

which, within the traditional animal duo format (Ren is a chihuahua and Stimpny a fat cat), manages more intertextual nuances and changes of tone per minute than any programme to date while occasionally being, dare I say it, profound. It can certainly be watched as just a knockabout cartoon but at the same time it encodes the viewer with an extraordinarily wide cultural competence. The other is the recent British comedy football show, *Fantasy Football League*. An outcropping of the 'bourgeoisification' of football, it was fronted by comedians Frank Skinner and David Baddiel, with the able assistance of Angus 'Statto' Loughran. Combining elements of the magazine, quiz-show, chat and comedy-sketch genres, it fully acknowledged yet remorselessly parodied the authentic, anorak, blokey culture of football. (It was salutary and moving to see the format collapse when something *really* serious happened; the presenters were so genuinely upset by Germany's defeat of England in the 1996 European Championship semi-finals that they found it hard to be funny.)

However, as I mentioned at the outset, we shouldn't assume that all TV is postmodern. Much programming and viewing is reassuringly traditional. I ~~for~~ one regularly sit and watch the conventional realist narratives of *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* pretty much from beginning to end, with little or no zapping or hopping (though I do some timeshifting now and again).

POSTMODERNISM AND LITERATURE

(or: WORD SALAD DAYS, 1960-90)

BARRY LEWIS

The dominant mode of literature between 1960 and 1990 was postmodernist writing. A few inaugural and closing events can be aligned with these dates (give or take a year or so either way).

The assassination of John F. Kennedy and the *fatwa* decree against Salman Rushdie.

The erection and demolition of the Berlin Wall.

Philip Roth's essay 'Writing American Fiction' (1961) and Tom Wolfe's 'Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel' (1989).

The killing of Kennedy, and the death threat against Rushdie for writing *The Satanic Verses* (1989) provided two sinister book-ends for a period of history that was rife with terrorism and doubt. The Berlin Wall was the most potent symbol of the Cold War and its accompanying suspicion. This was a world uneasy with rapid technological change and ideological uncertainties.

The essays by Roth and Wolfe indicate how literature responded to this climate. Roth's piece declared that the daily news was more absurd than anything fiction could render. This gave hundreds of novelists the go-ahead to experiment with fantasy and self-consciousness. Wolfe's manifesto, on the other hand, was a rallying-cry for a return to realism. He claimed that postmodernist novelists had neglected the task of representing the complex life of the city. His own work *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1988) was an attempt to redress the balance by applying the journalistic methods of Balzac and Thackeray to the urban New York jungle.

Another plausible set of benchmarks for this postmodern period involves *Naked Lunch* (1962) by William Burroughs, a novel that challenged every norm of narrative unity and decorum upon its original French publication in 1959. The Boston Superior Court created a sensation when it concluded that the book's portrayal of the hallucinations of a drug addict was nasty and brutish (and not particularly short). Few

eyelids were batted, however, in 1992 at the release of the feature film *Naked Lunch* (directed by David Cronenberg). Despite its lurid depiction of talking anuses and virulent cockroaches, the movie met with apathy and not apoplexy, disdain and not disgust. This suggests not only a rise in schlock-tolerance levels, but also a change in attitudes towards transgressive fictional forms.

Indeed, the aura formerly attached to the avant-garde is now fading. When an offbeat television series such as David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* is as popular as *Peyton Place* was in its day, it is certain that the demarcation between mainstream and fringe art has eroded. The printed word can no longer compete with the visual media as far as surrealism is concerned.

Is, then, the literature of exhaustion (John Barth's phrase for the last-gasp attempt of the novel to achieve pre-eminence in the electronic global village) now itself exhausted? De Villo Sloan, in his essay 'The Decline of American Postmodernism' (1987) thinks it is: 'Postmodernism as a literary movement ... is now in its final phase of decadence'. Malcolm Bradbury and Richard Ruland, in their sweeping survey *From Puritanism to Postmodernism* (1991) think so too: 'Postmodernism now looks like a stylistic phase that ran from the 1960s to the 1980s.' Therefore a large proportion of writing published after 1990 which is dubbed 'postmodernist' is really 'post-postmodernist', or 'post-pomo' for short.

