
DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

Inchan Pak, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
August, 1995
HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND SELF-SEARCH: A STUDY
OF THOMAS PYNCHON'S V., JOHN BARTH'S THE SOT-WEEP
FACTOR, NORMAN MAILER'S THE ARMIES OF THE NIGHT,
ROBERT COOVER'S THE PUBLIC BURNING, AND
E.L. DOCTOROW'S THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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A search for self through historical reconstruction constitutes a crucial concern of the American postmodern historical novels of Pynchon, Barth, Mailer, Coover, and Doctorow. This concern consists of a self-conscious dramatization, paralleled by contemporary theorists’ arguments, of the constructedness of history and individual subject. A historian-character’s process of historical inquiry and narrative-making foregrounded in these novels represents the efforts by the postmodern self to (re)construct identity (or identities) in a constructing context of discourse and ideology.

Each novel explores the problematics of a constructing self that varies according to how he performs historical reconstruction. *V.* deals with the crisis of a humanist constructing self. While Stencil’s self-reifying projection of a totalizing order makes him, like his mirror opposite Profane, merge in inanimateness, Maijstral offers a post-humanistic vision through his awareness of the
provisionality and constructedness of self and order. In the other four novels, the constructing self's historical reconstruction implicitly serves or undermines liberal humanist individualism. If a fabulationist play with self-creation and story-making in The Sot-Weed Factor results in reinforcing the liberal capitalist ideology of an exploiting class, The Armies of the Night, The Public Burning, and The Book of Daniel present through a resisting self a critique of the hegemonic (ab)use of history and the ideological fixation of self in Cold War America. Mailer's dispersive construction of self and history challenges a unified subject and a totalitarian culture of the 60s. Nixon's critical inquiry into the Rosenberg case uncovers the official fabrication of history, but his naive illusion of a private self free from ideology ironically makes him a victim of ideology. Finally, Daniel refuses an illusion of the private "I," confronts the power of authority through his disruptive narrative and his critique of surrounding ideological and cultural forces, and suggests the possibility of a resisting self.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The American postmodern historical novel of the sixties and seventies is remarkable for its self-conscious presentation of history. Such writers as Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Norman Mailer, Robert Coover, and E.L. Doctorow, as well as many others1, do not directly represent the historical past as in the traditional historical novel but instead problematize the ways the past is known and constructed. In V., The Sot-Weed Factor, The Armies of the Night, The Public Burning, and The Book of Daniel, it is a historian-narrator-character’s self-conscious inquiry into the past that plays the role of foregrounding the process of historical reconstruction itself. Through this foregrounding, these postmodern novels challenge the traditional guarantees of historical knowledge and representation, such as the coherent subject2 and the accessible historical referent as the object, suggesting that both history and self are not ‘naturally’ given but made in the constructive contexts of language and ideology.

The five historical novels are very similar in that the individual character employs historical reconstruction as a crucial means of self-search. Herbert Stencil, Ebenezer Cooke, Henry Burlingame, Mailer’s "Mailer," "Richard Nixon,"
and Daniel Issacson pursue a viable form of self and try to establish a tenable relation to the world by making their own narratives of historical events. This individual search leads each character to duplicate the role of the historian as a writer, one who not only reorganizes the past with given facts and data but also invents a story from such historical materials. Moreover, the historian-writer is conscious of his own act, revealing that he is writing or telling "his story" (history) of the events. Each of the five postmodern novels explicitly shows its historian-writer narrating not only "his story" but also his experience of historical reconstruction.

Through this self-conscious presentation of historical reconstruction, each novel emphasizes the textuality of historical knowledge. The historical past can be known only provisionally, only as it is inscribed and mediated in textual forms, such as history, fiction, documents, mass media, archives, eye-witness accounts, and etc. In addition, these textual forms do not objectively represent the actual world. Each novel especially incorporates the traditionally separated genres, history and fiction, into each other, so as to testify to the postmodern historical fiction's "self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" (Hutcheon 1988, 5). To Pynchon and the other four postmodernists, history-writing, like fiction-writing, refers to an act of meaning-making, and both history and
fiction constitute narrative discourses in which ideology is necessarily inscribed. The historical past thus retains its ontological status only in a zone of verbal and ideological construction.

