ON REFERRING
IN LITERATURE

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I.

METAFICTIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR NOVELISTIC REFERENCE

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The critical acceptance, not to say canonization, of contemporary metafiction—postmodernist, neobaroque,[1] or whatever it is eventually to be named—has led to a rethinking of many of the traditional assumptions about the novel as a mimetic genre. In other words, the actual forms of the fictions themselves have brought about a challenging of the theories that purport to explain them. For example, a self-reflexive form of fiction, one which in effect constitutes its own first critical commentary, has disturbing implications for concepts of novelistic reference. While the realist novel of the last century has usually provided the data base from which Marxist theories of reference[2] have developed, metafiction's *auto*-referential dimension complicates any attempt to conceive of fictional reference only in intratextual and extratextual terms. The major worry is probably that perhaps what metafiction has really done is to make explicit what is a truism of all fiction: the overdetermination of novelistic reference.

   Of all the literary genres, the novel has had the most difficulty in escaping from naïve referential theories. Poetry was rescued from the myth of the instrumentality of language by the Symbolists, the New Critics, and a host of others. Part of the novel's problem is no doubt the result of the extended length of the genre. New Critical methods are not totally successful with larger verbal structures, partly because of the limitations of human memory: a novel is never one coherent spatio-temporal unit in the reader's mind, as a lyric poem might be. Critics, in discussing its language, must therefore decide whether they will isolate passages as subtexts for commentary, trace linguistic threads through a work, or use some other method.[3] Metafiction, in one sense, resolves this particular critical dilemma by bringing the formal language issue into the foreground of the fiction itself.

   This kind of linguistic self-reflexiveness[4] can be overtly thematized in a text. Of course, the powers and limitations of language in both experiential and literary contexts are themes that are not the exclusive property of contemporary fiction. *Tristram Shandy*, not to mention *Don Quijote*, had raised the same questions about linguistic functioning in their narratives. What does seem to be more uniquely modem is the actualized or concretized version of these insights into language and

the increased stress on the role of the reader. If words have the power to create worlds, for novelist and for reader, then novels can perhaps be generated from word play. Jean Ricardou, following the lead of Raymond Roussel, is only one of those who have investigated this possibility.

I.

If metafiction in general calls attention, overtly or covertly, to the fact that it is *text* first and foremost, that it is a human construct made up of and by words, then the traditional mimetic assumptions of novel criticism are explicitly being contested by the fiction itself. The "referential fallacy," when applied to this kind of fiction, becomes in a sense short-circuited. It is no longer, in Michael Riffaterre's formulation,[5] both the central obstacle to and the first step towards the reader's reaching the significance (semiosis) of the text. Instead, the fiction itself points to the fallacy as a fallacy, thereby preempting much of its status as necessity by presuming it as a given. What is immediately postulated as axiomatic in such fiction is the fictiveness of the referents of the text's language.

The clearest paradigm for this postulation is fantasy literature: here new, non-existent worlds must be created by using only the language of *this* world. But, of course, *all* novelists must convince the reader of the "existence" of their fictive universes, at least *during* the act of reading, and they must do so through language alone. Fantastic fiction, it might be argued, demands an increased effort on the writer's part because of the axiomatic imaginary character of its world. But perhaps the opposite is really true; that is, perhaps the reader's expectations as he reads a fantasy novel facilitate the task by also making axiomatic the fictiveness of the referents of the language. No one seems to demand that Tolkien's Middle Earth be a counter to our empirical world, just that it be an intratextually coherent universe. Tolkien himself wrote that the successful story-maker creates "a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside."[6] This would be true of even more radical fantasy worlds such as that of Ambrose Bierce's "The Damned Thing," where there are colours human eyes cannot see and sounds human ears cannot hear, or in David Lindsay's land of Tormance (in A *Voyage to Arcturus*) where Maskull, the human hero, has to grow non-human organs to cope with the geographical and emotional peculiarities of each region.