Bradbury has done much to chart the territory and promulgate the perception of post-1960s writing as a self-contained period. He admits that the problems of mapping contemporary literature are considerable, and that its diversity presents problems for the would-be cartographer. Postmodernism is, of course, only part of the total landscape, but like a mountain-range it looms over everything else, and plodding over its peaks and valleys is no easy task. Luckily there have been other intrepid explorers whose treks can assist our tours of its contours and reliefs. The most useful guides are Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction* (1984), Larry McCaffery's *Postmodern Fiction* (1986) and Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987). Also aiding orientation are dozens of more local sketches of individual writers and their works.

Postmodernist fiction is an international phenomenon, with major representatives from all over the world: Gunter Grass and Peter Handke (Germany); Georges Perec and Monique Wittig (France); Umberto Eco and Italo Calvino (Italy); Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie (Britain); Stanislaw Lem (Poland); Milan Kundera (former Czechoslovakia); Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru); Gabriel Garcia Marquez

(Colombia); J. M. Coetzee (South Africa); and Peter Carey (Australia). Yet, despite this cosmopolitanism, Malcolm Bradbury has quipped that 'When something called postmodernism came along everyone thought it was American - even though its writers had names like Borges, Nabokov, Calvino and Eco.' This is because the number of Stateside writers who can be placed under the postmodernist rubric is large. Here are twenty names usually included in such lists:

Walter Abish	Raymond Federman
Kathy Acker	William Gass
Paul Auster	Steve Katz
John Barth	Jerzy Kosinski
Donald Barthelme	Joseph McElroy
Richard Brautigan	Thomas Pynchon
William Burroughs	Ishmael Reed
Robert Coover	Gilbert Sorrentino
Don DeLillo	Ronald Sukenick
E. L. Doctorow	Kurt Vonnegut

Raymond Federman states in 'Self-Reflexive Fiction' (1988), that 'it cannot be said that these writers ... formed a unified movement for which a coherent theory could be formulated'. It is difficult to disagree with this, as the novels and short stories of these authors vary a great deal. However, they do have certain things in common. Some of the dominant features of their postmodernist fiction include: temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; a pervasive and pointless use of pastiche; a foregrounding of words as fragmenting material signs; the loose association of ideas; paranoia; and vicious circles, or a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse. Traits such as these are encountered time and time again in the bare, bewildering landscapes of contemporary fiction. John W. Aldridge puts it like this in *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now* (1983):

In the fiction of [postmodernist writers] ... virtually everything and everyone exists in such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be said to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified. Characters inhabit a dimension of structureless being in which their behaviour becomes inexplicably arbitrary and unjudgeable because the fiction itself stands as a metaphor of a derangement that is seemingly without provocation and beyond measurement.

The following brief survey will concentrate on the characteristic derangements of contemporary novels and short stories. Postmodernism has influenced all the literary forms. Yet, as Chris Baldick observes in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, '[it] seems to have no relevance to modern poetry, and little to drama, but is used widely in reference to fiction'. For this reason, this introduction will focus on postmodernist fiction, although it is possible to find many of the features it discerns in other types of contemporary writing.

TEMPORAL DISORDER

Postmodernism, according to Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), is a 'contradictory enterprise: its art forms . . . use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention . . . [in] their critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past'. She argues further that postmodernist writing is best represented by those works of 'historiographic metafiction' which self-consciously distort history. This can be accomplished by several means, as Brian McHale notes in the study mentioned earlier: apocryphal history, anachronism, or the blending of history and fantasy.

