions of materiality in contemporary art history.⁴⁹ The signature, argues Derrida in Memoirs of the Blind, like the mark or line in a drawing, deals with the status of the frame or border, the border between the world of representation and the world of the real, and can therefore be linked to the self-portrait. What is at stake in the signature, is also at stake in the self-portrait, that is, the quality of its uniqueness which is at the same time effaced by its repeatability and iterability. The repeatability of the signature is the condition of its singularity. The same double bind we have seen above, also exists in writing, and is played games with in John Barth's use of the signature in his epistolary LETTERS.

In "Ulysses Grammophone" in Acts of Literature Derrida adds another aspect to this double bind of the signature: like all other signatures, he argues, it also involves a "yes." There is a difference between writing your proper name and signing your name, for writing out one's name is not yet signing. When Derrida went to a conference of Joyce scholars in Frankfurt in 1984, he thought back to the time he was travelling to another conference in Tokyo:

In a plane, if you write out your name on the identity card which you hand in on arrival in Tokyo, you have not yet signed. You sign when the gesture with which, in a certain place, preferably at the end of the card or the book, you inscribe your name again, takes on the sense of yes, this is my name, I certify this, and yes, yes, the *synthetic* performative of a promise and a memory conditioning every commitment. We shall return to this obligatory departure point of all discourse, following a circle which is also that of the yes, of the 'so be it,' of the amen and the hymen. (Derrida, 1992: 279)

VI. Authorship and Author-ity in Barth's Later Fiction

Derrida argues that self-portraits are like the signature versions of the double bind and can thus be seen as an allegory of writing. The three part distinction between object-subject-signatory can be found in both. This is where I have argued John Barth and his re-thinking of the notion of authorship and author-ity comes in. Can John Barth's inclusion of the "John Barth, Author"-character signing from the outside of the text in LETTERS, or his construction of an author who lives in similar circumstances in Chesapeake Bay, as "John Barth, author" signing from within the text in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales, be seen as a signature, or, by extension perhaps, as a form of self-portrait? And does this form of self-portrait thus become an

allegory of writing as Derrida argues that Fantaine la Tour's self-portraits have become?

There is certainly enough evidence to be found to substantiate this point of view. "Given Barth's view of the Author," writes O'Donnell, "the phenomenon of 'John Barth' exposing us to a critique of a novel (his 'own') where his authorial self is anonymously present complicates the issues of authority and authorship that LETTERS explores at length" (O'Donnell, 1986: 169, n29). Heide Ziegler points to similarities between the character of Ambrose Mensch, in Lost in the Funhouse as well as in LETTERS, and that of John Barth, Author. Both were born in 1930, both reside in Dorchester County, Maryland, both are "myopic, and this leads them both to neglect the visible world in order to 'see' the truth of the invisible world of imagination. And both Ambrose and Barth decide to become writers" (Ziegler, 1987: 86). Charles B. Harris points at similarities in Sabbatical between Barth's second wife, Shelly Rosenberg, as recounted in his narrative piece "Teacher" in Harper's, and Susan Seckler Turner, Fenn's second wife, who are both teachers at an exclusive girls' school (Harris, 1990: 422-423), and the similarities in a double remove between Fenn and Susan and their "real life counterparts" in The Tidewater Tales, Frank Talbott and Lee Ann Silver, who are said to be the "true" authors of Sabbatical. Other similarities between the lives of Peter Sagamore and Frank Talbott in The Tidewater Tales and Fenwick Turner in Sabbatical on the one hand and John Barth's on the other have already been hinted at. In an interview with students at Southern Illinois University, published in Papyrus, one of the

questions asked was: "How much of your life pops up in your novels?," to which Barth answered: "My characters wear an occasional purple heart or distinguished service medal from my own biography, but unlike Nabokov, I don't deplore that on principal. God knows, one of the virtues of coaching other writers is that you learn to be very pluralistic about these matters" (Howell, 1987: 48).

By turning the author into Author Barth makes, as Ziegler argues, the capital-A Author in LETTERS into "the ultimate hero of Barth's fiction" (Ziegler, 1987: 86). By turning his "real" situation into a fictional one, and turning his real identity into the role of Author, the author effaces himself from the text, in the same way as the Author, as we have seen in Section Four of Chapter II, effaces himself from the text in his two letters to the Reader, by playing on the signifier "now," in "LETTERS is now begun" (L, 42) and "LETTERS is now ended" (L, 771). Apart from the echoes of the author in the two alter egos in the text, Ambrose Mensch and Lady Amherst, and in an alter ego doubly removed, Arthur Morton King, Barth's intradiegetic Author is not only a self-portrait of the author, but has as an extra-diegetic construct also come to serve as an allegory of writing. Barth's sense of the Author, who is the creator of the text, as one who is "authorised to authorship" (L, 759), in a Heideggerian sense associates the act of writing with the act of physical engendering, as we have seen in an earlier section in the courtship of Lady Amherst and Ambrose Mensch, resulting in their marriage. Ziegler furthermore points out that the only time that the lives of the creator and his creation overlap is during the

period of conception. This short moment of tethering to the source could be seen as exactly that moment that Derrida refers to as the moment or "graft" of presence that precedes absence, starting the process of *différance*.

In LETTERS this relationship between writing and being has taken on the metaphoric guise of the relationship between pen and penis, as was argued in Section Six of Chapter III and Sections Two and Three of chapter IV. Barth has engendered himself as a character in his own fiction, by reenacting himself as a capital-A Author in his own fiction. The author has become the Author who, as a creator - apart from his roles as instigator and rearranger - also operates as an engenderer, as Ziegler puts it, "engendering something on something else" (Ziegler, 1987: 85); he is, after all, the engenderer of all his characters, who at the same time engender him, since they have become part of his self-history.⁵⁰ The questions of who is authoring whom and who has author-ity over whom are what is at stake in the novel; the role of Author itself thus becomes the focal point of the narrative and allows the narrative to turn into an allegory of authorship, narration and writing. This is, as has been argued throughout this thesis, Barth's project.

Conclusion

I have argued in this thesis that John Barth's re-thinking of the notion of authorship in the late twentieth century seems to signify the demarcation of a period that came into being in the late fifteenth century. Barth has, through a radical intertextuality, attempted to re-think notions of authorship, literature and literary form in his later fiction. He has remoulded the traditional concept of intertextuality and transformed it into something new, into a poststructuralist intertextuality of immediate accessibility and availability. Barth has thus offered the literary culture of his period a possible narrative solution to the impasse in which the modernist novel, particularly of the avant-garde sort, found itself in the nineteen-sixties and -seventies.

It has been my concern throughout to demonstrate that John Barth is one of the few "critical" authors in contemporary American fiction, who, having first diagnosed an exhaustion of possibilities in the novel as a genre, has creatively pointed the way out of this narrative crisis, while at the same time rendering a creative account of literary history until that particular point of crisis. Barth's seventh novel, LETTERS (1979), can be seen as his most radical programmatic statement for the replenishment of letters, Sabbatical: A Romance (1982), The Tidewater Tales: A Novel (1988) and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991) as the fictional enactment of this programme. Barth's later fiction also constitutes an intertextual critique of fiction as part of his narrative investigation into

the genesis of fiction. His later works can indeed be read as metafictional treatises on the origin of fiction.

The traditional relationship between author and text, as I have argued, is challenged in contemporary theories of intertextuality. The author as an individual is no longer seen as the sole origin and creator of a text, but instead is seen as a medium through which text is created. Likewise, the notion of authorial originality has been replaced with that of imitation or repetition. Barth's acceptance of repetition directly follows from his belief that the only viable type of contemporary novel is one which does not attempt to imitate life directly, but attempts to imitate the fiction of life instead. This conviction has led to his re-writing of the notion of mimesis. In turn, poststructuralist mimesis provides the reader with the key for unlocking the ubiquitous duplications, repetitions, revolutions, re-writings and echoes in Barth's later fiction.

Most significantly of all, when in his latest novels narrative is seen as providing a programme for living, we have arrived at narrativist mimesis, the ultimate form of post-structuralist mimesis. In this form of mimesis narration has almost literally come to equal living, as the language of narration is used to live in the world and not to refer to things of the world. It represents no reality outside itself. Both life and story are governed by the same narrative principles, the only difference being that life "out there" is unavoidably limited and thus teleological, while a narrativist mimetic life-story is limitless and cyclical. Barth has positioned himself in the centre of the debate on poststructuralist intertextuality by his

dislocating of the traditional triptych author/reader/text. He has dislodged all three agencies so as to re-construct each of them creatively as a meaning-producing site of textuality.

No doubt Barth's work raises more questions than this thesis could address, let alone answer. The skeptical reader could claim that his work is self-consciously repetitive, but it can be seen, through my various analyses, that Barth has effectively answered these critics by going back, through story, to the "springs of narrative."

By offering intertextual readings of his later fiction and by introducing the notion of narrativist mimesis as a key to unlock the treasure-house of Barth's later fiction, this thesis has attempted to analyse his use of repetition and further an understanding of Barth's position in American literature.

Further areas of research might include in-depth analyses of Barth's three latest novels in the light of this thesis' findings; another area of research could be an examination of the impact Barth's re-thinking of literary form and his ideas on re-writing have had on the production of fiction by his peers and successors. That this is not an unimportant issue is shown, for instance, by the recent controversy surrounding David Leavitt's novel While England Sleeps (1993), a partial re-write of Stephen Spender's auto-biographical World Within World (1948), for which Spender has taken Leavitt to court.

As this case clearly shows, intertextuality has in contemporary literary fiction indeed come to be seen both as a strategy of writing and a site of text production. This is where the significance of Barth's project lies.

Notes to Chapter I:

1. This is my definition of the term "intertextuality." In my definition intertextuality is treated as a strategy of writing and a site of text production rather than as a literary/philosophical concept. It is, to use Alan Thiher's phrase, a mix of theory and practice: a theory of the production of discourse and a mode of composition (Thiher, 1984: 183).
There is a lot of confusion concerning the use and definition of the term intertextuality, which confusion is referred to in almost all introductions to intertextuality. See, for instance, O'Donnell & Davis, 1989: ix-xxii; Morton & Still, 1990: 1-44; Clayton & Rothstein, 1991: 3-36; Plett, 1991: 3-29.
2. For argument's sake Lost in the Funhouse and Chimera are referred to here as novels five and six respectively. The ten novels referred to are:
 1. The Floating Opera (1956);
 2. The End of the Road (1958);
 3. The Sot-Weed Factor (1960);
 4. Giles Goat-Boy, or the Revised New Syllabus (1966);
 5. Lost in the Funhouse (1968);
 6. Chimera (1972);
 7. LETTERS (1979);
 8. Sabbatical: A Romance (1982);
 9. The Tidewater Tales: A Novel (1988);
 10. The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor (1991).
3. In O'Donnell & Davis (1989: 239-279).
4. The stories of The Thousand Nights and a Night are more popularly known as The 1001 Nights or The Arabian Nights, in Sir Richard Burton's translation, dating back to 1885.
5. In Positions Derrida speaks about elements in the signifying system: "Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces" (Derrida, 1981: 26).
6. "Différance," Margins of Philosophy (1982).
7. In so far as possible I have used the English translation in The Kristeva Reader, edited by Toril Moi. Oxford, Blackwell, 1986. The original French quote is to be found in Kristeva, 1974: 59-60.
8. Kristeva's neologism "thetic" refers to the "precondition for meaning and signification" (Kristeva, 1986: 112), as "origin and transcendence" it "conditions the possibilities of truth specific to language" (Kristeva, 1986: 110). Margaret Waller's translation reads: "*the thetic is the precondition for both enunciation and denotation.*" (Julia

Kristeva. Revolution and Poetic Language. New York, Columbia University Press, 1984: 53).