Fantasy literature manages to evade the demand for extratextual reference that plagues more traditional, especially realist, narrative. The self-conscious thematization of this very issue in metafiction acts as a marker of fictionality (like "once upon a time") and suggests that the referent of the language of *all* fiction is likely not the same as that of non-literary language. Prose may also be the form of our newspapers and our letters, but there is one important difference in context between my letter to my parents and that of Richardson's Pamela to hers. My letter will be judged by informational or expressive criteria (the accuracy and interest of its details, my sincerity as writer), but both the details and the form of Pamela's letter have

an intratextual structural function in the plot and character motivation of the novel, *Pamela.* They have, in addition, no necessary reference at all to any extratextual reality.

Jean Ricardou feels that the main problem of the kind of realist poetics that would deny this last statement arises from a naïvete about extralinguistic reference that results in a confusing of the signified of a literary sign and its referent: "I think of all those people who, when reflecting on a novel, say: if I had been that character I would have done something different. . . . Well, one could say that those people are transposing a character from the domain of the signified to that of the referent."[7] But, despite the convenience of this distinction, it is not quite accurate. Surely, in strictly linguistic terms, the signified of a word in my letter and of the same word in Pamela's would be the same, that is, if they were taken in isolation. Their different contexts, however, would demand different referents. Therefore one could say that it is the nature of the referent itself that changes when a fictive universe is posited.

This kind of thinking underlies much of the recent work in pragmatics, semantics, and logic[8] on alternate or possible worlds, especially theories derived from Frege's distinction between sense and reference (or, in Ricardou's Saussurian terms, signified and referent).9 Frege argued that in ordinary language usage a sign could have a sense and yet no reference if the latter did not "demonstrably" exist in our empirical world. In *literary* discourse, however, this idea of truth-value reference ceases to have much value or meaning, and Frege's own solution is not very satisfying. In an epic poem, he argues, "we are only interested in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. The question of truth would cause us to abandon aesthetic delight for an attitude of scientific investigation." If literary texts do not denote but only seem to denote, as Frege claims, then perhaps the notion of reference has to be expanded — not denied — to include such pseudo-denotative processes by which readers create fictive worlds. Recently pragmatic theories of "fictionality," as the regulative principle dominating all semantic operations in literary communication, have offered one way of opening up the concept of novelistic reference to make room for the implications of metafiction that explicitly or implicitly teaches its reader how to create its universe out of words, how to actualize a possible world through the act of reading. The fictions of Robert Coover, John Barth, Julio Cortazar, John Fowles, and others encode the fictiveness of their worlds directly into their texts, thereby implicating both the agent (the reader) and his or her world model in the creation of a new world.

These novels all suggest that what would be useful would be an expanded notion of referentiality that would make possible distinctions between real and fictive referents. One such theory was offered by Georges Lavis in response to a Frege-like claim that literary texts lacked referents.[10] At the level of *langue,* Lavis claims (using Saussure's definition of reference), there can be real referents which are either physical ("table," "forehead") or non-physical ("honesty"). There can only be fictive referents which are physical ("unicorn") or non-physical ("ubiquity"). At this level of *langue,* fictive referents are not real because they are nonexistent in empirical reality. On the level of *parole,*[11] the issue is more complex and more relevant to our discussion of literature. Referents can again be real, as in most

ordinary language usage, or fictive (physical or not). Here, however, they are fictive either because they are lies (false referents) or because the objects are imagined. Obviously this latter case is of interest here, for two reasons. First, the denigration of fiction in earlier periods as "lies" can be seen to have its root in this question of false and fictive referents. Second, in the literary text, one could argue that there are no such things as real referents for the *reader* at least: *all* are fictive — "table," "forehead," "unicorn," "honesty," "ubiquity" — because their context would be an imagined world. Readers accept this as a given when they accept the fact that what they are reading is a fiction, that is, an imagined construct.

This acceptance is what Norman Mailer plays upon in *The Armies of the Night* when he divides his book into two parts: the novel as history, and history as a novel. Genres are more than mere classificatory devices for literary critics; they also enable readers to orient themselves and to understand the context in which they must situate the referent. "In the novel," wrote Maurice Blanchot, "the act of reading is unchanged, but the attitude of the person reading makes it different."[12] It is very relevant to the reading experience whether or not the referent is believed to be real or fictive, that is, whether one is reading about the real world or one is creating an imaginary possible world oneself. This is not to deny referentiality, as we shall see, but rather to reconsider its dimensions.

