

"We make fiction because we are fiction":

**Authorities Displaced
in the Novels of Russell Hoban**

Lara Dunwell

Submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English
University of Cape Town
1995

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

The University of Cape Town has been given
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Acknowledgements:

For her continued support and encouragement, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Lesley Marx; thanks also to my friends Kate Gillman and Catherine Grylls for their devotion to the onerous task of proofreading.

Many others offered much-needed support and motivation: I remember with great appreciation my parents, Mike and Michéle, my sister, Coral, Pauline Collins, and Jill Goldberg.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Jonathan Hoffenberg, who loaned his copy of The Medusa Frequency to me in 1989, and never asked me to return it!

Finally, I must thank both the University of Cape Town, and the Centre for Science Development; without their financial support, this thesis would not have been written.

Abstract

Russell Hoban, born in Pennsylvania in 1925, is the author of fifty children's books and eight novels. This thesis provides a critical reading of his novels Kleinzeit (1974), The Medusa Frequency (1987), Riddley Walker (1980) and Pilgermann (1983).

The thesis argues that the alienation of the protagonist from his society -- a theme common to the novels above -- is the result of the operation of the Derridean process of displacement. Hoban's novels work deconstructively to undermine binary oppositions (such as "reality" versus "fantasy"). I argue that the novels aim to recuperate the marginal by displacing the centre.

In Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency, reality itself is figured as an absent centre. Through a discussion of magical realism, I show how Hoban questions the idea of a "consensus reality". I argue that by denying authority to the authors in these texts, Hoban privileges the uncertain authority of language itself. Using Derrida's concept of *différance*, I show that language in Kleinzeit is figured as an endless deferral of meaning.

In Chapter II, I turn to an analysis of the invented post-atomic language of Riddley Walker, and examine how the neologisms and futuristic orthography of the text contribute towards significant wordplay. I argue that Riddley's attempts to read his culture's past offer a critique of the contemporary reader's assumptions, both about her present and about reading itself. I rely on Mircea Eliade's The Myth of the Eternal Return (1965) in discussing the nature of myth-making in Riddley Walker.

In the final chapter, I discuss in detail the mechanism of displacement in Pilgermann. By examining the role of the grotesque in the novel, I argue that Pilgermann can be read *hymeneutically*. Derrida's figure of the *hymen* becomes the emblem of marginalisation. Using the example of the mode of the grotesque (which is prominent in the novel), I argue that the marginal is always already present in the very centre which would expel it. Pilgermann is read as an attempt to recuperate the margin in spite of "the confusion between the present and the non-present" (Derrida, 1984: 212) which is the *hymen*.

Finally, I conclude that Hoban's works, while focussing on displacement, unwittingly displace women, by figuring them as absences whose existence is primarily metaphorical.

Contents

Introduction	1
I: Identity and Authority in <u>Kleinzeit</u> (1974) and <u>The Medusa Frequency</u> (1987).	11
i : Reality and Narrative.	11
ii : The Authority of the Name.	17
iii : The Authority to Name.	30
iv : The Name of the Author	36
II: Future Present: The Apocalyptic Language of <u>Riddley Walker</u> (1980)	51
i : Apocalypse or Armageddon?.	52
ii : Hoban's <u>Bildungsroman</u>	57
iii : History and Myth	60
iv : The Language of Myth	68
v : Hoap of a tree	94
III: Recuperating the Margin: <u>Pilgermann</u> (1983) and the <u>Hymen</u>	105
i : Unmanned author(ity)	106
ii : <u>Pilgermann</u> patterns Pilgermann patterns <u>Pilgermann</u>	117
iii : Pilgermann displaced.	126
Conclusion	153
Bibliography	161

Introduction

Since the publication of his first novel, The Mouse and His Child, in 1967, Russell Hoban has established himself as one of the most thought-provoking novelists writing today. Although most criticism of his work has been favourable -- his novels have been described as "fascinating, intelligent and disorienting" (Olsen, 1988: 3), "brilliant, puzzling and disturbing" (Lynn, 1986: 19) -- some critics have found Hoban's fiction to be "bloodless and disembodied" (Leader, 1983: 259) and "increasingly indulgent and out of control" (Uglow, 1980: 1221).

It is most often Hoban's style and its appropriateness to his choice of subject which attracts commentary. While one critic labels Hoban's style an "awkward and effortful reaching for significance" (Inglis in Lynn, 1986: 20), another praises it as "hover(ing) between the playful and the profound, between the patent wish-fulfillment of fairy stories and the shamanistic preaching of parable" (Dowling, 1988: 179). Indeed, Hoban describes himself as a "mystic ... someone who thinks that the things that really matter are not those that admit of rational explanation" (Hitchcock, 1977: 28). The rational world is often undermined in Hoban's novels. His protagonists usually participate in an alternative reality: in The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz (1973), for example, Jachin-Boaz confronts a

dangerously aggressive lion, which is invisible to other characters, in a country where lions have long been extinct. The lion is at once figured as objectively real (it attacks Jachin-Boaz, wounding him severely), and symbolic (it can be read as a personification of Boaz-Jachin's anger towards his absentee father).

Hoban's most recent publication, The Moment Under the Moment (1993), is a collection of short stories, a libretto, and essays. He has collaborated with The Impact Theatre Co-operative in the stage production of The Carrier Frequency (1984), which developed from the work in progress, The Medusa Frequency (1987). His fourth full-length novel, Turtle Diary (1975) was made into a film in 1985; the script was written by Harold Pinter. It is unsurprising that Hoban is active in so many fields; he came to novel writing via a career as free-lance illustrator and advertising copywriter (Wilkie, 1989: 21). Jack Branscomb suggests that

Hoban's background as an illustrator may contribute to the unusually strong sense of controlling images at the heart of his novels. (1986: 30)

This assertion is borne out: Vermeer's "Head of a Young Girl" is discussed at length in The Medusa Frequency (1987: 15), and the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch are meticulously evoked by the nightmarishly grotesque scenes of Pilgermann (1983: 54-55).

David Dowling traces the influence of Hoban's earlier works of children's fiction on his later novels,

saying that Hoban "always endorsed the child's viewpoint for its anarchic challenge to the adult ways of doing things" (1988: 179). Perhaps this accounts for his use of a child protagonist in Riddley Walker (1980); certainly, all of Hoban's protagonists come to question accepted societal norms in their struggle to assert their unique perceptions of their worlds.

Hoban's novels have been compared to the work of many other contemporary writers; Jeffrey Porter (1990: 450) and Thomas Morrissey (1984: 197) compare Riddley Walker (1980) to Walter Miller's A Canticle for Liebowitz (1960), while A. Alvarez compares the same novel to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn (1981: 17). Porter compares the "astonishing, bizarre and forbidding ... neobarbaric language" (1990: 451) of Riddley Walker to Burroughs' Naked Lunch (1966) and Burgess's A Clockwork Orange (1962). Christine Wilkie, author of the only full-length study of the works of Russell Hoban to date (Through the Narrow Gate: The Mythological Consciousness of Russell Hoban, 1989), writes

Hoban's writing does not fit easily into any contemporary patterns of Euro-American literature. It has the intelligence, invention and a preoccupation with paradox that is evocative of the Argentinian Borges. It bears some of the features of experimental contemporary writers, among whom are Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut ... Hoban shares with John Barth a mythical basis for his writing together with a sense of contemporary society living in a contracting universe.(1989: 16)

Hoban himself sees

the writer's job (as being) to invoke the universal by means of the particular. (1980b: 175)

While precedents for both the style and subject matter of Hoban's novels can be found, his voice remains strikingly original. Riddley Walker, which received much critical acclaim, broadened the scope of its predecessors (The Mouse and His Child (1967), The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz (1973) and Kleinzeit (1974)) from the domestic to the global. However, the focal issues of the novels have remained unchanged: Hoban writes of the individual displaced from both society and self; often the displacement is facilitated by language, which is, for Hoban, an unreliable vehicle of meaning. He uses the metaphor of disease to emphasize the necessity for a renewed wholeness, both spiritual and physical, in all of his protagonists. Hoban is "a writer who patiently explores consciousness" (Wilkie, 1989: 15), generally employing an isolated protagonist and a bizarrely animated universe whose conflicting voices clamour for recognition.

Most of the critical work on Hoban takes the form of journal articles in response to Riddley Walker, while Wilkie's full-length analysis is focussed on the thematic tracing of Jungian archetypes in Hoban's work, rather than providing a rigorous critique. Riddley Walker, the futuristic account of a boy's journey through a post-nuclear English wasteland, attracted the most critical

interest: it is referred to by critics working generally in the field of apocalyptic literature (Dewey, 1990; Hollinger, 1990; Lewicki, 1984; Morrissey, 1984; Schwenger, 1992), as well as by those more specifically interested in the invented 'decayed' language of the novel (Dowling, 1988; Lake, 1984; MacLean, 1988; Maynor and Patteson, 1984; Porter, 1990; Schwetman, 1985).

While Jennifer Uglow accuses the novel of "projecting into the future a pessimistic contempt of the masses which is hardly balanced by the promise of mystic intuition for an artistic élite" (1980: 1221), she is in the minority. Praise for Riddley Walker is high -- Maynor and Patteson claim that

(it) is perhaps the most sophisticated work of fiction ever to speculate about man's future on earth and the implications of a potentially destructive technology. (1984: 18)

Most of Hoban's novels have elicited widely differing opinions. Lance Olsen condemned The Medusa Frequency, disagreeing with Tom LeClair's assertion that it is "fascinating and intelligent" (1988: 3), while concurring that the novel is "disorienting" (1988: 3). Zachary Leader found Pilgermann "bloodless" (1983: 259), while Leonard Cheever argues that it "is one of the most interesting genres of science fiction to appear in years" (1986: 339).

Hoban is clearly a controversial and provocative author; his novels Kleinzeit (1974), Riddley Walker (1980), Pilgermann (1983) and The Medusa Frequency (1987)

are discussed in this thesis. Detailed examination of both The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz (1973) and Turtle Diary (1975) is omitted. While The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz explores issues of authority in the patriarchal family (a father abandons his wife and teenage son, and both men re-negotiate their identities by resolving the aggression of the generations, which appears in the form of a lion) I have chosen to explore the relationship between authority and identity in Chapter I: Identity and Authority in Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency.

Turtle Diary relates the efforts of two isolated individuals, William G and Naera H, to release giant sea turtles from their captivity in the London Zoo. I have not included an analysis of Turtle Diary in this thesis, as it differs in many significant ways from the texts I have chosen to discuss. While the other novels explore the predicament of individuals who have been marginalised against their will, and whose difference has been forcibly inscribed upon them, William and Naera have chosen their separateness, seeming reconciled to "the unenviable circumstances of their everyday lives" (Wilkie, 1989: 44). Turtle Diary lacks the wit and sparkle of the other texts under discussion, and Hoban's penchant for magical realist episodes is not indulged. The vitality of Hoban's language is not pronounced, and as language attracts much commentary in this thesis, Turtle Diary does not demand inclusion. The conclusion of the novel leaves William and Naera isolated from one

another, and the liberation, regeneration and reintegration which characterises the other novels is experienced only vicariously through the release of the turtles. Elements of a similar futility in Pilgermann are discussed in Chapter III: Recuperating the Margin.

The scope of this thesis embraces an investigation of the metaphors of language and writing in Hoban's novels. Rather than repeating Wilkie's Jungian analyses, or remaining concerned solely with the nature and role of language in Riddley Walker (as do most critics), I have endeavoured to reformulate Hoban's obsessive concern with language and the way it structures reality, in terms of its intersection with current literary theory. I have found Derrida's figures of *différance*, the *hymen* and the notion of the apocalyptic particularly useful in this regard. As Porter points out:

Derrida's ... own obscurity is in principle modelled on paronomasia.(1990: 464)

The approach I have taken towards Hoban's work is designed to highlight a similar multivalency of meaning in his novels. I have read them as collections of conflicting voices -- an animated universe argues vociferously with the protagonist in both Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency --- as well as portrayals of the individual marginalised by society, who must needs try to re-establish his authority in the face of his inescapable difference.

Chapter I: Identity and Authority in Kleinzeit (1974) and The Medusa Frequency (1987) discusses the negotiation of identity in a world where authority seems to be denied. The chapter begins with an analysis of the narrative technique which Hoban employs to destabilise any confident assumption of fixed "reality" in both of these novels. Magical realism accentuates the displacement of the protagonists from the consensus reality of their peers. The subsequent sections discuss the authority of the proper name, using the structuralist model of the sign and Derrida's concept of *différance* to trace the absence of meaning, and the protagonists' insistence on presence.

Chapter II: Future Present: The Apocalyptic Language of Riddley Walker (1980) focusses on the authority of mythmaking in the novel. The "decayed English" of the novel and the prominence of the cultural myths offer an opening into a discussion of the role of language in creating reality, and the role of story-telling in Riddley's society. Riddley Walker is discussed as a

polyglot novel (which) offers a radical example of antilanguage that is noteworthy largely because it derives from the primary story of the new physics -- radioactive decay. (Porter, 1990: 450)

The chapter argues that Riddley is able to offer hope of ending the destructive cycles of his community when he authorises a new type of story-telling.

The final chapter, Recuperating the Margin: Pilgermann (1983) and the Hymen Effect examines the

mechanisms of displacement common to all of Hoban's novels, but most pronounced in Pilgermann. Pilgermann's castration becomes the emblem of his displacement, which, it is argued, marginalises him both as man and as author. Derrida's figure of the *hymen* is used to examine marginalities in the text; Pilgermann is further marginalised through the use of the modes of the fantastic and the grotesque in the text.

Each chapter is intended to emphasize different aspects of Hoban's works which are common to all of the novels under discussion. As Branscomb has pointed out:

The complexity of Hoban's treatment of theme and symbol has increased greatly over the past twelve years, but his concerns and methods have remained essentially the same. (1986: 29)

However, the underlying connection between all of the chapters is the focus on Hoban's vision of language, and by extension, story-telling, as therapeutic: despite the inevitable and unavoidable displacement of authority, the writer continues to manufacture 'presence' in the form of the text from his own 'absence'. Indeed, Hoban draws his inspiration from absence:

for me the black is primordial creation. It's not the black of despair, the black of depression -- it's the darkness of the mother goddess, it's the darkness inside the womb of the mother goddess, it's the darkness of the sexuality of the mother goddess from which everything comes. (1984: 79)

Hoban succeeds, as Derrida has done, in displacing presence; his novels concur with Derrida's statement that:

Literature belongs to this nuclear epoch, that of the crisis and of nuclear criticism, at least if we mean by this the historical and ahistorical horizon of an absolute self-destructibility without apocalypse, without revelation of its own truth, without absolute knowledge. (1984: 27)

Chapter 1:
Identity and Authority in
Kleinzeit
and The Medusa Frequency

i: Reality and Narrative

Although Hoban wrote four novels between the publication of Kleinzeit (1974) and The Medusa Frequency (1987), both these texts explore the same themes: writing, reality and the negotiation of identity. These issues underlie all of Hoban's novels discussed in this thesis, but Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency foreground Hoban's metafictional concerns. The protagonists of both novels, Kleinzeit and Herman Orff, are writers: Kleinzeit loses his copywriting job at the outset and spends the rest of the novel trying to learn "HOW - (TO) - MAKE - WORDS - STAY - ON - THE - PAPER?" (Kleinzeit 168), while Orff has completed two novels, but seeks inspiration for a third. The Medusa Frequency can be read as an epilogue to Kleinzeit in that the former develops the Orpheus and Eurydice fixation introduced in the latter. Kleinzeit's problem is to overcome writers' block -- to learn to "find what's there and let it be" (Kleinzeit 168); Orff struggles to identify the sources of inspiration. Because both novels are concerned with aspects of the writing process, both return obsessively to the idea of

naming. The search for the name, and for the authority to use the name, will form the focus of this chapter.

Both novels expose the fragile fabric of reality by rendering "consensus reality" (Hume, 1984: 21) vulnerable to invasions by characters whose existence is fantastic. Kleinzeit confronts and eventually befriends a bestial Death:

HOO HOO! yelled Death. I'LL BLOODY TEAR YOU APART ... It stuck its fingers through the letter box. Bristling black and hairy, with disgusting-looking long grey fingernails.

(Kleinzeit 122)

Herman Orff chats amiably with the rotting head of a dismembered Orpheus which makes regular appearances. Before discussing the novels in detail, it is useful to examine the narrative technique which Hoban uses to introduce the idea of conflicting realities.

A conversation between the protagonist of The Medusa Frequency, Herman Orff, and his lover, Melanie Falsepercy, takes as its subject Rousseau's painting of the 'Sleeping Gypsy':

"Looking at the 'Sleeping Gypsy', I said, "What do you think is going to happen in that picture?"

"First tell me what you think."

"I think the gypsy is in a dream. The lion isn't in the dream so the gypsy is safe for the moment. But if the gypsy wakes up or the lion falls asleep there could be big trouble."

(The Medusa Frequency 110)

The Medusa Frequency can be read as an account of the "big trouble" that results from the collision of two

realities, the 'real' reality of every day, and the "Medusa frequency" of the title. Herman Orff lives in what Katherine Hume has termed "consensus reality"; however, he is plagued throughout the novel by the head of Orpheus, which is so bizarre as to be immediately placed beyond the boundaries of the real. Yet simple distinctions between reality and fantasy cannot be made in the novel; although the head of Orpheus is the more apparently fantastic of the two characters, it is through Orff's conversations with him that both Orff and the reader come to question the conventional categorisation of reality. By the end of the novel, this culminates in the realisation that Orff is just as much a fabricated character in the story of his own life as Orpheus is a character in an ancient myth. The Medusa Frequency is a highly complex series of games in which the 'real' is played off against the 'fantastic'; Herman Orff's apparently predictable, intelligible universe is gradually dissolved into one where the usual categories no longer have any validity. As Rosemary Jackson writes:

Since this excursion into disorder can only begin from a base within the dominant cultural order, literary fantasy is a telling index of the limits of that order. Its introduction of the 'unreal' is set against the category of the 'real' -- a category which the fantastic interrogates by its difference. (1981: 4), (my emphasis)

The narrative method which naturalises the bizarre, and functions as a tool of the interrogation which

Jackson mentions above can be defined as magical realism. Angel Flores coined the term in 1955, defining it as

preoccupation with style and ... transformation of the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal ... The practitioners of magical realism cling to reality as if to prevent "literature" from getting in their way, as if to prevent their myth from flying off, as in fairytales, to supernatural realms. (1955: 188-89)

Since this initial definition, many critics have elaborated and expanded the range of the term ¹. Although there is no theoretical consensus on an exact definition of magical realism, it is possible to identify its characteristics by looking at particular examples from the text. The episode when Herman Orff wakes up after his first night with Melanie Falsepercy, finds the head in his fridge, and eventually confronts her with it, is a case in point:

I went down to the kitchen and opened the fridge. There were three cans of beer, most of a salami, a mouldering of old cheeses, half a tub of margarine, half a jar of marmalade, half a pint of milk and the head of Orpheus.

"Loss!" it said. "That's what she was to me, you know ... "

Just then I heard Melanie's bare feet on the floor behind me and I closed the fridge as she came into the kitchen.

"Anything good in there?" she said.

"Three cans of beer, most of a salami, a mouldering of old cheeses, half a tub of margarine, half a jar of marmalade, half a pint of milk and the head of Orpheus."

"Let's have a look at the head of Orpheus."

I opened the fridge.

"Oh my God," she said.

"What do you see?"

"It's all right, it's only a rather filthy old cabbage but I must be very suggestible because just for a moment I could've sworn I

saw this dreadful-looking head with no eyes and the flesh all eaten away."

"Yes," I said, "it's a dreadful-looking thing." The head of Orpheus went on being itself but it kept its mouth shut as I carried it into the hall and put it in the larder under the stairs.

(The Medusa Frequency 73)

Characteristically, magical realism involves the introduction of supernatural events into the narrative in such a way that they are accepted without disbelief by the characters. The narrator often appears to recognise the fictional impossibility of the event, but seldom draws direct attention to this, leading the reader to suspend her disbelief as well. In this extract, Herman Orff, the first person narrator, who has previously doubted the reality of his Orphic experiences, has clearly reached a point where he has suspended this disbelief. To him (and to the reader as well by this stage), the question has become immaterial, and indeed, it is more likely that the head is real than that it is not.

A further condition of magical realism is that the fantastic be portrayed as objectively real, as it is in the extract. The idea that the conversations with Orpheus might be hallucinations is gradually rejected, as the episodes are internally coherent and based entirely on rational norms, apart from the single, and apparently unimportant, fact that the partner in the dialogue is a mythical rotting head.

In the passage quoted above, further evidence for the reality of Orpheus is given when Melanie Falsepercy

almost sees it: she cannot hold the (literal) vision because she is not seeking the (metaphoric) vision of creativity which Orff, Fallok and Kraken have sought. This is perhaps the reason that Orff's denial of the vision of the head (he accuses it of being an hallucination, whereupon it "stops thinking" Orff (The Medusa Frequency 32)) leads to the punishing heart pain: a conscious rejection of the possibility of the impossible is, in reality, a sign of the potential death of the creative urge. However, Melanie Falsepercy does get a glimpse of it, if only for an instant. Another characteristic of magical realism is that it is often episodic in nature, occurring in short bursts of alternative perception. Again, Orff's periodic conversations with Orpheus fulfill this requirement.

The humour of magical realism lies in its deadpan delivery. At the same time as emphasizing the strangeness of the magical realist episodes by providing no easy (that is, "real") explanation for them, the distance between magical realism and textual 'reality' is diminished owing to authorial reticence. The narrator "present(s) a world view that is radically different from ours as equally valid" (Chanady, 1985: 30); an example of this is the calm listing of the items in Orff's fridge, culminating almost nonchalantly in mentioning the head of Orpheus. The narrator does not question the event, but rather seems to substantiate it by providing a wealth of specific details. Verisimilitude serves to detract attention from the absurdity of there being a head in the

fridge; the needlessly descriptive cataloguing places the bizarre within the category of the real, and the fact that Herman Orff is more surprised that the head should immediately begin speaking than that the head is there at all, illustrates the effectively naturalising function of authorial reticence in magical realism.

By using this narrative mechanism to destabilise the "consensus reality" in which both his characters and the reader participate, Hoban complements in narrative style the diegetic agenda of both Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency. The remainder of this chapter will examine the characters' search for a guiding authority sufficient to stabilise the conflicting realities of their worlds.

ii: The Authority of the Name

The first reading of both The Medusa Frequency and Kleinzeit overwhelms the reader with a proliferation of names; not only the main characters, but also peripheral figures are referred to by names which are clearly intended to be significant. David Lodge points out that, despite the "fundamental principle of structuralism ... 'the arbitrariness of the sign' ... In a novel names are never neutral. They always signify, if it is only ordinariness" (1992: 36-7). Hoban is clearly aware of this, and plays on the convention of significant naming to humorous effect in both novels:

NOW SHOWING: 'KILL COMES AGAIN'. *They were all dying to come with him!* On the poster a man in tight fitting clothes aimed a double barreled shotgun from between his legs. Behind him naked girls lay stacked like cordwood. ... Starring PRONG STUDMAN, MAXIMUS JOCK, IMMENSA PUDENDA ...

(Kleinzeit 24)

My first novel, Slope of Hell (Mumchance Press, 1977), sold 1,731 copies before being remaindered. The Times found the writing 'a little slippery'; the Guardian noted that the story was 'a downhill sort of thing'. My second one, World of Shadows (Reedham & Weap, 1978), sold 1,247 copies before the publisher went into receivership.

(The Medusa Frequency 12)

The first extract parodies the hyperbole of advertising by commodifying the actors through the allocation of suggestive stage names. In the second passage, the names of the publishing houses seem to be wry retrospective acknowledgements of the futility of Herman Orff's pretensions to literary success. In both examples, the name is clearly linked to the nature of the named. Lodge identifies this as an attempt to recover "that mythical, prelapsarian state of innocence in which a thing and its name were interchangeable" (1992: 40). Obviously, a return to this Edenic unity of sign and signified is impossible. Lodge's argument implies that the nostalgia for a unified whole serves only to highlight the irretrievable and to emphasize the widening gap between word and object. However, rather than tacitly recognising the chasm between the name and that which it represents, in both Kleinzeit and The Medusa

Frequency the connection between name and named is treated as if it were inviolate. This is emphasized by the way in which characters fear the name given to something, as they believe that the name will predict the nature of that thing. Kleinzeit himself attempts to thwart the power of naming by mis-translating his name in conversation with Sister:

"Kleinzeit, does that mean something in German?"
 "Hero," said Kleinzeit.
 "I *thought* it must mean something," said Sister.
 (Kleinzeit 15)

Sister's expectation that meaning be attached to the name confirms the anxiety which compels Kleinzeit to change his name through misinterpretation. Although she discovers the truth (that Kleinzeit means small-time), Sister maintains that "'Only a hero would say that Kleinzeit means hero'" (Kleinzeit 18). In a way, the apparently deterministic nature of naming transforms Kleinzeit from a small-time player to a hero once he adopts the new name for himself; he re-creates himself in an act of re-naming. Rimmon-Kenan notes the important function of names in characterization, arguing that

the analogy may emphasize either the similarity or the contrast between the two elements compared, and it may be either explicitly stated in the text or left for the reader to discover. (1983: 68)

In the case of Kleinzeit, the analogy created emphasizes contrasts rather than similarities, for Kleinzeit is an anti-hero, a passive, ineffectual man who

is obliged to assume the role of hero of the novel. He gains heroic stature in his own estimation as the novel progresses, starting with his act of re-naming. The analogy is ironic, and explicitly stated.