9. My translation. The French text reads: "[...] *tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte*" (Kristeva, 1969: 146).
10. Margaret Waller's translation reads: "the formation of a new one," instead of "the formation of the new one" (Julia Kristeva. Revolution in Poetic Language. New York, Columbia University Press, 1984: 59).
11. My translation. The French text reads: "*Dans l'espace d'un texte plusieurs énoncés, pris à d'autres textes, se croisent et se neutralisent*" (Kristeva, 1969: 113).
12. See note 2 to this chapter.
13. The original title is Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes (Paris, Seuil, 1975). Hereafter referred to as RB. Ann Jefferson, in "Autobiography as Intertext" in Morton & Still (1990: 108-129), positions Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes in a series of autobiographies by French *nouveaux romanciers*. Other texts in this series are Nathalie Sarraute's Childhood (1983) and Alain Robbe-Grillet's Le miroir qui revient (1984) and its sequel Angélique, ou l'enchantement (1987). Jefferson suggests that these autobiographies invoked heresy and scandal as "the genre implies an authorial figure which the *nouveau roman* had always vigorously denied" (Jefferson, 1990: 109).
14. In an interview in Papyrus one of the interviewers asks Barth if he is in his bulky novels staving off "the horror, the terror" of having nothing more to say. Barth refers in his answer to Beckett's Watt: "It's Watt who says, 'Now I shall speak and then you will hear my voice no more, only the silence, the silence of which the universe is made.' No doubt that is the impulse [...]" (Howell, 1987: 44).
15. That this was not a far-fetched idea is proved by an article on "interactive fiction" in a recent issue of New Literary History, in which Richard Ziegfeld, given the software developments in the 1980's, puts forward a new genre of computer-generated fiction. He proposes in "Interactive Fiction: A New Literary Genre?" a literary software programme of interactive fiction in which readers are provided with alternate versions of a character's viewpoint, interpolate coloured, animated graphics, and lay-out experiments. In LETTERS Jerome Bray programmes his LILYVAC II computer with classical novels from world literature, Monarch Notes on literature, historical data and narrative theories in his attempt to generate the ultimate novel.
There is also a type of computer-activated text that is known as "hypertext," which term has nothing whatsoever to

do with Genette's notion of hypertext (1982). Nicole Yankelovich e.a. give the following description of a hypertext computer environment in "Intermedia" in IEEE Computer 21, January 1988: 81-96: "In essence, a hypertext system allows authors or groups of authors to link information together, create paths through a body of related material, annotate existing texts, and create notes that direct readers to either bibliographic data or the body of the referenced text" (1988: 81). A good example of such hypertextual activities is the use of e-mail, recently introduced at UCT.

16. In the Papyrus interview Barth denies ever having faced a writer's block. Speaking about the protagonist of The Tidewater Tales, one of Barth's many alter egos, he says: "[...] he is a minimalist. And he's blocked, which [knocks on the table], thank the Lord, I've never been" (Howell, 1987: 48).
17. Djean, one of Barth's avatars in The Tidewater Tales, had faced exactly the same problem as Barth in his writing career. When he meets medieval Scheherazade in twentieth-century Maryland, he observes: "Wherever it came from, the message had been the same: *What you've done, is what you'll do*. And at first it had depressed him, for professional reasons [...]. Nothing ahead but repetition or silence? But he was so far from finished saying what he wanted to say [...] and so determined to tell along, tell along, whether with or against the winds of fashion [...]" (TT, 599).
18. Genette's hypertext is not to be confused with the definition of "hypertext" in note 15 to this chapter.
19. My translation. The French text reads: "[...] *il s'ensuit bien clairement qu'il reste quelques beaux jours à la reactivation générique, et à l'hypertextualité en general, qui est l'une des ressources majeures. Ce qui ne signifie pas, comme on l'avance parfois niaisement, que certaines époques n'ont 'rien à dire': l'oeuvre de John Barth [...] est une bonne illustration du contraire*" (Genette, 1982: 236).
20. Robert Scholes e.a. have shown with their Textbook: An Introduction to Literary Language (1988) that teaching of *écriture* can be a very challenging and productive way for students to get to know how intertextuality operates. Two other recent useful introductions, Michael Worton and Judith Still's Intertextuality: Theories and Practice (1990) and Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History (1991), equally demonstrate the accessibility of poststructuralist thinking on intertextuality, as does Jasper Neel's Plato, Derrida, and Writing (1988).

21. The concept of genius itself belongs to the late eighteenth century.
22. The terms "positive" and "negative" are borrowed from Morgan, 1989: 241.
23. Dällenbach, *"Intertexte et autotexte,"* (1976: 282-296).
24. For an excellent introduction to semiotics see Jonathan Culler's The Pursuit of Signs (1981).
25. With regard to the issue of limitability of meaning Morgan distinguishes between structuralists and others (1989: 247).
26. See especially Bakhtin's Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (1973) and The Dialogic Imagination (1981).
27. My translation. The French text reads: "[...] *quel que soit le contenu sémantique d'un texte, sa condition de pratique signifiante présuppose l'existence d'autres discours*" (Kristeva, 1974: 388).
28. My translation. The French text reads: "*Il s'agit donc de présuppositions généralisées jouant entre des ensembles discursifs dont l'un est donné, et dont l'autre (ou les autres) [...] est à reconstruire par le lecteur*" (Kristeva, 1974: 339).
29. Kristeva warns, however, that this explosion or dissemination of meaning also allows for the subject's disintegration or loss of self.
30. See The Pleasure of the Text (1975: 58-59).
31. My translation. The French text reads: "*une relation de co-présence entre deux ou plusieurs textes, c'est à dire [...] la présence effective d'un texte dans un autre*" (Genette, 1982: 8).
32. My translation. The French text reads: "*l'intertexte, écrit-[Riffaterre] par exemple, est la perception, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une oeuvre et d'autres qui l'ont précédée ou suivie*" (Genette, 1982: 8).
33. My translation. The French text reads: "*l'intertextualité est [...] le mécanisme propre à la lecture littéraire*" (Genette, 1982: 9).
34. This is not to be confused with Northrop Frye's archetypes of literature which are more like symbols, that is, any units of any work of literature which can be isolated for critical attention.

35. My translation. The French text reads: "*c'est à dire [...] son action sur le lecteur, lieu en particulier de ce que l'on nomme volontiers [...] le contrat (ou pacte) générique*" (Genette, 1982: 9).
36. My translation. The French text reads: "*qui unit un texte à un autre texte dont il parle, sans nécessairement le citer*" (Genette, 1982: 10).
37. My translation. The French text reads: "*toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai hypertexte) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai hypotexte) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle de commentaire*" (Genette, 1982: 11-12).
38. My translation. The French text reads: "*la vieille image du palimpseste, ou l'on voit, sur le même parchemin, un texte se superposer à un autre qu'il ne dissimule pas tout à fait, mais qu'il laisse voir par transparence*" (Genette, 1982: 451).
39. My translation. The French text reads: "*une fonction nouvelle se superpose et s'enchevêtre à une structure ancienne, et la dissonance entre ces deux éléments co-présents donne sa saveur à l'ensemble*" (Genette, 1982: 451).
40. My translation. The French text reads: "*ou l'on voit comment un texte (un mythe) peut [...] en lire un autre*" (Genette, 1982: 452).
41. My translation. The French text reads: "*L'hypertexte à son mieux est un mixte indéfinissable, et imprévisible dans le détail, de sérieux et de jeu (lucidité et ludicité), d'accomplissement intellectuel et de divertissement*" (Genette, 1982: 453).
42. My translation. The French text reads: "*Mais l'humanité, qui découvre sans cesse du sens, ne peut toujours inventer de nouvelles formes, et il lui faut bien parfois investir de sens nouveaux des formes anciennes*" (Genette, 1982: 453).
43. My translation. The original text speaks of a "*[...] totalité, dont tous les auteurs ne font qu'un, et dont tous les livres sont un vaste Livre, un seul Livre infini.*" Genette has borrowed the idea from Jorge Luis Borges' line in *Enquêtes*. This line in Borges reads: "*La littérature est inépuisable pour la raison suffisante qu'un seul livre est.*" Quoted in Genette, 1982: 453.
44. See Sections Two to Four in Chapter IV on poststructuralist mimesis.
45. See Genette (1982: 244, 307) for these references to Borges.

46. In Ziegler's Facing Texts (1988: 275-286).
47. In Passionate Virtuosity Charles B. Harris brings in Heidegger's concept of repetition to account for Barth's abundant use of intertextuality. Barth's reappropriations of traditional literary forms in LETTERS is seen as a function, in Heideggerian terms, of repetition, "a resolute return to past tradition in order to recover the possibilities that generated the tradition but that have since become sedimented within it and thereby forgotten" (Harris, 1983: 166). Barth rehearses the forms and figures of the traditional novel in order to locate the "something that has not been thought" in that tradition (Harris, 1983: 169).
In this Heideggerian view of repetition the original is opened up in order to explore and restore other by-now forgotten elements of that original. Barth himself prefers to use the terms reenactment or recycling. In this revolutionary movement the materials of the past, form as well as content, are recycled to move beyond the original. I will come back to this form of repetition in Section Seven of Chapter Four.
48. The same point is reiterated in "The Literature of Replenishment": "Leaving aside the celebrated fact that, with Don Quixote, the novel may be said to *begin* in self-transcendent parody and has often returned to that mode for its refreshment [...]" (FB, 205).
49. Perseus has retracted his heroic route, Barth writes in "Getting Oriented," for reorientation. When he was making love to Calyxa, he suddenly found what he had been looking for all along: "Somewhere along that way I'd lost something, took a wrong turn, forgot some knack, I don't know; it seemed to me that if I kept going over it carefully enough I might see the pattern, find the key." And a bit further on: "Thus the endless repetition of my story. As both protagonist and author, so to speak, I thought to overtake with understanding my present paragraph as it were examining my paged past, and, thus pointed, proceed serene to the future's sentence." Perseus is indeed successful as he finds the key and moves to take his proper place in the sky, "endlessly reenacting his story in his risings and his settings" (FB, 137-138).
50. In the interview in Papyrus Barth positions himself in a tradition of specific narrative conventions, as he says: "[...] the question of what the hero did after the big story was told, what happened next, is also as old, I think, as the narrative imagination. Think of all the sequels to the Odyssey, for example, back in classical times. When you have a good story, it's hard to leave it alone. Indeed, the Odysseus story that percolates through The Tidewater Tales, for instance, was really inspired by the fact that in late classical times nobody could leave the story of Odysseus alone. It's not enough that he came

back and was reunited with Penelope and had made his peace with Poseidon and brought civil peace to his Ithacan neighbors whose sons he is butchering at the end of the story. No, the classical readers, too, wanted to know "And then what? I bet he got restless. I bet he started pacing the seashore. Maybe he went back to Calypso again." Nobody could forget the charming characterization of Nausicaä - so much, as you know, that some writers, Robert Graves among them, even believe the Odyssey to have been written by Nausicaä, in effect: the 'Homer's daughter theory.' Well, if they can't leave it alone, why should I leave it alone?" (Howell, 1987: 45-46).

51. In the Papyrus interview Barth says: "And I've included [in The Tidewater Tales] as well a story about Scheherazade that brings her for the moment into the present and leaves her stuck there. The narrative problem is how to get her back home. I'm in love with the story that I've made up for her. And I have one more story yet to tell about Scheherazade, that I've just begun to make notes on: a story about her death - as an old woman. I want to imagine a Scheherazade, whether or not she's run out of stories, who now wants to die and cannot, - the very inverse of the situation where we first meet her, where she's telling stories in order to go on with her life" (Howell, 1987: 45).
52. In the Papyrus interview Barth reminds his interviewers of the end of Don Quixote, where the narrator, Cide Hamete Benengeli, bids farewell to Don Quixote and asks his readers to tell the narrator, should they meet him, to leave Don Quixote alone in his tomb, "where he most certainly lies, stretched at full length and powerless to make a third journey, or to embark on any new expedition" (Cervantes, 1950: 940). "So, you know," says Barth in the interview, "one is hesitant to transgress against the master's advice. But I've done it" (Howell, 1987: 45).

Notes to Chapter II:

1. Riffaterre's position on reading is summarized briefly by Bennett: "Reading is a two-stage process which will lead the reader to signification via a first heuristic linear reading and a second hermeneutic reading or retroactive reading attending to the underlying matrix or hypogram" (Bennett, 1993: 10).
2. In "Textual Analysis: Poe's "Valdemar"," Roland Barthes referred to undecidability as "not a weakness, but a structural condition of narration [...]" (Barthes, 1981: 158).
3. Andrew Bennett. "Reading, in Theory." Unpublished paper. "The Experience of Theory" Conference, English Department, University of Göteborg, Sweden, September 1993. This paper will form part of the "Introduction" to Readers and Reading. Longman Critical Readers Series. Edited by Andrew Bennett. London, Longman, forthcoming (1994).
4. For an introduction to the phenomenology of reading see Paul Ricoeur's three volumes of Narrative and Time (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988). To briefly summarize Ricoeur's position, I will quote Bennett here: "'Understanding' a text necessitates a constant and unstable movement forwards and backwards in which the 'experience' of any particular moment of reading is constituted by a disturbance and dislocation of the self-identity of that moment, together with a later reconstruction of it" (Bennett, 1993: 9).
5. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, for instance, suggest in Re-Reading Levinas that "what distinguishes deconstruction as a textual practice lies in double reading, that is, a reading that interlaces at least two motifs, most often first by following or repeating the intentions of a text, in the manner of a commentary, and second within and through this repetition, leaving the order of commentary and opening up the blind spots or ellipses within the text's intentionality" (Bernasconi & Critchley, 1991: xii).
6. Derrida himself experiments with reading in Glas (1986), which he, as Gregory Ulmer reports in "Sounding the Unconscious," does not call a book, but rather "a reading effect" (Ulmer, 1986: 113). The aleatory structure of the text of Glas produces a multi-voiced discourse, "including everything from the complex oscillations between the two columns to the double inscription of homonymic or punning terms," (Ulmer, 1986: 109) which can be seen an inter-textual experiment in the effects of reading.
7. Quoted by Bennett, 1983: 6.