Metafiction today challenges that reification which made what is essentially a temporally limited period-concept of realism into a definition of the entire novel genre. The result of this realist imperialism had been the implied positing of the referent of fiction as *real,* with the underlying assertion (and apologia for the novel) that if something "really happened," or could be made to seem to, it was therefore its own justification and verification.[13] But this referential illusion could be said to destroy the integrity of the sign, almost cancelling out the signified by presuming direct collusion between referent and signifier. This establishes a kind of incomplete denotation (sign/referent becomes signifier/referent) in order to create what Barthes called an *"effet* de réel. "

Yet even early and traditionally realistic novels have thematized this effect as mere effect. Don Quijote and Emma Bovary are literary examples of what happens when the referent of fiction is presumed to be real and operative. Emma is the most serious of realists, for she truly believes that art, even the romantic literature she reads, is a vehicle for experiences which really exist or can be made to exist in her own world. Her belief raises the question of how both ordinary and literary language can ever correspond to the precise nature of non-verbal realities. It is not that Emma reads the wrong books, as some have suggested, but that, like Don Quijote, she reads believing the referents to be real.

It is now an accepted truism of much contemporary criticism that literature cannot lay claim to truth value in a philosophical sense, and that in effect it derives its autonomous ontological status and value from this very fact. We can now see that the linguistic reason for this autonomy is that a truth claim would demand a real referent, not a fictive one. At the level of *parole,* lies and imaginary objects lack real referents. It is the fictiveness of the language's referents that effects the freeing of the reader from what Georges Poulet has called his "usual sense of incompatibility

between [his] consciousness and its objects. "[14] It is the *objects,* which he or she now creates, that have changed their level of reference. Fictive referents[15] project a fictional universe, one which is aware always of its verbal reality.

One warning ought to be issued at this point: in fiction, the fictive referent and the signified ought never to be confused, in the sense that the former lies outside the Saussurian linguistic sign. Its focus is the imagination of the reader: hence Ricardou's refusal to acknowledge the different kinds of reference. Within his structuralist critical framework, the referent is, in fact, irrelevant. In the act of reading a novel, however, especially a metafictional one, it is too relevant to ignore. This is not in any way to place the referent above the sign itself in importance for textual analyses. Two signs may have the same referent ("mutt" and "dog") but, since the signified marks the distinctive features of the sign, the pejorative connotations of "mutt" are revealed through it and not through the referent that both signs share. In cancelling out this important role of the signified, realist dogma implicitly postulates a common real referent that all readers share, despite individual ideolects. In doing so, one could argue, a realist poetics actually mitigates the possibility of a "vivid" imagining of the text's universe.

II.

When a reader first picks up a novel and begins to read, one could say that at this early stage s/he can *only* read in such a way as to refer words to his/her own linguistic and experiential knowledge (which, since it includes his/her past reading experience as well, is in no way limited to his/her actual practical experience).[16] This is the realm of the Peircean "secondness," of "object," which exists prior to the sign. It is that with which the reader and author must presuppose an acquaintance in order for communication to take place at all. Gradually the words read by the reader take on their own unity of reference and create a self-contained world that is its own validity through its own contextual ideolect. Although this created world is total and complete, novel reference itself is never so. This is the difference between a novel and a film. In other words, the reader busily fills in the gaps in reference, guided by the text's encoded instructions,'" actualizing a new possible world but doing so, at first, by means of his/her linguistic and empirical knowledge of his/her own world. The metafictions of Jorge Luis Borges, for one, stand as allegories of this, the reading (as well as writing) side of *poiesis.* The fictive referents gradually accumulate during the act of reading, thereby constructing a "heterocosm"-another cosmos, a second ordered referential system. This fictional universe is obviously not an object of perception, but an effect to be experienced by the readers, in the sense that it is something created by them and in them. Yet here *is* a link to real life.