Once Kleinzeit has claimed the identity of the hero, it is easy to reread his actions as heroic ones, even when the tone is mock-heroic. An example is the passage describing his preparations to go to the hospital.

"Right," said Kleinzeit. That afternoon he bought a pair of adventurous-looking pyjamas, selected from his shelves books for the hospital. He packed Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*. He'd already read that, wouldn't have to read it again. Thucydides he would carry in his hand.

(Kleinzeit 13)

The incongruous image of the patient arming himself for battle with an unknown disease contributes to the humour of the unlikely hero. Kleinzeit is figured as a pretentious man camouflaged in "adventurous pyjamas", whose greatest adventure is provided by his illness. At this point in the novel, the books which Kleinzeit carries seem useless weapons, and as the stereotype of the bookish weakling, he appears to be the ideal prey of a beast such as Hospital. Indeed, Hospital is simultaneously animated and personified as an apparently kindly, but nonetheless vicious, old uncle; in his presence, Kleinzeit is reduced to the insignificance and vulnerability of a scuttling insect:

The next day Hospital unsheathed its claws, sheathed them again, made velvet paws, put its paws away, shifted its vast weight from one buttock to another,

crossed its legs, played with its watch chain, smoked its pipe, rocked placidly.

Shall I tell you something, my boy? said Hospital.

Tell me something, said Kleinzeit, scuttling like a cockroach away from one of the rockers as it came down to scrunch him.

(Kleinzeit 39)

As the novel progresses, the tone alters from lightly mocking to more serious; Kleinzeit becomes more of a hero as he grapples with the challenges presented both by his ailing hypotenuse and by the yellow paper. When a series of operations seems inevitable, Kleinzeit escapes from Hospital in a truly heroic manner:

On the second floor the A-4 fire exit door opened, two Pain Company scouts came out, weapons at the ready ... Action whistled, the scouts whistled back. The rest of Pain Company came out, some of them supporting Kleinzeit, one of them carrying his case, the others guarding his rear. Kleinzeit, dressed for the street, was very pale.

(Kleinzeit 163)

Furthermore, the books themselves become the only weapons which can aid him in his fight against his mysterious ailment; after his relapse, Kleinzeit turns to Thucydides for solace. He sees his plight (as both a writer and as a sick man) as parallel to that of the Athenians, who are fighting a hopeless battle:

Athens has been defeated, he said. We mourn the loss of comrades and brothers. Looked at in another light, however, Athens has not lost, Sparta had not won ...

You know how it is, said Thucydides. You're winning, so you think why quit now.

I've done three more pages, said Kleinzeit, but nobody's making peace offers.

(Kleinzeit 158, 126)

Not only Thucydides's book, but the beginnings of his own novel, bolster Kleinzeit in his fight. By re-naming himself "Hero", Kleinzeit alters his place in the world of the texts; he becomes a hero, and the books which he carries become his weapons.

Similar punning on proper names is indulged in The Medusa Frequency. Melanie Falsepercy is an enigma to Hermann Orff. Her name offers a combination of morphological analogy and mythological allusion (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 67): her first name -- derived from the same base word which produces "melanin" -- means 'black beauty', while her surname hints at Percy-phony. "Falsepercy" is the reverse of "Persephone", and both Orff and the reader come to realise that she is not a pure Persephone figure, but a false one. When Melanie Falsepercy betrays Herman Orff by sleeping with his employer, a new reversal takes place. So, in order to understand the allusion, the reader needs firstly to reverse "Falsepercy", which gives Persephone, and thus propels Melanie into the mythical subtext of the novel. However, her Persephone-nature is reversed again when she deceives Orff through her infidelity -- falsehood is reinstated at the beginning of the name. This can be simplified as follows: Falsepercy = Persephone (first reversal); but "False" remains the prefix, and she becomes a False Persephone. However, this interpretation cannot be made immediately the character is introduced, primarily because the Persephone motif has not yet been

fully emphasized, and the reader is likely to miss the "percy" allusion. The truth is only revealed when Melanie Falsepercy admits her infidelity, and the meaning of the name is intended to be as much of a surprise to the reader as the betrayal is to Orff.

Hoban obviously intends the reader to interpret the names of the characters in all of his novels: Riddley Walker "walks his riddles" through the post-apocalyptic devastation; Pilgermann is the pilgrim; Herman Orff is -- despite an ironic distance -- an Orpheus forever enslaved to a woman (her man); the list continues. Joseph Ewen points out that

many ... analogies may have developed out of conceptions involving causality, ... but they are grasped as purely analogous characterisation when the causal connection is no longer strongly operative. (1983: 67)

Hoban intends the causal implication of the analogy to remain prominent in the reader's mind, and it is this emphasis on cause-and-effect which lends an apparently deterministic power to names in his novels.

The apparent power of the name to determine its subject offers the possibility of redemption from fate through re-naming, but simultaneously, it is a threatening power when lodged in the hands of another. If the relationship between name and named is somehow inviolate, then the authority to confer the name is that which causes most anxiety. Indeed, the authority of the name, the authority to name, and the name of the author

are central to my analysis of both Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency.

The name has authority because it is awarded semantic intent (Lodge, 1992: 225), and yet at the same time, it has no authority, because, as the structuralists have pointed out, the sign is arbitrary. Kleinzeit is simultaneously obsessed with, and indifferent to, meaning; he struggles to make sense of pervasive enigmas, such as the "barrow full of rocks" permutations, and yet is completely indifferent to meaning, such as the meaning of his own name, "Kleinzeit". At once, he believes that meanings are fixed -- there is a solution to the "arrow in a box" riddle -- and that he is empowered to change meanings -- through his act of renaming, for example. The anxiety about the name which I indicate above is the result of this paradox. Lodge writes:

The often asserted resistance of the world to meaningful interpretation would be a sterile basis for writing if it were not combined with a poignant demonstration of the human obligation to attempt such interpretation, especially by the process of organizing one's memories into narrative form. (1992: 225)

An example of the "resistance of the world to meaningful interpretation" is the series of puzzling phrases which haunt Kleinzeit from the first pages of the novel. Having found a piece of yellow paper in the Underground, Kleinzeit uses it to write the commercial for Bonzo toothpaste which gets him fired. His advertising concept is based on a man pushing a barrow

full of rocks. The phrase mutates and reappears throughout the novel, always recognisable because of its meaningless assonance. The permutations are as follows:

barrow full of rocks (11)
 MAN WITH HARROW FULL OF CROCKS (20)
 arrow in a box (23)
 Yarrow, *Fullest Stock* (26)
 SORROW; FULL SHOCK (37)
 borrow fool's pox? (41)
 Narrow, cool. The flock. (129)
 Sparrows rule the clocks (131)

Kleinzeit is puzzled and frustrated by the apparent meaninglessness of these strings of words; he cannot admit that the world he inhabits is one of signifiers endlessly loosened from their signifieds. As many of these phrases are uttered by fellow patients, Kleinzeit must acknowledge that "the sign is transsubjective by its very nature" (Thiher, 1987: 71). Indeed, Derrida (following Saussure) writes that

there can be arbitrariness only because the system of signs is constituted solely by the differences in terms, and not by their plenitude. (1978: 10)

The arbitrary nature of the cryptic phrases, whose only similarity is phonic, makes them resistant to Kleinzeit's understanding. The words in the phrases are meaningful as units, but every phrase is enigmatic; Kleinzeit attempts to understand them by observing the relationship of every phrase to the other. Indeed, through his attempts to read the repeated phrases in a meaningful way, Kleinzeit is obliged to recognise that

every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences. (Derrida, 1978: 11)

Derrida's name for this "play of differences" is *différance*. In defining the term, it is necessary to return to the root word, *différer*, which has two meanings: "to temporize", and "to be not identical, to be other" (Derrida, 1982: 8). Kleinzeit's conceptual confrontations with the "barrow full of rocks" permutations consist of an endless deferral of meaning: he awaits the final revelation of a transcendental signified which would serve to explain the phrases. As Derrida has indicated, "the sign itself is deferred presence", as it "represents the present in its absence" (1982: 9). However, that deferred presence is deferred further when it becomes apparent that every new phrase is a permutation of the previous one, and not the final signified to which its predecessors refer. The absence of meaning is passed along an interminable chain, always just beyond the grasp of Kleinzeit's understanding, yet continually promising the full presence of meaning which he seeks. Even though the final link in the chain, "Sparrows rule the clocks", submits to the grammatical rules which define it as an independent sentence, its meaning remains elusive. It is Kleinzeit's belief in "the thing itself" (Derrida, 1982: 9), the possibility of the presence of the signified, which propels his search. The process of his discovering that all the other

patients in the hospital ward have been plagued by one or another version of the initial phrase is a discovery that

the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *secondary* and *provisional*; secondary due to an original and lost presence from which the sign thus derives; provisional as concerns this final and missing presence towards which the sign in this sense is a movement of mediation. (Derrida, 1982: 9)

Just as the sign is endlessly in movement, a mediation which Derrida calls the "play (of) *différance*" (1982: 11), so every phrase is linked in a chain. What Kleinzeit seeks is the original, lost presence. However, the play of *différance* itself puts into question

precisely the quest for a rightful beginning, an absolute point of departure, a principal responsibility. (Derrida, 1982: 6)

Kleinzeit's search for the original meaning of the "barrow full of rocks" chain of phrases seems doomed to failure. He is able to understand a measure of what they signify by reading their relationship to one another, but as units of meaning, every phrase remains unintelligible. After writing down every phrase, Kleinzeit draws the conclusion that

When all the existing data have been correlated and analysed ... we find nothing whatever ... There may be, however, some evidence, as yet unconfirmed, of the existence of a group of yellow paper men. There may possibly be a whole ward of them in hospital ... I am one of the A4 men ... The etiology of the various malfunctions and diseases in Ward A4 is unknown to me, said Kleinzeit.

(Kleinzeit 125)

The meaninglessness of the phrases written by the sick men is mirrored in the apparent non-referentiality of their diseases. Kleinzeit is admitted for tests on his hypotenuse, which seems to be skewed; Flashpoint has a distended spectrum, and Redbeard suffers a slipped fulcrum. Although all of these ailments appear to be terminal, none is identifiable as purely physical or psychological in origin. Rather, they are described in the abstract language of mathematical formulae, and could thus be interpreted as being diseases 'in the mind', just as mathematics is cerebral. The only clue the reader receives that the diseases are not mere figments of the imagination -- that Hospital is not, in fact, Mental Hospital -- is the conversation between Kleinzeit and the nurse who is trying to coax him to sign a surgery release form:

"Then sign this and let's get on with it ... I should think you'd have a little consideration."

"I have a lot of consideration," said Kleinzeit. "I'm considering hypotenuse, asymptotes and stretto. That's a lot to consider. I want to keep my angle right even if my hypotenuse is skewed, I want my asymptotes to keep approaching the curve they never meet, I want to keep my stretto even if it can't channel entries any more ..."

"Cor," said the bosom lady. "I think they've put you in the wrong kind of hospital ..."

(Kleinzeit 144-45)

The ailments, then, are physical, indeed, terminally so: they lead to death, the absolute absence-of-presence. Kleinzeit's search for the meaning of the yellow paper phrases parallels his desire to live: both are attempts to re-establish presence.

Inevitably, Hoban reveals the signified for which Kleinzeit has been searching. Kleinzeit himself does not make the discovery; the truth is revealed by Word to the yellow paper. The implication is that meaninglessness can only be resolved through the attempt to make meanings of one's own; through writing itself. This idea -- of writing as therapeutic -- is repeated in Riddley Walker, when Riddley writes the narrative of his experiences, which leads to his "writing" of the Punch and Judy alternative to the destructive Eusa shows.

Despite the implied promise that the 'meaning' of the "barrow full of rocks" phrases will be discovered, the moment of revelation is denied. The conversation between Word and the yellow paper perpetuates the chain of deferral while ostensibly revealing the transcendental signified:

Barrow full of rocks? said the yellow paper.
 That's just my name for it, said Word. A
 pneumatic.
 Mnemonic, said the yellow paper.
 Whatever you like, said Word. The line itself
 is by Pilkins.
 Milton? said the yellow paper.
 Something like that, said Word. "Hidden soul
 of harmony" is what he said. I like that. It
 sings. "Untwisting all the chains that ty / The
 hidden soul of harmony." ...
 Do you mean to tell me, said the yellow paper, that
 "Barrow full of rocks" is nothing more than a
 mnemonic for "Hidden soul of harmony"?
 (Kleinzeit 161)

A mnemonic is, of course, a signifier whose meaning is the deferral of other signifiers. "Barrow full of rocks" serves as a mnemonic for other mnemonics, which

represent a line from Milton, valued not because of its meaning at all, but because "It sings"! Further, as Wilkie points out,

(the) two lines from Milton's *L'Allegro* (are) quoted here for (their) significant connections with the myth of Orpheus. (1989: 39)

"Barrow full of rocks" is a mnemonic for "Hidden soul of harmony", which functions as a mnemonic for the Orpheus myth. Kleinzeit's hunt for the presence of meaning is thus ultimately denied: just as every mnemonic is a mnemonic for another, so the signifiers signify only other signifiers. Presence is continually deferred; the chain of *différance* continues.

iii: The Authority to Name

I have argued above that the authority to confer the name causes extreme anxiety for Hoban's characters. Kleinzeit's act of self-naming has the effect of altering the way he is perceived, both by himself and by others, but the change is not threatening, as Kleinzeit has exercised the power to name himself. The anxiety of which I write is that experienced by a character who is named by another. Kleinzeit's world is totally animated; everything speaks, from the advertisements in the Underground to the yellow paper on which he writes. Wilkie observes that

Kleinzeit is surrounded by their voracious presences, each insisting on its own verbosity, its own distinct and inescapable presence, its own particular perspective, and its own individual brand of realism. (1989: 37)

Here lies the clue to the terror of naming: every speaking subject is able to determine "its own individual brand of realism"; what this means for Kleinzeit and Orff is that consensus reality ² is dissolved in an uproar of conflicting voices, each authorised by the fact of its individual subjectivity to create reality: to confer the name. Kleinzeit's experiences with the grotesquely animated universe which he inhabits reveal the authority of his own subjectivity as mere illusion. The individual certainty of the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" dissolves into a frightening multiplicity of authority:

He put his face in front of the bathroom mirror.

I exist, said the mirror.

What about me? said Kleinzeit.

Not my problem, said the mirror.

(Kleinzeit 7)

The mirror, which should be just a reflection of Kleinzeit's presence, and thus confirm his authority, is instead portrayed as an independent subject whose existence is confirmed by any reflection. When Redbeard removes all of Kleinzeit's possessions from his flat, the mirror is reanimated:

I exist, said the bathroom mirror as it looked into Redbeard's face. There is world again. The face came and went. Lights went on and off. Sounds,

voices. Life, said the mirror. Action. Silence again.

(Kleinzeit 101)

Kleinzeit seems completely replaceable: any person is good enough for the mirror; any number of yellow paper men have preceded and will succeed Redbeard; any number of writers pass through ward A4. The struggle to assert individuality is a struggle to maintain authority. Kleinzeit expresses his greatest happiness in terms of possession:

The world is mine, sang Kleinzeit. Sister loves me and the world is mine.

Cobblers, said Hospital. Nothing is yours, mate. You least of all are yours.

(Kleinzeit 50)

However, that authority which he would claim is denied. Kleinzeit is least of all in control of himself: in the physical sense, organs he was totally unaware of are mutinying without apparent reason; his stretto, asymptotes and hypotenuse are all acting up, and not even the medical authorities are able to evaluate the potential damage. He cannot possess the world because he cannot possess himself: he is not in control of his own identity, because he is just another subject in a world of clamouring subjectivities. The mere existence of Underground, Hospital, Death, Word and so on as speaking subjects robs Kleinzeit of the authority which he desires. He is vulnerable to endless misrepresentation, which greatly disturbs him -- even though he claims "I don't care if God forgets my name" (Kleinzeit 95), the

insult of being called Krankheit and Klemmreich is added to the injury of being referred to as "I, the undesigned" in the hospital surgery release form.

"'Undesigned'," said Kleinzeit. "That may be your opinion, but I'm God's handiwork just as much as anyone else." His voice broke on the last word.
(Kleinzeit 79)

Kleinzeit's concern to establish and secure his individuality underlies his anxiety about living in a universe where Hospital says "Nothing is special about you" (Kleinzeit 172) and even God forgets his name. God, the ultimate authority, has abdicated His role as a personal God, similarly to the God in Pilgermann; He is deposed, portrayed as forgetful and disinterested:

You've got to move with the times, said God.
Are we talking about the same thing? said Sister.
One usually does, said God. I mean how much is there to talk about really. It's pretty much all one thing, isn't it.
(Kleinzeit 84)

In a world where God is no longer a reliable repository of authority (and thus of meaning), the only alternatives left to Kleinzeit are either to name himself, or to submit to being named by others. He resists the latter:

"You see?" said the fat man. "You simply won't bear examination, will you? It's almost as if you'd made yourself up on the spur of the moment."
(Kleinzeit 35)

by indulging in the former:

Sister pearly in the dusk, silky on the flowered sheets, tasty in the mouth, opulent to the touch, Kleinzeit, overwhelmed, became nothing, disappeared, reappeared, from nowhere entered, inventing himself as theme, as subject.

(Kleinzeit 86)

Kleinzeit resists being named by another: he is not "the undesigned", he will not lose the battle with anonymity and death as the Athenians are always fated to be defeated by the Spartans in Thucydides. However, his resistance takes the form of running away: he is continually escaping from the hospital; he seems deliberately to have forgotten his past. Adopting the name "hero" was just a desperate man's attempt to bluff himself (and Sister) into believing in his own importance. Kleinzeit has to learn to name himself. For this reason, he remains afraid of the authority of others:

Dr Pink lowered his eyes tactfully ... "you'll feel a little breathless and as if everything is piling up inside you from behind while at the same time you are quite unable to move forward to get away from it" ...

Dr Pink's voice had become a long and massive Sunday afternoon through which Kleinzeit drowsed like a fly in amber. At the end of his remarks it was Monday morning, a change not necessarily for the better. Kleinzeit felt breathless and as if everything was piling up inside him from behind while at the same time he was quite unable to move forward to get away from it. Its marvellous the way Dr Pink knows exactly how it feels, he thought. I wish I'd never met him. God knows what'll come into his head next and I'll feel it.

(Kleinzeit 78)

Why does he insist on *naming* everything,
thought Kleinzeit.

(Kleinzeit 118)

Although Kleinzeit feels trapped by the authority of others for most of the novel, he changes from the insecure and insignificant man who believes himself to be at the mercy of forces greater than himself:

I'm no better off than that chap with a barrow full of rocks, he thought. I wrote him and there he was. Nothing behind him and rocks ahead.

(Kleinzeit 52)

Kleinzeit becomes the hero of his own novel: he regains his lost authority, or, as Hospital would have it, he remembers himself. This is a great struggle for Kleinzeit; even in the closing pages of the novel, once he realises that he is not merely the hollow "Hero" of his first conversation with Sister, he is unable to name himself:

What are you? said Hospital.
I don't know, said Kleinzeit.
Be that, said Hospital. Be I-Don't-Know.
HOW? yelled Kleinzeit.
BY REMEMBERING YOURSELF, roared Hospital.

(Kleinzeit 173)

"Remembering yourself" refers Kleinzeit to the myth of Orpheus, who was dismembered. Hoban uses dismemberment as a metaphor for psychological disintegration, for the loss of authority which Kleinzeit suffers. Christine Wilkie notes:

His universe dislocates the structures which would lend pattern and meaning to an otherwise conventional unquestioned and unquestioning world. (1989: 37)

One of these dislocated structures is the structure of authority. Kleinzeit's illness -- the skewing of his hypotenuse -- can be read as a metaphor for this dislocation of authority: he attempts to keep his angle right whilst his points of reference wander.

iv: The Name of the Author

Kleinzeit tries to claim authority by becoming an author. He believes that the author has authority; that the one who writes is in control of what is written. For this reason, he challenges Redbeard to explain the cryptic "barrow full of rocks":

"Morrow's cruel mock,'" said Kleinzeit.
 "What's it mean?" ... Redbeard stared at him ...
 "You!" he said when he had finished chewing.
 "You're no better than a little sucking baby. You bloody want answers to everything, everything explained, meanings and whatnot all laid on for you. What's it to me what the yellow paper does to you? Do you care what it does to me? Of course you don't. Why should you?"

(Kleinzeit 56-7)

Hoban portrays the writing process as something which does not originate from the will of the author at all, but finds its source outside him/her. Herman Orff describes the writing process as one of receiving a

transmission -- and, indeed, he is one of the few "tuned" to the "Medusa frequency" of the title:

the words come out of green dancing and the excitation of phosphors. I'm the one who makes the words appear, but I don't always know who or what is speaking ... after all, why did I sit here like a telegrapher at a lost outpost if not to receive messages from everywhere

(The Medusa Frequency 8-9)

For Hoban, the author has none of traditional authority in the sense of final control over what is written. Rather, Hoban believes that writing functions to save readers from the authority of what he terms the "limited-reality consensus":

The writer has to listen to those voices because the straight people seem not to have the capability of living in full reality. The straight people live in a limited-reality consensus in which the chair is real, the table is real ... but what is inexplicable and ungraspable and nameless isn't real. So the writer has to find names and handles, the writer has to find words to make it real. (1992: 189)

Kleinzeit's greatest anxieties are caused by naming; for Herman Orff, on the other hand, it is the way names are joined into stories which presents a terrifying threat to his individuality. Orff is haunted by the spectre of his lost love, Luise. He discovers that he has been merely one in a seemingly endless chain of lovers, all of whom lived with Luise for exactly two years, were involved in the creative arts, and were intrigued by the myth of Orpheus. Orff is trying to write a third novel, and in so doing, he hopes to break

away from historical patterns of failure, both in his personal and in his professional life. His efforts, like Kleinzeit's, can be read as an attempt to regain his authority, to structure his world according to his own will.

The anxiety of authorship is another facet of the anxiety of naming. Orff wants to resist the roles life seems to thrust upon him, in much the same way as Orpheus tries to conceal his identity from Aristaeus:

"My name is Aristaeus." He stood there as if listening for something that only he could hear.

"What are you listening for?" I said.

"Your name."

I didn't say anything, I didn't want to tell him my name.

"You don't want to tell it," he said.

"You're afraid."

"Afraid of what?" I said.

"Afraid to hear the sound of your name in this place."

"I'm not afraid."

"Then tell it."

"My name is Orpheus," I said. Still he seemed to be listening for something else.

"What are you listening for now?" I said.

"The olive trees whisper," he said. "I always listen. You are the one who is Orpheus."

"I've just told you that."

"Not just your name," he said. "You're going to do it, you're going to be Orpheus."

"What else can I be?"

"You are the story of yourself," he said. With his finger he traced figures in the air.

"What's that you're doing?" I said.

"Your name. You are the story of Orpheus."

"How can I be a story? I'm a man. A live person."

"You're a story."

"Not a story," I said. I began to run.

(The Medusa Frequency 38-39)

No sooner is Orpheus caught up in "the story of himself", than Herman Orff feels a similar horror of the same thing overcoming him. He writes a *dramatis personae* of his life, asking "Is there a story of me? ... Am I in it?" (The Medusa Frequency 46). For Hoban's characters, the source of the anxiety about naming could be termed "syntactic". Names are susceptible to stories in the same way that words are susceptible to sentences. Once something has been named, the authorial control over that thing passes from the subject who bears the name to another, the one who names the name. The name moves the subject from the world of subjectivity into the world of objects, and it is this move which robs the subject of its authority.