8. To further support this point Calinescu (1993: xii) quotes from The Uses of Literature by Italo Calvino, who observed that reading the classics "is always an act of rereading," even though "every rereading of a classic is as much a voyage of discovery as the first reading" (Calvino, 1986: 127).
9. I have made up this term to avoid confusion with Seymour Chatman's "real reader" (Chatman, 1978: 151). Also see Section Three of this chapter.
10. The terms *intradiegetic* and *extradiegetic* used in this dissertation follow Genette's definitions as inside and outside the narrative situation (Genette, 1980: 228-229). The terms *intradiegetic* and *diegetic* refer to the same narrative level and are used indifferently.
11. In The 1001 Nights Scheherazade tells the stories of the seven voyages of Sindbad the Seaman and Sindbad the Landsman (Burton, 1948: 176-225), all of which function as intertextual narratives for Barth's rewriting in The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor.
12. For further references on the different types of readers, see Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 118) and Martin (1986: 154).
13. Rimmon-Kenan writes: "While the extradiegetic narrator is a voice in the text, the extradiegetic narratee, or implied reader, is not any element of the text, but a mental construct based on the text as a whole. In fact, the implied reader parallels the implied author" (quoted in Genette, 1988: 137).
14. In his response to Rimmon-Kenan's proposal to exclude the implied narrator from the text Genette agrees in Narrative Discourse Revisited (1988) with Rimmon-Kenan's argument that the two agents, implied author and implied reader, are indeed situated beyond the narrative situation and should therefore be excluded from the narrative model. Genette and Rimmon-Kenan disagree on the status of extradiegetic narrator and narratee, but agree on the presence of both intradiegetic narrator and narratee within the boundaries of the text.
Genette suggests the following revised diagram:
extradiegetic narrator ---- extradiegetic narratee
= not implied author = implied reader
(Genette, 1988: 138).
15. Genette argues: "Contrary to the implied author, who is the idea, in the reader's head, of a real author, the implied reader is the idea, in the real author's head, of a possible reader [...]. No author [...] can address in writing a real reader: every author can address only a possible reader [...]. Perhaps it would positively be better to rechristen 'implied reader' potential reader" (Genette, 1988: 149).

16. He writes: "Each reading of a narrative fiction reconstructs its intent and principle of invention - *reconstructs*, not *constructs*, because the text's construction preexists any individual act of reading [...] the reader can constitute only one-half of that actualization. There must already exist a text for her to activate" (Chatman, 1990: 74-75).
17. The use of the term *metadiegetic* in this context is not to be confused with Genette's use of the term for a narrative in the second degree (Genette, 1980: 228). Genette admits that this term functions in a way opposite to that of its model in logic and linguistics: metalanguage is a language in which one speaks of another language, so metanarrative should be the first narrative, within which one would tell a second narrative (Genette, 1980: 228, n41). I propose to restore the original meaning in the term and will use it for a narrative above the first degree.
18. My diagram for the narrator-agent in LETTERS would be:
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| <i>metadiegetic</i> narrator | ----- | implied author |
| <i>extradiegetic</i> narrator | ----- | letter writers |
| | | including the Author |
| (<i>intra</i>) <i>diegetic</i> narrator | ----- | characters including |
| | | letter writers |
19. The eighty-eight letters are all *intradiegetic* letters. The internal letters contained within these eighty-eight *intradiegetic* letters will be referred to as *hypodiegetic* letters.
20. My *hypodiegetic* level is Genette's *metadiegetic* level. See Genette (1980: 228 n41) and the previous note to this chapter.
21. Unless the receiver of the letter reads over the letter writer's shoulder, while the letter is being written, and even then ...
22. Steven Kellman introduced this term in The Self-Begetting Novel (1980).
23. Malcolm Bradbury makes a similar point in John Haffenden's Novelists in Interview when asked about the illusoriness of "received reality": "Deconstruction is fascinating precisely because it pushes this question of authenticity to the limit. It could be said that all deconstructionist writing is meta-parody, and that what is parodies is discourse itself. The result is that many of the things which we think to be verifiable and true - because they are spoken or written - are questioned at their linguistic source" (Haffenden, 1985: 32).
24. Also see table (1), the titlepage of LETTERS, in Section Two of Chapter I.

25. James Joyce actually set a precedent for this by producing a schema for the reader as a kind of masterplan for reading Ulysses (1922).

In another contemporary novel, Hopscotch (1967, originally published in Spanish under the title Rayuela, 1963) by the Argentinian author Julio Cortázar, the author himself even suggests two different reading routes in the "Table of Instructions," in order to accommodate the different readers' preferences. The reader can either read the novel in linear order, sequentially from chapter 1 to 56, or according to the intertextual route as set out by the author in his reading instructions, skipping from chapter to chapter according to a prescribed ordering that leads back and forth in the book. To complicate matters further, a revised edition of Rayuela has recently been published. See Thiher (1984: 168-173) for a further analysis of this novel's aleatory structure.

26. Barth had earlier used the Möbius-strip form for his short story "Frame-Tale" on pages three and four in Lost in the Funhouse, for which the cooperation of the external reader had also been solicited. The reader was asked to cut out the right hand margin of page three of the novel, which was at the same time the left hand margin of page four, along the dotted line. After that the end had to be twisted and the marks AB in the bottom right corner of page three had to be pasted on to marks ab in the upper left hand corner of page four, after which the same procedure had to be repeated for CD which was to be pasted on to cd. After these preparations the story reads: "ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN (continued)" and so on, *ad infinitum*. With "Frame-Tale" Barth seemed to have created the ultimate form of a *mise en abîme*.

The same strategy would be repeated in Sabbatical, The Tidewater Tales and The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor. At the end of Sabbatical, Susan says, "if that's going to be our story, then let's begin it at the end and end at the beginning, so we can go on forever" (S, 301). The Tidewater Tales does not end with a full stop, but with a semi-colon. Moreover, the titlepage of the novel is to be found at the end, signifying the circular, or rather spiral, movement of the narrative, like in the Möbius-strip described above. This circular narrative is infinite. The possibility of the infinite book had been hinted at by one of the characters in Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths": "I had questioned myself about the ways in which a book can be finite. I could think of nothing other than a cyclic volume, a circular one. A book whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I remembered too that night which is at the middle of the Thousand and One Nights when Scheherazade (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the Thousand and One

Nights, establishing the risk of coming once again to the night when she must repeat it, and thus on to infinity" (Borges, 1970: 50-51).

27. In The Sot-Weed Factor Barth had combined a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century setting with a twentieth-century sensibility, as Elaine B. Safer points out. Historic Ebenezer Cook, poet laureate of Maryland and author of the original 1708 poem "The Sot-Weed Factor," who had satirized a foolish greenhorn persona in his poem, had in turn been satirized by Barth as British emigré Eben Cooke, himself a greenhorn who evokes laughter (Safer, 1988: 51). To underline the fictionality of his protagonist Barth had deliberately misread the name of eighteenth-century poet Ebenezer Cook by spelling the name of his fictional poet with an "e" as "Cooke."
To complicate matters further, by returning to "The Sot-Weed Factor," A.B. Cook VI also indirectly becomes a hypodiegetic internal reader of John Barth's rereading of Ebenezer Cook's 1708 poem "The Sot-Weed Factor" in The Sot-Weed Factor, which makes this into yet another textual remove from reality.
28. Barth himself had deliberately misspelt the name "Cook" as "Cooke." Also see the previous note to this chapter.
29. It is interesting to note that the writing career of Edgar Allan Poe, one of Barth's intertextual forebears, also started with a manuscript in a bottle: his first published story was "MS. Found in a Bottle" (1833). Kenneth Dauber points out in The Idea of Authorship in America that Poe's literary career has been haunted by an aura of misappropriation, starting with the beginning of his career, when he left his reader a manuscript to be found in a bottle and ending with his death, when he appointed his enemy as his literary executor (Dauber, 1990: 132).
30. Barth also literally started his literary career as a reader. In Chimera we read that when he was a penniless student, he pushed "book-carts through the library-stacks of his university to help pay for his education, [and] contracted a passion for Scheherazade upon first reading the tales she beguiled King Shahryar with [...]" (C, 20). In "Tales Within Tales Within Tales" Barth elaborates: "But let me tell you the story of my romance with this second sort of stories: tales within tales. You've heard its beginning: that student, once upon a time, pushing his book-cart through the stacks of Johns Hopkins classics library and surreptitiously reading the fantastic literature he was supposed to be filing: The 1001 Nights, The Ocean of Story, the Panchatantra, the Metamorphoses, the Decameron, Pentameron, Heptameron, and the rest. A good many years later, that student found himself metamorphosed into a storyteller as well as a story-reader" (FB, 224).

31. As Beth A. Boehm (1989: 108) points out in "Educating Readers," Barth also expects his external reader herself to fill in the blanks as a reader. In "Title" for instance, the reader is first made aware of the fictitiousness of conventional narrative structures, after which she is invited to participate in Barth's highly self-conscious verbal play, by inscribing the blanks. Commenting upon his metafictional techniques the narrator of the story suggests that "it's self-defeating to talk about it instead of up and doing it; but to acknowledge what I'm doing while I'm doing it is exactly the point. Self-defeat implies a victor, and who do you suppose it is, if not blank?" (LF, 107).
- And in The Tidewater Tales Katherine Sherritt writes that Scheherazade tells May Jump that "good readers read the lines and better readers read the spaces" (TT, 534).
32. The relevant passage in Barthes' "On Reading" in The Rustle of Language reads: "Reading is a conductor of the Desire to write [...]; not that we necessarily want to write like the author we enjoy reading. [...] This has been very clearly put by the writer Roger Laporte: "A pure reading which does not call for another writing is incomprehensible to me. [...] Reading Proust, Blanchot, Kafka, Artaud gave me no desire to write on these authors (not even, I might add, like them), but to write." In this perspective, reading is a veritable production: no longer of interior images, of projections, of hallucinations, but literally of work" (Barthes, 1986: 40-41).
- Barthes had already in an earlier (1970) paper, called "Writing Reading," called attention to the connection between writing and reading. Calinescu points out that Barthes "joins here a long line of thinkers, starting with Friedrich Schiller" (Calinescu, 1993: 141).
33. In The Ethics of Reading (1987: 120).
34. His literary double, Arthur Morton King, reacts likewise by also denying Ambrose his presence: "May we suppose that "Arthur Morton King" has gone to dwell with "Yours Truly"?" (L, 758). "It's silence I'm stung into," laments Ambrose in a letter to Yours Truly (L, 427). Ambrose reads others' messages, but others refuse to read him.
35. And when film director Reg Prinz proposes to shoot a film version of "certain themes and images" (L, 256) from Todd's life as featured in The Floating Opera, we have definitely arrived at one of the ultimate forms of intertextuality, referred to by Davis (1985) as poststructuralist mimesis, where the text solely exists as an imitation, not of reality, but as an intertextual product of a mimetic act, imitating, that is, reading and writing, other works. I will come back to this notion in Section Two of Chapter IV on the text as a site of intertextuality.

36. Apart from the literary intertexts mentioned, there are also quite a few non-literary intertexts that play a role in this novel. Among these are, for instance, different articles in The Baltimore Sun (S, passim), the Amnesty Internation Report on Torture (S, 123, n40), Philip Agee's Inside the Company (S, 42, n35), and John T. Irwin's American Hieroglyphics on Edgar Allan Poe (S, 300).
37. For a more detailed discussion of the nature of this erotic relationship see Section Five of the next chapter.
38. This has also been pointed out by Edgar Dryden in "The Romance of the Word" (Dryden, 1988: 175).
39. Like Fenwick Turner and Susan Seckler in Sabbatical, Peter Sagamore and Katherine Sherritt in The Tidewater Tales are also professional readers, Peter being an ex-CIA agent, who as a reader of signs as turned into a producer of signs with his book on the Agency, and Katherine a librarian. And in a double movement of poststructuralist mimesis (see especially Chapter IV on this notion, and also note 35 to this chapter) their doubles in this novel, and Fenwick's and Susan's for that matter, Frank Talbott and Leah Silver, are professional readers too, Frank being an author and Leah being a professor of literature. Scheherazade is also a reading subject who turns into a writing subject: "Young Scher there had studied story-telling like young Peter Sagamore in College Park and Portugal. Those thousand books of stories she collected; all those poets she learned by heart. She had boned-up in her library on the art of telling stories [...]" (TT, 577). The next two decades after the thousand and second night she devoted her time to "transcribing, editing and publishing in thirty volumes the tales she'd told, plus the story of her telling them to Shahryar" (TT, 578).
40. As E.P. Walkiewicz (1986: 137) points out in John Barth, this merging of two narrative voices into one found its commencement in LETTERS, when the two voices of Ambrose Mensch and Lady Amherst were combined in the first person plural pronoun "we," turning their separate monologues into a dialogue:

P.S.: Adieu, Art. Now: Will you, dear Germaine, circa 5 P.M. Saturday, 13 September 1969, take me Ambrose as your lawful wedded husband, in dénouements as in climaxes, in sevens and in sixes, till death do us et cet.?