In laying bare the constructedness of History (the past 'real' or events) and history (textual presentations of History), these five postmodern historical novels also foreground the problematic status of an individual subject committed to historical reconstruction. As each novel embodies, the historian-character is precariously situated in a contradictory condition of what Paul Smith calls "'the individual subject'" (xxxiv). On the one hand, the crisis of a unified and autonomous individual at the core of liberal humanism confronts the historian-character as he finds himself "subjected" to a larger order of discourse, ideology, or culture that imposes on him a series of positions and versions of reality. On the other hand, the historian-character yearns for the very humanistic individual or critically negotiates the border between the individual and the "subject." As I will discuss, the historian-character tries to cope with his decentered subjectivity by means of historical reconstruction. While the historian-character searches for the possibility of a constructing self in seeking to find or if necessary construct a narrative and meaning from the historical past, the very possibility varies according to how he engages the
constructing self in the process of historical reconstruction.

This study intends to examine the historian-character's efforts to construct history and self in the five American postmodern historical novels. I will show how these efforts to construct history and self are embodied in each novel's self-conscious challenge to the liberal humanistic views of History/history and of the individual subject. Pynchon's novel is my opening example that critically reveals a general landscape of the "decadence" of individual subjectivity and the 'real' in post-industrial culture. And this study contrasts Barth's fabulationist approach to History/history, one that stresses the aesthetic freedom of unlimited storification in reconstructing the past, with the socio-critical approach we find in the novels of Mailer, Coover, and Doctorow. These three authors criticize the political and cultural appropriations of the historical referent by mass media's "media-tion" (Kunow 1990, 372) and other governmental, official versions of it. This study also examines the different modes of "the individual subject" in each novel, such as Pynchon's paranoiac and reified "individual subjects," Barth's story-indulgent "individual subjects," and the "individual subjects" that differently resist ideological closure in the work of three other novelists.

Chapter Two surveys the theoretical background of what
Lyotard calls "the postmodern condition" as it specifically relates to the issue of the crisis in historicity and subjectivity underlying the five postmodern novels. With the help of selected studies by such contemporary theorists as Hutcheon, Barthes, White, Jameson, Althusser, Belsey, and others, I discuss the epistemological status of History and the ontological status of history as both verbally structured and ideologically inscribed constructs before moving on to an analysis of the fictionalization of history the novels present in order to illustrate that condition. The second half of this chapter discusses the humanistic views of the individual, the structural and poststructural critiques of them, and the historian-character as an "individual subject" that each novel situates in the constructing contexts of discourse and ideology in order to explore the problematics of a constructing self.

Chapter Three focuses on the paranoia of logocentricism and its relation to a constructing self in Pynchon's *V*. It traces Herbert Stencil's obsessive historical search for "the ultimate Plot" (210) which he believes will bring order to twentieth century history as well as his personal history. It argues that the paranoiac attachment to the presence of "the" meaning and order in the world objectifies (reifies) Stencil's identity by addressing him as "a stencil" (a hole designed by a fixed pattern), as the instrument of the quest itself. The historical past is not
represented but stenciled or constructed, though Stencil does not acknowledge its fictionality. In the course of the quest, furthermore, Stencil’s self is not just split but dislocated into fragments of impersonations, finally vanishing into the homogeneous world of V-signs. As this chapter also argues, the logocentric paranoia victimizes the ‘real’ itself by imprisoning it in the closed structure of the meaning, from which it turns out absent.

This chapter claims that Stencil’s paranoia makes him merge into the domain of Profane and his whole sick crew, that is, into the "decadent" landscape of the simulated ‘real,’ which has been worsened by fetishism, mechanization, and intellectual abstraction. It further deals with V. as a symbol of the ‘real’ outside any imposition of meaning and shape, suggesting that V.’s decay into fragments of inanimate things explains the condition of the ‘real’ in late-capitalistic culture. It also suggests Fausto Maijstral as a redemptive self, one whose detached self-consciousness of fiction and self, if not centrally deployed in the novel, allows him to withstand reality.