Similarly, narratives themselves become objects jostling to establish 'truth value' -- the gom yawncher man's argument with Kleinzeit over their roles in one another's life stories is a good example of the way narratives are denied absolute authority. If the universe continually fluctuates around whatever is perceived as centre, then one's own life-story takes no priority over those of others. The story one perceives as one's own life is no more 'true', 'real' or 'objective' than the story-lives of others. This is demonstrated in The Medusa Frequency by the character Gombert Yawncher, who first meets Herman Orff on the Underground, after Herman has been for his initial session of electrical therapy. Yawncher relates his own experiences with mental 'problems': "I never asked them

to take away the voices, but there it is, you see: who am I? Nobody. I'm not entitled to hear voices unless it's somebody asking me questions ... Don't let them empty you out, they've got nothing better to offer" (The Medusa Frequency 29). This advice confirms on the diegetic level what is suggested on the thematic level: alternate realities are not necessarily less valid merely because they fail to conform to "consensus reality". It is for this reason that Orpheus may truly exist, because his "Medusa frequency" is the point of configuration of his universe.

Orff meets the stranger again in the "Cheshire Cheese" bar, where they recognise one another:

As the gom yawner man passed me I recognised him as the man in the broken-brimmed hat who'd spoken to me in the underground when I was on my way home from Istvan Fallok's studio with electrodes all over my head.

"Hello," I said.

"Nimser vo," he said.

"You weren't talking like that the other day. How come?"

"I must've been somebody else then."

"How's that?"

"Economy. You have a little chat with a stranger now and then, right? So do I, so does everyone. How many lines has the stranger got? Two or three maybe. There's really no need for a new actor each time, is there?"

"So you play them all."

"The same as you."

"What do you mean?"

"Yesterday you were the conductor on the 11 bus and you also did quite a nice little tobacconist in the Charing Cross Road. Actually London hasn't got that big a cast, there's only about fifty of us, working flat out."

"Are you writing a novel?"

"Novel-writing is for weaklings," he said, and moved on.

(The Medusa Frequency 56)

The man appears again to sell Orff the cabbage which is the head of Orpheus, and later turns up as a busker in the Charing Cross Road underground, where his challenge to Orff's authority is the least disguised. Orff condescends to him:

"Really," I said, "your eagerness to make an appearance and be noticed however briefly is pathetic. Can it possibly matter that much to you to play these tiny scenes and speak your few little lines?"

(The Medusa Frequency 116-17)

His anxiety at the partial recognition of himself and his own role in that of the other man does not remain concealed for long:

"Let's get something straight," I said.
"I'm not a bit player in *your* story, you're a bit player in *mine*."

"Oh yes. Says who?"

"This is intolerable ... "

(The Medusa Frequency 116)

Herman Orff is forced to recognise his tenuous position in his universe; he can no longer "configure (himself) as centre" (The Medusa Frequency 38). His loss of centrality is an eroding of the authority of the centre: he cannot "limit what we might call the play of the structure" (Derrida, 1978: 278). Rather, he is subsumed and becomes part of the "play", which liberates him from an authority which demands adherence to consensus reality. Orff realises the truth of Orpheus's words:

"Of course when I sang there was the music of it ... I don't think it actually *moved* stones and trees; what it did was put them in a new place for those who heard the singing ... "
 (The Medusa Frequency 72)

Orff is "put in a new place" -- decentralised, if you will -- and it is this shift in perspective which frees him from the creative stagnation which impedes him at the outset.

While Orff must recognise and accept the erosion of his authority, Kleinzeit is initially a man entirely disempowered, who tries to overcome his loss of authority by becoming an author. Hoban uses the metaphor of lion-taming to represent the relationship which Kleinzeit believes exists between the author and his/her subject:

Right, said Kleinzeit. Enough. He opened the door of the yellow paper's cage, and it sprang upon him. Over and over they rolled together, bloody and roaring. Doesn't matter what the title is to start with, he said, anything will do. HERO, I'll call it. Chapter I. He wrote the first line while the yellow paper clawed his guts, the pain was blinding. It'll kill me, said Kleinzeit, there's no surviving this. He wrote the second line, the third, completed the first paragraph. The roaring and the blood stopped, the yellow paper rubbed purring against his leg, the first paragraph danced and sang, leaped and played on the green grass in the dawn.

(Kleinzeit 108)

Kleinzeit uses language as an instrument; he attempts to dominate his subject, and thus make his mark as author. Hoban implies that this is a false representation of the writing process; he credits language with more authority than the writer, and personifies it as Word:

Morrows cruel mock, said the paper.
 I told you I was tired of that, said Redbeard.
 Bad luck, said the paper. Morrows cruel mock.
 I don't want to, said Redbeard.
 Let's get this straight, said the paper. It
 isn't what you want. It's what I want. Right?
 Right, said Redbeard.
 Right, said the paper. Morrows cruel mock.
 That's all for now. I'll be in touch with you
 later.

(Kleinzeit 47)

Even when Kleinzeit believes that he has triumphed over the first few paragraphs of his novel, the narrator reveals that Kleinzeit has been used as the instrument of Word, rather than the other way around:

Under the yellow Ryman bag that was its cover the yellow paper growled softly. Lover, come back to me, it whispered. It was so good, so good the last time when you took me whilst I was sleeping. Where are you?

He's not here today, said Word. I am.

Not you, whimpered the yellow paper. Not the enormity of you. No, no, please, you're *hurting* me. O my God the awful tremendousness of you, you, you, you, ...

Like thunder and lightning the seed of Word jetted into the yellow paper. Now, said Word, there you are. I've quickened you ...

The yellow paper was weeping quietly ... He wanted to be the only one, he wanted to do it all himself.

Nobody does it all himself, said Word.

(Kleinzeit 160)

Herman Orff knows that he cannot do it "all himself", which is why he approaches Istvan Fallok, who promises to stimulate his creativity with "low powered electrical charges" and "complementary sonic patterns" (The Medusa Frequency 24). What Orff finds is not what he expects: the rotting, eyeless head of the dismembered

corpse of Orpheus manifests itself to him, and through their discussions, Orff learns about the process of writing. The head of Orpheus repeats the gist of Word's argument to the yellow paper, saying

"The story is different every time ... and every time there are difficulties -- I always need help with it and I'm always afraid it won't go all the way to the end."

"Different each time. How can that be?"

"How can it not be? A story is a thing that changes as it finds new perceptions, new ideas."

(The Medusa Frequency 100-101)

Herman Orff believed that Fallok's machine would help him to write his own story; instead, it makes him the instrument of Orpheus's story. Where Kleinzeit cannot write without Word, Orff cannot write without Orpheus. Orpheus implies that authors are not needed to write new stories, but rather to provide new perceptions of old stories -- and indeed, this is what Hoban has done in offering two novels which replay the Orpheus myth.

The Medusa Frequency is about finding the sources of inspiration, and relaying the words onto the page in the act of writing. Hoban foregrounds the process of fiction-making, and portrays it as a *bricolage* of pre-existing words and ideas. Writing is described as a play of structure, where words and ideas are in continual flux, always changing and re-arranging themselves in relation to each other. The head of Orpheus describes his own story-telling as follows:

"Broken pieces want to come together," said the brain, "they want to contain something. I see

Aristaeus with his broken bits of fired clay, each one only big enough for a word or two. ORPHEUS, he has written on one piece, THE TORTOISE on another. As soon as these words are put next to each other there want to be more words: THE ROAD; THE RIVER; EURYDICE. Or perhaps EURYDICE is the first word and in the empty space next to it there appears THE TORTOISE. Or first THE TORTOISE, yes of course, THE TORTOISE first because it is the centre of the universe ..."

(The Medusa Frequency 118)

In Orpheus's view, writing is not the perfect representation of a pre-existing idea, but rather a patchwork of broken words and phrases which are free to break loose from the structure of the story and coalesce in new patterns. From the extract above, the concern with establishing "the centre of the universe" is emphasized; Orpheus wants to write 'from the centre', but at the same time, must acknowledge that "the centre is not the centre" (Derrida, 1978: 279).

"You know how you'll hear a sound while you're asleep and there comes a whole dream to account for it and in the dream there are things that happen before and after the sound -- might it be that the whole universe has no purpose but to explain the killing of the tortoise? Do you see what I mean? Perhaps the universe is a continually fluctuating event that configures itself to whatever is perceived as centre. Do you think that might be how it is?"

(The Medusa Frequency 38)

Derrida explains the importance of the centre in the structuralist mode by saying:

the function of this centre was not only to orient, balance and organize the structure ... but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure ... as centre, it is the point at

which the substitution of contents, elements or terms is no longer possible. (1978: 278-9)

For Hoban's characters cling to a necessary centre, but are at a loss as to what the nature of that centre might be. Indeed, the identity of the centre seems open to change, depending on the subject who perceives it. Thus, TORTOISE can be substituted for EURYDICE as long as one of the terms retains the central role. What Hoban does in both Kleinzeit and The Medusa Frequency is to shift the characters' central point, thus relocating the infinitely substitutable elements of the overall structure. Kleinzeit wants to establish himself as centre by regaining his authority and thus confirming his individuality; instead, he finds that Word is the point of origin, without whose intervention yellow paper will remain forever barren. Herman Orff seeks inspiration and finds the rotting head of Orpheus at the centre; but the head is not an unwavering centre. The head of Orpheus appears in many guises, firstly as a stone (p 31), then as a head of cabbage (p 60), then as a football (p 97) and finally as half a grapefruit (p 115). Any head-shaped object may at any time transform into the head of Orpheus; as Fallok says, "I was hoping not to (see the head again) but a kind of madness came on me and I bought a large Edam cheese and when I took it out of the bag there was the head of Orpheus continuing its variations" (The Medusa Frequency 43). The effect of this continual mutation is reminiscent of the endless play of

différance; the head slips from signifier to signifier,
much like

an interlacing which permits the different threads
and different lines of meaning ... to go off in
different directions, just as it is always ready to
tie itself up with others. (1982: 3)

That centre which Kleinzeit and Orff seek is
authority; the centre authorises the structure and limits
play, and both characters yearn for the limitation which
would accord them a fixed and stable identity. However,
as Derrida notes, the centre can never be a part of the
structure which it is supposed to inhabit; it cannot
participate in the play of the structure, and therefore
cannot be in it at all: "the centre is not the centre"
(1978: 278). Derrida writes:

there was no centre ... it was not a fixed locus but
a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite
number of sign substitutions came into play. (1978:
280)

Both Kleinzeit and Orff initially resist the endless
number of sign substitutions, but both accept the legacy
of indeterminacy by the close of the novels. For
Kleinzeit, the realisation is that "the absence of a
centre is here the absence of a subject and the absence
of an author" (Derrida, 1978: 287): he is absent as
subject, and must needs continually reinvent himself ("as
theme, as subject", above), and he is absent as author,
as it is made clear that his authority does not originate
with him. For Herman Orff, "the play is always the play

of absence" (Derrida, 1978: 292); he must reconcile himself to the loss of Luise, and he must give up his addiction to loss itself. The Kraken, another Orphic voice, tells Orff:

THIS MYSTERY ... SHOWS ITS MEDUSA FACE TO COMPEL RECOGNITION, TO WARN THAT UNDERSTANDING STOPS BEFORE IT AND GOES NO FURTHER. THIS IS THE FACE OF MEDUSA WHO CANNOT BE IGNORED, CANNOT BE INTRUDED UPON, CANNOT BE POSSESSED. YOU HAVE NEVER GIVEN YOURSELF TO THIS ONE WHO WILL NOT GIVE HERSELF TO YOU, YOU HAVE WANTED ONLY THE SWEETNESS OF EURYDICE TO LOVE AND TO BETRAY. THIS IS THE FACE OF WHAT CANNOT BE BETRAYED.

(The Medusa Frequency 121-22)

The "Medusa face" represents that which cannot be controlled; that over which no authority can be exercised. At the beginning of the novel, the Kraken describes himself as the receptacle of the terror of creation: "YOU MADE ME HOLD THE TERROR THAT YOU COULD NOT HOLD ... THE TERROR OF ITSELF ... AND WORLDS THAT MIGHT BE" (The Medusa Frequency 10). He is also the father of Eurydice, who represents the loss of all that might be. The Kraken is at once the potential to be, and the potential to lose; he is the always already absent presence which can never be attained. In "Transformations and Patricidal Deconstruction", Patrick Mahoney cites Sarah Kofman, who compares terror of the law of phallogocentrism to the terror of the Medusa:

The voice of truth is always that of the law, of God, of the father. The metaphysical logos has an essential virility. Writing, that form of disruption of presence, is, like the woman, always put down and reduced to the lowest rung. Like the

feminine genitalia, it is troubling, petrifying - it has a Medusa effect. (1985: 125-6)

The Kraken can thus be read as a figure of the false centrality of the logocentric discourse. All that is present is absence; thus Orff's sense of loss is displaced, as Luise was never really present to him, and therefore cannot be lost. What Orff must accept is the unknowableness of the Medusa, rather than yearning for the familiarity of the loss of Eurydice. That he achieves this is implied by the close of the novel: he sees "Medusa, flickering and friendly, trusting (him) with the idea of her" (The Medusa Frequency 143). For Kleinzeit, the peaceful acceptance of his own displacement occurs on the last page, when he takes a Japanese brush from the hand of Death and draws "in one smooth sweep a flat black circle, sweet and round" (Kleinzeit 191). The circle is always already the beginning and the ending; it encompasses all, but contains nothing; the ultimate cipher, it is the centre without centre. As Gösta Kraken notes, "everything is metaphor, and metaphor is the only actuality" (Kleinzeit 85).

Notes

1. See, for example, Amaryll Chanady's excellent book, Magical Realism and the Fantastic : Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy (1985), in which she traces the use of the term "magical realism", and examines key Latin American texts in terms of the definition which she finally adopts. Milan Kundera's The Art of the Novel (1991) is also useful in establishing the scope of magical realism.

2. "Consensus reality" is Kathryn Hume's term, which she uses to distinguish the world of the real from the fantastic.

Chapter II:
Future Present: The
Apocalyptic Language of
Riddley Walker

Riddley Walker, written almost entirely in an invented form of the English language, presents a series of complex interpretive challenges to the reader, and perhaps this accounts in part for its great critical success. The reader, in striving to make sense of the phonetic orthography of the text, joins Riddley in his quest to untangle the cryptic clues of his nuclear-age predecessors. Riddley's search is for an apocalypse -- a renewal -- both of forgotten knowledge and of lost innocence. This chapter discusses the nature of that search, by examining the meaning of the Apocalypse, and analysing Riddley's entrapment in a deterministic cycle of destruction. Myths dominate the text, and I argue that the desire for the Apocalypse can be read as a desire to break free of the dichotomy of mythical versus historical time. The allusive language of the text facilitates puns which deconstruct the reader's own cultural myths, mirroring in the act of reading the process in which Riddley himself participates. Finally, Riddley's ability to re-write the dominant myth of his culture (by providing

a new type of puppet show) is, I argue, a sign of hopefulness: the "Fools Circel" (Riddley Walker 5) may be broken.

i: Apocalypse or Armageddon?

Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker has received much critical acclaim since its publication in 1980. The novel differs from Hoban's other works in that it is set completely within a fantasy world. The fantastic "other" does not merely intrude into the world of the novel as it does in The Medusa Frequency: Riddley Walker creates a realm of "otherness". Generically, the novel can be classified as a work of apocalyptic science fiction. The notion of the apocalypse is central to my reading of the novel; Hoban teases the reader with this term's connotations of destruction and revelation, and the relationship between these two concepts.

Riddley Walker has been compared to Walter Miller's A Canticle for Liebowitz (1960) in its treatment of the apocalyptic subject matter; the protagonist, a boy of twelve, spends the duration of the novel trying to make sense of the riddles of his culture's past, which are the cultural remnants of the reader's present.

The story is set in post-nuclear holocaust East Kent, "2347 o.c. which means Our Count" (Riddley Walker 5) -- about 3000 years hence. Hoban's world is one which seems to the reader to have devolved to a primitive developmental stage in both its economy and its culture; communities of "Inlanders" live in simple "forms", but do little farming, as they spend most of their time foraging for pieces of machinery and other artifacts of "Good Time", which is the twentieth century. They aspire to the technology which was the "1 Big 1", equating this with modern conveniences, rather than with thermonuclear weapons (the latter is the reader's understanding of the term). Only the "connexion men" and the "Mincery" are literate, and information is essentially orally transmitted through the performance and "tel"(ling) of Eusa shows. Riddley inherits the role of connexion man (interpreter of the Eusa myth) when his father is killed early in the novel, and as the shaman of his tribe, attempts to make sense of their myths in an effort to understand the motivations and desires of his society.

The question of whether Riddley Walker is indeed an example of apocalyptic literature is not as easily resolved as I have glibly asserted above. Some critics maintain that

Apocalypse must be discussed as a religious structure. The nature of a particular god may vary,

but a man-made disaster, even if it is 'final', should not be called apocalyptic, or the term loses its reference (Lewicki, 1984, xvi).

Riddley Walker portrays a society which has no conception of a single god-figure, and this would seem to disqualify the text from the apocalyptic genre. However, although the generic necessity of the presence of God as a locus of control and preordination may be disputed, Riddley Walker does fulfill this condition in an unusual way. In this case, god is no longer conceived as the Judeo-Christian deity of the twentieth century, but has instead evolved into "the girt dans of every thing the 1 Big 1 the Master Chanjis" (Riddley Walker 157), which Riddley and his fellows seek with a fervour which is at once religious and scientific. This sacred construct, symbolised by the "1 Big 1", is godlike in that it surpasses human understanding, and (like the Judeo-Christian God) it necessitates destruction even as it promises salvation.

The numinous plays a crucial role in the novel, being the essential focus of Riddley's quest. Through an alchemical transformation of the reader's idea of the scientific into the Inlanders' sense of the mystical, and *vice versa*, Hoban problematises the stability of both concepts. The "god" of Riddley's universe is a synergistic union of scientific and mystical concepts.

Although the action of the novel is centered on "Cambry" and what was once Canterbury Cathedral, Riddley Walker contains no explicit references to the Judeo-Christian God. However, despite the traditionally religious origin of the concept of the apocalypse, it has been noted that there is a growing tendency towards a "secular" conception of the term, devoid of reference to the numinous. In fact, Lewicki himself observes that the secular notion of the apocalypse "was increasingly understood to denote destruction rather than rebirth" (1984: xiv), which overlooks an essential defining element of the apocalypse: that it be the herald of a rejuvenating rise from the ashes of previous disaster.

Armageddon -- literally "the place of the last decisive battle at the Day of Judgement; hence used allusively for any final conflict on a grand scale" (Oxford English Dictionary, 635) -- is necessary, but not sufficient, for the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse embraces Armageddon. However, most critics use the terms synonymously in the manner described by Lewicki, focussing on the portrayal and implications of ultimate destruction, as well as on other aspects usually associated with the Apocalypse: regeneration, revelation and spiritual renewal.

Riddley Walker is an example of Lewicki's "secular" notion of apocalyptic literature in so far as it portrays

a period chronologically after the event -- a nuclear war -- which the reader has come to think of as Armageddon. However, the expected apocalypse is paradoxically absent, for, as Kreuziger cautions: "the creation of purpose and meaning collides with the possibility of non-meaning and chaos" (1982: 78). The apocalyptic validates that which precedes it by transcending it; yet, for Riddley Walker, the "end" (the twentieth century armageddon which predates the diegesis) opens up a chasm of circularity which subverts its own apocalyptic intent.

Riddley struggles through a renewed Dark Age; ironically, twentieth century knowledge is lost, and Riddley and his contemporaries find themselves perpetuating a cycle in which they desire an Armageddon, mistaking it for the Apocalypse. The great and often tragic irony of the novel is that revelation is forever deferred by destruction caused in the hope of attaining the desired revelation.

A true revelation (of the type which Riddley seeks, and -- I will argue -- finds) would disrupt this destructive cycle. However, the desire for the "1 Big 1" (which brings self-destruction rather than the societal advances it appears to promise) is validated by the mythology of the post-Armageddon society, which finds its origin in the Eusa Story. The Eusa myth is therefore a double-edged sword of the Apocalypse: at once a

cautionary and prophetic tale, it offers an illusory revelation, while actually foretelling further destruction.

Riddley's task is to establish whether the "1 Big 1" plays the role of a "God" and thus heralds a revelation, or whether his society is trapped within the secular circularity of Armageddon without renewal. Thus, while Riddley Walker is often identified as apocalyptic fiction¹, in terms of Lewicki's strict definition, the novel tends more toward the presentation of post-Armageddon entropy. Riddley's struggle to obtain a moment of revelation amidst the entropic decline of his society becomes the catalyst of the confusion which propels his quest.

ii: Hoban's Bildungsroman

In many ways, Riddley Walker is patterned identically to other Hoban novels such as The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz (1973) and Pilgermann (1983). In these novels, a young male protagonist begins a quest towards manhood which is precipitated by a sexual experience with a woman, and the receiving of some mark of the quest -- a physical sign of difference written on the body (for example, the castration of Pilgermann and the ritual scarring of Riddley with the Eusa brand mark). The

psychological journey necessitates an ordering and understanding of the past in order to negotiate the opportunities presented by the future. In "Post nuclear post card", Schwenger uses the example of a man whose back is literally scarred by the atomic blast at Hiroshima to illustrate how

His back ... became a more significant message ...
This is the retroactive nature of our knowledge.
(1992: 9).

The paradox is that nothing can be read from the front; like Derrida's postcard, it is the message on the back which begs interpretation, and yet defies it (Schwenger, 1992: 9). Riddley attempts to read the message written on his own back, by his atomic-age predecessors, and the sign of his authority as reader is contained within the Eusa scar on his belly. This epitomises his dilemma: his eyes, turned to the future, are focussed by the past.

Hoban's male protagonists are isolated by the condition they find themselves in², and it is their striving to make sense of their difference which propels their quests toward self-knowledge. While Boaz-Jachin struggles to establish himself in the shadow of his father, who has exchanged one fatherly stereotype (remaining with and protecting his family) for another

(abandoning them in favour of a mid-life-crisis younger lover), Riddley begins a quest for the essential truths which he, as "connexion man", is expected to relay to his community. Hoban's obsession with the Bildungsroman theme finds voice again through Riddley Walker. Jack Branscomb identifies this pattern in Hoban's novels, and points out that although the model is the conventional one of the search for happiness, the outcome is not:

They launch themselves or are thrust into searches for wholeness which turn out to be circular, leading them into the past before allowing them to escape into the present ... They develop, not towards conventional happiness, but toward reintegration of the self, recovery of the past, openness toward the future, and freedom to act in the present (1986: 33).

Riddley in particular must struggle to obtain "freedom to act in the present", as the novel shows him attempting to oppose powerful deterministic forces (the impulse towards self-destruction epitomised by the "1 Big 1") which seem to preclude any personal freedom at all.

This is the reason that critics are divided about the general tone of Riddley Walker, many opting for a pessimistic reading qualified by the doomed cycles of inevitability which permeate the novel. Riddley's community seems literally hell-bent on reinventing the nuclear devices of destruction which caused their fall from the grace of "Good Time", the very "Good Time" which they think to reclaim by this means. Ignorance and greed

seem to have control over their fate as they blindly stumble towards another hollow "Apocalypse". The critical alternative is a reading which allows a moment of optimism; my analysis will read Riddley's final role as puppeteer of his own show as a sign of a break with the negative deterministic cycles of history.

iii: History and myth

In order to establish the scope for possible escape from the cycles of determinism threatened by the Eusa myth, it is necessary to examine the relationship between history and myth. Mircea Eliade, in The Myth of the Eternal Return, discusses the notion of circularity (fundamental to Riddley Walker) in terms of an opposition between sacred and profane time. Eliade identifies as "sacred" any action which finds a precedent in "a reality which transcends (it)" (1965: 4); its value lies in its property of "reproducing a primordial act, of repeating a mythical example" (1965: 4). The sacred, then, is the realm of the myth. Historical time is profane, and is defined by its linearity. In profane time, events occur once, and are not meaningful in the transcendent fashion of myths.

Thus, reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything which lacks an exemplary model is "meaningless", that is, it lacks reality. Men would thus have a tendency to become archetypal and paradigmatic. This tendency may well appear to be paradoxical, in the sense that the man of the traditional culture sees himself as real only to the extent that he ceases to be himself ... and is satisfied with imitating and repeating the gestures of another. (Eliade, 1965: 34)

Riddley's task, in Eliade's terms, is to escape the process of transformation of history into myth, which his society encourages. By Riddley's time, the historical fact of the twentieth century nuclear war has amalgamated previous myths (such as the Legend of St Eustace) and situated itself firmly within sacred time; it has mutated into a self-replicating myth. The very performance of the Eusa shows which Riddley is bound to maintain is in itself a device for the continued mythologisation of the events. Eliade notes

(t)he ahistorical character of popular memory, the inability of collective memory to retain historical events and individuals except insofar as it transforms them into archetypes (1965: 46)

and it is this type of transformation which I identify at work in Riddley's community.