Apocryphal history involves bogus accounts of famous events. Take Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989). This novel implies that a butler in a stately home played a small but significant role in the appeasement policy adopted by Britain towards Germany before the Second World War. Anachronism disrupts temporal order by flaunting glaring inconsistencies of detail or setting. In *Flight to Canada* (1976) by Ishmael Reed, Abraham Lincoln uses a telephone, and his assassination is reported on television. Tom Crick, a schoolteacher in Graham Swift's *Water/and* (1983), blurs history and fantasy by combining his account of the French Revolution with personal reminiscences and unsubstantiated anecdotes about his own family history.

Postmodernist fiction does not just disrupt the past, but corrupts the present too. It disorders the linear coherence of narrative by warping the sense of significant time, *kairos*, or the dull passing of ordinary time, *chronos*. *Kairos* is strongly associated with those modernist novels which are disposed around moments of epiphany and disclosure, such as James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Postmodernist novels such as *Gerald's Party* (1986) by Robert Coover chuckle at such solemnities. The sheer abundance of incidents that occur over one night (several murders and beatings, the torture of Gerald's wife by the police, and the arrival of an entire theatre group)

distends time beyond recognition. Realist writing specialises in *chronos*, or common-or-garden clock time, and this too is ridiculed in some postmodernist texts. Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine* (1990), for instance, comprises a series of extended meditations on why the central character's shoelace snapped during one particular lunchtime.

Postmodernist writing is full of these kinds of temporal disorder. As Coover writes in *The Public Burning* (1977), 'history does not repeat . . . there are no precognitions - and out in that flow all such assertions may be true, false, inconsequential, or all at the same time'. Or, as Inspector Pardew, a character from *Gerald's Party*, remarks about time: 'It's the key to it all, it *always* is, the key to *everything*!'

PASTICHE

The Italian word *pasticcio* means 'A medley of various ingredients: a hotchpotch, a farrago, jumble' (*OED*), and is the etymological root of the word 'pastiche'. Pastiche is an individual writer is rather like creating an anagram, not of letters, but of the components of a style. Pastiche is therefore a kind of permutation, a shuffling of generic and grammatical tics.

The mere presence of pastiche in postmodernist writing is not in itself unique. The infancy of the novel form itself was marked by a succession of parodies, from Samuel Richardson to Laurence Sterne. Yet as John Barth points out in his essay 'The Literature of Exhaustion' (1967) and its sequel 'The Literature of Replenishment' (1980), there is certainly something peculiar and distinctive about the contemporary mania for impersonation.

Barth's earlier essay epitomizes a mood in the late 1960s, when critics such as Susan Sontag were busy greatly exaggerating rumours about the death of the novel. The traditional devices of fiction seemed clapped-out, unable to capture the complexities of the electronic age. At first it was thought that Barth, by stressing the exhaustion of both realism and modernism, had not only joined the novel's funeral procession, but was volunteering to be chief pall-bearer. However, the critics overlooked his claim (reasserted in the later essay) that the corpse could be revived by stitching together the amputated limbs and digits in new permutations: by pastiche, in other words.

Pastiche, then, arises from the frustration that everything has been done before. As Fredric Jameson notes in 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' (1983), 'the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds . . . only a limited

number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already'. So instead of honing an unmistakable signature like D. H. Lawrence or Gertrude Stein, postmodernist writers tend to pluck existing styles higgledy-piggledy from the reservoir of literary history, and match them with little tact.