(Pause!

(Hm!

(Well ...

(I will. Yes. I will.) (L, 764-765)

At the beginning of The Tidewater Tales we read that "author and reader had remet now and commenced the story of their life together" (TT, 39), which merging would

eventually result in a "coupled viewpoint for The Tidewater Tales: A Novel" (TT, 643). "Whatever else we are," narrate the protagonists of The Tidewater Tales, "[we] are principally the principal characters in a work of fiction entitled The Tidewater Tales: A Novel" (TT, 239).

Notes to Chapter III:

1. It was a tenet of New Criticism that the locus of meaning was the text, not the author. The New Critics tried to close the meaning of the text, whereas in contemporary theory the text is opened up.
2. See especially pages 12-14 of Foucault's introduction to The Archeology of Knowledge (Foucault, 1972: 3-17).
3. The first two sections of chapter V, on Barth's rethinking of authorship, give an historical introduction as to how the notion of authorship developed over the centuries, from the writing practices of the Middle Ages to the modern period.
In summary: Until the modern period, the most common method of creating a narrative was "expanding on inherited materials" (Martin, 1986: 170). In the Renaissance imitation and derivation had been common practice. The modern period, starting with the Enlightenment, showed a developing discontinuity with that past, as more and more value was put on individuality and originality. Interpreting and rewriting of existing narratives was no longer practised in the modern period, as imitation and derivation came to be considered to be inferior. Narratives even became personal property after the introduction of copyright laws. At the end of the twentieth century, however, Barth resurrects ancient writing practices in an attempt to rejuvenate literary form.
4. Derrida had in fact already ten years earlier postulated in Of Grammatology (1967) that "the names of authors [...] have here no substantial value" (Derrida, 1976: 99). He refuses to see texts in terms of authorial intention. For him the author does not function as origin or source of signification, as "the proper name has never been [...] anything but the original myth of a transparent legibility present under the obliteration" (Derrida, 1976: 109).
5. See also note 13 to Chapter I on the "scandal" that the autobiographies of the French *nouveaux romanciers* had caused in the 1980s, as the genre of the *nouveau roman* had always implied the absence of an authorial figure.
6. The result of this, writes Norris, "has been a kind of radical euphoria, much like the consequences of reading Nietzsche before one got around to reading either Kant or Hegel" (Norris, 1985: 223).
7. "Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re)Birth of the Author," by Susan Stanford Friedman. In Clayton & Rothstein (1991: 146-180).

8. The title and subtitle of Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts are in themselves indications of Miller's refusal to dismiss the concept of the author's agency. Miller's book can be seen as an experiment with what she calls "narrative criticism," in which the personal and the theoretical, anecdote and text are interwoven. As the write-up on the cover of the book says, "Getting Personal examines the rhetorical strategies of a feminism traversed by internal debates over its own self-representations." Miller's political intertextuality, in which she places herself "at a deliberately oblique (or textual) angle" (Miller, 1986: 111) positions her in opposition to French anonymous intertextuality. Other American feminist critics who have "assumed the agency of the woman writer in intertextual dialogue with precursors and peers" (Friedman, 1991: 175, n17), in Bloomian literary histories are, for instance, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Patricia Yaeger, Susan Howe and Susan Stanford Friedman herself.
9. The full quote from The Ethics of Reading reads: "Reading is not of the text as such but of the thing that is latent and gathered within it as a force to determine in me a revision of what has been the latent law of the text I read. Re-seeing which is also a rewriting, that form of writing we call criticism or teaching. This rewriting, however, is not a misreading in the sense of a wanton deviation from the text freely imposed by my subjectivity or by my private ideology or by the ideology of the community of readers to which I belong. My subjectivity, those ideologies, are more functions of the text, already inscribed within it, than anything coming from the outside. Criticism as re-writing is truly ethical and affirmative, life-giving, productive, inaugural" (Miller, 1987: 120).
10. This musical metaphor aptly describes Barth's rewriting strategy. Because of its appropriateness I borrowed the phrase from Barth, and took it as the title for an essay on Barth's intertextuality in Journal of Literary Studies 8 (1/2), June 1992.
11. In "Some Reasons Why I Tell the Stories I Tell the Way I Tell Them Rather Than Some Other Sort of Stories Some Other Way" Barth writes that he went to the Juilliard School of Music at seventeen, after he had been playing drums in a homegrown jazz band since he was fifteen. At Juilliard he soon realised, however, that his talent for music was "makeshift amateur flair" and he decided to go and study journalism at Johns Hopkins University instead. After Juilliard he kept on playing with jazz groups for twenty-five years, "for money in college and early teaching days, for mere pleasure later" (FB, 7).
12. In "The Self in Fiction, or 'That Ain't No Matter, That is Nothing'," Barth extends the jazz metaphor to classical music: "One finds much on successive listenings or close

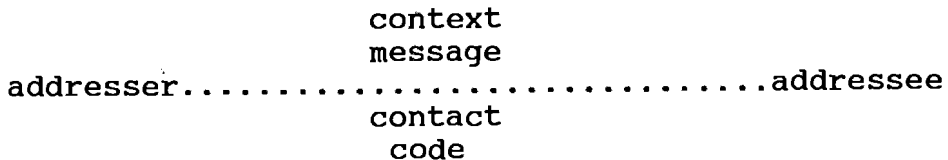
examinations of the score that one didn't catch the first time through; but the first time through should be so ravishing - and not just to specialists - that one delights in the replay" (FB, 213).

Another favourite metaphor of John Barth's for his practice of rewriting is that of the spiral. In the Preface to this dissertation I already referred to the spiralling metaphor, in "the spiral reenacts the circle, but opens out," which is a "transcension by reenactment" (FB, 170), which Barth uses to describe the ground-theme of Chimera and LETTERS. In a letter to the Author in LETTERS Lady Amherst describes Ambrose Mensch's rewriting of the story of Perseus, later published by John Barth in Chimera, as "the working out, in narrative, of logarithmic spirals, 'golden ratios,' Fibonacci series, [...] whirling triangles, chambered nautili, eclipsing binaries, spiral galaxies!" (L, 348).

13. Lady Amherst re-writes among others the beginnings of Thomas Mann's The Magical Mountain, Herman Hesse's Magister Ludi, Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited, James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake, and George Orwell's Brave New World.
14. This incident is echoed in Day 4 in "The Forest-Green Crayoning of Mrs Porter Baldwin, Jr." in The Tidewater Tales, when the ex-Mrs Porter Baldwin, Jr., also known as Katherine Sherritt, recounts how her ex-husband raped her with a forest-green crayon.
15. Patrick O'Donnell has referred to this scene as one of "authorial insemination" (O'Donnell, 1986: 59). The inverse sexuality of this scene, he writes, reflects "the problematic nature of literary beginnings" (O'Donnell, 1986: 60), as Germaine's postscript only contains repetitions of past beginnings.
16. This point is raised in "Renoving That Bible," by Valentine Cunningham in The Theory of Reading. (Gloversmith, 1984: 16).
17. I will come back in more detail to the signifier "author" in the first section of Chapter V.
18. Max F. Schulz argues in The Muses of John Barth that the omniscient voice of the authorial *deus artifex* or "the surrogate first-person point of view and self-reflexive agon, is lost in the word, and subsumed by the narrative voice created" (Schulz, 1990: 13). As Barth wrote in "Echo," "none can tell the teller from told" (LF, 99).
19. In John Fowles' The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), another contemporary self-conscious novel, the novelist is also referred to as a god, "since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely)." The novelist is no longer seen her either as "omniscient and decreeing, but in the new theological image, with freedom our first

principle, not authority" (Fowles, 1969: 82). Fowles' author has also been disinvested of authority and been resurrected with author-ity.

20. See the Preface and note 12 to this chapter for an elaboration on the significance of the spiral metaphor for Barth's project.
21. Jakobson's original communicative model is to be found in "Linguistics and Poetics," in Style in Language (Sebeok, 1964: 353) and looks thus:



22. In an interesting article on the role of memory during the shift from oral to written text production, entitled "The Mind's Eye: Memory and Textuality," Michael Riffaterre locates the memory capacity of a text in the written sign. The principal mechanism of the written text, he argues, is memory: "reading the text is not a matter of decoding contiguous signs in linear sequence, but of matching those signs against simultaneous memories stacked in paradigms" (Riffaterre, 1991: 30). The text thus not only serves as a substitute or a presupposition for memory, but also as an inscription of memory itself" (Riffaterre, 1991: 36-37).
23. This is what makes reading into a creative act, says Lotman. In this way reading is capable of generating meaning. However, a reader will never be able to find the text's meaning as intended by the author as she brings her own personality and cultural memory to bear on the text. Yet, Lotman says, this is still what the reader strives for (Lotman, 1990: 80); she tries to establish a ground for mutual understanding between herself and the author. By giving and taking, Lotman argues, by behaving "like a partner in dialogue," an understanding of the text will ultimately be achieved. The reader, argues Lotman, should use her informational flexibility in order to allow herself to be drawn closer to the world of the text.
24. Incidentally, Lotman also argues that the same processes involved in autocommunication lie at the basis of poetic creation (Lotman, 1990: 29).
25. This ties up neatly with Culler's definition of intertextuality as a network that includes "anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost" (Lotman, 1981: 103) as discussed in chapter I, yet goes against Derrida's ideas on "the present and singular intention of the production of signs" (Derrida, 1988: 20).

26. See the diagram of the different narratorial levels in LETTERS in table (9) in Section Six of this chapter.
27. Schulz suggests that the author's inclusion of himself "in quasi-biographical fashion" as "Author" in the text is "to be interpreted as his yielding the field to the 'death of the author' crowd." Or, Schulz continues, "is the smuggling of his voice and personality into the narrative to be seen as a bid for the godlike control the author once enjoyed with supreme uncontested authority?" (Schulz, 1990: 74).
28. This ties in with what Culler said in Structuralist Poetics about authors as readers of their own work: "Even if the author does not think of readers, he is himself a reader of his own work and will not be satisfied with it unless he can read it as producing effects" (Culler, 1975: 116).
29. It is the only letter written to Drew Mack by Jerome Bray, and we are not told of any response from the part of the addressee. As a matter of fact the external reader is not even informed whether the letter reaches Drew; neither is she notified whether it is mailed at all.
30. We will find the same trope returning in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales, where the main characters also find narratives floating by to be picked up from the water. In Sabbatical, for instance, the dead body of John Arthur Paisley, CIA-agent, floats the Chesapeake, which starts off the story of the disappearance of Fenwick Turner's brother, who was also a CIA-agent. And in The Tidewater Tales, for instance, Katherine Sherritt and Peter Sagamore meet with present-day reincarnations of Odysseus and Nausicaä in the persons of Theodoros and Diana Dmitrikakis, who narrate the story of what happened to Odysseus when he got home after his travels. They also meet a reincarnation of Don Quixote in the person of Captain Quicksoat, who fills them in on the third part of Don Quixote. Katherine also fishes a canister from the water which contains a play called SEX EDUCATION, which play is a rewrite of "Night-Sea Journey" from Lost in the Funhouse, but this time written from the perspective of the ova, called May and June. This story, by the way, is in itself again a rewrite of the love-story between Katherine Sherritt and her gay lover May Jump.
31. In one of the bottles Ambrose submits the manuscript of The Amateur, among which his story "Water-Message," in an attempt "to come to terms with conventional narrative and himself" (L, 149). His attempt at suicide fails and the Choptank washes the bottle up, as no-deposit bottles cannot be returned. "To oblige a certain fellow fictionist," Ambrose writes later to Yours Truly, he decides to swap the retrieved anecdotes for the literary experiments discarded by the Author, as he himself, in search of new life for letters, has "put by the traditional contaminants of fiction," like

"characterization, description, dialogue, plot, [...] even language, where [he] could dispense with it" (L, 151), which reminds us of Jerome Bray's computer project, which moves from NOVEL to NOTES through "Blank Illuminations" to NUMBERS, "the world's 1st work of Numerature" (L, 527).