Individuals, transformed into archetypes, are denied their individuality. An example of the depersonalisation which such archotyping causes is the tradition of the ritualistic twelve-yearly interrogation and execution of

the Ardship of Cambry, figure-head of the "Eusa folk". The Eusa folk are

a tribe of deformed monsters descended from the original nuclear victims and made to interbreed to preserve the last scattered imprints of a now vanished science. (Alvarez, 1981: 16)

The Ardship is ritually beheaded by the men from the Mincery. Lissener explains this to Riddley, and also reveals the historical origin of the child's rhyme, "Fools Circel 9wys". Riddley initially doubts Lissener's story, as the rhyme is completely meaningless, and thus harmless, to him.

He said, "Wel Im the Ardship of Cambry enn I."
 I thot he wer making a joak. I said, "Thats about it and you bustit out before the 1st chop too. So now its some 1 elses tern inside the circel innit."
 He said, "Thats right. 12 mor years or so and Goodparley can have his self a nother Ardship." ...
 He said, "Wel its sharna pax and get the poal innit. 1st the easy askings then its helping the qwirys then its Chops your Aunty and your head on a poal. Dont you know the rime?"
 I said, "What rime do you mean?"
 What he done then he sung Fools Circel 9wys:

Horny Boy rung Widders Bel
 Stoal his Fathers Ham as wel
 Bernt his Arse and Forkt a Stoan
 Done It Over broak a boan
 Out of Good Shoar vackt his wayt
 Scratcht Sams Itch for No. 8
 Gone to senter nex to see
 Cambry coming 3 times 3
 Sharna pax and get the poal
 When the Ardship of Cambry comes out of the
 hoal

The way he sung it made my blood run col. I cud see like in a dream figger running in a kynd of dream space. I said, "Thats Fools Circle 9wys thats jus a game."

He said, "O yes its a game right a nuff if you like to call it that only it aint too much fun for the Ardship what gets his head took off at the end of it."

(Riddley Walker 75-6)

Through the use of macabre irony, the above extract illustrates the process of mythologisation, and its self-perpetuating nature. Riddley's ignorance of the political nature of the child's rhyme is another example of the semiotic instability of his language: what he takes to be meaningless is meaningful, and what he thinks is "blipful"³ is not symbolic at all. Eliade writes:

insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures, and acquires it through that alone, there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of "history"; and he who reproduces the exemplary gesture thus finds himself transported into the mythical epoch in which its revelation took place". (1965: 35)

Eliade's observation is supported by Goodparley's participation in the bloody ritual of interrogation and murder, and Lissener's partial acquiescence (he fathers the heir without whom he could not be executed, and he believes that using the same methods of investigation might reveal the truth they both seek, if only he could escape). The society's desire for "Good Time" is an effort to collapse historical difference through the

performance of "sacred rituals". Both Lissener and Goodparley believe that the ritual of "helping the qwirys" will unlock the door to a genetic treasure-house of memories, thus repeating the "sacred" moment when the mysteries of the "1 Big 1" are revealed.

Leonard Mustazza examines the role of myth and history in Riddley Walker; he points out that "Riddley's people accept both the (Eusa) story and its moral theme, which testifies to the prestige the myth enjoys in that traditional culture" (1989: 21). He goes on to identify a crucial transition in Riddley's society in the shift from a mythic understanding on Riddley's part to an historical one. This occurs when Riddley hears opposing versions of the end of the Eusa story (which he had believed as "old spel"/gospel up till then) from Lissener and Goodparley. The opposing possibilities for closure offer not only alternatives on the level of narrative, but also in terms of politics:

the ruling powers of the country - notably Goodparley - are more concerned with history than myth, more concerned with how knowledge of the past can lead to future developments than with the lessons of the past. (Mustazza, 1989: 25)

I would argue that Mustazza's simple opposition of myth / history: primitive / progressive society is challenged by Hoban. I have shown above that what

Goodparley is concerned with is not history (although he believes this to be so), but rather myth. The historical events have been so occluded by the accretion of myths, that Goodparley's striving for the repetition of an historical event has become a mythical desire for the return to the "sacred" realm of "Good Time". While it appears that Goodparley is concerned with history, he is instead caught within the cyclical process of mythical self-replication. Myths revel in their obtuseness, the possibility for a multiplicity of readings allowing for an appreciation of their cyclical resonance -- Riddley's myths are meaningful to the reader in the twentieth century, as well as in the fictitious future of the text. Myths are therefore authorised in a way that history is not, for history is a series of unique events, while myths endlessly recapitulate themselves. Repetition 'authorises' myth. This authority is present in the text in the form of

"some thing in us it dont have no name ... it aint ben beartht it never does get beartht its all ways in the woom of things all ways on the road." Seams like I ben all ways thinking on that thing in us what thinks us but it dont think like us. Our woal life is an idear we dint think of nor we dont know what it is.

(Riddley Walker 6,7)

Hoban shows that what Mustazza and Goodparley see as "history" perpetuates itself in an equally circular

fashion; after a twentieth century armageddon, the Inlanders begin the quest for the "1 Littl 1" and the "1 Big 1" (gunpowder and nuclear weaponry) all over again. Granser blows himself up while mixing gunpowder; his head impaled on a pole, he represents the mythic figure of Eusa, for 'telling' inevitable destruction). His sticky end predicts a repetition of this "history", and the iconic nature of the symbol places the events within sacred, rather than profane, time. This is reinforced by the allusion to the image of Eusa, beaten to death after "Bad Time":

"They took his head off then they put it on a poal for telling."

(Riddley Walker 117)

The Mincery has tried deliberately to foster the mythologisation of the remnants of twentieth century history in order to authorise their own actions. Goodparley wishes to act in historical time, but is trapped by his own machinations in the realm of myth. What he sees as the source of his power (his control of the Eusa myth) is in fact the very thing which disempowers him -- no one can control the myth, as it supersedes individual events and people. Goodparley's belief that he is free to act in historical time, and not predetermined, is denied by his own tendency to "see himself as real only

to the extent that he ceases to be himself ... and is satisfied with imitating and repeating the gestures of another" (Eliade, 1965: 34).

Riddley rejects this:

I cud feal some thing growing in me it wer like
a grean sea surging in me it wer saying, LOSE
IT. Saying, LET GO. Saying, THE ONLYES POWER IS
NO POWER.

(Riddley Walker 162)

Riddley's realisation that the "truth" of his myth is in actuality the result of political manipulation for "sacred" purposes stimulates a similar insight on the part of the reader: while he apprehends the political difference between versions of the Eusa myth, we are encouraged to perceive a paradoxical similarity between myth and history. The line between the two is necessarily blurred, as the reader knows the history (twentieth century atomic news) of the myth, and realises (with Riddley) that truth resides in neither category. Although in response to Marquéz's work, Gerald Martin's comment that

readers have generally failed to recognise that although history is sometimes devoured by myth, every myth has its History. This novel is not about some undifferentiated fusing of 'history-and-myth', but about the myths of history and their demystification. (1989: 223)

is equally pertinent here. Riddley cannot form a single interpretation of his history; as his history is the reader's present, Riddley's inability to provide a single reading of his past subverts the reader's attempts to do the same with her present.

iv: The Language of Myth

"I dont think it makes no diffrents where you start the telling of a thing"

(Riddley Walker 8)

Ever a disingenuous narrator, Riddley opens the novel at a moment of epiphany: he describes the rite of passage into manhood -- the killing of a wild boar -- which should signify a momentous entrance into the adult world of his community. Ironically, for Riddley the epiphany lies not in the symbolic act, but in the realisation that "The woal thing fealt jus that littl bit stupid" (Riddley Walker 1). His society poised on the brink of change, Riddley is an outsider from the beginning. From the very first page of the narrative, Riddley is displaced in the language of Derridean discourse. No longer a boy, he cannot respect the occasion of his manhood; his incredulity places him

outside categorisation -- he is not just between the stages of boyhood and manhood, but outside them altogether. This initial displacement of the protagonist is a feature common to all of Hoban's novels under discussion.

As the novel progresses, he becomes more rebellious; defying conventions is the hallmark of Hoban's heroes. In Riddley's case, it is only a matter of time before he crosses the fence (literally). Even during children's games, he "all ways rathert be the Ardship nor 1 of the circel I liket the busting out part" (Riddley Walker 5). The irony of this statement is that the "busting out" leads to more "ardship" than Riddley can imagine: he suffers both physical and psychological hardship through his meeting with Lissener, the Ardship of Cambry.

In many ways, Riddley becomes remarkably aware of the social and political forces which regulate his society; however, he remains unaware of the ironic jokes played upon him by his own language. The tension between Riddley's language and that of the reader is so great that critics have gone so far as to identify language as one of the protagonists of the novel (Maynor and Patteson, 1984: 18-25).

Although Riddley's society is largely pre-literate (with only a privileged few -- the Mincery and the connexion men -- able to read and write), language plays a

pivotal role in the community. Its influence is most greatly felt in the prevalence of myths which regulate and explain aspects of the characters' lives. The central myth which governs the Inlanders' behaviour is the story of Eusa, which is a pseudo-scientific religious allegory susceptible to use as political propaganda; however, analysis of other myths will serve to contextualise this most important one.

The novel begins with the relation of the myth "Hart of the Wood" (Riddley Walker 2); it is a creation myth, explaining the origin of charcoal. At the same time, the myth functions as a cautionary tale, and forms part of the symbolic fabric of Riddley's society in so far as it elaborates on other dominant myths, such as the Eusa myth. There is a sense of intertextuality (emphasised by the multiple meanings of homophones) which permeates all the myths and is emphasized at the outset of "Hart of the Wood":

There is the Hart of the Wud in the Eusa Story* that wer a stag every 1 knows that. There is the hart of the wood meaning the veryes deap of it thats a nother thing. There is a hart of the wood where they bern the chard coal that a nother thing agen innit ... Why do they call it the hart tho? Thats what this here story tels of.

* Iwl write down the Eusa Story when I come to it.
(Riddley Walker 2)

The above extract illustrates the complexity of Riddley's language: one word or concept can have a multiplicity of meanings, depending on context. These many meanings continually efface and replace one another, destabilising the already complex semiosis of the language. As David Dowling suggests,

Riddley faces a deconstructionist nightmare. He already lives in a deconstructed world where no position is privileged, no code to decoding apparent. Apparent key words like "aulder/older", "hart/heart", "wood/would" and "saviour/saver/savor" replicate and mutate dizzyingly even as he contemplates them. (1988: 183)

The myths, then, seem to be guides to understanding the phenomena of Riddley's world, and yet paradoxically serve to complicate that understanding even as they attempt to simplify it. A synopsis of "Hart of the Wood" illustrates this: During "Bad Time", a man, woman and child struggle against starvation in the post-nuclear wasteland. A "clever looking bloak" offers them fire in exchange for the body of the child as food. The parents agree:

The man and the woman then eating ther chyld it wer black nite all roun them they made ther fire bigger and bigger trying to keap the black from moving in on them. They fell a sleap by ther fire and the fire biggering on it et them up they bernt to death. They ben the old ls or you myt say the auld ls and be come chard coal. Thats why theywl tel you the aulder tree is bes for charring coal.

(Riddley Walker 4)

The myth explains the origin of charcoal in a tragic tale of trickery, betrayal and loss -- in the same manner as the Eusa myth deals with the scientific facts of nuclear fission. The presence of the "clever looking bloak" foreshadows the character Mr Clever, at whose instructions Eusa creates nuclear weapons and ushers in "Bad Time" in the Eusa Story. Further, the name of "The Hart of the Wood" story reiterates central concepts like "hart" and "wood/wud" from the Eusa myth. In the Eusa story, Eusa reduces himself in size until he enters the atom; fission is explained in the following way:

1. Wen Mr Clever wuz Big Man uv Inland thay had evere thing clever ... Eusa ... wuz werking for Mr Clever wen thayr cum enemes aul roun & maykin Warr.
4. Eusa wuz a noing man ... He smaulest his self down tu it he gon in tu particklers uv it.
5. Smauler & smauler thay groan with Eusa in tu the hart uv the stoan hart uv the dans.
6. Cum tu the wud in the hart uv the stoan.
8. He cum tu the Hart uv the Wud it wuz the Stag uv the Wud it wuz the 12 Poynt stag ... On the stags hed stud the Littl Shynin Man the Addom
12. Eusa sed tu the Littl Man the Addom, I nead tu no the No. uv the 1 Big 1 & yu mus tel me it ... Eusa sed, if yu woan tel in 1 may be yul tel in 2. Eusa wuz pulin on the Littl Mans owt stretcht arms
14. Pult in 2 lyk he wuz a chikken. Eusa

screamt he felt lyk his own bele ben pult in 2 &
 evere thing rushin owt uv him.

(Riddley Walker 28-30)

Hoban uses repetition of central terms (such as "wood"/"wud") and ideas (such as the conflict between unity and division on both the personal and the political scale) in much the same way as he used repetition of the "barrow full of rocks" phrases in Kleinzeit. The meanings are never fixed or stable; there is rather

an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning -- or of force -- to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others (Derrida, 1978: 3).

By using this narrative device, Hoban has created myths, as "there is no real end to methodological analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking-down process has been completed. Themes can be split up ad infinitum" (Derrida, 1978: 287).

One of these recurrent themes is the ambivalent figure of female sexuality. As has been mentioned above, it is a sexual experience with a woman which precipitates Riddley's quest; the woman concerned is Lorna Elswint, the "tel woman", or female shaman, of his tribe. In his role as connexion man, Riddley figures as her shamanic complement. Hoban presents prominent female characters as oracles of wisdom and sources of deceit in all of his

novels (Sophia, meaning literally 'wisdom', is Pilgermann's muse, while Melanie Falsepercy -- the false Persephone -- misleads Herman Orff in The Medusa Frequency). In Riddley Walker, it is Lorna's words which begin Riddley's search for truth. He "freshens the Luck" (has sexual intercourse) with her, and she "tels" for him:

"Its some kynd of thing it aint us but yet its in us. Its looking out thru our eye hoals ... It puts us on like we put on our cloes. Some times we dont fit. Some times it cant find the arm hoals and it tears us a part"

(Riddley Walker 6)

This mystery propels Riddley into the act of writing the novel, an act of creativity which, I will argue, contributes towards providing the true apocalypse, and functions as the alternative to the search for the "1 Big 1":

Thats why I finely come to writing all this down. Thinking on what the idear of us myt be. Thinking on that thing whats in us lorn and loan and oansome.

(Riddley Walker 7)

Lorna Elswint figures as the positive aspect of femininity in Riddley Walker, and is complemented by "Aunty", a fearful symbol of death and sexuality. Hoban perpetuates two of the archetypal stereotypes of femininity: the lover/mother figure who nurtures, protects and inspires, and the witch/crone figure, who is

awesome and has a murderous power. By combining the death-witch with images of powerful sexuality, Hoban plays on the notion of the 'little death' of orgasm, and so uses Aunty as another symbol of circularity: the *petit mort* in life is, Hoban suggests, a shadow of an orgasmic death. Georges Bataille argues that

the depression following upon the final spasm may give a foretaste of death ... the individual splits up and his unity is shattered from the first moment of the sexual crisis ... A rush of blood upsets the balance on which life is based. A madness suddenly takes possession of a person ... for the time being, the personality is dead. (1962: 102, 105, 106)

For Bataille, sex at once contains and mirrors death; for Hoban, death at once contains and mirrors sex. This is shown in the myth "The Bloak as Got on Top of Aunty", which begins:

Every body knows Aunty. Stoan bones and iron tits and teef be twean her legs plus she has a iron willy for the ladys it gets red hot. When your time comes you have to do the juicy with her like it or not.

(Riddley Walker 87)

In this story (also set in "Bad Time"), a suicidal man who has lost his wife and children to the plague goes out looking for Aunty; because he desires her, she lets him live: "'No youre not dead becaws you got on top of me

and I pult in my bottom teef for you'" (Riddley Walker 88). Feeling triumphant, the man goes on to boast to another woman that he has been with Aunty and survived. To celebrate, he has sex with the woman, until, exhausted, he stops to rest. "'I think youwl rest a little longern you think,'" she says, revealing herself as "'Auntys saymning sister'" Arga Warga (Riddley Walker 89). "Arga Warga" is another term for Death, which has its origin in the onomatopoeic parallel with the baying of the wild dogs which roam Inland. The parallels between Riddley "freshening the Luck" with Lorna and thus learning something of the mysteries of life, and this story are striking. Sex itself becomes a double-doored portal to the mysteries of life and death, functioning as did the olive tree in The Medusa Frequency as a gateway to the unconscious drives of creation and destruction.

Hoban uses sexual arousal to symbolise extreme self-awareness of both the physical and psychological body. An example of this is the epiphany Riddley experiences when he finally reaches Cambry and intuits a sense of the inter-connectedness of the symbols of his myths and the 'reality' he discovers in the ruins of the former Canterbury cathedral:

Beclaws it come to me then I knowit Power dint go a way. It be and it wer and it wud be. It wer there and drawing ... I began to get as cited thinking on them things ... Yet unner neath the Zero Groun I

lissent up a swarming it wer a humming like millying
of bees it wer 10s of millyings. I began to feal all
juicy with it ... Not jus my cock but all of me it
wer like all of me wer cock and all the worl a cunt
and open to me

(Riddley Walker 150, 151, 153-4)

The sexual imagery is complex: Hoban seems to align the feminine with the processes of both life and death, resulting in an orgasmic moment of revelation. This is further complicated by the opposing forces of myth and history at play in the novel. Myths, such as the two related above, are re-told and interpreted by the "tel-woman", while history is written by men⁴. Hoban problematises the relationship between myth and history in Riddley Walker, aligning myth with the feminine (and therefore as the realm of a threatening, yet revelatory essential truth), while history is figured as masculine. This conclusion can be drawn through an analysis of the Eusa myth.

Central to the analysis of the Eusa myth is the relationship between the reader and the protagonist. The novel depends largely on the intersection between the protagonist's point of view and that of the reader, for its success. The futuristic setting of the novel facilitates a disjunction in what Hume would term "consensus reality" (1984: 21) between the reader and Riddley; this allows for the fantastic "tokens" of which MacLean writes, where twentieth century commonplaces (such

as aeroplanes and video) are rendered fantastic to Riddley's contemporaries. In order that the antinomy between the reader's consensus reality and that of the characters be resolved, the reader necessarily participates in the 'decoding' of the text. This authorial strategy allows Hoban to tell an essentially moral tale without appearing heavy-handedly didactic, as the reader is obliged to participate in formulating her own conclusions as a result of the presentation of opposing viewpoints. A brief examination of the role of the reader will illustrate the complexity of this relationship to show how it is manipulated by Hoban through the Eusa myth.

According to Wolfgang Iser, any act of reading involves:

two ranges of indeterminacy: (1) between text and reader, (2) between text and reality. The reader is compelled to reduce the indeterminacies, and so build a situational frame to encompass himself and the text. (Furthermore,) the literary text ... delivers different information to different readers - each in accordance with the capacity of his comprehension. (1988: 22)

Susan Suleiman emphasizes that the work is more than the text, as it needs realisation in the act of reading in order to exist. She further suggests that realisation is directly dependent on "the individual disposition of the reader" (1980: 8). This is a central factor in Riddley

Walker, as both Riddley and the actual reader of the novel are, in a sense, readers in the text. Riddley 'reads' remnants of the reader's culture; the reader reads Riddley's reading critically, only to find this criticism being redirected at her own conventions of reading.

Riddley Walker is fascinating because of this process; the redoubling (reader reads Riddley reading traces of reader) which constitutes the act of our reading is illustrated thematically in the novel.

The idea that everyone is merely a minor character in another person's life-story, that every subjectivity is reduced to the status of object, recurs throughout Hoban's work ⁵. While this theme was one of the focal points in The Medusa Frequency, it emerges with more subtlety in Riddley Walker. Twentieth-century readers find themselves reading a reading of their own culture; we are characters in Riddley's his/story, just as he is a character in the novel we hold in our hands.

The tragic irony in Riddley Walker is generated by the tension between the reader's interpretation of the textual events, and that of the protagonist. Hoban emphasizes the possibilities for a linguistic 'free play' of meaning by describing the intricate and logical deliberations of Riddley and Goodparley as they struggle to make sense of what to the reader is the simple description of a work of art from the Middle Ages, The

Legend of St Eustace. Written in twentieth century standard English, The Legend of St Eustace (Riddley Walker 118-19) seems dull and lifeless by comparison with the vigorous, allusive language which Riddley and his fellows use. Goodparley attempts to "connect" (interpret) the Legend:

1. ... St Eustace is seen on his knees before his quarry, a stag, between whose antlers appears, on a cross of radiant light, the figure of the crucified saviour

(Riddley Walker 118-19)

is read as :

A stag. Wel thats our Hart of the Wud innit ... "a cross of radiant light". Which is the same as radiating light or radiation ... Wel we know from our oan *Eusa Story* where you fynd the Hart of the Wud, youwl fynd a shyning be twean his horns. Which that shyning is the Littl Shynin Man the Addom. Only in this legend its callit "*the figure of the crucified saviour*" ... Iwl tel you theres a working in this thing theres a patten theres mor connexions nor wewl ever fynd reveals of.

(Riddley Walker 122-23)

That Goodparley and Riddley use the same intellectual strategies to discover the truth as are favoured by the reader's own culture (logic, rationality etcetera) to arrive at completely different conclusions, destabilises the reader's confident authority in her own reading strategies.

The Eusa myth is the mysterious text inviting readings by both the characters in and the reader of the novel, Riddley Walker. It is an orally transmitted myth which is retold and reinterpreted by Riddley's community. For the reader, it mythologises the armageddon of nuclear war which the twentieth century fears, while for Riddley and his contemporaries, it is a myth of origins, and a key to the future. Again, in a typically paradoxical fashion, Hoban unites the end of the world with the beginning of civilisation, showing the interdependence of the two concepts and minimising the all too obvious differences between them. The Eusa myth functions in Riddley's society as a "lessing and a lerning" (Riddley Walker 78) to his people. It provides a narrative account -- which is, unsurprisingly, distorted -- of the nuclear destruction presumed to have occurred around the year 2000. Although Riddley's is a largely illiterate society, the Inlanders are aware of the approximate date of the nuclear disaster because

"We dont know jus how far that count ever got becaws Bad Time put an end to it. Theres a stoan in the Power Ring stannings has the year number 1997 cut into it nor we aint never seen no year number farther on nor that."

(Riddley Walker 120)

Having no knowledge of the Christian calendar, this discovery engenders a feeling of inadequacy which is

ironic to the reader, who realises that her own civilization has its origins thousands of years prior to this date. Riddley's wistful comment

"Dyou mean to tel me them befor us by the time they done 1997 years they had boats in the air and all them things and here we are weve done 2347 years and mor and stil slogging in the mud?"

(Riddley Walker 120)

serves to remind the reader that the will to destruction seems disguised as the race for progress.

In many ways, the Eusa myth is to the Inlanders what the Bible is to Christians: it is "written" in numbered sections reminiscent of Biblical verses, and it details the primal Fall (when Eusa "pult the Littl Shyning Man the Addom in 2"), the post-lapsarian spiritual and material darkness (in which Riddley languishes), and fosters a longing for what is fated to be another Armageddon (presaged by the deadly effects of the "1 Littl 1", gunpowder). As readers, we seem to be placed in a position of superior knowledge to Riddley; he travels the Fool's Circle searching for the "1 Big 1", not knowing or understanding its nature, while we know it to be atomic power. Although we cannot truly comprehend nuclear disaster on such a scale, we believe we are aware of its possible consequences, which seem to have resulted before Riddley's time.

The destruction is seen as almost inevitable; that we are bound to a cycle of history repeating itself is emphasized in a conversation between the puppeteer and Eusa during a show:

Orfing says, "... I mean if you hadnt opent up the Little Shyning Man the Addom and let out the Nos. of the Master Chaynjis of the 1 Big 1 then if you hadnt put that knowing in that box ..."

Eusa says, "If I hadnt some 1 else wudve done. Whyd the Hart of the Wud stan why dint it run? Whynt the Littl Shyning Man hop it whynt he vack his wayt out of there dubbel qwick 1st time he ever seen me? Iwl tel you why its part of ther game thats why. The Hart of the Wud and the Littl Shyning Man the Addom they cant live without you get the knowing of them nor you cant get the knowing of them til you kil the 1 and open up the other. Then its on you innit. Hevvy on your back for ever."