This explains why many contemporary novels borrow the clothes of different forms (for example: the western, the sci-fi yarn and the detective tale). The impulse behind this cross-dressing is more spasmodic than parodic. These genres provide ready-made forms, ideal for postmodernist miscegenation. The western, as Philip French observes, is 'a hungry cuckoo of a genre ... ready to seize anything that's in the air from juvenile delinquency to ecology'. In other words, it is already a bastardized form. Examples of the postmodern western include *The Hawkline Monster* (1974) by Richard Brautigan, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (1969) by Ishmael Reed, and *The Place of Dead Roads* (1984) by William Burroughs. Science-fiction is another popular source for postmodernist pastiche. Some critics assert that it is the natural companion to postmodernist writing, because of their shared ontological occupations. (See especially *Solaris* (1961) by Stanislaw Lem, *Cosmicomics* (1965) by Italo Calvino, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut.) Lastly, the detective genre is another candidate for the post of true companion of postmodernism. The pursuit of clues appeals to the postmodernist writer because it so closely parallels the hunt for textual meaning by the reader. The most popular postmodernist detective fictions are *The Name of the Rose* (1984) by Umberto Eco, *The New York Trilogy* (1987) by Paul Auster and *Hawksmoor* (1985) by Peter Ackroyd.

FRAGMENTATION

John Hawkes once divulged that when he began to write he assumed that 'the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting and theme'. Certainly many subsequent authors have done their best to sledgehammer these four literary cornerstones into oblivion. Either plot is pounded into small slabs of event and circumstance, characters disintegrate into a bundle of twitching desires, settings are little more than transitory backdrops, or themes become so attenuated that it is often comically inaccurate to say that certain novels are 'about' such-and-such.

'Too many times,' as Jonathan Baumbach observes in a short story in *The Return of Service* (1979), 'you read a story nowadays and it's not a story at all, not in the traditional sense.'

The postmodernist writer distrusts the wholeness and completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative. One alternative is the multiple ending, which resists closure by offering numerous possible outcomes for a plot. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) by John Fowles is the classic instance of this. The novel concerns the love of respectable amateur naturalist Charles Smithson (engaged to the daughter of a wealthy trader) for Sarah Woodruff, an outcast rumoured to have been scandalously involved with a French lieutenant. Although the book is set in Lyme Regis in 1867, and follows several love story conventions, it is far from being a regular historical romance.

Fowles disrupts the narrative by parading his familiarity with Marx, Darwin and others. He directly addresses the reader, and even at one stage steps into the story himself as a character. The multiple endings are a part of these guerrilla tactics. Fowles refuses to choose between two competing denouements: one in which Charles and Sarah are reunited after a stormy affair, and the other in which they are kept irrevocably apart. He therefore introduces an uncertainty principle into the book. He even dallies with a third possibility of leaving Charles on the train, searching for Sarah in the capital: 'But the conventions of Victorian fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ...'

Another means of allowing place for the open and inconclusive is by breaking up the text into short fragments or sections, separated by space, titles, numbers or symbols. The novels and short stories of Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme are full of such fragments. Some authors go even further and fragment the very fabric of the text with illustrations, typography, or mixed media. As Raymond Federman puts it in the introduction to *Surfiction: Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow* (1975): 'In those spaces where there is nothing to write, the fiction writer can, at any time, introduce material (quotations, pictures, diagrams, charts, designs, pieces of other discourses, etc.) totally unrelated to the story.'

Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife (1967) by William Gass does just about all these things in its sixty-odd pages, and is a postmodernist text *par excellence*. The pages themselves come in four different colours: jotter blue, khaki green, strawberry red and glossy white. The nude woman lounging full-frontal on the title-page is Babs. She is a frustrated spouse who figuratively embodies the language/lovmaking equation examined by Gass. The layout is so eccentric it might have been designed by Marshall McLuhan on mescaline. Multiple typefaces (bold,

italic), fonts (Gothic, script), characters (musical symbols, accents), and miscellaneous arrangements (columns, footnotes) jostle for air alongside some visual jokes (coffee-cup stains, huge asterisk). In a review, Ronald Sukenick called it 'a cloudburst of fragmented events'. 'Monsoon' is nearer the mark.