32. There is an interesting connection to be made here with Kristeva's view that the writer is not the one who fills the gap, but rather the one who creates it. In writing, she argues, the writer constructs his own absence, vanishing into intertextual anonymity. The writer becomes "an absence, a blank space [...] At the very origin of narration, at the very moment when the writer appears, we experience nothingness" (Kristeva, 1980: 74). At this zero position she situates the author, structured as a signifier. The writer, transformed into the signifier "author," has become an emptiness in the text, to be filled by the reader.
33. Maurice Couturier fails to see this dichotomy in an article on Barth in Critique. In his analysis of the Inquiry and Todd Andrew's letters to his deceased father in The Floating Opera and LETTERS he sees the external reader take the place of the absent father: "the reader is and must be the absent/present addressee of Todd's self explanation," and further on, "the reader is the father of the narrator" (Couturier, 1991: 7), the narrator being Todd. As an addressee Todd is simultaneously present/absent as he claims the novel still has to be written when he reaches the last page of the novel the external reader has just finished reading. Instead of seeing the reader as the father of the narrator, the reader, when looked at in terms of the "I-I" system, should be seen as the narrator in this case, in other words, the narrator is the reader.
34. As defined in Chapter II, an **implicated** reader is constructed by the author as a dynamic co-producer of the text, operating on the metadiegetic level. See Section One of the previous chapter, also see note 9 to Chapter II.
35. This takes place on the metadiegetic narratee level. Also see table (5) in Chapter II.
36. See tables (5) and (7) in Chapter II.
37. For the sake of completeness it could also be argued that the historically real letters, such as by Pascal and Napoleon, are written by extratextual authors. These intratextual intradiegetic authors write *hypodiegetic* letters.
38. This level is called the *hyperdiegetic* level, operated on by the real author.

39. This modified scheme, like the other schemes in chapter II, dislodges Genette's definition of implied author as "an image of the author in the text" (Genette, 1988: 141). For him the implied author is the real author, and not a narrative agent (Genette, 1988: 148) in the text. There are as far as Genette can see only three instances in which the implied author is not the same as the real author, two of which concern fraudulence. The first deals with an imitative apocryphal work (Genette, 1988: 146), and the second with a text written by an unacknowledged ghostwriter (Genette, 1988: 147). The third case of dissociation of implied and real authors occurs when texts are written in collaboration, without acknowledging the dualness of the authorial agents (Genette, 1988: 147). In all other cases Genette claims the notion of the implied author to be an "imaginary" one (Genette, 1988: 145), only put forward for ideological reasons; in his model the implied author is "the authentic real author" (Genette, 1988: 143).
40. Both The Floating Opera and The End of the Road were written in 1955. The first edition (which was actually a second revised version) of The Floating Opera was published in 1957; the second edition (which was actually the original version) was published in 1967. The End of the Road was first published in 1958.
41. Yet when we take the media, the publishing industry, the lecture circuit and the academic industry into account, the author's life has also been fictionalized; this would then be the hyperdiegetic level.
42. Barth also parodies this idea, as there is one internal author in the text who refuses both the role of reader and of writing subject, that is, Reg Prinz. He has, for instance, ensured the participation of the novel's characters by a prolonged silence, as he "will not write letters" (L, 192); to keep his imagination pure, he has not read Barth's books (L, 356), on which his film script will be based and later he even refuses Ambrose Mensch to author the film script, thereby "preempting the authority of the author at every turn," as Jan Gorak puts it in God the Artist (Gorak, 1987: 184). In order to boost the authority of his own projects, authority paradoxically first has to be preempted.
43. Edgar Dryden suggests in "The Romance of the Word" that the Author's mortality and his separation from the text are suggested by the author's insistence on the presence of the reader in the text (Dryden, 1988: 208), as the reader will outlive the author, but not the Author. The Author-character in LETTERS, says Barth in an interview, "isn't the real author at all," for the real one "lives and works in a dimension quite other than that of his creatures (but reminiscent of theirs - he has made them in his image" (Reilly, 1981: 20). Dryden also points out that the writing

self - call him John Barth - announces "An end to I" (L, 169) and "shifts to the third-person viewpoint" (L, 166) in the Author's final letter to the reader (Dryden, 1988: 209).

44. In The Tidewater Tales we find a similar game being played when the external reader learns that the "real author" of Sabbatical was in actual fact not John Barth, but Franklin Key Talbott. When Frank Talbott discusses the plot of his new novel in The Tidewater Tales (TT, 557), it turns out that the plot of this novel shows a remarkable likeness to the plot of Barth's previous novel Sabbatical. Part of the narrative of The Tidewater Tales deals with the conceptualization and drafting of Sabbatical: "So last May [...] I set to work on another novel," Frank Talbott tells Peter Sagamore, "the story was actually just the log of our cruise: two people going down and coming back, trying to get their heads straight [...]" (TT, 414). It also turns out that Peter Sagamore is not the sole author of the fiction he is apparently writing, as his wife Katherine Sherritt, as co-author, also takes over part of the narration, as do Frank and Leah Talbott, Leah's mother Carla B. Silver and Katherine's ex-lover May Jump. In this diffusion of narrative voices there are moreover also reincarnated narrative voices from the past, such as those of Odysseus, Don Quixote and Scheherazade, all of whom in their own way claim author-ity over the narrative.
45. In both Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales the text also operates as a life-engendering meaning-producing mechanism: in both novels the text is self-begetting, in the sense that the process of its being written is the subject of its narrative, and in the sense that the female protagonists in each text both find themselves pregnant, the difference between the two, however, being that Susan Seckler in Sabbatical decides in favour of an abortion of what appeared to be twins and is left with only story, whereas Katherine Sherritt in The Tidewater Tales decides against it, in favour of life and is left with life and story, or life in story, story in life; in other words, the enactment of Barth's programme for the rebirth of letters.
46. Barth had already experimented with the duality in the narrating voice in Lost in the Funhouse and in Chimera, in which we find two narrative voices, one autobiographical and the other metafictional. In LETTERS we find an explosion of narrative voices, made possible by its epistolary form, ultimately merging into one in the first-person plural of Lady Amherst and Ambrose Mensch (see note 44 to Chapter II). In Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales we find a continuation of this husband and wife narrative team, who both co-author the text. The Tidewater Tales actually presents the external reader with a diffusion of narrative voices, including that of the author, but in disguised form, as "Djean". This multiplexity of authorial agent, "our collective narrator" (TT, 643), again

parodically questions and undermines the validity of the Genettian narrative model.

47. As indicated in note 45 to this chapter, both female protagonists of Barth's next two novels do indeed find themselves pregnant.
48. In "Tales Within Tales Within Tales" (FB, 235) Barth indicates that he borrowed this idea from Todorov's essay "Narrative-men," in the latter's The Poetics of Prose. I will come back to this in more detail in Section Three of the next chapter.
49. See note 45 to this chapter.
50. The second degree (or *hypodiegetic*) letters are either written by fictitious or by historical persons, such as Consuelo and Mme de Staël respectively. A further distinction can be made between direct and indirect second degree letters, as some of these letters are fully or partially quoted, such as Napoleon's letters, whereas others are only indirectly referred to, such as Mme de Staël's.
51. This presence of internal authors is repeated in Barth's next novels. As pointed out in the last section of the previous chapter, the six protagonists in Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales are also professional readers and writers. And the contemporary protagonist of The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, Simon William Behler, is also a professional author, a journalist, who got lost in medieval Baghdad. Challenged by medieval Sindbad the Sailor, he turns to story-telling to find his way back to contemporary America. The narrative act thus becomes a system through which the narrating subject literally rediscovers himself again.
52. Hart, 1965: 777-778.
53. Ibidem, 180.

Notes to Chapter IV:

1. Sections one and two of chapter V give a brief historical introduction to the writing practices of the Middle Ages through to the mid-twentieth century.
2. Although originally published in 1936, this particular essay by Benjamin has been anthologized in important collections of postmodern essays such as in, for instance, Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, edited by Brian Willis (New York, The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984). Another essay by Benjamin that had a similar impact is "The Author as Producer." Like "The Work of Art," this essay is also published in Illuminations (1963).
3. "In principle," Benjamin argues, "a work of art has always been reproducible," because "man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men" (Benjamin, 1974: 613). Many seventeenth-century painters trained pupils in their studios who were often employed to do preparatory work before the master would finish off the painting. Forgerers, like Van Meegeren, were able to perfectly copy Renaissance paintings in pursuit of gain for themselves. But, Benjamin writes in 1936, the mechanical reproduction of a work of art, as in photography, "represents something new" (Benjamin, 1974: 613).
The mechanical reproduction of writing, with the invention of the printing press, brought about an analogous revolution in the history of literature. I will come back to this in the first section of the next chapter.
4. In another sense, however, hand skills as "the artist's signature" gained in value, defined by forces operating in the market place.
5. My observation regarding CNN's role in the Gulf War at the end of the previous chapter should also be seen in this light.
6. Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941) itself has an interesting history in this respect. First rejected in 1936, it was later published in 1941. The first edition sold fewer than 600 copies and was gradually forgotten, until in 1960 an exact copy of the original was published again. Only in the nineteen seventies sales caught on, leading to several reprints.
7. It is obvious that we are faced with a paradoxical situation here as it is after all the market that "makes" her objects into "originals."
This is an ironic reversal of Benjamin's observation, in "The Work of Art," that it makes no sense to ask for the "authentic" print of a photographic negative, as one can make any number of prints (Benjamin, 1974: 618-619).

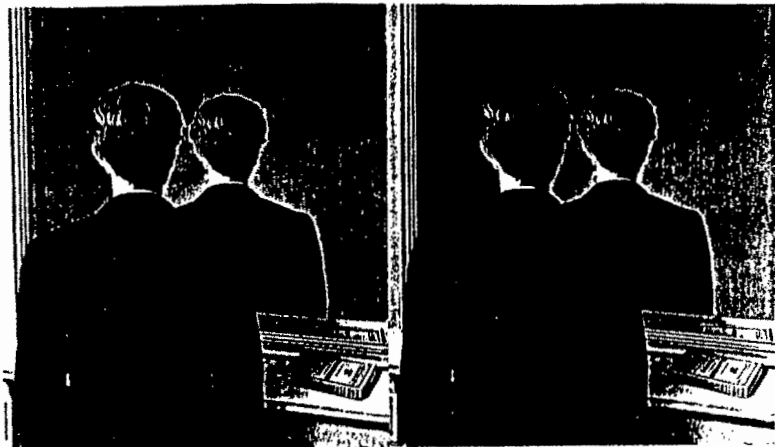
8. Figure 6 in Lovejoy (1989: 14) reproduces a work of art by Barbara Kruger, referred to as "Untitled, 1982. Unique photostat, 71 3/4" x 45 5/8," in which part of one of Michelangelo's frescoes of the Sistine chapel is reproduced. This partial reproduction consists of three arms, two of which are touching by the tips of the index-fingers. Over this partial reproduction five black beams have been printed, of which the first, third and fifth carry the text "You invest in the / divinity / of the masterpiece" in white print.
9. Duchamp's "Mona Lisa" is often mistakenly reproduced with a moustache only; this is, however, Picabia's 1920 version of Duchamp's 1919 version of "Mona Lisa," also known as "Dada Picture by Marcel Duchamp" (Cabanne, 1971: 62-63). Dadaist Marcel Duchamp had attached great value to the idea of chance as a stimulant for artistic creation. This is seen in his preference for the "readymade" and the "object trouvé." In 1913 Duchamp conceived his first readymade, "Bicycle Wheel," which involved the special selection and mounting of commonplace objects (Cabanne, 1971: 115). His readymades consisted of things to which none of the traditional notions of genre could be applied. His readymades were mass-products, products that could be reproduced, such as advertisement texts, bicycle wheels, urinals. The reason behind the invention of this notion of the "readymade" is, as Duchamp explains in "Apropos of Readymades", "an attempt to avoid the cult round the unicity of the art work. Another interesting aspect of the readymade is its textual nature, as "one important characteristic was the short sentence which I occasionally inscribed on the 'readymade.' That sentence instead of describing the object like a title was meant to carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions more verbal" (Duchamp, 1975: 141-142).
10. In Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth Century Culture Peter Wollen describes Warhol's "Factory." As this description gives a good idea of Warhol's demystification of the "originality" of the work of art and of the notion how art has become a mechanically reproducible commodity, it will be quoted in full.
"Warhol transposed his own interior discipline into the exterior form of the machine and the factory as site of automation and productivity. But this factory was a minimalist factory that simply recorded rather than transformed its raw materials. The techniques of standardization, repetition and assemblyline throughput were used to assemble not complex finished products but literal replicas of what was already there, more or less unaltered. [...] Warhol's Factory was a travesty of a real factory. Warhol had farmed out work to assistants and friends when he was a commercial artist, holding 'colouring parties' when he produced handmade books and experimenting with handmade printing devices. His assistant, Nathan Gluck, did original drawings for Warhol which the latter then

corrected, as well as doing the blotting that was part of Warhol's technique. Warhol's mother was entrusted with doing lettering. Warhol's practice at the Factory was simply to update these habits and procedures as new, relatively inexpensive technology became available to him: the silkscreen, Polaroid, the tape recorder, the film camera. All these devices simplified and speeded up the work and removed Warhol himself from arduous involvement. It was much easier that way (as indeed it was for Ford)" (Wollen, 1993: 163).