(Riddley Walker 50)

The myth is transmitted orally by means of Eusa shows, a stylised form of puppet show with links to the tradition of Punch and Judy. They are performed for the people by the Pry Mincer and the Wes Mincer, who represent the centre of political power in Riddley's time, the Ram. Every community (or "fents", so named because of the group's territorial defences) has a connexion man, whose function is to interpret the meaning of the Eusa show for his people. This is a job which Riddley inherits after his father is killed in an accident early in the novel, and (as I have discussed above) it alienates him from his community. Riddley's role of shaman, combined with his

unusual intelligence, leads to warnings from such "hevvys" (who maintain order on the forms) as Fister Crunchman that

"Youre myndy dont you see. You ben lernt to read and write and all ways thinking on things. Trubba not nor I aint staring but I wunt want to be like that it aint no way for a man to be ... Dont think too much youwl grow hair on the in side of your head."

(Riddley Walker 61)

In this respect, Riddley suffers alienation from his peers as a result of his different way of perceiving the world; this emphasis on differing modes of perception is characteristic of all of Hoban's protagonists.

Because of the disparity in basic knowledge and experience between the implied reader and the protagonist, the Eusa myth has an unusual status when compared to other myths. Conventionally,

There is no unity or absolute source of the myth. The focus or the source of the myth are always shadows and virtualities which are elusive, unactualisable and nonexistent in the first place. (Derrida, 1978: 286)

However, in this case, the reader believes herself to be aware, by virtue of her position in history, of the origin of the myth (as a description of the technological advances and moral choices which led to the armageddon); it is its interpretation which remains shadowy and elusive to the reader. We struggle to make sense of the way the

Inlanders have understood something which seems all too plain to us. Although a general sense of the disaster of "Bad Time" is conveyed (all too familiar in the light of current fears about nuclear war), the specifics remain hazy, and this is further complicated by the unusual interpretations of the myth offered by the different characters. For the Inlanders, the origin of the myth is unknown, but believed to lie in historical events, and the interpretations vary in their detail (particularly in their political bias), but confirm one another allegorically in spirit. Indeed, the Eusa myth and its descendants, the shows, often disagree:

"It says in Eusa 18 : 'Eusa put the 1 Big 1 in barms then him & Mr Clevver droppit so much barms thay kilt as menne uv thear oan as thay kilt enemes.' Yet now in this here show youre telling us it bint like that."

(Riddley Walker 48-9)

Hoban intends to draw the reader's attention to her own vulnerability to the existence of a multiplicity of readings, and the possibility of misinterpretation: "The question is of course raised whether our reading of these terms is not as distant from that of past ages as the reading of 3000 years hence is distant from us" (MacLean, 1988: 217).

The core text-within-the-text (the Eusa myth) is the apparent remnant of a previous civilisation. Marie

MacLean identifies anything which "provides a concrete link between the two worlds ... the present and the paraxial, the self and the other" (1988: 211) as a token. In the case of Riddley Walker, the Eusa myth and The Legend of St Eustace (an extant Twentieth century text) are both tokens of what to the Inlanders is fantastic ("boats on the air and picters on the wind"), but to the reader, the norm. This confirms Jackson's assertion that fantasy is an index of the limits of the dominant cultural order (1981: 4) -- the modern reader is forced to confront the limits of the contemporary world by seeing that world as distorted by the mythifications (writing and readings) of the future. The status of both the Eusa Story and The Legend of St Eustace as tokens is confirmed by the orthography of both texts, which differs from that of the frame narrative. The Legend is written in twentieth century standard English, while the Eusa myth is transcribed in a lexical form most similar to Old English spelling. The contemporary reader is obliged to entertain Riddley's apparent misreadings of these tokens, whose very coherent existence problematises the notion of the reader's own cherished, conventionally acceptable cultural myths. The position of authority apparently afforded to the reader by her historical precedence to Riddley's world is therefore steadily undermined as the novel progresses. This results in the the final subversion of any

pretensions towards absolute authorial control over the "truth", and the creation of an alternative to this model of narrative authority, realised in the creation of the Punch and Judy shows.

Hoban manipulates this unusual relationship between reader and protagonist to great effect in the novel; Riddley becomes a kind of post-atomic Huck Finn whose ignorance apparently artlessly foregrounds the ignorance of the reader. Alvarez points out the similarity between the two characters:

The voices are very similar, at once young and knowing, innocent and disillusioned, the voices of survivors fumbling with a language they have never been formally taught. (1981: 16)

This combination of innocence and disillusionment is most clearly illustrated by the language used in the novel. In Riddley Walker, Hoban provides a detailed examination of the role of language by creating for the purposes of the novel, his own version of the English language. Porter writes that Hoban

reinvent(s) language in the future in order to challenge the conditions of normal discourse in the present. (1990: 447)

Most critics address the problem of the language of apocalyptic fiction, raising questions which Hoban necessarily answers in the text. Porter asks: "How might

we understand nuclear physics when we cannot speak about the atom in ordinary language?" (1990: 448), which follows from Heisenberg's assertion that "our common notions do not apply to quantum events, and consequently we cannot speak about atoms in the unambiguous language of normal discourse" (Porter, 1990: 449). Not only is our language inadequate, but further, Schwenger argues that "nuclear war is unthinkable ... because none of the images that characterise our previous experience is adequate to this one" (1991: 39). In creating a unique language in Riddley Walker, Hoban implicitly denies the ability of standard English to express its nuclear subject. An extract from the Eusa myth will serve to illustrate this point:

The Eusa Story

1. Wen Mr Clevver wuz Big Man uv Inland thay had evere thing clevver. Thay had boats in the ayr & picters on the wind & evere thing lyk that. Eusa wuz a noing man vere qwik he cud tern his han tu enne thing. He wuz werkin for Mr Clevver wen thayr cum enemes aul roun & maykin Warr. Eusa sed tu Mr Clevver, Now wewl nead masheans uv Warr, Wewl nead boats that go on the water & boats that go in the ayr as wel & wewl nead Berstin Fyr.

5. Foun the syn uv dansing on partickler traks thay dogs & follert harking 1 tu uther hot & clikkin & countin thay gygers & thay menne cools uv stoan. Smauler & smauler thay groan with Eusa in tu the hart uv the stoan hart uv the dans. Evere thing blippin & bleaping & movin in the shiftin uv thay Nos. Sum tyms bytin sum tyms bit.

(Riddley Walker 28, 29)

The extract from the Eusa myth, whose language predates the language of Riddley's own narrative, illustrates the decay of standard English in the novel. The punctuation and syntax of the language reflect the oral tradition from which it supposedly springs, and the re-formulation of twentieth century technological and computer jargon (computer bits and bytes) in this apparently 'primitive' context shows the paradox of the 'new' reverting to the 'old', emphasizing on a lexical level the theme of cyclical repetition which recurs throughout the novel.

For Hoban, ... to speak the language of the atom is to speak the language of pun, which does not reveal the structure of the atom so much as criticise the forces which exploit it. (Porter, 1990: 451).

The figure of the Littl Shynin Man the Addom, for example, recalls atomic theory as well as the Christian figure of Adam. The reader necessarily combines both meanings into his or her understanding of Riddley's term; the Littl Shynin Man figures as a post-atomic icon of pre-lapsarian innocence and hope, which necessarily predicts its own loss; it combines the first man with his inevitable destruction. Mr Clevver, in whose service Eusa manufactures "barms and Berstin Fyr" (Riddley Walker 28, 30) is not described until the closing stages of the novel, when Riddley recognises Mr Clevver in the puppet

used for another character, Mr On the Levvil, and describes it as having the "same red face and littl black beard and the same horns growing out of his head" (Riddley Walker 201). The devilry of duplicit 'on-the-level' cleverness is emphasized by the redoubled irony to which only the reader is privy; it is a cleverness (the will to power) which Riddley eventually rejects. Instances of this ironic reading dynamic are frequent throughout the novel; an example is Riddley's term "spare the mending", which translates into the standard English "experimenting". Riddley's formulation is recognisable to the twentieth-century reader by virtue of both its phonetic similarity and context, yet contains within it the implication that experimenting leads to the very disasters which it seeks to avert.

In order to correct the mistakes of Hoban's characters, readers must submit to paronomasia, to postatomic wordplay, which often implicates them in the nuclear crime which brought Riddley's world so low. Through the action of punning, the privileged position of the reader - that is, the faulty consciousness of Riddley's past - turns out to be the focus of the irony. (Porter, 1990: 458)

Similarly, concepts like "greedy mints" encourage the reader to think not only of "ingredients", but also of "greed", particularly the childish gluttony for sweets. Goodparley's search for the greedy mints of the "1 Big 1" attracts ironic commentary from the reader -- Goodparley's

striving for power is like the childish greed for sweets -
 - and this irony is prompted by the orthography of the
 word. Porter writes:

From our privileged point of view, we know that Riddley is not punning; he has simply made a mistake. And yet the mistake is meaningful, for the mutation has doubled, if not trebled, the significance of the word ... Puns, metaphors and riddles abound in the novel and reveal a rhetorical vitality whose inexhaustible meaning exceeds both the understanding and control of postatomic man. (1990: 451-2)

This "rhetorical vitality" mirrors that of the repeated phrases which pervade Kleinzeit's world (discussed in Chapter 1). Kleinzeit is no more in control of his language than Riddley, but the device of inventing "nuke-speak" for Riddley and his contemporaries allows for puns, which highlight the chasm between signs and signifieds by allowing the contemporary reader access to implied signifieds of which Riddley could have no knowledge. Further, David Lake argues that use of puns serves the mystical concerns of Riddley Walker:

In mystical philosophy, nothing is really separate from anything else, no concept is an island, and punning is an essentially serious use of language. An orthography which helps to combine meanings is therefore perfectly appropriate ... (1984: 168)

Jackson writes that "fantasy is an expression of desire" (1981: 3) in that it indicates latent or even

unconscious desire and simultaneously removes it from the realm of the real, interrogating the norm by its very difference. Hoban's fantasy language is in part an expression of the desire to 'speak' the nuclear unthinkable, and yet at the same time, it is intended to hold its very subject at bay. Words like "new clear family" (Riddley Walker 124) and "help the qwirys" (rather than interrogate) (Riddley Walker 76) are opposite in tone from their standard English originals, showing that "nuclear amnesia is not unlike other forms of repression ... the order of discourse creates a semiotic underworld by effectively preventing the appearance of prohibited meanings" (Porter, 1990: 463). Derrida addresses the paradox of nuclear writing in "No Apocalypse, Not Now: Seven Missiles, Seven Missives". He writes that the apocalypse is

a phenomenon whose essential feature is that of being fabulously textual, through and through. Nuclear weaponry depends, more than any weaponry in the past, it seems, upon structure of information and communication, structures of language, including non-vocalizable language, structures of codes and graphic decoding. But the phenomenon is fabulously textual also to the extent that, for the moment, a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it. (1984: 23)

Thus, Hoban writes of "a phenomenon ... that is fabulously textual", yet at the same time, beyond "ordinary language", and indeed, "unthinkable". While

Derrida equates his "missives" with "missiles", (and indeed suggests that all literature is of the nuclear age!), Schwenger points out that

In deterrence diplomacy, the missile is aimed, but its real aim is precisely not to attain that towards which it is aimed. The more believable it is that the missile will reach its target, the less likely it is that it will ever do so; its aim becomes false the more it rings true. (1992: 10)

Hoban's novel Riddley Walker is just such a missive: it is intended to expose the twentieth-century mindset which precipitates the apocalypse in order to avert the destruction, yet the better it expresses its nuclear subject, the further the language of the text evolves from standard English, to the point where the novel's difficulty discourages reading. Some critics have suggested that it is these linguistic complexities which indicate that language has a life of its own. "Riddley may have got it wrong, technically speaking at any rate, but language gets it right" (Porter, 1990: 458). The puns and ironic apparent slippages of language actually serve to uncover the truth, after all.

Hoban likes to play with the idea of language as an independent protagonist, almost deliberately defying the control of the speaker. Riddley tries to escape the forces which would make a story of him. He literally jumps the "fents" surrounding his home "form", rather than

remaining the obedient interpreter of political propaganda disguised as religious dogma; at the end of the novel, he becomes a new sort of puppeteer, and instead of presenting the officially-sanctioned Eusa shows, he walks his riddles (Riddley Walker's true nature is indicated by his name) with Punch and Judy. Yet, by refusing to become a part of the Mincery's story (by refusing to aid in the greedy struggle for power which the repetition of the Eusa myth is designed to perpetuate), Riddley has written himself into our story, and therefore does not overcome his fate at all. Perhaps Hoban's assertion "We make fiction because we are fiction" (1992: 146) is better read: "We are fiction because we make it"!

v: Hoap of a tree

While most critics have tended to focus on the language of Riddley Walker and the portrayal of the post-Apocalyptic landscape and culture, both David Lake and Nancy Dew Taylor explore the mysticism which underlies the novel. The dense language of Riddley Walker owes some of its success to the way it is able to reflect concepts for which there are no words in standard English. Clearly significant concepts such as "wood" and "wud" can only be differentiated through the futuristic orthography;

language itself becomes a tool of mysticism in Riddley Walker.

Riddley's role as tribal shaman obliges him to pursue mystical interpretations of the events and narratives to which he is privy. He first realises this in conversation with Lorna Elswint:

Lorna said to me, "You know Riddley theres some thing in us it dont have no name."

I said, "What thing is that?"

She said, "Its some kynd of thing it aint us but yet its in us. Its looking out thru our eye hoals. May be you dont take no noatis of it only some times ... You look at lykens on a stoan its all them tiny mannings of it and may be each part of it myt think its sepert only we can see its all 1 thing. Thats how it is with what we are its all 1 girt big thing and divvyt up amongst the many."

(Riddley Walker 6)

As the novel progresses, Riddley tries to understand his place in the world, which involves an appreciation of the indivisibility of a universe which is forever divided against itself. The more he learns about his community, the more Riddley realises that nothing is "sepert" from anything else. It is this realisation which leads him to reject the struggling for political power which is present in the form of the race for gunpowder. He refuses to assist Goodparley in his search for the "yellerboy stone" (sulphur) which is the missing "greedy mint" because he realises that the "1 Littl 1" is not the key to "Good Time":

Becaws it come to me what it wer wed los. It come to me what it wer as made them peopl time back way back bettern us. It wer knowing how to put ther selfs with the Power of the wood be come stoan. The wood in the stoan and the stoan in the wood. The idear in the hart of every thing.

If you cud even jus only put your self right with 1 stoan. Thats what kep saying it self in my head. If you cud even jus only put your self right with 1 stoan youwd be moving with the girt dans of every thing the 1 Big 1 the Master Chaynjis. Then you myt have the res of it or not. The boats in the air or whatever. What ever you done wud be right.

(Riddley Walker 156, 57)

The final sentence of this extract can be interpreted in two ways: whatever you had done would have been the right thing to have done, or, whatever wrongs you had caused before, would be rectified. Hoban intends both meanings to be understood: being 1 with "the girt dans of every thing" would be the right thing to do, as it would be a salvation from the sins of the past (the cycles of historical destruction). Riddley tries to unravel the tangle of oneness and twoness in an attempt to become one with the life force which "aint us but yet its in us ... looking out thru our eye hoals" (Riddley Walker 6).

Lake identifies the "two main opposing forces of the whole novel: the mystical unity of being, and the twoness (fission or division) between and within beings" (1984: 164). These ideas underlie the Eusa Story, which is about divisions on all levels: a war which divides "Good Time" from Bad, enemy from enemy, Eusa from his

peers. The Little Shynin Man is "pult apart", and man is separated from an Edenic 'holy communion' with Nature (Eusa's dogs Folleree and Folleroo are "up on thear hyn legs & taukin lyk men" before nuclear fission, while after the disaster, there were "Dog paks after peapl and peapl after dogs tu eat them the saym." [Riddley Walker 29, 31]). Riddley discovers the opposition between unity and division on his way to Cambry:

You try to make your self 1 with some thing or some body but try as you wil the 2ness of every thing is working agenst you all the way. You try to take holt of the 1ness and it comes in 2 in your hans.

(Riddley Walker 143,44)

Through his experiences on the journey around the "Fool's Circel", Riddley realises that the microcosm is inseparable from the macrocosm. This is illustrated effectively by the metaphor of Eusa. In the Eusa Story, Eusa shrinks to the size of a molecule to confront the Little Shynin Man (the atom); "Atomic fission is an emblem of the great fission within humanity, and between humanity and God/Nature" (Lake, 1984: 166). Riddley realises that the greedy struggle for power will lead to the gruesome division of head from body, mind from heart, which is illustrated in the beheading of Granser, the geographical separation of the Ram -- the seat of government -- from Inland, and the image of Mr Clevver attaching a mechanism

to Eusa's head and extracting all his knowledge into a box (computer), leaving him pathetically powerless and empty (Riddley Walker 46).

Perhaps the most ambiguous and confusing figure in Riddley Walker is Greanvine, the carved image of a face with a

Thick mouf $\frac{1}{2}$ open and leafy vines growing out of boath sides and curling up roun his head ... The way his mouf wer open and how his eyes lookit it wer like he dint know what to make of it. Like he ben breaving and suddn the breaf coming out of his mouf ternt into vines and leaves.

(Riddley Walker 160)

This vivid image appears first in Riddley's mind, but is immediately confirmed in the carved figure which Riddley finds at the Cambry site. The reason Greanvine is such a confusing symbol to the reader is that even Riddley doesn't know what to make of him. He reminds Riddley of almost every significant authority figure he has encountered:

Take a way the vines and leaves and it myt be Punchs face or it even myt be Eusas face ... It wer the face of the boar I kilt and the dog that old leader. It wer the face of my father what ben kilt ... It wer Belnot Phist hung up by his hans ... and it wer the Littl Shynin Man ... Yes it wer Goodparleys face moren any bodys may be. Orfings as wel

(Riddley Walker 160-1)

Greanvine is in everyone; everyone is in Greanvine. This is the clue which unlocks the symbol: Greanvine is perhaps the name of "some kynd of thing it aint us but yet its in us ... looking out thru our eye hoals" (Riddley Walker 6). Further, he senses that Greanvine is particularly masculine:

Not a woman this wernt a woman thing ... This here man dying back in to the earf and the vines growing up thru his arse hoal up thru his gullit and out of his mouf ... A woman shewl dy back in to the earf but not the same as a man. ⁶

(Riddley Walker 163)

Yet, Greanvine cannot be read as a symbol of a death-urge within men (and thus simplistically opposed to the life-giving feminine forces of oneness with mythical time), because it is on seeing Greanvine that Riddley decides to reject the "ways of men", epitomised in the political machinations of Goodparley and his fellows. On finding the face, Riddley says:

I wernt looking for no Hy Power no mor I dint want no Power at all ... I dint know what the connexion wer with that face in my mynd only I knowit that face wer making me think diffrent.

(Riddley Walker 161)

So, Greanvine is at once surprised and threatened by "dying back into the earf", and yet he also represents an escape from the deadly cycle of destruction. Schwenger

notes that "the foliage sprouts only out of the mouth of this Green Man (which) indicates a speaking, although one which is beyond words" (1992: 142). What, then, does Greanvine speak of, which is able to release Riddley from the destruction yearning for political power which had overcome him?

Schwenger suggests that Greanvine is in fact the medieval "Green Man", a well-known figure represented in medieval art: "studies of the Green Man's meaning usually come to no conclusion about that meaning" (1992: 139). Riddley's confusion, therefore, is not unprecedented. What is certain about the image is that it is open to continual reinterpretation -- like the Eusa story, it is not a closed, finite symbol. Unlike the Eusa story, however, Greanvine is incomplete. While the Eusa myth may have more than one ending, it nevertheless offers a sense of closure which Greanvine can never offer.

It is this lack of closure which offers an entry place for hope in the novel. Taylor points out that Riddley Walker is a message of "pessimism, mysticism and a desire for hope" (1989, 27); the pessimism of which she writes is the apparently deterministic nature of the cycles of history which binds the Inlanders to the mistakes of their ancestors, and the hope is embodied in Riddley's struggle to untangle the riddles of the past. Greanvine can also be read as a figure of hope, but it is

a hope which is beyond articulation. Greanvine speaks with the tongue of nature (literally, the vines from his mouth), and his message is one of renewal for the earth:

Which theres hoap of a tree if its cut down yet itwl sprout again. And them tinder branches theyre of wil not seaze. Tho the root of it works old in the earf and the stick of it dead in the groun yet even jus only the smel of water and itwl bud and bring forit ... Inland may be cut down yet them branches wil keap coming. Peopl may try to kil them branches only itwl be the peopl what fall down and dy them branches wil grow out of ther moufs which thats our blip and syn.
(Riddley Walker 34)

Despite the weighty responsibility of the atomic error of his predecessors and the greed for gunpowder of his peers, Riddley draws hope from the healing power of the earth. It is through this recognition that Riddley is able to separate his interests from those who would use him for political ends:

So there I wer then may be I wer 1 with Greanvine only it lookit like I come in 2 with every 1 else ... I really fealt like the onlyes Power wer no Power nor I cudnt think of no 1 I wantit to be on the same side with no mor. Wel the dogs.

(Riddley Walker 164)

What Riddley has achieved is a glimpse of "1st knowing", harmony with nature which, Lorna tells him, was lost when "cleverness" came. Significantly, 1st knowing is lost through greed, just as greed threatens to bring about a renewed "Bad Time":

man and woman got that 1st knowing from the dog ... Dint have no mor fear in the nite they put ther self right day and nite that wer good time. Then they begun to think on it a littl. They said, "If the 1st knowing is this good what myt the 2nd knowing and the 3rd be and so on?"

(Riddley Walker 18)

Riddley's friendship with the wild dogs who accompany him on the "Fools Circel" culminates in the epiphany of the 1st knowing which he learns from Greanvine.

Riddley uses this 1st knowing to begin afresh with the "new show" (Riddley Walker 202), instead of submitting to his politically sanctioned role as Eusa show connexion man. Significantly, his first performance is received by the sceptical Weaping Form, who represent the pessimism of which Taylor writes (p 100 above). The headman of Weaping Form is not hopeful for the future:

"O ter morrerwl come up Erny. Ter morrer all ways comes up the thing is to be 1 of them as comes up with it."

(Riddley Walker 204)

At the same time, though, Weaping Form represents a break with the past -- as Taylor points out, it is not a part of the "Fools Circel" (1989, 36) -- just as Riddley's Punch and Judy show breaks with the tradition of Eusa. Herein lies the "hoap of a tree" -- Riddley proves that it is possible to write himself right, by re-writing the Eusa

myth in the form of the new shows, and by writing the story of his discovery as an anachronistic legacy of deterrance to the people of his past -- the contemporary reader.

Notes

1. T. J. Morrissey's "Armageddon from Huxley to Hoban" (1984: 197-213) and Natalie Maynor and Richard F. Patteson's "Language as Protagonist in Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker" (1984: 18-25) are two cases in point.
2. Kleinzeit finds that his mysteriously ailing hypotenuse troubles none of the other patients in his ward, despite the common plague of the yellow paper; Orff is one of a privileged few who is visited by the head of Orpheus; Pilgermann is rejected as a Jew during the purges and as a man after his castration, and literally undertakes a solitary pilgrimage.
3. Riddley believes the extant twentieth century text "The Legend of St Eustace" to be a cryptic message from his ancestors, whose secrets, if deciphered, would lead his people back to "Good Time".
4. I use the term "history" here to refer to Goodparley's understanding of the word; while I have argued above (section III) that this is a false categorisation, and that Goodparley is in effect contributing to the mythologisation of history by harking back to the sacred time of the 1 Big 1, there is a clear distinction in the novel between the "sacred" myths told by the women, and the apparently "profane" history perpetuated by the men. Lorna Elswint's story "Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes" (Riddley Walker 16) is a sacred myth, whereas the two versions of the end of the (sacred) Eusa myth, given by Lissener and Goodparley, are profanely historical, because they have political agendas -- the sacred has been corrupted for profane ends.
5. An example of this is Herman Orff's encounters with the same man in the guise of different personalities in The Medusa Frequency.
6. In all of Hoban's novels under discussion, the female characters are marginalised from the struggle for authority. Women are figured as enigmatic emblems of masculine fears or desires; they function as the embodiment of the taunting signifier whose signified is forever absent. This "double displacement" (Spivak, 1983, 176) is discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

Chapter III:
Recuperating the Margin:
Pilgermann and the *Hymen*

Hoban's novel Pilgermann (1983) begins with an acknowledgment:

Riddley Walker left me in a place where there was further action pending and this further action was waiting for the element that would precipitate it into the time and place of its own story.
(Pilgermann 9)

In many respects the novel pursues ideas raised in its predecessor, particularly in its obsession with the concepts of circularity and repetition, both on the level of the diegesis and in the narrative style itself. However, in Pilgermann, Hoban adopts an entirely different approach to his subject matter: what the reader was asked to infer from both the language of Riddley Walker and the 'ignorance' of its protagonist, is expressed self-consciously in the overt metaphysical musings of Pilgermann. The novel combines the realist mode of narrative with elements of the fantastic and the grotesque; some critics have even labelled the novel "science fiction" (Cheever, 1986: 335). The uneasy co-existence of apparently mutually exclusive modes of narrative is typical of Hoban's novels: he rejects conventional generic labelling, claiming that any distinction between fantasy and reality "is meaningless to

me. Everything includes everything" (personal communication, 27 March 1994).