With works such as these by Fowles, Brautigan, Barthelme and Gass it is difficult not to be reminded of the famous epigraph to E. M. Forster's *Howards End*: 'Live in fragments no longer. Only connect.. .' We can counterpoint this with an utterance by a character in Barthelme's 'See the Moon?' from *Unspeakable Practices. Unnatural Acts* (1968): 'Fragments are the only forms I trust.' These two statements evince a crucial difference between modernism and postmodernism. The Forster phrase could almost be modernism's motto, as it points to the need to find new forms of continuity in the absence of the old linear plots. Conversely, Barthelme's gem hints at postmodernist fiction's wariness of wholeness.

LOOSENESS OF ASSOCIATION

Another means by which many postmodernist writers disrupt the smooth production and reception of texts is by welcoming chance into the compositional process. The infamous *The Unfortunates* (1969) by B.S. Johnson, for instance, is a novel-in-a-box which instructs the reader to riffle several loose-leaf chapters into any order. Only the first and last chapter are denominated, otherwise the sections can be freely mixed. The point of this contrived format is not just to perform a cold, technical experiment. Rather, Johnson wishes to recreate the unique disposition of his thoughts on a particular Saturday afternoon, when reporting a football match in Nottingham for the *Observer*. It was the first time he had returned to the city since the death of his friend, Tony. The peculiar form of the novel mirrors his churning feelings. So, ironically, the loose-leaves of *The Unfortunates* are not intended to be random at all, but strive to render the workings of the mind more naturally.

William Burroughs also forays frequently into serendipity. The arrangement of the twenty-two individual sections of *Naked Lunch* (1962) was regulated solely by the adventitious order in which they happened to be sent to the publishers. Indeed, the untidiness of the room in which the manuscript was assembled sometimes disturbed the sequence of pages. Small wonder that Burroughs confessed that 'You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point'. Burroughs wields chance less randomly in three novels from the 1960s which are often

grouped together as a trilogy: *Nova Express* (1966), *The Soft Machine* (1967) and *The Ticket That Exploded* (1967). These books make methodical use of the cut-up. The cut-up is the brainchild of the artist Tristan Tzara, who envisaged it as a verbal equivalent to the cubist and Dadaist collages in the visual arts.

Further extensions of the idea can be traced through the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and the newspaper pastiches of John Dos Passos. The cut-up was taught to Burroughs by Brion Gysin. It involves placing excised sentences from a range of texts into a hat or other container, shaking them, then matching together the scraps of paper which are picked out at random. This rigmarole has prompted sceptical critics to make unflattering comparisons between Burroughs and monkeys with typewriters.

Another chance technique favoured by Burroughs is the fold-in, in which a page of text is folded vertically, and then aligned with another page until the two halves match. Just as the cut-up allows writing to mimic cinematic montage, the fold-in gives Burroughs the option of repeating passages in a specifically musical way. For example, if page 1 is folded-in with page 100 to form a composite page 10, phrases can flash forward and back like the anticipation and recapitulation of motifs in a symphony.

The fold-in, like the cut-up, strains to evade the manacles of ordinary fiction. Few texts directly borrow these techniques, but Burroughs' spirit of chance-taking is decidedly congenial to the postmodernist writer. In this respect he is rather like the musician John Cage, who opened up tremendous ground for exploration by later composers, although his experiments with dice and the *I-Ching* proved to be unrepeatable. Nevertheless, as Julian Cowley noted in an essay on Ronald Sukenick (1987), in both music and writing 'Readiness to ride with the random may be regarded as a characteristically postmodern attitude .. .'

PARANOIA

Paranoia, or the threat of total engulfment by somebody else's system, is keenly felt by many of the dramatis personae of postmodernist fiction. It is tempting to speculate that this is an indirect mimetic representation of the climate of fear and suspicion that prevailed throughout the Cold War. The protagonists of postmodernist fiction often suffer from what Tony Tanner calls in *City of Words* (1971) a 'dread that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob

you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous'.