11. Andy Warhol says of the role of the postmodern artist: "When I look in the mirror, I see nothing. People call me a mirror, and if a mirror looks into a mirror, what does it see?" Quoted in Richard Kearney, "The Crisis of the Postmodern Image" (1987: 117).

René Magritte's "Reproduction Interdite" ("Reproduction Forbidden") (1937), reproduced on page ii of this thesis, ties in with Warhol's surface image. The beholder of this picture is first positioned and then dislodged in the same way as the beholder in the picture is dislodged, looking into the mirror. The painting is a play with imitation, an example of poststructuralist mimesis *avant la lettre*. To me it represents the ultimate postmodern model of the image, represented as a mirror, that reproduces the surface image of the other, without depth, or interiority, yet with a difference.

And in an exemplary movement of poststructuralist mimesis Richard Torchia appropriated Magritte's "Reproduction Interdite" in 1983 through photocopying in colour the Magritte mirror image and putting the two copies next to each other (colour photocopy, 11" x 17"). His work, called "La Reproduction Interdite" ("Not to Be Reproduced"), shows Magritte's deficient mirror, that, as Lovejoy puts it, "does not 'copy' or reflect the face of the figure in front of it. This surprising lack leaves us in a quandary in the same manner as Torchia's punning repetition of the image - which is the copy and which is the original (which will not reproduce the original?)" (Lovejoy, 1989: 109).



Richard Torchia, *La Reproduction Interdite* (1983)

Barth plays with this same idea when he makes Peter Sagamore start a new chapter with "Twice upon a time [...]" (TT, 634).

12. A good example of this is Richard Torchia's photocopy in colour discussed in the previous note to this chapter.
13. Another postmodern instrument of appropriation is to be found in the public internet services available on e- or blitzmail. Messages sent to multiple recipients of possibly hundreds or thousands of e-mail lists, or e-mail journals, such as, to mention but a few, the Derrida-list, the Deleuze-list, the Heidegger-list, the Renaissance-list, Neder-L, Postmodern Culture and so on have all entered the public arena and can thus be appropriated by any of the subscribers on these list. Notions of ownership and copyright have clearly been effaced here. When one of the subscribers to the Derrida-list, for instance, raised the question of who owned the list, and who, if some of the discussions on the list were to be published, would hold copyright, a barrage of posts followed deconstructing the notion of ownership. I specifically remember Geoffrey Bennington's reaction (it must have been sometime in October or November 1993), who said "publish anything, anytime." Due to these explosive developments in electronic communication, the academic world at least, seems to have been turned into one linguistic universe of immediate availability and accessibility.
14. Grunge rock, like sampling, is another form of "deconstructed" music. As an illustration of appropriation discussed in note 11 to this chapter, I have appropriated James R. Covey's post (English Department, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada) to the Derrida-list, dated Fri 7 Jan. 1994, 10:38:22, in-reply-to a message dated Fri 7 Jan. 1994 07:55:39 re "grunge" music:
"Since I *think* I am the only person on the Derrida list who also runs a grunge rock discussion list (Sloan Net), I'd like to take up that point [...]. Grunge music does indeed [deconstruct "traditional" rock music], in at least a couple of ways. The first is by certain refusals. By the refusal to participate in various rock and roll conventions or cliches, and even economic structures (we witness the boom in independent labels), those tropes and structures are revealed as constructs. The second method is irony. While some rock cliches are rejected outright, others are embraced... and heaped on until they collapse under their own weight (lead singer of Six Finger Satellite: "Sometimes there's so many levels of irony *I* don't know what's going on..."). [...] james the slacker cybergrunger."
15. Quite significantly, in postmodern theatre, as for instance in Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, we witness a movement against repetition and thus an embrace of the particularity of the present; as a matter of fact this form of theatre, unlike other movements in postmodern art, denies all

operations of repetition and appropriation. Yet, as Jacques Derrida has rightly argued in an essay on Artaud ("The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," in Writing and Difference, 1978: 232-250), this can never happen. We are faced with a paradox here, as theatre, by its very nature, always is a form of representation. So even if an attempt is made at presence of origin, this is being denied as theatre will always be a fiction, that is, a linguistic presence through repetition and representation.

16. See the first two sections of the last chapter for an historical introduction to the notion of authorship.
17. Quoted in Lovejoy, 1989: 111.
18. For an excellent introduction to mimesis see John D. Boyd, S.J., The Function of Mimesis and Its Decline, New York, Fordham University Press, 1980. Very briefly, Auerbach's concern in Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature is primarily with literary form, in which mimesis is seen as a structural arrangement in narration. His theory, as the subtitle of Mimesis indicates, is based on the correspondence of art to "real life," where life is seen as inherently meaningful, thus appealing to an absolute referent. Reality is referred to as "true" (Auerbach, 1957: 432) "ordinary" or "actual" (Auerbach, 1957: 297). Frye also sees a direct reflection of life in art in Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, when he speaks of "the conception of art as having a relation to reality" (Frye, 1957: 93), whereas Booth speaks in The Rhetoric of Fiction of an artistic reflection of reality, "many purely 'mimetic' or objective writers [...] treat realism as subordinate and functional to their specific purposes" (Booth, 1983: 57). Girard introduces the element of desire into mimesis in To Double Business Bound: Essays on Literature, Mimesis and Anthropology (1982). His theory focuses on conflictual desires, mediated by the characters in a novel. For him meaning is, as Davis puts it, inherent in a "ritualized experience that an author must be undergoing" (Davis, 1985: 54), which experience is reflected in the literary work. The common denominator between these substantialist views is the notion that art can eventually only aspire to be no more than an imitation of that in which ideal meaning is inherent, that is, life, whereby substance prevails over structure, and signified over signifier.
19. Austin's speech act theory ties in with the approaches referred to. His theory, ultimately, also goes back to traditionalist substantialism based on the assumption that language has "illocutionary force," that is, it can imitate or "refer to" the real world. In this substantialist type of theory, there is a direct link between sign and "real" object via the referent; the referent refers to the object

as a transcendental giver or meaning, or transcendental signifier.

20. Section Five of Chapter V will discuss Derrida's signature theory in detail.
21. Admittedly, this is the favourable reading of De Saussure. It would, for instance, be impossible to fit the famous picture of the tree and the head of the thinker in his Course in General Linguistics into this account.
22. My translation. The original in Dutch in "Postmoderne (on)mogelijkheden in de Nederlandse literatuur," in De achtervolging voortgezet: Opstellen over de moderne letterkunde aangeboden aan prof.dr. Margaretha H. Schenkeveld (1989) reads: "In het modernisme vindt een rationeel-reflecterende verwerking van de epistemologische (met inbegrip van de linguïstische en ethische) twijfel plaats, terwijl de verwerking ervan in het postmodernisme van mimetische aard is" (Ibsch, 1989: 351).
23. McHale argues that postmodern literature is characterized by the tendency to create new worlds (ontological dominant), whereas in modernist literature we would find an emphasis on attempt to get to know the existing world (epistemological dominant). Ibsch disagrees with this distinction as the epistemological and ontological elements cannot be separated. After all, she argues, the (im)-possible worlds of postmodernist literature owe their sheer existence to extreme epistemological doubts. The difference between modernism and postmodernism is rather located in the ways in which these epistemological doubts are dealt with (Ibsch, 1989: 350).
24. Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales can, of course, be seen as perfect examples of this "dramatized" or "lived" doubt.
25. Richard Kearney sees the postmodern image as an "incessant play between self-reflecting mirrors" (Kearney, 1987: 117). Reality, he says, has been "unmasked as an illusionist effect of mirror-play"; it does not reflect the world "out there," nor does it reflect an inner world, "it reflects only itself - a mirror within a mirror" (Kearney, 1987: 118). See also note 10 to this chapter on Andy Warhol.
26. Before these texts became Novels, or in Barthesian terms "readerly" texts, they were fictions or "writerly" texts. At this stage, Davis argues, Barth is seen to write imitations of "writerly" texts, which in due course will be seen as "readerly" texts or Novels.
27. Barth acknowledges his debt to Todorov's "Narrative-men" in The Poetics of Prose, tr. Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1977), in a footnote (FB, 235). Todorov illustrates his argument that narrating almost literally equals living with examples from The 1001 Nights.

28. This equation also ties in with Foucault's observation on the relationship between writing and death in "What is an author?" that "our culture has metamorphosed [the] idea of narrative, or writing, as something designed to ward off death" (Foucault, 1988: 198).
29. I will come back to this in more detail in the last section of this chapter.
30. Even the unborn twins in The Tidewater Tales realize the textuality of reality, when the one quotes his/her father's opinion to the other: "the end whereto one is fetched forth into the parlous world is neither more or less than this: to hear or make up stories, and to pass them on" (TT, 423).
31. Martin Kreiswirth argues in "The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences" that in retrospect the year 1980 can be seen as "a kind of *annus mirabilis* for the study of narrative." After 1980 narrative theory took centre stage and turned this period, he claims, into "the narrativist decade of the 1980s" (Kreiswirth, 1992: 631). Barth's fictions can, following Davis' argument, be considered to be part of this critical narrativist discourse.
32. "Don't Count on It: A Note on the Number of The 10001 Nights," the last entry in The Friday Book, examines Scheherazade's three pregnancies and deliveries, which piece would be echoed four years later in a chapter in The Tidewater Tales, entitled "The Story of Scheherazade's First Second Menstruation."
33. Echoes from Sabbatical in The Tidewater Tales are innumerable. Perhaps the first could in this respect be seen as a trial run for the latter, to which Barth decided to add his four narrative "compass-points," resulting in a novel more than twice the size of its main intertext.
34. An interesting link can be made in this context between Jerome Bray's attempt at a Novel Revolution/Revolution Novel, referred to as "NUMBERS, the world's first work of numerature," and Philippe Sollers' nouveau roman Nombres (Numbers), Paris, Seuil, 1968. This novel, like Jerome Bray's, as will be argued in Chapter V, is unreadable by traditional criteria for reading; it consists of broken numbered sequences, bits of mathematics and Chinese ideograms, all of which break the linear flow of the narrative. The play on the number four in Nombres is repeated in LETTERS by Barth's ubiquitous play with the numbers six and seven. Nombres starts off with an unaccounted-for quote from Lucretius on its fly leaf, in the same way as Barth had Lady Amherst rewrite unattributed quotes. Nombres, full of intertextual references, has turned into the repository of other texts, and it is up to the reader to identify the intertexts. Interestingly enough, Derrida refers to Nombres in Dissemination as "a generalized simulacrum [...] - a chimera" (Derrida, 1981:

294). Both Nombres and NUMBERS seem to have reached what Alan Thiher in Words in Reflection has called "a limit point" (Thiher, 1984: 183) in the intertextual game of mixing theory and practice. Barth's subsequent return to narrative, albeit with a difference, does indeed seem to prove this point.

35. "*Praeteritas futuras stercoreant*," the motto of Mack Enterprises, is grammatically incorrect Latin. *Praeteritas*, the subject of the sentence, should have been *praeterita* (past participle of the verb *praetereo*, used as a noun) signifying "the past", *futuras*, object, should either have been *futurum*, accusative singular, or *futura*, accusative plural, signifying "the future," and *stercoreant* should have been *stercorat*, the third person singular ending of the verb *stercore*, signifying "to fertilize." This fake Latin could either, as in the case of the misspelling of Ebenezer Cooke's name, point at a deliberate mistake on the part of John Barth in yet another attempt to inscribe his metadiegetic presence into the novel, or it could point at a lack of knowledge of Latin grammar in Harrison Mack, or John Barth, which would be another ironic reversal in that the past this time has indeed been unable to fertilize the future, otherwise the knowledge of Latin grammar would not have been lost on Harrison Mack, or John Barth for that matter. The past has "turned into shit in the future," in other words, option (b).
36. Kierkegaard, 1964: 12, 52.
37. "Irony and the Literary Past" (Schleifer & Markley, 1984: 183-216).
38. Ambrose's law reminds us of the Marxian reading of repetition, as set out in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Historical events, claims Marx, have a tendency to occur twice, first as tragedy, then as farce: repetition, in other words, produces difference. Marx uses the example of Napoleon's nephew, Louis Bonaparte, who had tried to legitimize his usurpation of power by an appeal to filial repetition while masquerading as his uncle's legatee or substitute. Marx argues that this form of repetition is a form of counterfeit, leading to a farce; constituted by affiliative instead of filial repetition, it cannot produce a handsome copy of its precursor. The repetitive pattern, argues Marx, leads to debasement. While favouring Marx, Said dismisses the Kierkegaardian form of repetition as eccentric (Said, 1976: 151), for in its attempt to compensate for the rupture between what has been and what now becomes, it uses, as Said says, filiative (that is, repetitive) means to describe affiliation (that is, repetition with a difference). And the result, says Said, is religious, leading to a "return to reality with a consciousness raised to the second power" (Said, 1976: 152).