Criticism today accepts that the novel is not a copy of the real world; nor does it stand in opposition to it. It seems to be less generally acknowledged, however, that the novel is, in fact, related to life experience in a very real way *for the reader:* that is, the novel is a continuation of that ordering, decoding, naming, fiction-

making *process* that is part of the reader's normal coming-to-terms with experience in the real world. And it is this fact that theories of novelistic reference ultimately have to take into account, given the self-conscious narrative and linguistic thematization of it in metafiction itself.

For instance, in John Barth's novel, *The End of the Road,* the mythic world-creating or story-telling capacity of the mind is thematized overtly as the basis of what in the novel is called "mythotherapy." In life, as the doctor explains to the hero, Jacob Horner, "there are no essentially major or minor characters. To that extent, all fiction and biography, and most historiography, are a lie. Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story . . . we're the ones who conceive the story, and give other people the essences of minor characters."[18] For Barth, the narrative "heterocosmic" impulse is related to human choice and existential freedom. "So in a sense," continues the doctor, "fiction isn't a lie at all, but a true representation of the distortion that everyone makes of life."

Jacob, who is a teacher of the English language — the means by which he creates his fictions — is in the grip of a Pirandellian relativity paradox. To turn experience into linguistic speech, he reflects,

> — that is, to classify, to categorize, to conceptualize, to grammarize, to syntactify it — is always a betrayal of experience, a falsification of it; but only so betrayed can it be dealt with at all, and only in so dealing with it did I ever feel a man, alive and kicking. It is therefore that, when I had cause to think about it at all, I responded to this precise falsification, this adroit, careful *myth-making,* with all the upsetting exhilaration of any *artist at his work.* When my mythoplastic razors were sharply honed, it was unparalleled sport to lay about with them, to have at reality. (pp. 112–113; italics mine)

Jacob perceives two important things here: that language, by its creative power, is the key to this myth-making, and that, by its structures, language is the means to the only lucidity one can ever know. *Metafictions such as this which show a character looking at — that is, creating through words — the novelistic world, mime the mind's ordering and naming processes of coding and decoding, ciphering and deciphering.* And the essence of literary language lies not in its conforming to the kind of statement found in factual studies, but in its ability to create something new, a coherent, motivated "heterocosm." Svevo's hero in *La coscienza di Zeno,* thinking that he can be the novelist of his own life, learns that to recapture the past is to structure it, to falsify it; in short, to invent it as if it belonged to someone else. Later, in "Il vecchione," the only part of the past that Zeno actually can recall as real is what he wrote down, which is in part invented due to his linguistic limitations. A native Triestine-speaker, Zeno can only relate in Italian, and in writing, those parts of his world for which he has sufficient vocabulary.

This idea of a linguistic "heterocosm" of fictive referents that the reader and the writer co-create is not merely a concept of just *another,* possible world. The *cosmos* is "the world or universe as an *ordered* and *harmonious* system" (*O.E.D.*). Even in classical mimetic theory, mirrors are seen to create worlds even as they

imitate (as Plato explains in the *Republic* X). In most metafiction today, literature remains a self-sufficient aesthetic system of internal relations among parts that aim at an Aristotelian harmony which the reader actualizes. But along with coming to terms with the ordered and self-informing characteristics of the novelistic universe (as created in the act of reading), the reader must also come to terms with that fictiveness which we have been examining. Since fiction is not a way of viewing reality, but a "reality" in its own right, the fictive "heterocosm" will have its own rules or codes of which the reader becomes gradually aware as he proceeds.

As well as being ordered and fictional, the "heterocosm" is, as we have seen, constructed in and through language, and both author and reader share the responsibility for this creation. Literature has a particular context created by relationships between words which are activated by the reader. Furthermore, the actual referents of those words are not real in the context of empirical reality. The result of this dual removal from the real is the liberation of the reader from the world he knows only through the senses. This does not deny a mimetic referentiality in the sense of a semantic, pragmatic, or psychological accumulation of reference, but it does relegate it to second place. The fictiveness of the referents of the novel's signs is responsible for this freeing of language from being just a counter to any reality outside fiction. It would be simplistic to claim, as indeed some have, that detective stories are "unrealistic" because, although full of murders, no one really dies. Surely, this is true of all fiction: no one fictional event is more or less real than any other.