Chapter Four discusses the relation of storification to a constructing self and historical reconstruction in Barth’s *The Sot-Weed Factor*. It contends that while the novel gives a counter-realistic challenge to the conventional naturalness of the boundary between history and fiction by treating them as narrative constructs, the novel’s
attribution of history to the infinite possibilities of stories in which the past can be freely and playfully storified has its own liberal humanistic implications and political limit.

This chapter argues that "an ocean of story" (Barth 1967, 582) deeply conditions the characters' roles, their sense of identity, their views on history, and their relationships with reality. History as so many fabulations of stories operates as their self-indulgent means of verbally enjoying and manipulating the gap between the known and the unknown in the names of freedom of invention, of the cosmic love for the world as a realm of infinite possibility and choice, but without regard for the context of social and historical conflicts in which particular stories are inscribed.

This chapter examines the novel's "subjects" lost in stories, such as some minor characters notable for their great appetite for storytelling, as well as two major characters, Ebenezer Cooke and Henry Burlingame, whose search for identity necessarily leads to the historical search for colonial America. It finally suggests that toward the end of the novel such a view of history as verbally infinite storifications is ultimately used as an instrument in the exploiting class's liberal humanistic ideology, which on the one hand lets Ebenezer reaffirm the present social order against the rebellious slaves and Indians by uniting
both oppressor and oppressed under the sign of the "human,"
brotherhood, and the virtue of Western culture, and on the
other hand urges Henry to politically disperse the
rebellious by means of his capacity to invent plots and
intrigues.

Chapter Five discusses the complex implications of
egotism self-consciously installed in the process of
historical reconstruction in Mailer's *The Armies of the
Night*. As this chapter suggests, Mailer employs egotistic
perception as "the last tool left to History" (Mailer 1968,
68) and merges in this novel his two major concerns for a
supreme fiction of self and a supreme fiction of History
against mass media.

As this chapter discusses, the novel emphasizes a
perceiving individual's imaginative power to recapture the
"feel" of a historical event beyond fetishised facts,
incorporating the novelistic genre of a personalized vision
in history. But at the same time the novel claims that the
"feel" of reality itself is so intricate and changing as to
require a variety of individual positions. For Mailer, the
identity of the individual as the source of perception is
not stable or coherent but a fiction, which is conditioned
to be repeatedly pinned to the wall or "imaged" by the
media. Mailer takes advantage of the instability of the self
by becoming a self-manipulator. The deployment of
multifarious roles in a constant change attacks the media
and at the same time contributes to illuminating various layers of reality.

This chapter further suggests that the complication of egotism operates under the control of the novel's self-conscious authorial self. "Mailer" the self-conscious author deliberately blurs the boundary between history and novel and reveals the discursivity of representation. Also, he overtly insists on the authority and power of the perceiving self as a necessary source of historical imagination, and at the same time undermines the very authority by acknowledging the provisionality and fictionality of perception.

Chapter Six compares two remarkable fictionalizations of historical execution of the Rosenbergs, The Public Burning and The Book of Daniel, in terms of the possibility of a resisting self who commits himself to writing his own counter-narrative of the political event in a world already interpreted by a regime of dominant discourse. It suggests that the novels are similar to each other in many respects. Both regard history as a narrative construct which may be fabricated not only aesthetically but also politically; both offer a critical revelation of reality ideologically penetrated by mass media, governmental manipulation, and cultural representations; both juxtapose the personal and the public and put them in tension; and both, more suggestively, focus on the attempts of two "individual subjects," Richard Nixon and Daniel Issacson, to create an
acceptable narrative and a new mode of self. This chapter suggests that the two characters are similarly split between the desire for the purely private and the demand of public forces, though they cope with their situation in very different ways. It investigates at first Nixon's introspective first-person narrative, in which Nixon's recognition that history is nothing but a play of words and fabrications that may be used to politically manipulate the randomness of historical reality itself stimulates him to yearn for a new self freely moving in pure flux and to create his own "script" of reality. But the new self turns out to be an illusion caused by his naive belief that he can be entirely free from the public. Nixon's possibility as a resisting self disappears, and his identity is indeed established by his complete submission to the interpellation of Uncle Sam, "the Absolute Subject."