While this chapter cannot hope to include everything, it will focus on Pilgermann's castration and its implications for his authority and the construction of his narrative voice, and will then turn to an examination of the mode of "writing" which Pilgermann adopts. Through a discussion of the narrative modes / genres of science fiction, fantasy and the grotesque, I will show how the narrative structure of Pilgermann replicates its thematic concerns with doubleness and uncertainty. Drawing on feminist theories of subjectivity and authority, as well as on the theories of Jacques Derrida (in particular, the ideas of *displacement* and the figure of the *hymen*) I will provide a reading of Pilgermann's narrative designed to highlight the incongruities which the novel leaves deliberately unresolved. I will suggest that the tile pattern designed in Antioch is an attempt to circumvent the disempowerment of the castration by restoring Pilgermann's symbolic authority -- what has been written on his body, he in turn writes on the landscape.

i: Unmanned author(ity)

The nature of the first-person narrative voice employed in Pilgermann is unique among Hoban's protagonists: Pilgermann at once present and absent, a discrete character and a collection of ideas. He

describes himself as "waves and particles" (Pilgermann 11), and mournfully laments his immortality:

I don't know what I am now. A whispering out of the dust. Dried blood on a sword and the sword crumbled into rust and the wind has blown the rust away but still I am, still I am of the world, still I have something to say, how could it be otherwise, nothing comes to an end, the action never stops, it only changes ...

(Pilgermann 11)

While Riddley Walker was charged with the responsibility for his community's spiritual development, Pilgermann does not have such a clearly defined mission. He journeys toward Jerusalem in response to a Bath Kol, the voice of God which is "not so much a voice but the daughter of a voice" (Pilgermann 32). On the road he meets with a party of pilgrim children, who claim that "Jerusalem will be wherever we are when we come to the end" (Pilgermann 64).

This pilgrimage motif is reminiscent of Branscomb's observation (quoted earlier) that all Hoban's protagonists undergo a physical journey of psychic self-discovery. However, it is significant that all of them are in some way physically damaged, and it is the bearing of the literal mark of their difference which precipitates their narratives. In an analysis of The Mouse and his Child (Hoban's novel for children), Joanne Lynn points out that

Significantly, all the benign characters are lame, broken or worn ... All have been clearly marked by their contact with reality; only the shallow or completely self-centered escape battering. (1986: 23)

Riddley bears the Eusa mark on his belly, Jachin-Boaz is scarred by the leonine claws of his son's anger, Kleinzeit is physically ill and Herman Orff is, to some extent, mentally deranged by his experiments with Fallok's creativity machine. Pilgermann's wound is doubled: he is initially wounded into Jewishness through circumcision, and this primal mark of difference is occluded by castration.

Pilgermann's life story is set in Germany during the Middle Ages; he is attacked and castrated by a roving band of Christian peasants in July 1096. He cites the Jewish fast-day of Tisha b'Av, a day of mourning for devout Jews, as the moment "his being goes back to" (Pilgermann 13). It is the origin of Pilgermann as the narrator of the novel; the identity "Pilgermann" did not exist before the castration on this date. He makes it clear with his first words that "Pilgermann" is not his real name:

Pilgermann here. I call myself Pilgermann, it's a convenience. What my name was when I was walking around in the shape of a man I don't know, I simply can't remember.

(Pilgermann 11)

He is able to take on the twin identities of Pilgermann and narrator only after his castration. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar propose that "Male sexuality ... is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis" (1979: 14). However, in Pilgermann's case the paradox is that it is only after his

castration -- the loss of his pen/penis -- that he is able to write. It would seem that he writes not with the pen/penis, but with the bloody wound of its absence.

Pilgermann is clearly intended to be seen as a text written in "blood", in so far as it records the bloody injustices perpetrated in the name of religion (both Christianity and Islam). This metaphor is exemplified when the blood of the Christian residents of Antioch is spilled on the Hidden Lion tile pattern in an act of retribution for the slaying of Muslims by the besieging Crusaders. The blood is deliberately left unwashed as a visible sign of the judgement against the "provocation and .. insult" (Pilgermann 181) of the murders; this reminder doubles in significance when it is read also as a judgement on the audacity of the creation of the tile pattern itself. Pilgermann's loss of his penis is a similar judgement: in his case, the insult for which he is punished lies ostensibly in his not turning aside from the "land of milk and honey" -- Sophia, the tax-collector's wife, with whom he commits adultery on the day of mourning.

Whether his sin was adultery or lack of respect for Tisha b'Av, or even the arrogance of his desire itself -- as Pilgermann says, "There's allegory for you, the vision of naked Wisdom and the Jew lusting after her."

(Pilgermann 14) -- the result is the loss of his penis. Another connection with Riddley Walker can be drawn here: the "Littl Shynin Man the Addom" finds his partner in Pilgermann, who can be read as a medieval Adam. His

sexual transgression becomes a metaphor for the search for divine Knowledge (and consequent authority) exemplified by the symbolic Sophia. Her reappearance in different guises throughout the text (the tax-collector's wife, the wife of the relic-hunter and the ship which carries Pilgermann to Antioch all bear the same name) serves to maintain the focus of Pilgermann's quest. Pilgermann's Fall from the ladder (literally propped up against Sophia's window) is a fall from Eden which banishes him to the desolation of castration, where he can no longer commune freely with his God. The God of the Jews refuses to answer his cries for help as he lies in the street; instead, he is aided by the Christ in whom he has no belief. The redemptive blood sacrifice which would restore his original state of grace finds its parallel in Pilgermann's castration: it is because of the spilled blood that he is able to write (both the narrative, and, as I shall show, the tile pattern), and through writing, he attempts to right himself. However, the castration has robbed him of the instrument with which Gilbert and Gubar would have him write. How, then, does the "Pilgermann" (author) identity come into being, if he loses his "pen" (in Gilbert and Gubar's terms above) at the instant that he ascends to authority?

After being propositioned by Bodwild, the libidinous sow, Pilgermann wonders if "a live eunuch could couple with a dead sow by means of a ghost of a penis" (Pilgermann 77). I would argue that he retains at least a "ghost of a pen", with which he is able to write a story

of some kind. Emasculated, he forfeits conventional authority; yet, he does succeed in authoring some sort of narrative. Pilgermann denies himself the status of the conventional narrator, saying:

I can't tell this as a story because it isn't a story; a story is what you have when you leave most of the action out.

(Pilgermann 38)

This apparent opposition between narrative and action can be understood through Jorge Luis Borges' assertion "One literature differs from another, prior or posterior, less because of the text than because of the way in which it is read ..." (Cheever, 1986: 335). Leonard Cheever argues that what Borges says of texts is especially true of actions as represented in texts:

actions must be interpreted from the present, thus Pilgermann is not to be viewed as a historical novel in the usual sense of a work which presents an illusion of what the past was like. (1986: 335)

Therefore, Pilgermann's assertion that "a story is what you have when you leave most of the action out" gives an impression of narratives being somehow "fixed" or immutable (in the way that myths are "fixed" and yet simultaneously open to varying interpretations), whereas "action" is transient, referential, and above all serves to situate the reader within her own time. "Stories", for Pilgermann, are timeless, while "action" is a measure of time.

History -- the history of Christian persecution of the Jews -- writes itself onto his body by castrating him, and the wound which remains writes history as a consequence. Yet the history it writes is not (as was Riddley Walker's) his (own) story -- the Pilgermann identity has lost its individual masculine authority (symbolised by the penis), and remains as a dispersed identity, "waves and particles" (Pilgermann 11) of individuality whose "consciousness is not continuous, ... only a mode of perception used irregularly by strangers" (Pilgermann 206). Pilgermann's consciousness is inside the reader's consciousness -- we understand Pilgermann's world as revealed through his narrative by using his consciousness as our "mode of perception". Thus, the novel is a blend of stories, both those of Pilgermann's life, and those pertaining to others outside of his experience. He is able to write of things of which he claims to have had no knowledge -- this defies the authorial convention of coherence of focaliser.

Pilgermann's castration enables his writing, both of the narrative which is the novel, and of the tile pattern in Antioch (which I shall come to later). The absence of the penis leads not to an inability to author, but to a loss of authority -- the narrator is no longer an individual consciousness with a unique perspective and a strictly delimited sphere of experiential knowledge. Hoban challenges the convention that a narrator should either be both omnipotent and omniscient, or else both impotent and unknowing. He does this by providing

Pilgermann, whose physical (and, as I have argued, metaphorical) impotence grants him the omniscience which makes him privy to detailed "memories" of a lifetime not his own¹. Further, Pilgermann writes "I myself am a tiny particle of Memory" (Pilgermann 102), and his own experiences are apparently available to others -- "a mode of perception" used by strangers. This construction of the narrator is suggestive of the Jungian model of the collective unconscious, of the type of 'universal mind' which Lorna Elswint believes is "looking out thru our eye hoals" in Riddley Walker (p 6).

Following the initial trauma of his castration and the appearance of a vision of Christ to a Jew calling upon his God for mercy, Pilgermann is further shocked to be informed that he *desired* castration -- that his desire *authorised* the act -- and because of this, he will not be restored to his manhood. The conversation between the convalescing Pilgermann and his unwanted Christ problematises the notion of authority criticised by Gilbert and Gubar above:

Jesus said, "I said it is what you wished."

I said, "Can you have seen Sophia and say that? I am young, the blood in me runs hot, I lust but I am unmanned. I lust, I long, I yearn, I hunger, I hum like a tuning fork, I flutter like a torn banner in the wind. That which I was I can never be again, that which I am is intolerable, that which I shall be I cannot imagine. I glimmer like a distant candle, I mottle like the sunlight on the carpet, like the shadows of leaves. I am something, I am nothing, I am here, I am gone."

"It is what you wished," said Jesus. "only now do you hum, flutter, glimmer, mottle, be something, be nothing, be here, be gone with me."

(Pilgermann 25)

It is interesting to note that the eloquence of Pilgermann's speech is as new to his experience as the experiences themselves are. From his loss, his creativity is born. He writes with the "blood" of his wound. That loss is necessary for creativity, is a familiar theme in Hoban's work ². The twinning of literary creation with sexual metaphors is also familiar: in Kleinzeit, "Like thunder and lightning the seed of Word jetted into the yellow paper" (Kleinzeit 160). For Pilgermann, literary and sexual creativity are expressions of the same creative force. He describes conception as "egg and sperm writing their word of flesh" (Pilgermann 92), and wonders of a mute boy he meets, "Had his speech been castrated?" (Pilgermann 126).

The metaphor of castration operates on two levels: not only does it subvert the penis-centered authority which disqualifies the unique type of creative act that Pilgermann attains in narrating his tale, but it also functions as a signifying precursor of death. In Riddley Walker, Hoban uses sexual orgasm as a microcosmic forerunner of the experience of death, which was portrayed as ultimately orgasmic ³. For Pilgermann, the premature impotence of castration is representative of man's final impotence in the face of death. He is able at once to lament his state, and to accept its inevitability:

"I am a eunuch. I am cut off from my
generations, I am not a man, I am nothing."
(Pilgermann 112)

"I was already castrated, was I not, by mortality?"

(Pilgermann 200)

Bruder Pförtner (death), the castrator, is as overtly sexual a figure as was Aunty in Riddley Walker. Many of the most grotesque sequences in the first section of the novel feature the horrific description of the rape of mortals by the skeletal Bruder Pförtner at the moment of their deaths. Death is again figured as orgasmic:

"When I say, "Sleep with me!" nobody says no," he said. "Kings and queens, I have them all, no inch of them is forbidden to me; nuns and popes, ah! There's good loving! I am the world's greatest lover, that's a simple fact, though I say it myself. Well, there's no need for me to blow my own trumpet - - you'll see when you sleep with me."

(Pilgermann 58)

The symbol of castration at once encourages Pilgermann to write, and prefigures his death. Because he is "cut off from his generations", he sublimates his procreative desire into 'generating' the text. As Gayatri Spivak states, "The desire to make one's progeny represent his presence is akin to the desire to make one's words represent the full meaning of one's intention" (1983: 169). Having forfeited the penis-pen, but retained the urge to procreate, what sort of text does Pilgermann write? Firstly, as I have stated above, Pilgermann is not an omniscient, omnipotent authorial figure, and the narrative lacks conventional elements (such as a coherent focaliser, and closure -- ironically, a kind of textual death). The story Pilgermann is not empowered (as was Riddley Walker's narrative) to avert the disaster of which

it speaks; on the contrary, it is through the creative act of writing the tile pattern in Antioch, that further religious persecution and death result. As in Riddley Walker, the writing creates, but in this case, it creates destruction -- the text becomes a testament to its own futility. The reason for this is hinted at within the narrative itself:

"You know how it is even at the most desperate moments, even in matters of life and death - part of your mind is busy with its own affairs ... Part of my mind was singing a little song, it hadn't much tune, there were no proper words, it just went:

'Tsitsa, tsitsa bem, tsitsa tsitsa bem,
Tsitsa tsitsa bembel bembel bembel bembel bem.'

... I was thinking what a lot of bems and rudzes there are in the universe, what an altogether bembelish and rudzukal thing it is, to say nothing of the tsitsas ... From that moment I called myself Bembel Rudzuk so that I should never forget the bembelish and rudzukal nature of the universe ...

(Pilgermann 226-27)

This story of naming illustrates the act of linguistic castration whereby the signifier is cut off from the signified. The threat of meaninglessness is what castrates language -- yet, as Pilgermann suggests, death is what gives meaning to life; living and language become metaphors for one another. In Spivak's terms, the desire to procreate is metaphorically the desire to write, and thus to give presence to "the full meaning of one's intention" (1983: 169). Both desires are impossible, as in Derridean terms, presence is endlessly absent, and language is "castrated". Once again, Hoban returns thematically to his aphorism "We make fiction because we are fiction" (1992: 146).

ii: Pilgermann patterns
Pilgermann patterns
Pilgermann?

Pilgermann can be divided diegetically into three parts: initially recounting the beginning of the journey from Germany to Jerusalem, during the year 1096, the story moves through four chapters relating Pilgermann's capture as a slave, his release and his subsequent residence in Antioch from 1096 to the final phase of his death in the fall of that city to the Crusaders in 1098. The central part of the novel consists of metaphysical musings which centre on the creation of a ceramic tile pattern called Hidden Lion. Hidden Lion, or The Willing Virgin, is a pattern of Pilgermann's design, commissioned by his Muslim benefactor, Bembel Rudzuk. While the physical tile pattern dominates the novel, it is merely an aspect of the underlying obsession with patterning with which the novel is concerned. The repetition of shapes is a visual representation of the reiteration of ideas, such as the name of Sophia and the metaphor of castration, which resound through the text.

The conflict between Pilgermann's desire for originality and authority -- his desire to give origin to both child and word -- and his inescapable enmeshment in patterns beyond his control (such as the pattern of displacement which hinges on his being Jewish, for

example), generate the action of the novel.

Paradoxically, while Pilgermann is denied progeny by his castration, he still manages to produce both physical and textual offspring -- a son is born to him after his castration, just as the novel is "written" after his death. As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the tile pattern can be read as another form of writing. The pattern is the central motif of the novel, and, having discussed the margins at length, this section will focus on the pattern at the centre of the text. The Hidden Lion functions as a symbolic encoding of the mysteries which Pilgermann seeks, as all other patterns in the novel derive from it: as he suggests,

I had become more and more strongly aware that the visual manifestation of a pattern comes only after the pattern is already in existence and already infinite ...

(Pilgermann 149)

Pilgermann designs the Hidden Lion pattern after being commissioned to do so by Bembel Rudzuk, his owner / benefactor, who liberates him from the slave seller Prodigality in Antioch. His arrival in the city has been ominously patterned on familiar symbols: travelling to Jerusalem on the ship "Balena", he is captured by pirates aboard the "Nineveh", and thus becomes a Jonah-figure in Antioch. Pilgermann demonstrates the same resistance to being absorbed into pre-existing stories as does Orpheus in The Medusa Frequency; he says:

Having already been transferred from the "Balena" to the "Nineveh" and having so far proclaimed nothing on behalf of the Lord I preferred not to be aware of any further names of significance for a time; I wished if possible to be reabsorbed into the ordinary.

(Pilgermann 111)

However, he is equally unable to resist incorporation into the symbolic pattern of the story. He soon discovers Rudzuk's vessel is called "Sophia", the name significantly shared by his Christian lover and the wife of the relic-hunter. By the time of his arrival in Antioch, Sophia's name has an increased resonance for Pilgermann, having been the cause of his castration and the saviour of his life in the forest. Combined with the whale and Nineveh, the symbolism of these events is obvious: Pilgermann is sent to Antioch to proclaim the Lord, and through doing so, will gain the Wisdom he sought at the outset of his journey. "Proclaiming the Lord" is a paradoxical task for Pilgermann, for although he was born a Jew, his castration effectively cuts him off, not only from his generations, but from the Jewish congregation. Further, he encounters Christ after his castration, and is told "'Whatever I am, ... I'm the one you talk to from now on" (Pilgermann 24). Pilgermann's conception of God has changed as the novel progresses: he no longer believes in the unitary God of the Jews, or even the tripartite God of Christianity, but rather:

It is my belief that God is of an artistic temperament and has therefore chosen to let his own work be beyond his understanding; I think this may well be why he abandoned the He identity and has moved into the It where he is both subject and object, the doer and the done. God is no longer available to receive or transmit personal messages;

he has been absorbed into the process and toils ignorantly at the wheel with the rest of us.
 (Pilgermann 98)

Pilgermann's situation as author -- unmanned by castration, he has lost the "penis/pen" type of authority referred to in section I above -- can be paralleled with his own understanding of God's position: "he is both subject and object", rather than a discrete authority figure. His task (of "proclaiming the Lord") seems an impossible one, and it is consequently fitting that he be given an impossible place to fulfil it: Antioch in 1096 is held by the Muslim Saracens, has a minor Jewish population, and will fall to Bohemond, the Christian hero of the First Crusade of Pope Urban II, in 1098. Like Pilgermann, the city is divided against itself in religious matters.

The impossible task of bearing witness to God should be read creatively; I have shown above that Pilgermann's desire for progeny is initially gratified through the generation of the text, and finally fulfilled literally in the birth of his son. Similarly, through the design and creation of the Hidden Lion / Willing Virgin tile pattern, Pilgermann attempts to provide a witness to God in Antioch. At Bembel Rudzuk's prompting, he designs a hexagon-based pattern in red, black and tawny tiles, which Rudzuk has built on a flat plane specially prepared for this purpose. The local brickmaker, Tower Gate, suggests that a tower be built on the centre of the tiled plain "to give us a platform from which to observe the action of the

pattern" (Pilgermann 140). The action which they want to observe is

intransitive motion ... the motion in a tile pattern is intransitive, it does not pass; it moves but it stays in our field of vision. It arises from stillness, and I should like to think about the point at which stillness becomes motion.

(Pilgermann 118)

By observing this action, they hope that "Thing-in-Itself" will "reveal more of itself" (Pilgermann 117). Thing-in-Itself is a philosophical construct; it refers to that which cannot be perceived -- that is, to the numinous. Bembel Rudzuk realises the futility of trying to apprehend the unapprehendable, and yet hopes to catch sidelong glimpses of it through the creation of the pattern. In a way, he hopes to see what Pilgermann claims the stones of Antioch understand: that "God is motion!" (Pilgermann 120). This is identical to the Biblical desire of the Babylonians, to "build a ... tower, whose top may reach unto heaven" -- both projects are attempts to see the face of God.

There are clear parallels between the Hidden Lion and the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel. The Biblical story resembles the story of the Hidden Lion, particularly in the following verses:

GENESIS 11 3 And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime they had for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; ... 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all

one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel 4

Unlike the Tower of Babel, the completion of the tile pattern is unhindered by intervention from a divine source. On the contrary, rather than prompting God to communicate His wrath to mankind, people begin to see the tiles as a holy message to God, and begin a tradition of encoding secret prayers of hopefulness in the form of monetary offerings in the tiles themselves:

"So be it," said Bembel Rudzuk. "The pattern is abstract; let the money also be used abstractly. I shall put it into one of the tiles of the pattern where it will be united with the design on the pattern and with the names of Allah in celebration of your gratitude to Him the Responsive, Him the Restorer."

(Pilgermann 148)

The difference between the tile pattern and Babel, then, is that the pattern is used to speak to God, while God spoke to the people through his act of destroying the tower of Babel. Both constructions, however, are used as vehicles for speech, or for speech confounded. Just as God chooses to punish mankind by confusing their speech, so the message of the tile pattern goes awry. Ultimately, what was intended as a symbolic representation of the face of the infinite is corrupted into a site of murder and retribution. The parallels between Babel and the Hidden Lion will be revealed through a close reading of both symbols.

Patrick Fish argues that the "moment of Babel" represents the final trajectory of man's Fall from Edenic grace. He writes:

Babel then is a sign of the courage and folly of a people trying to reach, with flawed materials, the 'gates of the gods'. (1989: 4)

God's pronouncement of wrath hinges not on the apparent arrogance of mortals who wish to build a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven", but on the threat of the pure language which the builders possess: "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." That "pure language" which mankind possessed is reminiscent of the divine speech, the *Logos*, which is written of in John 1: "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God." Fish writes:

This *Logos* stands as a Utopian promise, a language so pure, so quintessential that to discover it again will ensure a semantics not about life but of life. The promise of this primal language is that we will no longer have to harness words, batter and barter with them. (1989: 3)

This divine act of confounding the pure speech by imposing the Babel of confusion upon the builders serves to render language an impotent instrument which forever begs translation; it is the injection of impurity into the system of signification -- one can no longer be certain of

the meaning of any word, as all become contingent translations of the others.

Just as the builders of Babel began with one language (and, by implication, one purpose), so the creators of the tile pattern start with one clear idea. The repetition of the same geometric shapes and shadings can be read as a continual reiteration of that single idea: a picture of stillness becoming motion. However, Antioch in 1098 is definitely post-Babel, and as such, the curse of necessary translation already exists, even in an object which seems to contain no speech. Before language even enters the pattern, two translations can be made of it. As Rudzuk describes:

"One of the virtues of this simple but at the same time complex design," said Bembel Rudzuk, "this design in which we see the continually reciprocating action of unity and multiplicity, is that it suits its apparent action to the mind of the viewer: those who look outward see the outward pre-eminent; those who look inward see the inward."

(Pilgermann 139)

So, the language of the Hidden Lion is already impure; it needs no divine intervention to confound it. Matters can only worsen, it seems, when literal language is written onto the tiles. Bembel Rudzuk decides to inscribe the reverse side of every tile with one of the names of Allah; after a while, Pilgermann sees the pattern itself generating new names of Allah through the dances of the children:

The children soon began to walk on the tiles in special ways and to dance on it, sometimes stepping

only on the red triangles, sometimes only on the black. Seeing them always out of the corner of my eye, I found in my mind new and unwritten names of God: The Tiptoeing; The Sidewise-Jumping; The Hopping; The Leaping; The Dancing; The Whirling.

(Pilgermann 147)

The pattern, then, generates new proper names for God. Derrida, in his analysis of the Babel story, focuses on the implications of naming which are inherent in the tale. He argues that the real conflict between the tribe of Shem (which means "name") and God is one of naming:

God ... becomes beside himself in the face of this incredible effrontery and says to himself: So that's what they want to do, they want to make a name for themselves and impose their lip upon the world. He then interrupts the edification and in turn imposes his name on their tower (or his tower) ... God says: Babel. It is thus a proper name. (1985: 101)

What Derrida is emphasising is the nature of the struggle for authority over language, as he argues that the proper name must be distinguished from the common noun by its untranslatable nature. Further, the name "Babel" means, or has come to mean, "confusion", thus also hindering its translation. As Derrida argues:

To translate Babel by "confusion" is already to give a confused and uncertain translation. It translates a proper name into a common noun. Thus we see that God declares war by forcing men, if you will, to translate his proper name with a common noun. In effect, he says to them: Now you will not impose a single tongue; you will be condemned to the multiplicity of tongues; translate, and to begin with, translate my name ... He imposes a double bind on them when he says: Translate me and what is more don't translate me. I desire that you translate me, that you translate the name I impose on you; and at the same time, whatever you do, don't translate it, you will not be able to translate it. (1985: 102)

Bembel Rudzuk's action of inscribing the reverse of the tiles with the many names of Allah can be read as an attempt to translate and record the untranslatable name of God. By writing on the tiles, words become part of the pattern, and, just as the tribe of Shem were punished for their audacity in attempting to impose one language on the world, so Rudzuk and Pilgermann are punished for attempting to fuse word and object, pattern and God. This punishment is handed down through the blood sacrifice of the Antioch Christians; once again, blood writes itself on Pilgermann's creation.

iii: Pilgermann displaced

Pilgermann's tale is a difficult one to read: it offers the reader few guiding literary conventions. The novel neither begins nor ends; it is "always vibrating" on a frequency to which, Pilgermann claims, few are tuned. Pilgermann's journey through hellish forests with devilish companions is replicated in the reader's experience: we traverse uncharted fictive territory, where the narrator is not a stable, or even individual, consciousness whom the reader can trust as focaliser; where time is warped into a continuous Moebius' strip; where events are incongruously personified (Pilgermann's young death, for example), and human characters are, equally grotesquely, dehumanised; where patterns are more powerful than people.