In a very basic sense, all reading, whether of literature, history, or science, is an escape, for it involves a temporary transference of the reader's mind from his empirical surroundings to things imagined rather than perceived. The bridge from the real world to the other one of fiction is often explicitly provided by the narrator. For the reader, the narrator's living in that world is simultaneous with his writing of it: "as long as I live or write (which in my case means the same thing)," comments Tristram Shandy. The narrating "historian" of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Macondo, in *Cien años de soledad,* presents to the reader real, that is historical, events (the Colombian civil wars) as if lived for the first time in his fictive world where fantastic things occur equally logically. Time and space have no meaning (certainly no reference, in Frege's sense) outside the text itself.

It is thus only by the gradual cumulative constructing of the "heterocosm" through its (acknowledged) fictive referents that readers can be said to share in the creation of a text or a possible world. Though in actual fact the novel has no ultimate responsibility to the real, there are still retired cavalry officers who write to Claude Simon that they lived the events of his La *Route des Flandres,* the novel Ricardou claims is not at all representational. When this question arose at Cerisy in 1971, Ricardou's reply was typically dismissive because to him, and possibly to Simon, such real, personal reader experience is irrelevant: "What Simon gives are the referents of fiction: in no way does this mean that the fiction obtained by the text is the equivalent of the 'documentary' referent."[19]

This consciousness of the possible tension in the reading experience between real and fictive referents is perhaps most clearly seen in the novelist's use of real place

names in novelistic settings, as many critics have pointed out. Robbe-Grillet admits that he has used Hong Kong and New York as explicit locations for the action of his fiction, but he perhaps rather naïvely adds: "I knew, though, that it could no longer be a question of representation, and I could name a real city while still producing a perfectly imaginary city by my own text."[20] Lest this appear to be a new and radical stand, it is worth recalling Kafka's vision of Prague. In his Preface to *Roderick Hudson,* Henry James even wrote that he actually felt that the naming of a real place in the novel, instead of being economical and realistic as intended, was limiting and unnecessary.

The autonomy of the referents of literary signs in relation to real referents is, therefore, not a modem radical realization of recent *criticism.* And even modem, self-informing, self-reflexive metafiction merely points self-consciously to what is a reality of the novel genre, a reality that has also been singled out indirectly by linguistic philosophers of this century, who worked to end the confusing of the meaning of a name with the bearer of a name, and to suggest that the final interpretation of art is justified by its internal, not external, relations. All language is experience, and not merely a store of easily extractable meaning. Yet there does seem to be a difference in the reader's imaginative process, an increase in the active element of that experience, if the referents are acknowledged as fictive—by the word "novel" on the book's cover, or even more overtly and textually, through metafictional thematization.

In summary, these fictive referents form an increasingly complete "heterocosm" of fictively referential totalities by means of a process of semantic accumulation. Nothing is in these referents that has not been expressed, explicitly or implicitly, in the text itself (or in the reader's filling in of gaps guided by the text). Therefore both the ontological and epistemological natures[21] of the "heterocosm" (of its characters, events, and so on) are in this sense fundamentally different both from those of the real world and from those of other texts. No matter how "prosaic" the language, no matter how close to banal reality the story, the language of fiction is transformed because it invites the reader, in Blanchot's words, "to make the words themselves render an understanding of what is happening in the world being proposed and whose reality is to be the object of a tale."[22]

It is the reader's genre expectations and his imaginative creating of the fictional universe through the referents of the language, and *not* the subject matter or any supposedly real referents, that determine the validity and even the status of the novel's world. In John Fowles's novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* Sarah's "true story" is revealed to be fictional, and it is through the very realization of both that fictiveness and its validity that Sarah can free Charles at the end of the novel—in a *mise en abyme* of the liberation of the reader by the novelist.

III.