Postmodernist writing reflects paranoid anxieties in many ways, including: the distrust of fixity, of being circumscribed to anyone particular place or identity, the conviction that society is conspiring against the individual, and the multiplication of self-made plots to counter the scheming of others. These different responses are immanent in three distinct areas of reference associated with the word 'plot'. The first meaning is that of a piece of ground of small or moderate size sequestered for some special purpose, such as a plot for growing vegetables or building a house. A stationary space, in other words, intimidating to the postmodern hero. Randle McMurphy in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), Yossarian in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1962) and Billy Pilgrim in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) are each confined to their own 'plots' in this sense by the authorities. McMurphy is committed to a mental hospital, Yossarian is conscripted to the air force, and Billy Pilgrim is interned in a German prisoner-of-war camp. A vindictive bureaucracy controls these mavericks by medication, red tape or the force of arms.

In each instance the imprisoning of the individual by outside powers propagates a panic of identity. So McMurphy's protests that he is sane prove his insanity. Pilgrim's belief that he is the subject of an experiment is belied by the offhand way his German captors treat him. To compensate for the hopelessness of their predicaments, these paranoids long for a state of complete fluidity and openness. However, their impulse towards freedom is tainted both by their terror of the actual open road and their cynicism about possible escape. McMurphy, Yossarian and Pilgrim are simultaneously safe and insecure in their 'plots' of the Oregon Asylum, the Pianosa air-force base, and the Dresden slaughterhouse.

A second meaning of 'plot' is that of a secret plan or conspiracy to accomplish a criminal or illegal purpose. The protagonist of the postmodernist novel sometimes suspects that he or she is trapped at the centre of an intrigue, often with some justification. McMurphy is right to be afraid of Nurse Ratched and the Combine, who eventually force him to undergo shock treatment and an unwarranted lobotomy. Yossarian's parachute is stolen by Milo Minderbinder and replaced by a useless M&M Enterprises voucher. General Peckham sends Yossarian's squadron out on dangerous bombing missions simply to obtain decent aerial photographs for the magazines back home. Nately's whore stabs Yossarian, in the belief that he killed her lover. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*,

Billy Pilgrim also correctly perceives that others wish to control his welfare. His daughter commits him to a mental institution and Paul Lazarro later kills him as a revenge for allegedly allowing Roland Weary to die.

There's but a small step from these private apprehensions to a more distressing speculation. Perhaps the whole of the society is a plot against the citizen. What if all the major events of history are really side-shows orchestrated by unseen ringmasters for hidden motives? This is known as paranoid history. Thomas Pynchon is enthralled by the topic. Stencil in *V.* (1963), Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), and Prairie in *Vineland* (1990) each stumble upon subterranean schemes and cabals which threaten the rights of the individual. As Pynchon remarks in *Gravity's Rainbow*, their multiplying anxieties are triggered by 'nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the Creation'.

The third, more mundane, meaning of plot is, of course, that of a plan of a literary work. In an interview, John Barth called this 'the incremental perturbation of an unstable homeostatic system and its catastrophic restoration to a complexified equilibrium'. This humorous definition suggests that a plot has a particular shape: somebody is challenged, certain obstacles are overcome, a new state of affairs is reached. Plot is shape, and shape is control. Several postmodernist writers proliferate plot, as if to prove through zealous mastery that they are free of the straitjackets of control by outside forces. The best of these maximalist works are *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988) by Umberto Eco, *Life: A User's Manual* (1978) by Georges Perec and *Letters* (1979) by Barth himself.

VICIOUS CIRCLES

Vicious circles arise in postmodernist fiction when both text and world are permeable, to the extent that we cannot separate one from the other. The literal and the metaphorical merge when the following occur: short circuits (when the author steps into the text) and double binds (when real-life historical figures appear in fictions).