Although it would seem to be a historical novel, Pilgermann is as much a novel about the future as it is about the past -- which is why Hoban writes of it as the place where the "further action ... pending" (p 9) from Riddley Walker comes into being. However, it would seem that Pilgermann is not so much the completion of the story-telling impulse of Riddley Walker as it is a narrative to fill the space between Riddley's time and our own. Pilgermann, the historical predecessor to Riddley Walker, comes into being after the latter. Pilgermann becomes our "connexion man" (Riddley Walker 21) -- a consciousness privy to the past, enduring through the present; existing neither here nor there, he is a passageway between the two, leading to the nightmarish future of Riddley Walker.

The idea of neither-here-nor-thereness, of absent-presence/present-absence, is Pilgermann's enduring motif. The protagonist is forced to move from a world of apparent absolutes into the shadowy realm of the undecidable; he learns to accept this as the events unfold. The mere existence of Pilgermann's young death and the headless tax collector illustrate this. An uncomplicated example of the erosion of certainty is Pilgermann's question to the pilgrim children:

"Do you know where Jerusalem is?" I say to him.
 "Do you know how far it is to Jerusalem?" ...
 "Jerusalem will be wherever we are when we come to the end."

(Pilgermann 64)

The boy's answer dissolves the dichotomy of Beginning/End. This pattern is repeated in the structure of the text, which denies narrative closure by occupying a position which is neither present nor retrospective. Indeed, it is this quality of "betweenness" which Hoban continually returns to: he describes the Hidden Lion tile pattern as "motion ... (which) arises from stillness" (Pilgermann 118), and repeats the same idea in The Medusa Frequency:

"I looked at the road that was the place of Hermes. Without moving it ran through the valley and over the mountains, at the same time running and standing still, at the same time here and gone."
(The Medusa Frequency 36)

Hoban's obsession with the "doubleness", with simultaneous "here and gone"ness, moves his texts into an interregnum which challenges the mutual exclusion of opposites. Hoban writes from within the mirror which separates reality from fantasy, present from absent -- in Rosemary Jackson's terms, Hoban's mirror is positioned midway between the object and image, in the paraxial zone "whose imaginary world is neither 'real'(object), nor entirely 'unreal'(image) but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two" (1981: 19).

The deliberate indecision which permeates the text is part of the obscurity which renders Pilgermann almost impossible to read. The combination of historical political/psycho-sexual drama with lengthy metaphysical discourses on the nature of God and meaning, and the bizarre and grotesque figures which recur throughout, are

overwhelming. The reader is further confused by the contradictory symbols used in the novel (such as the benign, naive figure of Pilgermann's young death, in contrast to the ghoulish death's head, Bruder Pförtner), which deny the figurative coherence necessary to unite the disparate elements of the text. Pilgermann is, in many ways, an unsatisfying reading experience. The reader's frustration is to some degree reduced when the text is read as a *bricolage* of ellipses and contradictions, rather than in an attempt to discover/create a sense of coherence.

The theories of Jacques Derrida generate precisely this type of reading. His thought is founded on the metaphysics of presence, or perhaps more accurately, on the metaphysics of absence. Spivak summarises his work in saying that Derrida:

substitutes undecidable feminine figurations for the traditional masculine ones and rewrites the primal scene as the scene of writing. (1983: 174)

Pilgermann's un/decidably un/masculine narrator invites a Derridean reading. Deconstruction proceeds by identifying the two components of any philosophical dichotomy; establishing which has been privileged; inverting the direction of privilege between them, and finally displacing the relationship entirely. As Mark Krupnick suggests, Derrida does not merely foster a revolution in thinking; he displaces thought (1983: 1-17). Pilgermann situates itself within a world of inversion and displacement; I will argue that it is a text which

demonstrates "certain marks" in Derrida's chain of nomenclature, particularly the term *hymen*.

The *hymen* is "between"; it both describes and originates in the disjunction left by the process of displacement. Mark Krupnick writes:

Displacement is above all about writing itself, but it is also about women and the unconscious and Jewishness. For these are all exemplary instances of the marginal, and in the deconstructive analysis of texts the outsider returns to contest and demoralise authority. (1983: 3)

Pilgermann is displaced by his Jewishness in medieval Christian Germany; Jews were commonly feared and despised as practitioners of the occult, and devourers of Christian children. This attitude is reflected by Konrad, the German peasant -- owner of Bodwild, the lascivious sow who smells Pilgermann out as a Jew:

"They won't get near pork," said Konrad, "them children of darkness, them Jewish devils. They call up Asmodeus, they drink the blood of Christian children, they say the Lord's prayer backwards, them Christ-killers."

(Pilgermann 79)

Further, Jews bear a physical mark of their sacred covenant with difference, and it is this mark which the band of peasants who castrate Pilgermann wish to eradicate:

"Cut it off and make a Christian of him," says the man with the sow.

(Pilgermann 17)

However, this prioritising of the authority of Christianity over the displaced Judaism is inverted by the

act intended to erase the differentiating sign:
 Pilgermann is not rendered any more the Christian by the absence of the sign of circumcision than he is by its presence. This is illustrated by the gruesome return of the circumcision image, described as a dream of Pope Unguent VII. The hellish image deliberately evokes similar scenes by the medieval Flemish artist, Hieronymus Bosch (to whom the novel refers) -- the dream is dominated by "cranes and scaffolding and ladders", as is Bosch's famous "Last Judgement" triptych. The dream is an amalgamation of barbarous attempts made by Christians to deny the Jewish heritage of Christ:

With bricks and mortar made of the clay of Jews, made of the straw, lime, sand, water and blood of Jews Unguent is trying ... (to) put a foreskin made of flayed Jews on the member of Christ.

(Pilgermann 54)

Unguent's dream reveals the conventionally unacknowledged dependence of Christianity on Judaism. In Derrida's terms, the dichotomy "Christianity/Judaism" is displaced -- Judaism is elevated to a position of relative authority in an act which questions the foundation of the authority of either. The displacement of the relationship between the two terms is realised in the inability of either to regain or maintain complete dominance. It is through the process of displacement that the *hymen* is revealed. Derrida defines the *hymen* as

an operation that *both* sows confusion *between* opposites *and* stands *between* the opposites "at once". What counts here is the *between*, the in-between-ness of the hymen. (1981: 212)

Displacement ~~reveals~~ the presence/absence of the *hymen*, "the confusion between the present and the non-present" (1981: 212). I have placed "reveals" under erasure, as the *hymen* cannot be revealed in the true sense of the word, being between its own presence/absence. The *hymen* ~~reveals~~ itself through displacement, but displacement is itself not a simple procedure. Spivak argues that women are "doubly displaced" by the deconstructive reading, as the notion "woman" is retained as metaphor of displacement; she writes "Derrida asks us to notice that all human beings are irreducibly displaced, although ... women alone have been diagnosed as such" (1983: 170). As Krupnick notes, other examples of the marginalised, including Jews, are aligned with women (quoted p 130 above). Spivak uses the term "double displacement" to describe the process of conceptual adjustment regarding the status of women which occurs when man realises his own displacement. The male deconstructionist, she writes, "having stepped into the place of displacement, has displaced the woman-model doubly" (1983: 171).

(P)erhaps the point is that the deconstructive discourse of man (like the phallogocentric one) can declare its own displacement (as the phallogocentric its placing) by taking the woman as object or figure. (1983: 173)

In Pilgermann, the Christian peasants unwittingly declare their own displacement by taking the Jew as "object or figure".

The mechanism of double displacement which Spivak identifies in the case of women operates in Pilgermann in two ways. Firstly, Pilgermann is initially displaced as a Jew, and then doubly displaced as eunuch, for he is rendered neither Christian nor Jew by the act of castration. Quoting Deuteronomy 23:2, Pilgermann says he is not eligible for inclusion into the Jewish community in Antioch, as he "is crushed or maimed in his privy parts" (Pilgermann 132)). Secondly, women in Pilgermann are doubly displaced. Within the phallogocentric discourse, women are positioned as other; I noted above (p 132) Spivak's observation that Derrida "asks us to note that ... women alone have been diagnosed as (displaced)" (1983: 17)) (my emphasis). Thus, when Pilgermann is displaced by his castration, he does not join women in a zone of equality of displacement; rather, he displaces them doubly by situating women in an area of mystical, symbolic otherness. Women remain objects in Pilgermann's chain of signifiers; they are denied subjectivity by their double displacement. "Sophia-Wisdom-Taboo-Lover-Mother" is an example of one of Pilgermann's constructions of woman which denies her subjectivity in its accretion of symbolic resonances. Although Pilgermann perpetuates the process of displacement, he is able to recognise the constructedness of this identification of woman: "There's allegory for you, the vision of naked Wisdom and the Jew lusting after her." (Pilgermann 14). Spivak summarises this as follows:

a certain metaphor of woman has produced (rather than merely illustrated) a discourse that we are obliged "historically" to call the discourse of man ... the **discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman.** (1983: 169). (my emphasis)

Derrida's concept of displacement describes the status of Pilgermann within the text. However, the term *displacement* needs a successor, for what remains when the dichotomy has been displaced? From what position does the displaced Jew-eunuch author the text? The next link in Derrida's chain of signifiers is the *hymen*, which signals the place of differentiation, while at the same time denying difference. When read through the Derridean veil of the *hymen*, displacement forms an intricate criticism of the very decisiveness on which language is based: the system of differences by which the signified is defined, is subsumed by difference itself. Resolution is not only impossible, it is made redundant. Derrida's concept of the *hymen* articulates "a literary practice that challenges the philosophy inherent in all literary criticism ... (insofar) as criticism attempts to decide on the truth or meaning of a text" (Bass, 1984: 72). The *hymen* "sees literature as a practice of suspending decision, of articulating doubleness" (Bass, 1984: 74). Derrida writes:

Thanks to the confusion and continuity of the *hymen*, and not in spite of it, a (pure and impure) difference inscribes itself without any decidable poles, without any independent, irreversible terms. Such difference without presence appears, or rather baffles the process of appearing, by dislocating any ordinary time at the centre of the present. (1981: 210)

Derrida's notion of the *hymen* combines simultaneous absence and presence with the idea of motion; the *hymen* is a process (rather than an entity) which reveals itself only insofar as it remains hidden. It is the epitome of paradox; Alan Bass reads the *hymen* as "Between-ness -- the suspended decision -- (which is) intolerably anxiety-provoking for thought as we know it" (1984: 74).

Pilgermann, then, situates itself between what is present and what is absent; it denies the simple structure of opposing terms in favour of the vague and unstable difference between the terms. It is important to note that difference itself is not removed -- "difference inscribes itself without any decidable terms" -- it is the ability to decide which is undermined. The fundamental nature of the *hymen* is that difference is no longer formulated in terms of the priority accorded to one of any pair of opposite terms. As Barbara Johnson notes, "what these hierarchical oppositions do is to privilege unity, identity, immediacy and temporal and spatial presentness" (1981: viii). In Pilgermann's world, these are the very concepts which are questioned.

The nature of the *hymen* confuses the attempt at definition; it cannot be slipped between the hermeneutical act of reading, and the text, as if the *hymen* were a thing, a veiled interpretive tool, open to the tactical manipulation of the critic. The nature of the *hymen* defies this attempt: it is neither between the act of reading and the text, nor does it reside in interpretation, nor does it envelop the text. In fact,

the only way to approach the *hymen* is to set your goal not at the *hymen* itself, but beyond it. Derrida writes:

To repeat: the *hymen*, the confusion between the present and non-present, along with all the indifferences it entails within the whole series of opposites ... produces the effect of a medium (a medium as element enveloping both terms at once; a medium located between the two terms) ... The *hymen* "takes place" in the "inter-", in the spacing between desire and fulfillment, between perpetration and its recollection. (1984: 212), (my emphases)

Where is this aporia which houses the *hymen*? Is it at once the margin, as Krupnick and Spivak suggest, and the centre of the confusion? It becomes impossible to describe the *hymen* further, without placing every adjective always already under erasure; perhaps more fruitful is to desist from the full frontal attack on the term, and to go beyond it by examining the processes which reveal it.

What is initially striking about the quotation from "The Double Session" above is that this definition denies itself definitiveness, being dominated by words like "confusion", "enveloping/between", "indifferences". To set our sights beyond the *hymen* in Pilgermann itself, we find these terms recurring indefinitely as we approach the narrative structure and generic classification of the novel. From the point of view of genre, Pilgermann is at once history, fantasy, romance; it encompasses all, and yet seems to fulfill the requirements of none. Cheever, in an article entitled "Is Russell Hoban's Pilgermann a Science Fiction Novel?" describes Pilgermann as "an anti-

historical novel" (1986: 335), following Le Guin's term "thought experiment", a classification accorded to works which examine contemporary reality from ostensibly exotic perspectives. According to Cheever, Pilgermann is

anti-historical in that it postulates an imaginary past ... in order to show the present in a new and different light. (1986: 336)

"Anti-historicism" becomes the defining element of science fiction in Cheever's argument. Cheever's "science fiction" resides within the doubleness articulated by the *hymen* in that it is at once "scientific" (and therefore of the real world) and "fictitious" (not real). Science fiction, for Cheever, is of the present, and yet not present; in Derrida's terms, it is a "difference without presence (which) baffles the process of appearing, by dislocating any ordinary time at the centre of the present." (quoted above). Derrida's description of the *hymen* describes the mechanism of the relationship between science fiction and the present established by Cheever: future-historical time is "dislocated", simultaneously present in (the form of the text) and absent from the reader's present. In Pilgermann, this is emphasised from the outset :

I don't know what I am now ... I speak from where I am; I speak from between the pieces; ... my consciousness is not continuous, I am only a mode of perception irregularly used by strangers.
(Pilgermann 11, 206)

Pilgermann is neither purely a historical nor a futuristic construct; he claims to have continued to exist from his "time" through the reader's time, and suggests he will endure beyond both. He is an impure collection of "waves and particles" rather than a discrete being, and, as we know from modern physics, the waves and particles of matter endure beyond the integrity of their source:

Pilgermann writes "the ringing of the steel is sung in the stillness of the stone" (Pilgermann 11). Pilgermann is thus present to us (both in the act of our reading -- he is the "mode of perception"/focaliser who opens the text to us -- and literally -- he asks us to believe -- as "waves and particles" of undecomposed energy) while necessarily remaining absent from our time. Cheever's notion of science fiction seems satisfied.

According to other definitions, however, Pilgermann could equally well be regarded as fantasy. The *hymen* at once envelops the text and divides it; I would argue that Pilgermann is at once science fiction and fantasy.

Todorov defines the fantastic as a genre which hinges on the reader's act of hesitation. Without the suspension of decision, the fantastic must be eradicated -- it metamorphoses either into the uncanny (when a rational explanation for apparently supernatural events is tendered), or into the marvellous (when no rational explanation can be considered at all). Todorov writes:

the text must oblige the reader ... to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described ... this hesitation may also be experienced by a character ... and at the same time

the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work. (1975: 33)

Immediate parallels with Derrida's description of the *hymen* emerge: both the *hymen* and the fantastic are revealed through the suspension of the reader's decisive faculty. The *hymen* articulates the doubleness which nurtures the fantastic -- both concepts are liminal in that they inhabit the space between the things which they are not, defining themselves by the absence of the others. Episodes where the distinction between the fantastic and the real are deliberately occluded recur throughout Pilgermann; a good example is the description of Pilgermann's encounter with the peasant who castrated him, and the sow that smelled him out:

The sow is looking at me from under her blonde eyelashes. She turns her snout towards me and begins to grunt urgently, perhaps ecstatically. I say ecstatically because I note that she has been mounted by the ever-potent Bruder Pförtner who is himself grunting ardently as he makes love to her ...

I kneel beside the sow listening attentively to her grunts. "Quick!" I say to the peasant, "Get a basin!"

"What for?" he says.

"To catch the blood," I say as I cut the sow's throat ... The peasant grabs a billhook but before he can take a step towards me Bruder Pförtner ... has leapt upon him and is enjoying him. The peasant utters a choked cry, gives birth to his death immediately, and falls on his face on the ground.

(Pilgermann 65-6)

In this extract, the description of the murder of the peasant and his sow is made to appear "unreal" because of the intervention of the "fantastic" in the form of Bruder Pförtner. In fact, the effect of the narration which

privileges the role of the fantastic (Pilgermann as subject of the implied verb "kill" is displaced in a sense by the indirect object, Bruder Pförtner) is to propel the reader into the zone of undecidability -- into the *hymen*. The fantastic is neither entirely real nor entirely marvellous; the *hymen* neither solely a barrier nor merely a portal. Both the genre of the fantastic and the concept of the *hymen* can be regarded as a conspiracy of intellectual subversiveness; to perceive both the fantastic and the *hymen*, the reader must indulge in a game of sorts with the text, allowing the suspension of decision to qualify the perception of both. What Derrida emphasises is the necessity of that suspension and the subversiveness it entails, while Jackson is the critic of the fantastic who most emphasises the subversive nature of the genre. The *hymeneutical* reading displaces any final decisive moment, which would rupture the *hymen* (and the fantastic) completely. Derrida writes:

The hymen, the consummation of the differends, the continuity and confusion of the coitus, merges with what it seems to be derived from: the hymen as protective screen, the jewel box of virginity, the vaginal partition, the fine, invisible veil which, in front of the hystera, stands between the inside and the outside of a woman, and consequently between desire and fulfillment. (1981: 213)

The *hymen* is described as "the confusion between the present and the non-present", the "continuity and confusion" which stands between "desire and fulfillment". In the same way, the fantastic is that which is not present in either the real or the marvellous; it stands

between the uncanny and the marvellous and is defined by its refusal to decide on the terms of its difference. The fantastic, therefore, shares with the *hymen* the quality of between-ness; Pilgermann as fantasy text is enveloped in the necessary undecidability of the *hymen*.

Another dominant mode which permeates Pilgermann is the grotesque. The grotesque is related to the *hymen*, but in a way which differs from the relationship I have established between the fantastic and the *hymen*. While I have argued that the *hymen* at once envelops and occupies the lacuna between the differends which delimit the fantastic, I will suggest that the grotesque exemplifies that *hymen's* quality of doubleness, of simultaneous existence within mutually exclusive realms. While the fantastic is concerned with at once plugging and enveloping the gap between binary terms, the grotesque is that which contaminates both terms, each with the other.

Pilgermann is dominated by images of the grotesque: the rotting headless corpse of the tax-collector, the "sow with her scarlet necklace of blood" (Pilgermann 80), the human-head cannon balls at Antioch -- all are horrific images somehow misplaced, rendered comic. One of the most effective vehicles of Pilgermann's liminality is the mode of the grotesque. Geoffrey Harpham, in an excellent work on the subject, On the Grotesque (1982), writes:

That the grotesque exists has always been a given. But it is up to the culture to provide the conventions and assumptions that determine its particular forms. Culture does this by establishing conditions of order and coherence, especially by

specifying which categories are logically incompatible with which others. (1982: xx)

It would seem that the grotesque allies itself with fantasy, at least in function: it serves to interrogate the parameters of the ordinary by its "excursion into disorder" (1981: 4). Jackson writes:

fantastic literature points to or suggests the basis on which cultural order rests, for it opens up, for a brief moment, onto disorder, onto illegality, onto that which lies outside the law, that which is outside the dominant value systems. (1981: 3-4)

While on the one hand, the grotesque seems identical with the fantastic, on the other, it seems to embody the spirit of deconstruction:

(Grotesqueries) stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown, the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question our ways of organising the world. (Harpham, 1982: 3)

The mechanism of questioning which Harpham argues the grotesque represents, is, I will argue, allied with the interrogative nature of the *hymen*. Harpham emphasises the illegitimate co-existence of something within mutually exclusive realms, while Derrida writes that the *hymen* is

A masked gap, impalpable and insubstantial, interposed, slipped between, the entré of the hymen is reflected in the screen without penetrating it. The hymen remains in the hymen. The one -- the veil of virginity where nothing has yet taken place -- remains in the other -- consummation, release and penetration of the antre. (1981: 215)

The crucial sentence here is "The hymen remains in the hymen" -- Derrida is playing on the contrasting connotations of the word: the consummation of marriage is opposed to virginity. He demonstrates the fallibility of the term he has chosen to the principle it illustrates: even the *hymen* must admit its own division against itself, and must take its meaning from its simultaneous occupation of two apparently exclusive areas of difference. The grotesque can be defined in a precisely similar fashion; it

call(s) into question the adequacy of our ways of organising the world. (Harpham, 1982: 3)

This effect of the grotesque (reminiscent of Derrida's characterising of the *hymen* as an "effect" (above)) is similar to the effect of displacement, that mechanism which initially propels the understanding towards the formulation of the concept "*hymen*". The grotesque exemplifies the process of displacement, by "calling into question" the authority of our dichotomising, hierarchical "ways of organising the world". Also, the grotesque shares the characteristic ambivalence of the *hymen*:

the sense of the grotesque arises with the perception that something is illegitimately *in* something else. The most mundane of figures, this metaphor of co-presence, *in*, also harbours the essence of the grotesque, the sense that things which should be kept apart are fused together. (Harpham, 1982: 11), (author's emphasis)

The *hymen* is the figure of "impossible split reference" (Harpham, 1982: 13), the threat of consummation always already present within the sign of virginity, just as the grotesque functions as an antechamber wherein the comic and the horrific mingle inseparably. The operations of both the *hymen* and the grotesque are evident in Pilgermann. Several episodes in Pilgermann are at once amusing and horrific; an example is Pilgermann's encounter with the bear-worshipper, whom he sees hanging the bear from a tree beside the road:

Before I could think what I was doing I had cut the rope with the knife given me by the second Sophia. The bear crashed to the ground and lay there without moving. The man turned on me in a fury. "You murdering fool!" he screamed, "You've killed God!"

I said, "I didn't mean to kill him."

"But you have killed him!" he said. "God was everything to me, he was big and strong and shaggy, he was like a bear."

"He was a bear," I said.

"Of course he was," said the man.

(Pilgermann 56)

The comedy of the scene arises from the bizarre beliefs of the bear-worshipper, who, prevented from hanging his God, illogically accuses Pilgermann of trying to murder him. The image of the hanging, as well as the need of the man to kill that which he worships, however, is not funny, and the combination of the two responses to the incident generates the grotesque. The desire to eradicate the object of adulation is grotesque, because the murder of the loved object is a taboo which repeats the condition of the grotesque: "things which should be kept apart are fused together" (Harpham, 1982:11).

Perhaps the most grotesque figure in the novel is Bruder Pförtner, who first appears as a disarmingly conventional figure of Death on a white horse:

I hear the low voice of a bell that nods to the walking of an animal. "Thou also," says the rough and broken voice of the bell, so I know it to be the bell hung from the neck of Death's pale horse. I see Death on his horse, all luminous bones that look as if they would clatter but they move in perfect silence.

(Pilgermann 44)

At this first meeting, death conforms to the caricatured personification whom Pilgermann expects, and so, whilst ghoulish in aspect, is not grotesque. The second meeting is slightly more disturbing:

There was a low chuckle in my ear and a hard hand clapped me on the shoulder in great good fellowship. It was that bony personage who had been riding his horse in the wood ... This time he was on foot; he was dressed as a monk and like me he carried a pilgrim's staff. It was very shadowy under his hood, one couldn't properly say there were eyes in the eyeholes of his skull-face but there was definitely a look fixed upon me; it was that peculiarly attentive sidelong look seen in self-portraits.