The second half of this chapter deals with Daniel's historical construction through which he emerges from the solipsistic self-enclosure against history and society and suggests the possibility of a resisting self. Frequently shifting between first and third person and interfusing a multiplicity of discourses and versions, Daniel rejects the "novel as private I" (Doctorow 1971, 285) and its humanistic notion of continuous and unique individuality, instead complicating subjectivity as that which is connected to a fabric of social forces. Daniel's disruptive narrative also
challenges the authority of the official discourse and other people's unacceptable narratives of his parents' case by disclosing the "composedness" and provisionality of those narratives. This narrative is not limited to Daniel's personal family affair. Daniel's oppositional position instead leads him to critically examine the ideological and cultural control of an individual in liberal-capitalist America.

Chapter Seven serves as the conclusion to this study. Briefly reiterating the previous discussion of the historian-character's self-search through historical reconstruction, this chapter finally suggests that the constructing "individual subject" performs as a resisting self that can be critically engaged in society through his socio-critical self-consciousness.
CHAPTER II

POSTMODERN HISTORICAL NOVELS AND THE POSTMODERN CONDITION OF HISTORY AND SUBJECT

The postmodern rethinking of the liberal humanist guarantees of historical knowledge, such as the individual as a coherent perceiving subject and the historical past as a transcendental object, derives from the "incredulity toward metanarratives" that defines "the postmodern" in general (Lyotard 1984a, xxiv). Both postmodern historical fiction and contemporary critical theories challenge a metanarrative legitimated by the subject-object paradigm of rationalist epistemology, that is, a grand myth of realistic representationalism which "conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it" (Jameson 1984, viii). The plenitude of ideal subjectivity and of non-discursive objectivity is seriously undermined to be reoriented to the linguistic and ideological contexts, and "the reproduction" is reevaluated as construction. But it does not mean that those centers of subjectivity and objectivity are completely discarded. Instead, both postmodern historical fiction and contemporary theory suggest that they exist, then, not in a single and pure state of transcendent entity, but to be radically incorporated in the constructive contexts as that which
cannot but be effected by the forces of signifying system and ideological structure.

First of all, the postmodern relocation of the status of History/history keeps two opposing views on History operating, History as an extratextual referent that exists in the actual empirical world and as an (inter)textual referent that exists in the world of texts. This duality of History in the postmodern era is succinctly articulated by Fredric Jameson, who says that History is, like Louis Althusser's "absent cause," "'not' a text," "fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational," but "inaccessible to us except in textual form" (1981, 35, 82). As a cause that exists, History is "absent" because it is outside its representational effects; it is conditioned to be known only through its textual representation. A text becomes a privileged medium in which the experience of History can be organized.

The textualized accessibility of History to man today takes a more radical turn when even its faintly remaining idealistic assumption of the existence of the past real is challenged by anti-epistemological views. Even though Jacques Derrida does not specifically refer to History, his critique of a transcendental signified implies a serious attack on History as a non-discursive entity. For Derrida, a transcendental signified, on the basis of which he argues Western metaphysics has developed, plays the role of a
center which is essential to the articulation of a given signifying system, but which is regarded as existing independently of that system. The center, however, is "a function" existing only in a differential system of discourse (Derrida 1978, 280). Derrida transforms the concept of an "absent cause" into that of structural causality by stressing the structurality of a signifying system against the entity of essence or cause. As he insists, "everything [becomes] discourse ... a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences" (280).

Similar to Derrida, Hindes and Hirst argue that all that is past does not exist. For them, "there is no real object 'history'"; 'history' is not a given, not "an object prior to and independent of thought," but "an object constituted within knowledge," in other words, appropriated by thought's activity of knowledge (317, 318, 308). Then thought itself, as a post-Saussurean linguist states, is essentially symbolic in the sense that it is "nothing other than the power to construct representations of things and to operate on these representations" (Benveniste 1971, 25). As it were, thought makes History "the thought object" in which the object of history is not whatever is past but "whatever is 'represented' as having hitherto existed" (Hindes and Hirst 1975, 317, 309). This view insists that while there is
no such thing as real history, there are representations and representations.