I think Said misses the point here. He fails to see the shortcomings of the Marxian model in that the Kierkegaardian model accounts for the formal spatial and temporal aspects of repetition, whereas the Marxian model can only do so for the spatial aspects, seeing events of importance happening twice. But he also seems to ignore that repetition is almost by necessity, to use his term, affiliative, since the context in which the repetition occurs, can never be the same as the original context, which also automatically changes the nature of the repetition itself. Kierkegaard at least acknowledges this changing context by referring to the dynamics of irony in the movement of repetition.

39. "*La structure originairement répétitive*" (Derrida, 1967: 56; quoted by Melberg, 1990: 85).
40. This could perhaps be seen as a direct reference to Vladimir Propp's analysis of the Russian folktale in Morphology of the Folktale, originally published in 1927. Propp used the notion of "function" as a starting-point for his research into the morphology of the folktale: "Function is understood as an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (Propp, 1971: 21). Not unlike Jerome Bray in his loading of LILYVAC in LETTERS, Propp did not use characters (which after all differ from narrative to narrative), but rather the functions characters fulfil within the narrative to arrive at a pattern of functions. The early Roland Barthes would later build on Propp's functions as one of three narrative levels in his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," reprinted in Susan Sontag, A Barthes Reader (London, Jonathan Cape, 1982).
41. See tables (1) and (8), in Section Two of Chapter I and Section Four of Chapter II respectively.
42. In Kabbalah and Criticism Bloom actually calls Kabbalah a "theory of writing": "More audaciously than any developments in recent French criticism, Kabbalah is a theory of writing, but this is a theory that denies the absolute distinction between writing and inspired speech, even as it denies human distinctions between presence and absence. Kabbalah speaks of a writing before writing (Derrida's 'trace'), but also of a speech before speech, a Primal Instruction preceding all traces of speech" (Bloom, 1975: 52).
43. See also note 15 to this chapter on postmodern theatre and Artaud.
44. See Derrida, 1978: 339, n3.
45. Translated by Miller, 1982: 5.

46. My translation. The original in French reads: "*denier le primat d'un original sur la copie, d'un modèle sur l'image*" (Deleuze, 1968: 92).
47. My translation. The original in French reads: "*l'éternel retour, pris dans son sens strict, signifie que chaque chose n'existe qu'en revenant, copie d'une infinie de copies qui ne laisse pas subsister l'original ni même d'origine*" (Deleuze, 1968: 92).

Notes to Chapter V:

1. Some of the introductions to the entries in The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction are a reflection of Barth's public performances, as, for instance, the "postmodernist roadshow" through German and Austrian universities in 1979 (with William Gass, John Hawkes and spouses), and many public lectures. In the introduction to "How to Make a Universe" he writes that on average he gives a public lecture once a month, "once a month time ten months times twice ten gives a couple hundred lecture-readings per twenty years" (FB, 14). The first entry in The Friday Book, "Some Reasons Why I Tell the Stories I Tell The Way I Tell Them Rather Than Some Other Sort of Stories Some Other Way," and "Teacher," in Harper's Magazine, about his second wife Shelly, constitute Barth's most truly autobiographical pieces.
2. This term is borrowed from Eisenstein, 1979: 147.
3. This is pointed out by Michael B. Kline in "Rabelais and the Age of Printing" (Eisenstein, 1979: 121, n313).
4. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary lists the year 1601 as the first known recording of this term in the English language as "one who sets forth written statements" (Onions, 1973: 134).
5. There are two problems here: firstly, my Latin dictionary does not list *auieo* as "to tie," whereas it does list the Latin verb *ligere* as "to tie." In his description of the etymology of the signifier *auctor* Minnis relies on what he refers to as "major medieval dictionaries," in this case that of Hugutio of Pisa, for in n7 on page 220 he writes: "According to Hugutio, *autor*, written without a 'c' and with a 'u,' may mean *ligator*, 'someone who ties together'," the third source of the signifier *auctor*. I fail to see how Minnis can link *auieo* to *ligere*. Why would he moreover all of a sudden use the first person singular ending of the verb, whereas the two other Latin verbs are given as infinitives?
Secondly, Minnis' reference to the "Greek noun *autentim* (authority)" (Minnis, 1988: 10) is problematic, as I have not been able to identify *autentim* as a Greek noun. The closest signifier to his *autentim* I could find is the Greek verb *authenteo*, which means "to have full power or authority over somebody," which signifier in turn has also given rise to "authentic." Minnis also claims to have this information from the medieval dictionary of William Brito. It seems to be impossible to me that he has taken Latin for Greek. In n6 on page 219 he writes: "When *autentim* ('id est autoritatem') is signified, *autor* is written with a 'u' and without a 'c.' [...] William Brito claimed that the senses of the term *auctor* have the following order of precedence:

autentim first, *augeo* second and *agere* third." A case of deliberate misreading?

6. Pieces of writing of anonymous writers were considered far less authoritative than works that were attributed to *auctores*. Works of uncertain authorship were regarded as "apocryphal" (Minnis, 1988: 11), and thus less authentic.
7. Cited by McLuhan, 1962: 98. For a discussion of Hajnal's work, see McLuhan, 1965: 94-99.
8. These prologues usually dealt with seven so-called *circumstantiae*, which were answers to the questions "whom, what, why, in what manner, where, when, and whence (or by what means)" (Minnis, 1988: 16).
9. Until the twelfth century an *auctor* was seen as a source of authority, and especially so the Scriptural *auctores*. The latter were regarded as the instrument of the divine *auctor* of things, God; the different books of the Bible were considered to have one single divine *auctor*, which meant that the individual contributions of the human *auctores* of the Scriptures were made subservient to what was seen as the divine *auctoritas* of the Bible.
In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a shift of focus became noticeable, from the divine to the human *auctor* of Scripture: as Minnis writes, "the unquestionable fact of the divine inspiration of the Bible no longer interfered with thorough examination of the literary qualities of a text" (Minnis, 1988: 39). The meaning of the Bible was no longer considered "to have been hidden by God deep in the Biblical text", but was "expressed by the human *auctores* of the Scripture, each in his own way or ways" (Minnis, 1988: 72).
10. This shift away from divine *auctoritas* was known as *translatio auctoritatis* (transfer of authority, Minnis, 1988: viii). *Translatio auctoritatis* could occur because exegetical attention had shifted from the allegorical to the literal sense of the Bible under the influence of the Aristotelian theory of causality. The four causes as explained by Aristotle in his theory of causality provided the paradigm for the so-called Aristotelian prologue to medieval commentaries on *auctores*. These four causes were: *causa efficiens* (the efficient cause), *causa formalis* (the formal cause), *causa propinqua* (the immediate cause) and *causa remota* (the remote cause) (Minnis, 1988: 76-81).
11. Gueric of St. Quentin, for instance, referred in the thirteenth century to this duality as the *duplex causa efficiens* (the twofold efficient cause): although God was regarded as the first *auctor*, he was not the actual producer of the text, the actual producer was the human *auctor*, who was moved by God (Gueric quoted by Minnis, 1988: 79).

12. An example of such quadruple efficient cause could be found at work in the Apocalypse, as explained by John Russel, a theologian who lived at the turn of the thirteenth century: "God, Christ, the angel who visited St. John on Patmos, and St. John himself" (Russel cited by Minnis, 1988: 81). It should be stressed, however, that the divine auctor kept his auctoritas, since he, as inspirator of the text, eventually remained responsible for all text that was written in the Scripture. But with the introduction of the individuality of the auctor, the latter's own personal ideas and intended meaning, referred to as the "literal sense" (Minnis, 1988: 85) as opposed to the allegorical sense, became more and more foregrounded.
13. In this way the human auctor of Scripture, still accountable to the divine auctor, was able to maintain his auctoritas in spite of the immoralities described in the text. Because of the recognition of the individuality of the Scriptural auctor the gap between pagan and Scriptural authority closed, even to such an extent that the lives of these auctores became objects of study in a new literary genre, the *vita auctoris*.
14. Translated by Minnis, 1988: 185. The original Latin reads: "*Hos ego compegi versus, quos fuderat in me / Spiritus in sompnis: nox erat illa grauis. / Hec set vt auctor ego non scripsi metra libello, / Que tamen audiui trado legenda tibi: / Non tumor ex capite proprio me scribere fecit / Ista, set vt voces plebis in aure dabant*" (Gower, 1902: 312, Cap m XXV, lines 1443-1448).
15. Translated as "an unlearned compiler" by Minnis (1988: 197).
16. In another essay in the same collection, "Muse, Spare Me," Barth observes that "[n]ot only classisal epic and tragedy, and Elizabethan and neoclassical drama, but virtually all folk and heroic narrative, both Western and Eastern, follow Horace's advice: "[...] safer shall the bard his pen employ / With yore, to dramatize the Tale of Troy, / Than, venturing trackless regions to explore, / Delineate characters untouched before" (FB, 58).
17. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Edited by F.N. Robinson. Second edition. London, Oxford University Press, 1957: 48 [I (A) 3173-3181]. The full quote reads: "[...] but for I moot reherce / Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse, / Or elles falsen som of my mateere. / And therefore, whoso list it nat yheere, / Turne over the leef, and chese another tale; / For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale, / Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse, / And eek moralitee and hoolynesse. / Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys."

18. Patrick O'Donnell, in Passionate Doubts, suggests another interesting link between medieval writing practices and Barth's narrative in LETTERS. He comments on Jerome Bray's "writing" of Backwater Ballads, which he sees to "portray the act of narration as a recollection of past lives reincarnated and as an accumulation, or synthesis [...]" "The author," writes O'Donnell, "is viewed as the compilation of these past lives, which are stories of stories, paradigms of how stories are told" (O'Donnell, 1986: 57). O'Donnell's apt term for this form of writing is "narrative accumulation" (O'Donnell, 1986: 58), which term could also be used to characterise the entire intertextual network of the later Barth fictions.
19. The Renaissance was in certain respects less free from medieval traditions than is often believed, writes Matei Calinescu in Five Faces of Modernity, as both "recognized the authority of Greek and Roman antiquity in nontheological matters" (Calinescu, 1987: 24). Renaissance authors still owed debt to the classical authors as is obvious from the three aspects of *translatio* (translation), *imitatio* (imitation) and *aemulatio* (emulation) that characterised Renaissance writing, but unlike the Middle Ages, authorship was no longer desired to be anonymous. The rupture between the periods is therefore not as wide as is often presumed. At this point I would like to point out the difference between the Renaissance notion of *imitatio* and intertextuality, as there is a fundamental difference between the two. In the Renaissance mode of *imitatio* the author tried to position himself within an accepted order of literary works by imitating his venerable precursors; he tried to partake of it even in the act of distinguishing himself from it, whereas a contemporary intertextual effort would at least attempt to be a subversion of the authority of one's precursors (Plett, 1991: 32-33).
20. Although Pamela, consisting of one hundred and thirty five letters and a long journal, has six correspondents, the novel has, in the main, only one single narrator, whereas Clarissa, with its twenty-seven narrators, is a so-called *Briefwechselroman* (the term is borrowed from Romberg, 1962: 46) which repeats actions and descriptions from the perspective of different epistolary narrators. This has led to a few recent studies in which the construction or "authorising" of the reader is seen as a considered strategy on Richardson's part. In Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader, for instance, Tom Kearney discusses Clarissa as an example of a narrative in which, due to different accounts of the action that are unsupervised by sustained authorial comment, the reader is given final responsibility for the construction of meaning: "Richardson knowingly fostered the active participation of his readers, whom he expected to become 'if not Authors, Carvers' of the text" (Kearney, 1992: xviii). In Pamela the author acts as the editor of Pamela's correspondence, which he claims to be authentic. The editor's

hand can clearly be seen in his adding of a title, preface, conclusion, advertisement, explanatory commentaries, reports and messages of congratulations from enthusiastic readers. And in a highly self-conscious way Richardson adds a letter from an enthusiastic reader to the Introduction of the second edition of Pamela: "Yet, I confess, there is *One*, in the World, of whom I think with still greater Respect, than of PAMELA: and That is, of the wonderful AUTHOR of PAMELA.-Pray, Who is he, Dear Sir? and where and how, has he been able to hide, hitherto, such an encircling and all-mastering Spirit? [...] The Comprehensiveness of his Imagination must be truly prodigious!" (Richardson, 1971: 10). Its echoes in the Author's letters in LETTERS are not lost on us.