Metafictions such as Fowles's, which acknowledge their fictiveness textually and thematically, do not represent the death of the novel as some critics and reviewers

insist. Rather, like fantasy fiction, they become emblematic of what begins to look like a literary reality of the novelistic form. All fiction retains the representational orientation of words, largely because this remains outside its control — that is, in the reader. But fiction also creates a new "heterocosm" through those words because the representation is of fictive referents, as the reader soon realizes. A second system comes into being, one which increasingly predominates in his act of reading. Although we move beyond the purely mimetic in reading, we never manage to eradicate it completely. A house in a novel can exist because it exists in the real world, or rather in our perceptual and linguistic experience of the real world. But this is never the point at which the reader stops. The theories of possible worlds and fictive referents permit a broadening of the concept of reference in reading fictive texts. They do so by allowing room for the positing of distinctions, distinctions that bring to light what is really an overdetermination of novelistic reference.

In fact, at least four separate but complementary levels of reference can be isolated in metafiction. Two of these, the most commonly overlapping, have already been discussed in detail: the inner (intratextual) reference is to the "heterocosm" in all its coherence and fictiveness, and the necessary outer mimetic reference is to the world outside the novel, in the sense of that first and inevitable presupposed knowledge that makes the "heterocosm" possible. It is crucial to keep in mind that we are still dealing on this level with fictive referents and that even if the author of a determinedly naturalistic novel should choose (for reasons of economy) to draw upon his/her reader's knowledge of extraliterary realities, he/she can do so in the sense of his/her text's having an "analagon"[23] to the world outside it. One could argue that such a relationship is, strictly speaking, almost metaphoric rather than referential, especially if by referential we mean, with Frege, having a real referent. The inner reference is also to fictive referents, of course. Here fantasy literature is the paradigm, for one hopes that vampires, unicorns, and hobbits only exist in words. Only language can conceive of the absent, the unreal, the supernatural.[24]

There are, however, at least two other levels of reference that metafiction specifically displays: an autorepresentational (the text as text) and an intertextual reference. Certain current theories[25] argue that intertextuality is a modality of perception in literature in that, through recognition of it, the reader identifies the structures which actually make the text a work of art. In Michael Riffaterre's terminology, it is in the "intertext" that this process operates. The loose and flexible limits of the "intertext" are those of the corpus of texts which a reader can legitimately connect with the text s/he is reading. (The legitimacy is determined by Riffaterre by the restriction that the connections must be made between variants of the same structure.)

Without disputing these complex and convincing theories, we should note the simple fact that metafiction again makes overt the intertextual reference of perhaps all fiction. Sometimes a particular text (or set of texts) is backgrounded (intended intertext) as is the Victorian novel, for example, in Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The modern novel here consists of a conscious superimposition of the new and the old. It incorporates the techniques and structures of fiction as written by George Eliot or Thomas Hardy, but there remains a critical distancing

between the backgrounded and the foregrounded texts that still allows us to call this device parody, although the judgment is not always at the expense of the so-called parodied text.[26] Sometimes in metafiction it is not a text but a set of literary conventions, such as the journal or epistolary novel, that is the object of intertextual reference. At other times a particular stereotyped narrative structure will be used. One of the most common of these employed by metafiction is that of the detective or mystery novel, itself a self-reflexive variation of the puzzle or enigma form. Highly codified, the detective novel actually possesses *as conventions* overt and covert modes of self-consciousness: there is often a writer of detective stories embedded within the fiction, just as there is inevitably a discussion about the novel's events happening as if in fiction, not life. On a more covert level, the detective plot itself, the following of clues by the detective, is a hermeneutic allegory of the reader's act.