(Pilgermann 57)

The unnatural familiarity of "great good fellowship" with a personified Death initially unsettles Pilgermann, and this impression grows when death is described no longer in terms of the familiar (and therefore to some degree domesticated) Grim Reaper stereotype, but rather as a fellow pilgrim. This is defamiliarisation at its most effective: the transformation of the familiar (pilgrim) by its extraordinary association with the exotic,

transforms both elements ("pilgrim" accrues sinister overtones borrowed from death, while the death's head pollutes the sanctity of pilgrimage). The moment becomes truly grotesque when Pilgermann recognises in Death a sort of self-portrait: the impossible contamination of life with death/death with life has occurred, blurring the distinct boundary between the two. Harpham states that "the perception of the grotesque is never a fixed or stable thing, but always a process, a progression" (1982:14). A progression of this sort is found in this passage, which culminates in a "peculiarly attentive sidelong look" (57) at both life and death. Pilgermann mis/recognises himself in the mirror of his own mortality,⁵ and is initially repelled by the image of his own death, or lapse into undifferentiation. However, as the novel progresses, Pilgermann not only recognises the death in himself, but fosters and nurtures it. Pilgermann begins to "order his experience and his environment" (quoted above) around the figure of his "young death". Interestingly, the young death is also described in terms of its mirror-like similarity:

And now I became aware of perhaps someone else, it was only the faintest light and shadow as it were sketched on the air, a ghostly chiaroscuro walking familiarly with the rest of us as if by right. This sketchy figure was in truth familiar, uncertain of feature as it was: it was immediately recognisable to me as an early state of my death. I felt drawn to it as a father to a son. This simulacrum was in no way childlike, it was a fully-grown duplicate of me but not yet fully defined, not yet fully realized, and therefore it was to me as a child to be looked after.

(Pilgermann 88)

Whereas Death personified had evoked fear and loathing, the young death inspires fatherly compassion in Pilgermann, who strives to be worthy of it; indeed, when visited by the figure as a portent of his impending death, Pilgermann comments with relief:

Still I can't be such a bad fellow to have a death like this.

(Pilgermann 217)

By this stage, the grotesque has been removed from its position in the margin. Death is still grotesque, but the grotesque is no longer horrific in the way that it was when it threatened from the margin -- being displaced from the margin has naturalised the grotesque, made it seem normal. Thus, the concept of death has become so familiar to him that Pilgermann nurtures it -- the young death is as familiar as the caricature of the Grim Reaper stereotype, and so poses no threat to the order of his world. The grotesque has become the marginal forced to the centre, yet it retains its marginal qualities; the border itself is questioned.

The examples I have given above illustrate the nature of the grotesque, and how it parallels the functioning of Derrida's *hymen* by virtue of its liminality. What is interesting is how this process is found operating even on the microscopic level of words themselves. This occurs at the very beginning of the novel and opens the door to the uncertainties which follow; Pilgermann is rescued from the

castrating mob by the tax collector husband of the first Sophia, and is confused about what the man says to him:

Pray for him! Did he actually say that, did I hear him right? "Betet fur mich." What else could it have been? "Tretet mich"? "Kick me"? Ridiculous; that man could not possibly have asked me either to pray for him or to kick him. I have a sudden hysterical vision of the two cherubim leaning towards each other over the Ark of the Covenant, the one saying "Pray for me" and the other "Kick me".

(Pilgermann 18)

Pilgermann's "sudden hysterical vision" is of the grotesque -- he perceives the ridiculous impossibility of both alternatives, feels obliged to reconcile himself to the acceptance of one of the alternatives. The impossible choice is similar to the 'choice' between the comic and the horrific; a choice which cannot be made, as the grotesque is at once neither and both. Derrida writes of the *hymen* that:

It is neither desire nor pleasure but in between the two. Neither future nor present, but between the two. It is the hymen that desire dreams of piercing, of bursting, in an act of violence that is (at the same time or somewhere between) love and murder. If either one did take place, there would be no hymen. But neither would there simply be a hymen in (case events go) no place. With all the undecidability of its meaning, the hymen only takes place when it doesn't take place, when nothing really happens, when there is an all-consuming consummation without violence, or a violence without blows, or a blow without marks, a mark without a mark (margin) etc., when the veil is, without being, torn, for example, when one is made to die or come laughing. (1981: 213)

Pilgermann's dilemma is over precisely this kind of "act of violence that is (at the same time or somewhere between) love and murder". "'Betet fur mich'" implies an

act of love; "*Tretet mich*" is the violent murder. Pilgermann cannot be sure that either of these ideas was indeed vocalised; both are incongruous, out of context. This is the nature of the *hymen* itself: "If either one did take place, there would be no hymen ... With all the undecidability of its meaning, the hymen only takes place when it doesn't take place, when nothing really happens". The grotesque, then, is the zone where "nothing really happens", or, as Harpham writes, "Looking for unity between centre and margin, the interpreter must, whether he finds it or not, pass through the grotesque" (1982: 38).

The process of perceiving the grotesque involves perceiving that which is in the margin. Pilgermann in its entirety demonstrates this: the first part of the novel, up to Pilgermann's arrival in Antioch, is dominated by grotesque images (the headless tax-collector, Bruder Pförtner, Bodwild the lustful Jew-killing sow, and others). This focus is suspended during the central part of the novel, which concentrates instead on the metaphysical musings of Bembel Rudzuk and the creation of the Hidden Lion tile pattern, and then, to close, the focus on the grotesque is resumed, culminating in Pilgermann's vision of his unborn son stumbling through the battlefield and away from his murdered mother (Pilgermann 217). The first and last sections act as flanking panels of a narrative triptych in the style of Hieronymus Bosch; the grotesque forms the "margins" of the text, and yet makes those margins the central concern.

The process of bringing the margin to the centre, while insisting on its marginal qualities, is emphasized on every level of the text. Pilgermann's attempt to write the tile pattern as if he were not writing from the ~~margin/centre~~ causes the landscape to be fouled with the blood of his castration. The tile pattern is a writing which cannot heal, because it participates in the displacement (in this case, of the name of God) which is always dependent on the initial rejection of the margin. The bloody wound of the absence of the penis, which enables Pilgermann to author a text in the absence of authority, becomes the epicentre of a quake whose tremors reach out and destroy the "Hidden Lion" pattern. Pilgermann's effort to capture "stillness in motion" is an attempt to bring the margin to the centre; the *hymen* which separates and at once enfolds them is ruptured. In retrospect, Pilgermann comes to this realisation:

Ah! Now as I walk I know there is no separateness in the world, I know that the souls of things and the souls of people are inextricably commingled; I know that the dome and the woman both are manifestations of something elemental that is both beauty and wisdom and it is forever in danger, for ever being lost, torn out of our hands, violated ... how should it not be violated ... ?

(Pilgermann 89)

Notes

1. For example, he writes, "There comes to mind unaccountably an order of the day from Jenghis Khan to his horsemen at some distance from 1071, a century or two perhaps." (Pilgermann 96)
2. Another example is found in Riddley Walker, where Riddley's ability to tell his own story is bought at the expense of his role of shaman in his society.
3. The story "The Bloak as Got On Top of Aunty" (discussed in the previous chapter) illustrates this point.
4. From The Holy Bible: King James Version 1611 . The selective quotation I have used for analysis is substantiated by the complete extract below:

GENESIS 11 ¹ And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. ² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. ³ And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime they had for mortar. ⁴ And they said, Go to, let us build a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth. ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. ⁶ And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. ⁷ Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence on the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. ⁹ Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth.

5. Pilgermann's mis/recognition of himself in the face of Death parodies Lacan's theories of the

construction of the subject through the "mirror stage":

There is a fading or *aphanisis* of the subject, in favour of the imaginary image. It is in the imaginary image that the child sees his identity and his unity, around the image that he orders his experience and his environment, and to the image that he attaches his desire (Tavor Bannet, 1989: 15).

The child is attracted to the mirror-image because it recuperates him (*sic*) from his state as "uncoordinated, powerless and fragmentary subject" (Tavor Bannet, 1989: 15). Pilgermann, on the contrary, denies this wholeness; he becomes increasingly fragmented as the novel progresses, until he is no longer a whole person, but mere "waves and particles".

Conclusion

The three preceding chapters have illustrated Hoban's concern with recognising the margin -- for Kleinzeit and Orff, their status as authors, for Riddley, his shamanic otherness, for Pilgermann, his non/Jewishness -- and with attempting to reinstate a kind of authority which is qualified to speak from and of the margin. In Authority and Identity, I argue that Hoban marginalises the 'authority' of the author by destabilising the structuralist model of language. The endless chains of signifiers whose meanings are continually deferred serve to illustrate inversion of the usual hierarchy of privilege: no longer is the author in control of language, but rather the ever-absent 'authority' of language dominates the will of the author. Having inverted the direction of privilege, Hoban continues to displace the hierarchical model altogether: dominance, both of author over language, and of language over meaning, is denied. The author is not the locus of control, but then, neither is language -- meanings are always inferred from the brink of endless deferral, which is absence. Thus, Kleinzeit's dilemma is not only to write words on the yellow paper, but to attempt to fix the meaning of those words to the marks which signify them:

Kleinzeit read the three pages he had written today and the three pages he had written before. Now as he read them the words lay on the paper like dandruff. He shook the paper, brushed it off.

Nothing there. Black marks, oh yes. Ink on the paper right enough. Nothing else. (Kleinzeit 167)

Kleinzeit's impossible task -- to reunite the sign and the signified -- is a simulcrum of Riddley's attempt to redress the wrongs of his nuclear-age predecessors. Riddley's awareness of the "1ness ... (which) comes in 2 in your hans" (Riddley Walker 144) is an understanding of the inevitability of multiplicity within unity. Despite his realisation that he can never really succeed, Riddley wants to reunite the Littl Shynin Man, to return to the pre-lapsarian wholeness which he believes is epitomised in the nameless "woom of her what has her woom in Cambry" (Riddley Walker 156) -- that thing that "think us but it dont think like us" (Riddley Walker 7). The Little Shynin Man represents the 1 become 2, and the disasters which follow foster the need for the 2 to become 1 again:

hes qwite a peace of work that Littl Shyning Man ... Like it says in the *Eusa Story* when he comes in 2 his cock and balls theyre on his lef side his head and neck theyre on his right ... When hes in 2 and you slyd him to gether the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ s of him come to gether with a clack.

(Riddley Walker 200)

However, Riddley acknowledges that the 2 can never become 1 again: Granser's head cannot be sewn back onto his body, and even the reunification of the Eusa figure in the show makes an ominous "clacking" noise:

I wunner if Goodparley ever thot of a bang when he heard that.

(Riddley Walker 200)

Endlessly confused by the circularity of a multiplicity of symbols, Riddley becomes convinced of one certainty, one lness which is never 2:

1 figger hes the same and very 1 in boath bags of figgers. Mr Clevver. Which hes Mr On The Levvil and hes callit Drop John as wel. There he is the name changes but he dont. You begin to wunner myt he be the 1 Big 1 of it? Or the 1 Littl 1 of it? Or may be there aint no such thing as a Big 1 or a Littl 1 its jus only all 1 and you see what diffrent things you see in the chaynjing lites of the diffrent times of the girt dans of every thing.

(Riddley Walker 201)

Mr Clevver, the constant threat to lness, is the recognition of 2ness. As Riddley Walker yearns for pre-lapsarian innocence, it is significant to note that Mr Clevver represents the devil -- in Biblical terms, the one who initially tempted Eve into sin by offering her a choice, that is, by exposing the 2ness of the 1. Mr Clevver is a metaphor for the absence without which there can be no presence; in recognising him, Riddley recognises the same chasm of meaninglessness which threatens Kleinzeit. As Frederick Kreuziger cautions: "the creation of purpose and meaning collides with the possibility of non-meaning and chaos" (1982: 78).

At the same time, Riddley recognises that this "possibility of non-meaning and chaos" may be part of the lness of everything after all: "its jus only all 1 and you see what diffrent things you see in the chaynjing lites" (Riddley Walker 202). This is Pilgermann's discovery:

I know there is no separateness in the world ... I know that the woman ... is forever in danger, for ever being lost, torn out of our hands, violated ... how should (she) not be violated ... ?

(Pilgermann 89)

In Pilgermann, Hoban offers a protagonist who is most clearly and obviously marginalised, which is why the discussion of displacement is extended in the third chapter, Recuperating the Margin. Hoban has said of himself that:

"to be a Jew is always to be the Other, and the feeling of otherness and strangeness, strangerhood, alienation, is always with me". (1984: 79)

In the third chapter, the effect of the *hymen* is used to examine the metaphor of division. Once again, the *hymen* is neither a *liness* or a *2ness*: it neither divides nor encloses completely; it is that which is always "between". It is the margin brought to the centre which speaks in all of Hoban's novels; that which should be silenced, echoes in the void of the absent centre.

My analyses have concurred with Branscomb's assertion which I cited in the Introduction:

Hoban's ... concerns and methods have remained essentially the same. (1986: 29)

However, I have shown how Hoban revisualises the same concerns in new ways in every novel. In an interview with David Brooks, Hoban says "my perception is about

perception" (1984:79); it is his perceptions of his topic which have changed, rather than his subject itself.

Two metaphors are constant in all of Hoban's novelistic 'perceptions': the metaphor of woman, and the metaphor of disease. These two may be part of one another, as is suggested below:

Life is the original sickness of inanimate matter. All was well until matter messed itself about and came alive. Men are rotten clear through with being animate. Women on the other hand have not quite lost the health of the inanimate, the health of the deep stillness. They're not quick so sick with life as men are. I'll tell you something I didn't tell Kleinzeit. The Thracian women didn't tear Orpheus apart. He fell apart, keeps falling apart, will fall apart.

(Kleinzeit 150)

Hoban's protagonists are all 'diseased' in one way or another: Hermann Orff hallucinates a mythical head; Kleinzeit fights an ailing hypotenuse; the blood from the wound of Pilgermann's castration is not stemmed, but pollutes the landscape; Riddley is "myndy" (Riddley Walker 61) and scarred forever (both physically and psychologically) as a Eusa "connexion man". Their illnesses can be viewed as the divine sickness of the shaman; Wilkie argues that "the theme of shamanism .. becomes the kernel of his writing" (1989: 41), citing Kleinzeit's

prerequisite shamanic symptoms of sickness; ecstatic fits are implied by his faintings ... Dismemberment of organs is inherent in Dr Pink's threat of surgery ... the narcotic element is supplied in the drug Zonk ... (he) moves between the cosmic layers of earth and underworld. (1989: 41-42)

The quotation from Riddley Walker above implies that life itself is the source of disease, that "being" is "being sick". "Disease" can be formulated as the absence of well-being, and indeed, all of Hoban's characters suffer significant absences which enhance the sickness of their solitude. The loss of Luise haunts Herman Orff, while the absence of Pilgermann's penis 'diseases' him as both Jew and man, for example. The achievement of Hoban's novels is the way in which they recuperate the diseased from the margin, replacing "disease" as norm. Absence becomes the necessary prerequisite for creativity. The sign is a false promise of a united signified/signifier; thus, to use the sign is to present a challenge to the threat of meaninglessness which threatens in the void of arbitrary connection. Further, the creative urge itself is most meaningful when exercised as response to absence. This is explained by Eurydice:

"You will sing better than ever," she said. "Art is a celebration of loss, of beauty passing, passing, not to be held. Now that I'm lost you will perceive me fully and you will find me in your song; now that the underworld is closed to you the memory of the good dark will be with you always in your song. Now you are empty like the tortoise-shell, like the world-child betrayed, and your song will be filled with what is lost to you."

(The Medusa Frequency 119)

This extract illustrates perfectly the paradox that only that which is absent can be present: "your song will be filled with what is lost". For Hoban, art must be a celebration of the absence without which it could not.

exist. For this reason, the Kraken -- the voice of Orff's inspiration -- is figured as the terror of nothingness which generates everything. Hoban returns to this in an article about writer's block, where he discusses the dread of the blankness of a blank sheet of paper:

In the original terror is the vital energy that is the beginning of beauty and everything else. (1992: 182)

It is noticeable that the one who is not diseased, the one who is not threatened by absence and undifferentiation, is the woman. Hoban uses the metaphor of woman in such a way that she is always already displaced, always already absent. The lack of woman is the lack on which other presences are founded (Orff's, for example). Whether she appears as the wise Lorna, the elusive Sophia, the unattainable Luise, the lost Eurydice, the devouring Aunty or the mother goddess who "has her woom in Cambry", the woman is always metaphor. For Hoban, woman is the absence of meaning (metaphor being meaning deferred) from which all attempts at meaning are generated; woman, like the signified, is the absent centre of Hoban's novels. Thus, Spivak's criticism of phallogocentrism can be repeated here:

(P)erhaps the point is that the deconstructive discourse of man (like the phallogocentric one) ... declare(s) its own displacement ... by taking the woman as object or figure. (1983: 173).

Hoban's novels take woman as metaphor for signified, banish both to a realm of absence, and from this emptiness, his voice speaks. Perhaps this is best expressed by Orpheus:

"I was, I am, an emptiness. I don't know what anything is: I don't know what music is, I don't know the difference between running and stillness, between dancing and death. The world vibrates like a crystal in the mind; there is a frequency at which terror and ecstasy are the same and any road may be taken.

(The Medusa Frequency 37)

Thus, for Hoban, language and woman are metaphors for one another; they are both within the *hymen*, the zone of undecidability, and neither are diseased with the desire for presence which infects the heroes of Hoban's novels.

Bibliography

Alvarez, A., "Past, Present & Future", New York Review of Books, 28, no.18: 16-19

Bass, Alan, "The Double Game: An Introduction", Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis and Literature, ed. by Smith, J. H. and W. Kerrigan, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984

Bataille, Georges, Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo, New York, Walker and Company, 1962

Booth, Wayne C., The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961

Branscomb, Jack, "The Quest for Wholeness in the Fiction of Russell Hoban", Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 28, no. 1 (1986): 29-38

Chanady, Amaryll B., Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved versus Unresolved Antinomy, London, Garland, 1985

Cheever, Leonard A., "Is Russell Hoban's novel Pilgermann a Science Fiction Novel?", Extrapolation, 27, no. 4 (1986): 334-40

Collins, Robert A. and Howard D. Pearce., eds., The Scope of the Fantastic: Theory, Technique, Major Authors, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1985

---, The Scope of the Fantastic: Culture, Biography, Themes, Children's Literature, Westport, Greenwood, 1985

Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", Writing and Differance, trans. by Alan Bass, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978

---, Dissemination, trans. by Barbara Johnson, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981

- , The Margins of Philosophy, trans. by Alan Bass, Brighton, Harvester, 1982
- , "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)", trans. by Catherine Porter and Phillip Lewis, Diacritics, 14 (1984): 20 - 31
- , The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation, McDonald, C. V., ed., trans. by P. Kamuf, New York, Schocken, 1985
- Dewey, Joseph, In A Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1990
- Dowling, David, "Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker: Doing the Connections", Critique, 29 (Spring 1988): 179-87
- Eliade, Mircea, The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. Willard E. Trask, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1965
- Ewen, Joseph, "The theory of character in narrative fiction" (in Hebrew), Hasifrut, 3, English abstract pp. vii-ix
- Fish, Patrick, "On Babel/Babel On", unpublished MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1989
- Flores, Angel, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction", Hispania, 38, no. 2 (1955): 187-93
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth century literary imagination, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979
- Harpham, Geoffrey G., On the Grotesque, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1982
- Hassan, Ihab H., The Dismemberment of Orpheus: towards a postmodern literature, New York, Oxford University Press, 1971

Hitchcock, Patricia, "Modest Mysticism: An Interview with Russell Hoban", Isis, 2 (1977): 28

Hoban, Russell, The Mouse and His Child, New York, Harper and Row, 1967

---, The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz, London, Jonathan Cape, 1973

---, Kleinzeit, London, Jonathan Cape, 1974

---, Turtle Diary, London, Jonathan Cape, 1975

---, "A Little As Plaining about Riddley Walker", The Bookseller, 3890 (12 July 1980): 175

---, Riddley Walker, London, Jonathan Cape, 1980

---, Pilgermann, London, Jonathan Cape, 1983

---, Interview, interviewed by E. Myers, Literary Review, 28 (1984): 5-16

---, "It cancels all distance between our unthinking and the unthinkable", The Listener, 112 (27 September 1984): 3-4

---, Interview, interviewed by David Brooks, Helix, Spring (1985): 21-22, 71-85

---, The Medusa Frequency, London, Jonathan Cape, 1987

---, The Moment Under the Moment, London, Jonathan Cape, 1992

Hollinger, V., "Cybernetic Deconstructions -- Cyberpunk and Postmodernism", Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature, 23, no. 2 (1990): 29-44

Hume, Kathryn, Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature, New York, Methuen, 1984

Iser, Wolfgang, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach", Modern Criticism and Theory, ed. by David Lodge, London, Longman, 1988

---, "The Reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature", New Literary History, 7, no. 1 (1975): 7-35

Jackson, Rosemary, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, London, Routledge, 1981

James, Clair, "Narrative Against Nuclear War", Modern Language Association of America Publications, 106, no.5: 1175-76

Johnson, Barbara, Translator's introduction to J. Derrida, Dissemination, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981

Kayser, Wolfgang, The Grottesque in Art and Literature, trans. by Ulrich Weisstein, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1963

Kreuziger, Frederick A., Apocalypse and Science Fiction: A Dialectic of Religious and Secular Soteriologies, California, American Academy of Religion, 1982

Krupnick, Mark, "Introduction" to Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. M. Krupnick, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987

Lake, David J., "Making the 2 One, Language and Mysticism in Riddley Walker", Extrapolation, 25, no. 2 (1984): 157-170

Leader, Zachary, "The allness of the everything", The Times Literary Supplement, no. 4172 (1983): 259

LeClair, Tom, "Review: The Medusa Frequency", American Book Review, 10, no. 4 (1988): 3

Lewicki, Zbigniew, The Bang and the Whimper: Apocalypse and Entropy in American Literature, Westport, Greenwood, 1984

- Lodge, David, The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Language, London, Edward Arnold, 1977
- , The Art of Fiction, London, Penguin, 1992
- Lynn, Joanne, "Threadbare Utopia: Hoban's Modern Pastoral", Children's Literature Association Quarterly II, no. I (1986): 19-24
- MacLean, Marie, "The Signifier as Token: The Textual Riddles of Russel Hoban", Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association, 70 (1988): 211-19
- Mahoney, Patrick, "Transformations and Patricidal Deconstruction" in The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation, McDonald, C. V., ed., trans. by P. Kamuf, New York, Schocken, 1985: 94-98
- Martin, Gerald, Journeys Through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century, London, Verso, 1989
- Maynor, Natalie, and Richard F. Patteson, "Language as Protagonist in Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker", Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 26, no. 1 (1984): 18-25
- Morehead, J. H., "Atomic Language (Comment on Hoban, Russell Riddley Walker)", New York Times Book Review, 86, no. 32 (1981): 25
- Morrissey, Thomas J., "Armageddon from Huxley to Hoban", Extrapolation, 25, no. 3 (1984): 197-213
- Mustazza, Leonard, "Myth and History in Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker", Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, 31, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 17-26
- Olsen, Lance, "Review: The Medusa Frequency", American Book Review, 10, no. 4 (1988): 3

- Porter, Jeffrey, "'Three Quarks for Muster Mark': Quantum Wordplay and Nuclear Discourse in Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker", Contemporary Literature, 31, no. 4 (1990): 448-69
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics, London, Routledge, 1983
- Schlobin, Roger C., The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art, Sussex, The Harvester Press, 1982
- Schwenger, Peter, "Writing the Unthinkable: Literature and Literary Attempts at Exploring the Nuclear Holocaust", Critical Inquiry, 13, no.1 (1986/7): 31-48
- , "Circling Ground Zero: Nuclear Holocaust and the Exploding Word", Modern Language Association of America Publications, 106, no. 2 (1991): 251-62
- , Letter Bomb: Nuclear Holocaust and the Exploding Word, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992
- Schwetman, John W., "Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker and the Language of the Future", Extrapolation, 26, no. 3 (1985): 212-19
- Spivak, Gayatri C., "Displacement and the Discourse of Women", Displacement: Derrida and After, M. Krupnick ed., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983
- Suleiman, Susan R. and Inge Crosman, eds., The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1980
- Tavor Bannet, Eve, Structuralism and the Logic of Dissent: Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, London, Macmillan Press, 1989
- Taylor, Nancy D., "'... you bes go ballsy': Riddley Walker's Prescription for the Future", Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, 31 (1989): 27-39
- Thiher, Allen, Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987

Thomson, P., The Grotesque, London, Methuen, 1972

Todorov, Tzvetan, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1975

Uglow, Jennifer, "Leavin the worl behynt", Times Literary Supplement, 31 October (1980): 1221

Wilkie, Christine, Through the Narrow Gate: The Mythological Consciousness of Russell Hoban, Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989