Another interesting link between Pamela and Barth's writing practice concerns the excessive copying practices in Pamela. Not only does the editor of the novel provide extracts and summaries of others' letters, so do the correspondents themselves. And Pamela herself often copies entire letters within her own letters. Rather than considering this a form of poststructuralist mimesis *avant la lettre*, this form of rewriting should instead be seen as an investigation into narrative form and technique.

21. The full title of Richardson's Clarissa is Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady, Comprehending the most Important Concerns of Private Life, whereas Pamela's full title is Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded: In a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel to her Parents: Afterwards, in her exalted Condition, between Her, and Persons of Figure and Quality, upon the Most Important and Entertaining Subjects, in Genteel Life. Barth self-consciously plays with the titles of the letters in LETTERS, and in The Tidewater Tales this parodic play finds its parodic apex, where one of the titles of a subchapter is just over a page long. The full title of The Tidewater Tales is only given on page 83 of the novel: The Tidewater Tales, or, Whither the Wind Listeth, or Our Houses' Increase: A Novel. Barth himself discusses the structure of titles in "the Title of This Book" in The Friday Book, which opens with the statement "Book-titles should be straightforward" (FB, ix). We can find a structuralist investigation into the structure and functions of titles in Genette's article in Critical Inquiry (1988), in which he sets forth that a title usually consists of three elements (title, subtitle and generic indication) and a poststructuralist one in Derrida's "Title (to be Specified)" (1981), in which he deconstructs the concept of the title as name.

We also find that Barth has taken over Richardson's habit in Pamela to indicate character's names with initials only, as in: "[...] and after that, the advanced season will take us to London, where Mr. B-- has taken a house for his winter-residence [...]" (Vol. III, 1902: 19), although Barth himself refers to this as a characteristic of nineteenth-century fiction: "*En route to Ocean City he sat in*

the back seat of the family car with his brother Peter, age fifteen, and Magda G--, age fourteen, a pretty girl and an exquisite young lady, who lived not far from them on B-- Street in the town of D--, Maryland. Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality" (LF, 69).

22. My translation. The original French reads: "*Les anciens n'auraient jamais fait ainsi de leur âme un sujet de fiction*" (De Staël, De l'Allemagne, 1813: 84).
23. The idea of *auteurisme* was imported to Hollywood from France. Auteurs such as Orson Welles, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks overcame "the overriding influence of the studios to achieve largely personal visions" (Chatman, 1990: 219, n6).
24. Cited by McLuhan, 1962: 128.
25. Taylor's Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self discusses Kierkegaard's "pseudonymous" works from Either/Or to Concluding Unscientific Postscript (Taylor, 1975: 51-62).
26. This confusing multitude of narrative voices in both Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales that leads to narrative diffusion disclaiming any author-ity, is much like the different discourses put into play in Derrida's essay "Restitutions" in The Truth in Painting. This essay is a "polylogue" for an unspecified number of "voices," some of which can be recognized, like, for instance, Meyer Schapiro's and Martin Heidegger's, others cannot. Likewise in The Tidewater Tales, most of the time we can recognize the narrative voices, like Peter's or Katherine's, and those of their unborn twins, or Scheherazade's, but at other times we cannot, as, for instance, in "Scheherazade is in our story as well as in our stories" (FB, 643). The narratives in both float up and down, in a back and forth movement, in "Restitutions," as Peggy Kamuf puts it in The Derrida Reader, "like laces crossing over the tongue of shoes" (Kamuf, 1991: 278), and in Barth's novel like the tidal waters in the Chesapeake Bay.
27. Dauber has referred to this particular form of authorship in The Idea of Authorship in America: Democratic Poetics from Franklin to Melville as "democratic" (Dauber, 1990: xiv).
28. As discussed in Section Five of Chapter I. Also see Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel" in The Dialogic Imagination (1981: 259-422).
29. Sigmund Freud on the other hand, Railton argues, sees the creative process, like the child's play, or daydreaming, taking place in the private sphere. In "The Relation of the

- Poet to Day-Dreaming," he sees "imaginative creation, like day-dreaming, [as] a continuation of and substitute for the play of childhood" (Freud, On Creativity and the Unconscious. Edited by Benjamin Nelson. New York, Harper & Row, 1958: 44). Cited in Railton, 1991: 203.
30. The issue of Poe's plagiarism has been discussed by Sidney P. Moss in chapter 5, "Culmination of a Campaign," in Poe's Literary Battles: The Critic in the Context of His Literary Milieu (Durham, Duke University Press, 1963: 132-189).
 31. Dean Flower pointed these two links out in his review of The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor, "Not Waving but Drowning" in The Hudson Review (Summer 1991: 318). A third idea that Barth borrows from Poe is the latter's extensive use of footnotes in "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade" (Poe, 1984: 787-804).
 32. See, for instance, page 300 of Sabbatical, "Well, the point of my story is that the point of Poe's story is that the point of Pym's story is this: "It is not that the end of the voyage interrupts te writing, but the interrupting of the writing ends the voyage"," which is footnoted in n18 on the same page as "a point made by Professor John T. Irwin of The Johns Hopkins University in his book American Hieroglyphics: the Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1980), which memorious Susan goes on now to quote verbatim."
 33. According to Harold Beaver, who wrote the introduction to the Penguin edition of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (Beaver in Poe, 1986: 5).
 34. And so are the plots of Sabbatical and The Tidewater Tales. As the narrating agents at that moment on duty in The Tidewater Tales observe: "The parents of Pete and Repeat exchange another, different glance, remembering our *Nights* talk on Day Zero and our recent dizzy conviction that where Huckleberry Findley, Odysseus Dmitrikakis, and Captain Donald Quicksoat have crossed wakes, Scheherazade must in some guise soon sail by" (TT, 526).
 35. The same device of narrativist mimesis of course allows Don Quixote in The Tidewater Tales to land up in twentieth-century America (TT, 591) and meet another "traveler out of fiction" (TT, 612), Huckleberry Finn, as well as the author, an "American [...] [who] has spent a long winter immersed in his four favourite stories" (TT, 493), and allows Peter Sagamore and Katherine Sherritt to meet avatars of Odysseus and Nausicaä.
 36. "*Die Sprache spricht*," writes Heidegger, "*nicht der Mensch. Der Mensch spricht nur, indem er geschiklich der Sprache entspricht.*" (Martin Heidegger, Der Satz vom Grund. Pfullingen, 1957: 161). In English translation: "Language

speaks. Man speaks only in so far as he artfully "complies with" language." Translation by Culler, 1975: 29. See also Scholes, 1988: 194.

37. Another interesting example of the third modality of the signature from within the text is given by Umberto Eco in Interpretation and Overinterpretation. He writes that his novel Foucault's Pendulum was named after the inventor of the pendulum, Léon Foucault. As an empirical author he hoped no superficial connections would be made with Michel Foucault, but many readers did and Eco has to acknowledge that the "whole affair is now out of [his] control" (Eco, 1992: 83), another example of a signature effect.
38. Both English "beard" and German "bart" (= "beard") go back to the same West Germanic root *bartha* (Onions, 1973: 170).
39. Barth has detected a common denominator between storytellers and Chesapeake Bay blue crabs in "Historical Fiction, Fictitious History, and Chesapeake Bay Blue Crabs, or About Aboutness": "they usually approach what they're after sideways" (FB, 181).
40. In Dutch as well as in German the lower part of a key, or bit, is referred to as "baard" (Dutch) and "Bart" (German) respectively, literally signifying "beard" (Van Dale: Groot woordenboek Duits-Nederlands. Edited by H.L. Cox. Utrecht/Antwerpen, Van Dale Lexicografie, 1983: 1109).
41. "Barth" is short for "Bartholomew." In Name This Child: A Handy Guide for Puzzled Parents, Eric Partridge writes: "Bartholomew: Heb., "son of *Talmai* (abounding in furrows)," so presumably the name was given first to a ploughman. It has many religious connotations" (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1959: 21).
42. Also see Of Grammatology (Derrida, 1976: 108-109) on this.
43. A very good introduction to Derrida's signature theory is to be found in Chapter 4, "Experiments with Texts: Fragments and Signatures," in Textbook: An Introduction to Literary Language by Robert Scholes e.a. (1988: 193-288).
44. Contemporary art critics, like Michael Fried, have found Derridean signature effects in paintings. In Courbet's Realism, for instance, Fried suggests that Gustave Courbet's initials are delineated in the two figures in the latter's painting "The Stonebreakers": "Thus the young man resting the pannier of stones on his knee can be seen as a fleshing out of the backward leaning but forward-bending 'G,' while the old man about to strike a blow with his hammer, although by no means simply describing the letter 'C,' nevertheless hints at that letter within his own configuration. [...] the image of Courbet's initials might then be thought of as [...] glorifying his proper name" (Fried, 1990: 107-108).

45. Namely, Henry Burlingame, of The Sot-Weed Factor.
46. See Chapter 7 of Peggy Kamuf's Signature Pieces, "Floating Authorship," which chapter gives a good overview of the discussions on intentionality by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in "Against Theory" (Critical Inquiry 9, 1982) and other new pragmatists collected in Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism. W.T.J. Mitchell (ed.). Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1985.
47. In the same way as the act of naming is no longer an act of appropriation in poststructuralist textuality, the title, when reduced to a name, can no longer take possession of the work. In "Title (to be Specified)" (1981) Derrida argues that titles, operating as frames, take place on the border. He deconstructs the title as name, while investigating the flexibility of borders.
48. H.F. Plett argues that "the death of the author" did not actually occur in intertextual theory as both author and reader had always been a matter of consideration, if not explicitly, then at least implicitly (Plett, 1991: 26). Linda Hutcheon on the other hand has shown little interest in the text's author: "Certainly the role of the author in contemporary discussions of intertextuality has proved to be minimal" (Hutcheon, 1986: 231).
49. I acknowledge my debt for these ideas to Michael Fried's seminars at the 1993 School of Criticism and Theory at Dartmouth College, entitled "Theory, Painting, Vision: From Merleau-Ponty to Derrida and After."
In Derrida's Memoirs of the Blind which originated as a catalogue for an exhibition of paintings of 19th century French painter Henri Fantaine la Tour, we find a discussion that bears some relevance to the relationship between signature and self-portrait. In this work Derrida is preoccupied with what constitutes a trait, a line or mark on a page, a piece of paper, a painting, a drawing. In his discussion of Fantaine la Tours' drawings Derrida discusses the *rétrait transcendental de trait*, or the transcendental withdrawal/retreat of the trait, a basic notion in his work that carries a range of meanings from a treat or feature to a line or mark. The necessity of such a retrait or withdrawal follows from the differential structure of the trait in Derrida's account, because the trait, once drawn, ideally has no thickness, as it only marks the separation between the inside and the outside of the figure. The single edge of the contour cannot, strictly speaking, manifest itself as such, in Derrida's words. Nothing belongs to the trait, and thus to drawing and to the thought of drawing, not even its own trace. The outline or tracing separates it and separates itself; it retraces only borderlines, intervals of spacing with no possible appropriations. The experience or experimenting of drawing that always consists in journeying beyond limits, at once crosses and institutes those borders; it invents what

Derrida calls "shibboleths" of these passages (what is left over, something that was and is at the same time - the term has to do with circumcision). And that transcendental retrait or withdrawal in turn calls for and forbids the self-portrait, in much the same way as it does for the signature. It does not only call for and forbid the self-portrait of the author and presumed signatory, but also that of the source point of drawing or signing, that is, the eye and the finger. This point is represented and eclipsed at the same time.

50. This is reminiscent of the ending of Don Quixote, about which Barth, during a talk on The Tidewater Tales, said in the Papyrus interview: "And one of the organizational principles of this novel is that that couple whom you met last night in a preliminary fashion will - before their two weeks are up, before their thousand pages are done - encounter avatars of Huck and of Scheherazade and of Odysseus and of Don Quixote. A story will be told about each of these people, despite Cervantes' warning at the end of Don Quixote. Remember, Cervantes is so enraged by people resurrecting Don Quixote that at the end of part two he not only has him die, but writes out a notarized death certificate, and then in that wonderful passage of the last chapter of part two of his novel has the narrator, Cide Hamete Benengeli, bid a beautiful farewell to his pen and tell that pen 'Never write again of Don Quixote.' So, you know, one is hesitant to transgress against the master's advice. But I've done it" (Howell, 1987: 44-45). And in The Tidewater Tales we read, "Let Don Quixote rest in peace, Cervantes warns in his last chapter: Do not presume to resurrect or disinter him" (TT, 472). But, as Barth already indicated in the above interview, he did resurrect Don Quixote by having him sail from the Cave of Montesinos in central Spain to Carla's cavern in Fells Point, Maryland.

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