The ready adaptability of this particular narrative form to metafictional intertextual reference is probably a result of these latter autorepresentational traits. The fact that a text can refer to itself as a text, as language, is not particularly new, but perhaps what is new, as suggested earlier, is the textual level at which it can do so.[27] Furthermore, what metafiction's autoreferentiality appears to do is *not* what one might expect it to, that is, to divert readers from making other references and to limit them to a narcissistic textual formalism. Instead, autoreference and intertextual reference actually combine to direct readers back to an outer reference; in fact, they direct the readers outside the text, by reminding them (paradoxically) that, although what they are reading is only a literary fiction which they themselves are creating through language, this act itself is really a paradigm or an allegory of the ordering, naming processes that are part of their daily experience of coming to terms with reality. Instead of there being a textual dialectic between fiction and reality, as Robert Alter has suggested,[28] there is a conflating of the two poles by the over-determined reference demanded by the act of reading metafiction. The two most self-reflexive modes of reference point directly towards the least so and, from there, outside the text's boundaries. It is true that the extratextual level reached here is one of *process*, the process of reading, and not one of an "analagon" with external reality as a *product* (as fictive referents or represented objects). But the reified notion of mimesis as product representation is one of those nineteenth-century novelistic throwbacks (admittedly one aided by Auerbach, Watt, and other important novel critics) that metafiction challenges.

The overt encoding of the decoder in these texts forces open the Jakobsonian concept of the self-focussing message in its "poetic" function and demands that the addressee enter as *part* of that self-focussing process, not as part of an additional function (conative). Literary discourse then becomes, in Ricoeur's terms, an *event*.[29] The frequent metafictional use of detective plots and journal and epistolary conventions points to the importance of the event of reading as having a role in literary creation, a role as significant as that of writing. It is the metafiction reader's perception of these superimposed levels of reference that directs him/her into, through, and *out of* the text, the text as language. In other words, in metafiction, the only way to make any mimetic connection to *real* referents, as I have defined them here,

would be on the level of *process,* that is, of the act of reading as an act of ordering and creating. The encoding within the text itself of the decoder and his/her role acts as a set of instructions to the *reader who exists in the real world* and who, though implicated directly by the existence of this narratee or surrogate addressee *within* the text, is actually an existing being, an interpreting, deciphering being, outside the work of art. The reader can read (or actualize or bring to life) the "heterocosm" of fictive referents only through an act that is the *same* as, and not the "analogon" of, the decoding process s/he engages in constantly in coming to terms with experience of all kinds. If we insist on wanting to speak of fiction's real referents, which by Frege's definition must exist in the real world, metafiction teaches us that it is going to have to be on another level: the *process* may indeed turn out to be "referential" in this sense, and in a way that the *products* can not be.

NOTES

1. The postmodernist label has recently been given the sanction of John Barth himself in "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction," *The Atlantic* (January 1980), pp. 65–71. "Neobaroque" is the term used to describe the particular version of this phenomenon that arises in Latin America out of the Spanish tradition. See Severo Sarduy, "El barroco y el neobarroco" in César Fernandez Moreno, ed., *America Latina en su Literatura* (1972; 2nd ed., Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1974), pp. 167-84.

2. See Thomas E. Lewis's interesting attempt to combine Marxist and semiotic approaches to the referent in his "Notes Toward a Theory of the Referent," *PMLA* 94, 3 (May 1979), 459-75.

3. See, for example, Ian Watt, "The First Paragraph of *The Ambassadors,*" *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960), 250–74; David Lodge, *Languuge of Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. x; Roger Fowler and Peter Mercer, "Criticism and the Language of Literature," *Style* 3 (1969), 45–72.

4. There is also a narrative or diegetic form of this. See Linda Hutcheon, "Modes et formes du narcissisme littéraire," *Poétique* 29 (février 1977), 90-106.

5. In his course on "The Semiotics of Poetry" at the International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies, University of Toronto, June 1980.

6. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), p. 37.

7. "Je songe à tous ces gens qui pensent à propos de tel roman: moi, à la place de tel personnage, j'aurais fait autre chose . . . Eh bien, ces gens font en quelque sorte passer un personnage du domaine du signifié à celui du référent." In *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui,* II, ed. J. Ricardou et F. van Rossum-Guyon (Paris: U.G.E. 10/18, 1972), p. 43.

8. For example, in the volume edited by Teun A. van Dijk, *Pragmatics of Language and Literature* (Amsterdam and Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1976), the following articles are of interest: Teun A. van Dijk, "Pragmatics and Poetics," pp. 23–57; David Harrah, "Formal Message Theory and Non-formal Discourse," especially p. 72; S.-Y. Kuroda, "Reflections on the Foundations of Narrative Theory from a Linguistic Point of View," pp. 107–140; and Siegfried J. Schmidt, "Towards a Pragmatic Interpretation of 'Fictionality,' " pp. 161-78.