Neither of the two views, History as an extratextual referent and as an (inter)textual referent, are disregarded or idealized in the postmodern problematization of historical knowledge. Instead, postmodernism tentatively acknowledges both views to question the idealistic and positivistic assumption that the 'real' is reached 'through' its representations, either because History has a rational order or "historical necessity" (Lukacs 1962, 59) and expresses a transcendental signified objectively accessible to knowledge, or because historical knowledge can be verified by given facts.

Against such an assumption, postmodernism argues that while the past indeed existed as the real referent, its accessibility to man today is only in textual forms: historical writing, documents, memories, journals, archives, eye-witness accounts, etc. But those forms should not be understood as merely instrumental and value-neutral objects; they are signifying practices in which the past (extratextual) 'real' turns into the textualized object of knowledge and unavoidably gets constructed through the text's discursivity.

This critical concern for the textuality of history leads to the reconsideration of a traditional boundary between history or fact and fiction: history as a genre
which has a truth claim by means of its ability to objectively refer to and factually verify what really happened, and fiction as a genre which depends on imagination to express only the fictitious or the probable. In his essay, "Historical Discourse," Roland Barthes offers an exemplary challenge to that separation, a challenge which is further developed by Hayden White, by provocatively asking if there is "any difference between factual and imaginary narrative" (1970, 145). Barthes claims that historical discourse, like conventional realistic novels in particular, is verbally constructed fiction. Historical discourse relies on such forms of fiction as objectivity and impersonality to create "the referential illusion" that "the referent is speaking for itself" (1970, 149). In order to provide the impression that the signifier of history-writing is directly related to its referent, Barthes points out, the historian confuses the signified and the referent and then elides the former.

But historical discourse is fundamentally a signifying system that "does not follow reality" but "'signifies' it" (Barthes 1970, 154). The illusionary referent assumed by the facts in historical discourse is not the same as the events, as the past 'real' outside the discourse. The events "have no meaning in themselves," while the facts "are given meaning" (Hutcheon 1988, 122). Against the historical discourse's pretension to deliver the facts guaranteed by
the 'real', Barthes argues that "the 'fact' can only exist linguistically, as a term in a discourse, yet we behave as if it were a simple reproduction of ... some extra-structural 'reality'" (1970, 153-54). In historical discourse, reality, which always exists unformulated, is secretly changed and constructed into 'meaning,' just as the events into the facts.

The further challenge to the separation of history from fiction has been made in terms of narrativity and its linguistic structure in the historical work. History and fiction are taken as having in narrative their common primary mode of operation of fiction-making. Especially, Hayden White's formal theory of historiography represents this challenge, regarding the historical work as purely verbal artifacts or fictions, "the contents of which are as much 'invented' as 'found' and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in sciences" (1978, 82). White claims that in arranging historical events, the historian, like the novelist, depends on "emplotment" which means "[the] process of exclusion, stress, and subordination [of the events] carried out in the interest of constituting 'a story of a particular kind'" (1973, 6). The emplotment is necessarily accompanied by narrativization: the historian invests reality with "the mask of a meaning" (1987, 21) by imposing on the chaos of events the formal coherency that only
Then the emplotting and narrativizing process is ultimately determined by the linguistic (poetic) level or, what White calls, the metahistorical factor, of all history. White argues that all levels of history-writing are prefigured and thus "dictated by the dominant figurative mode of the language [the historian] has used to 'describe' the elements of his account 'prior' to his composition of a narrative" (1978, 94). He postulates four master tropes, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, which he claims constitute the kinds of historical narratives that may be categorized as comic, tragic, romantic, and satirical. In this metahistorical level, the historian is simply given the freedom to choose among the four modes of figurative language that will prefigure his narrative.