The short circuits which plague postmodernist fiction rarely occur in other forms of fiction. In realist literature, for example, there is an unbroken flow of narrative 'electricity' between text and world. The author never appears directly in his or her fictions, other than as a voice that indirectly guides the reader towards a 'correct' interpretation of the

novel's themes. Conversely, much modernist fiction is motivated by the desire to expunge the author from the text altogether. Think of James Joyce's image of the artist standing behind the work, paring his fingernails. This again ensures that there is little chance of confusing the world inside the text with the world outside the text. In the postmodernist novel and short story, however, such confusion is rampant. Text and world fuse when the author appears in his or her own fiction. The best examples of this occur in Ronald Sukenick's *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories* (1969) and *Out* (1973), and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1971) and *Take It or Leave It* (1976).

The double bind is a concept elaborated by Gregory Bateson and others to explain an inability to distinguish between different levels of discourse. When a parent chastises a child, for instance, they may undermine the punishment by smiling as they smack. If these kinds of contradictory messages are repeated obsessively, it may lead to the child's breakdown. The boundaries separating the literal and the metaphorical will never fully form, and any moves to resolve matters result only in further entanglement. It is well known that schizophrenics often confuse fact and fantasy in their delusions. The patient who thinks he is Jesus Christ manifests a typical symptom of the illness.

The equivalent of the double bind occurs in postmodernist fiction when historical characters appear in a patent fiction. We are used to the idea of the historical novel, which shows famous people from the past acting in ways consistent with the verifiable public record. A common alternative is to sketch in the 'dark areas' of somebody's life, and again care is usually taken not substantially to contradict what we already know about them. In postmodernist writing, however, such contradictions are actively sought. So in Max Apple's *The Propheteers* (1987), the motel mogul Howard Johnson plots against Walt Disney. In Guy Davenport's 'Christ Preaching at the Henley Regatta' (1981), Bertie Wooster and Mallarme stand on the banks watching the boat race. In E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975), Freud and Jung go through the Tunnel of Love together at Coney Island. These are just some of the many derangements of postmodernist fiction.

POSTMODERNIST WRITING AND LANGUAGE DISORDER

The comparisons between the derangement of postmodernist writing and insanity are appropriate. Some major poststructuralist thinkers enlist ideas connected with schizophrenia in their diagnoses of postmodern society. Jean-Francois Lyotard, for instance, employs the

metaphors of fragmentation in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) to convey the splintering of knowledge into a plethora of incommensurate discourses. He states in 'The Ecstasy of Communication' (1983) that 'we are now in a new form of schizophrenia'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari speak of 'schizoanalysis' in *Anti-Oedipus* (1977). For all the recondite terminology, their rhetoric makes a surprisingly everyday equation between mental breakdown and the contemporary moment. Lastly, Fredric Jameson's full-length study *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) employs schizophrenia as an analogy for the collapse of traditional socio-economic structures.

This recurrent linking of mental illness, the fractures of late capitalist society and the linguistic experiments of contemporary writing is not accidental. Temporal disorder, involuntary impersonation of other voices (or pastiche), fragmentation, looseness of association, paranoia and the creation of vicious circles are symptoms of the language disorders of schizophrenia as well as features of postmodernist fiction. It is in this alignment that we can find the primary contrast between the modernists and postmodernists.

A possible objection to a postmodernist poetics that emphasizes elements of style is that these characteristics are not unique. Modernist writers such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust also experimented with distortions of narrative time, pastiche, fragmentation and so on. This cannot be denied, but perhaps we can argue that the derangements of works such as *Ulysses* (1922), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-27) have different motivations. These were homeopathic attempts to protect culture against the chaos of technological change and ideological uncertainty in the wake of the First World War. Following the Second World War, writers faced a situation which R. D. Laing would no doubt call 'radical ontological insecurity'. Postmodernist authors between 1960 and 1990 no longer believed that the old cultural values were recoverable after the Holocaust. They simply gave up the struggle and delighted in delirium. The alienation effects of *their* fictions express the effects of alienation upon themselves.