9. See Frege's "On Sense and Reference" in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), pp. 56–78. For the signified/referent par-

allel, see the argument of Oswald Ducrot in O. Ducrot and T. Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 319–20; translation, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 249–50.

10. Georges Lavis, "Le Texte littéraire, le référent, le réel, le vrai," *Cahiers d'analyse textuelle,* No. 13 (1971), 7–22; his attack is upon Arrivé's article in *Langue Française,* No. 3 (septembre 1969).

11. Frege does not make this crucial *langue/parole* distinction.

12. "Dans le roman, l'acte de lire n'est pas changé, mais l'attitude de celui qui lit le rend différent." In "Le Langage de la fiction," in *La Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 82.

13. See Roland Barthes, "L'Effet de réel," *Communications,* No. 11 (1968), 88: "The *having-been-there* of things is a sufficient principle of words" *("l'avoir-été-là* des choses est un principe suffisant de la parole").

14. "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary History* I (Autumn 1969), 55. Poulet, of course, attributes this change to different causes entirely.

15. Paul Ricoeur calls these referents "non-ostensive" ones, but retains a similar definition. See his "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," in *Social Research* 38 (1971), 536. Ricoeur links the concept further to Heidegger and Wilhelm von Humboldt.

16. See Maurice-Jean Lefèbve, *Structure du discours et du récit* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1971), p. 108, on this point, although his final signified/referent distinction is not in accord with the one presented in this paper.

17. See Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 135-59.

18. (1958; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 83. All further references will be to this edition and page numbers will appear in parentheses in the text.

19. "Ce qui est donné par Simon, ce sont les référents de la fiction: cela ne veut nullement dire que la fiction obtenue par le texte est l'équivalent du référent donné à titre documentaire." In *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui,* I, p. 30. Note the contradiction to the remark quoted above to the effect that this involved instead a signified/referent confusion. Here he seems to have slipped outside the rigid linguistic structure.

20. "Je savais désormais qu'il ne pouvait plus être question de représentation, et je pouvais nommer une ville réelle tout en produisant par mon propre texte une ville parfaitement imaginaire." *Nouveau Roman: hier, aujourd'hui,* II, p. 166.

21. See Lubomír Doležel, *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 5-6.

22. "Réaliser sur les mots eux-mêmes la compréhension de ce qui se passe dans le monde qu'on lui propose et dont toute la réalité est d'être l'objet d'un récit." In *"Le langage de la fiction,"* p. 84.

23. See Claude Duchet, "Une écriture de la socialité," *Poétique* 16 (1973), 450. See also, however, Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic perspective on this level of reference in "Writing as a Problem for Literary Criticism and Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *Philosophical Exchange* 2 (1977), 10: ". . . to understand a text is to interpolate among the predicates of our situation all the significations which make a *Welt* out of our *Umwelt.* It is this enlarging of our horizon of existence which permits us to speak of the references opened up by the referential claims of most texts."

24. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 87. Trans. R. Howard: *The Fantastic; a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p.82.

25. See the early theory of Julia Kristeva in *Semeiotiké: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 255, and also more importantly, Michael Riffaterre, "The Semiotics of Poetry" course at the I.S.I.S.S.S.,1980.

26. See Linda Hutcheon, "Parody Without Ridicule: Observations on Modern Literary

Parody," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 5, 2 (Spring 1978), 201–211, and also "Ironie et parodie: structure et stratégie," *Poétique* 36 (novembre 1978), 367–77.

27. This is the implication of Ricardou's interdimensional (i.e., fiction/narration) distinction between "autoreprésentation *expressive*" (pejorative) and "autoreprésentation productive" (modern and acceptable) in "La Population des miroirs," *Poétique* 22 (1975), 212.

28. *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

29. "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 4 (1975), 29–148; and "Structure, mot, événement" in *Le Conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969) or the English translation "Structure, Word, Event" in *The Conflict of Interpretations,* ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).