Though White's treatment of history purely as a verbal structure critiques an illusion of linguistic transparency contained in naive representationalism and blurs the distinction between history and fiction, it has a certain limit that such a formalistic approach implicitly endows the linguistic form with the self-sufficient values of autonomy, neutrality and universality. As some critics argue, White's formalistic or (ultra)textualistic approach "depoliticize[s]" history by "abstract[ing] the historical text from the social conflicts in which it is inscribed" (Mazurek 1985, 71), and at the same time covertly reaffirms
the liberal humanistic "free" subject. It is necessary to note that language constituting history as a verbal construct is not so much value-neutral and self-closed as inevitably connected with its social contexts of signification, such as power, authority, and political interests. Mediated by language as a political medium, history is also "essentially a product of ideology" (Barthes 1970, 153), a social construct. The regime makes a partisan use of historical knowledge and narrative for the purpose of social integration and the legitimation of political power.

As one of the signifying practices, history constitutes an ideologically intermediated discourse, in which a speaking (writing) subject represents to a reading subject his 'imaginary' relationships to the conditions of the past and the present in a particular way of speaking (writing). It is important that ideology here is "less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question who is saying what to whom for what purposes" (Eagleton 1991, 9). A discourse, which is a domain of particular language-use, becomes the material of social integration through which power is diffused and legitimated. For the legitimation, ideology is inscribed in discourse in the sense that ideology is "written or spoken 'in' it" as, using a critic's Althusserian definition of ideology, "the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the conditions of their
existence" (Belsey 1980, 5; 42). But what is represented in ideology is, as Althusser remarks, "not the system of the real relations ... but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (89). Ideology does not represent the 'real' but obscures or contains it by presenting partial truths as the 'obvious,' by wearing the mask of unity or coherence in the interests of the existing social relations, and above all by suppressing its own construction and inscription in signifying practice.

Historical discourse involves the same ideological inscription in its signifying practice. To create the referential illusion that the 'real' speaks for itself in his pure copy of it, the historian impersonalizes his authorial subject and suppresses all traces of the signifying 'I.' Above all he lets his "demand for moral meaning" narrativize the chaos of historical events into a unified whole of meaning; narrativization has "real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (White 1987, 21, 24). In historical narratives, as in fiction, narrativization indicates the very way of making meaning out of the (past) 'real.' It tends to, what I'd call, 'ideologize' an individual subject's relation to the 'real': substituting the imaginary, the illusionary, for the 'real' in the disguise of objective realism, it helps to fix the
individual subject's apprehension of the latter to the former.

The postmodern condition of historicity that History can be known only as it is inscribed in its verbal and ideological constructs is made for the ground of the self-conscious treatment of historical reconstruction in *V., The Sot-Weed Factor, The Armies of the Night, The Public Burning*, and *The Book of Daniel*. In these postmodern historical novels, the postmodernists acknowledge that they are "condemned to seek History by way of [their] own pop images and simulacra of that history" (Jameson 1991, 25). But the postmodernists' search is not to consolidate a late-capitalistic culture pervaded by simulation, "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1983, 2). The postmodernists instead critically reveal the problematic situation of a search for the historical past in the simulatory culture, borrowing Lyotard's view on the postmodern, by self-consciously "put[ting] forward the unpresentable in presentation itself" (1984b, 81). Foregrounding the fictionality of their own historical novels, those postmodern novelists stress the provisionality and constructedness of historical knowledge and representation.

Though those five postmodern novels emphasize that the experience of History is inevitably mediated and even defined by textual representations of historical events, it
is neither to bracket off the historical past as referent nor to regard those textual representations as absolute. In those five postmodern novels the historical past indeed exists as the events that really happened. Each novel deals with a variety of historical events, such as international disturbances, sieges, and espionage in Fashoda, Florence, German South-West Africa, Paris, and Malta, in the period mostly around World War I; political intrigues and plantation economy in colonial America; the March on the Pentagon; and the Rosenberg case. It should be noted, however, that each novel does not treat those events for the representation and testimony of any single essentialized and transcendent concept of "genuine historicity" (Jameson 1991, 19). Those postmodern historical novels instead view the historical past as having no objective reality or extra-discursive certainty of meaning: History or historical reality 'out there' is always indeterminate and unformulated, while historical meaning is constantly being made in course of historical reconstruction.

Pynchon and other postmodernists approach the problematic condition of historical reconstruction in both epistemological and ontological ways. First, their historical novels do not pretend to propagate historical knowledge, but "inquire into the very possibility, nature, and use of historical knowledge" (Wesseling 1991, 73). Rather than to what historical reality is in itself, those
postmodern novels pay more attention to how the reality, which often turns out chaotic, shapeless, and accidental, can be known and shaped by a perceiving subject which is no longer a coherent meaning-generating entity. And such an epistemological concern is led to a question of how the subjectively perceived historical knowledge, which is itself provisional, is constituted within the order of narrative discourse. In other words, as Brian McHale argues, the postmodern novels tend to focus on the constructedness of history by "foreground[ing] the ontological seams" (1987, 16) between History as the 'real' and history as a narrative construct, between reality and fiction.¹⁸

Those postmodern historical novels are particularly 'narrative-' or 'narrative-discourse-conscious' in overtly presenting the process the historical past is narrated. As it were, those 'narrative-conscious' novels are the counter-realistic products of narrative-(un)making, that is, of narrative-making through narrative-unmaking or narrativity-foregrounding. What they try to call attention to through 'narrative-consciousness' is that while all history-writing or narrative-making, including their own, is the human urge to impose meaning and make order, "the meaning and shape are not in the events, but in the systems [of the constructs] which make those past 'events' into present historical 'facts'" (Hutcheon 1988, 89, the author's italics).

In practice those postmodern historical novels lay bare
their own fictionality to undermine the objectivity and usefulness of facts inscribed in historical reconstruction. Historical records or details are actually used in order not to lend a feeling of verifiability to the fictional world, but to show the artificiality of the process of trying to make sense of the collected data and giving a meaning to the events. For Herbert Stencil in V, for instance, there are nothing like facts as they are; facts exist by being "[s]tencilized" (211) and arbitrarily filtrated through the meaning imposed on reality. Mailer shows how expediently the anti-war March can be factualized by the media representing various political groups, especially when each of them estimates the significance of the event with the differently measured number of participants.

Naive deification of facts or "factology" (Mailer 1968, 286) is seriously attacked, too. For facts are always vulnerable to biased meaning-imposition and distortion, and at the same time superficial and insufficient to recapture the multi-layered "feel" or nuances of the event (Mailer 1968, 37). For example, "Norman Mailer" in The Armies of the Night claims that it should not be expected that the whole of the event can be objectively known through the facts mediated by the mass media. The seemingly reportorial discourse of the media does not only make a fetish of the factualized surface of the event but also tends to control the knowledge of the event and its significance in the guise
of objective factuality.

Those five postmodern historical novels depend on what Richard Martin calls "a new libertarianism in relation to historical fact" (14) to challenge the nineteenth-century empiricist and positivist notion that "[H]istory may be retrieved by objective investigations of fact" (Scholes 1979, 206). The postmodern historical imagination lays claim to poetic liberty or license to handle the historical past not only with the facts corroborated in the record but also with the writer's imaginative power. Fact is explicitly mixed with fantasy, in which the postmodernists transgress an ontological boundary between the 'real' and the fictional. For instance, Herbert Stencil imagines that a certain pattern of order or purpose must be truly present in a past that is beyond his direct knowledge. As the external narrator of V. 'narrative-consciously' comments on Stencil's "general technique" of historical search, "[a]round each seed of a dossier ... had developed a nacreous mass of inference, poetic license, forcible dislocation of personality into a past he did not remember and had no right in, save the right of imaginative anxiety or historical care" (51). The Sot-Weed Factor reveals that the existence of two political opponents, Lord Baltimore and John Coode, and a plot between them may have been a fiction Henry Burlingame invents with an awareness that reality, which is itself uncertain and chaotic, is always open to be
manipulated in social contexts. Coover's and Doctorow's fictional accounts of the Rosenberg case question the official version of the event to point out the ideological manipulation of historical, social, and cultural reality in Cold War America. And when he tries to present what happened between the radical demonstrators who have entered inside the Pentagon and the soldiers, Mailer insists upon an individual perceiver's power to envision the part of the event which remains as one of the lacunae in historical records. As Doctorow says in an essay, the postmodern historical novels practice the potentials of fiction as "a kind of speculative history, perhaps a superhistory, by which the available data for the composition is seen to be greater and more various in its sources than the historian purposes" (1983, 25).

When the postmodernists rely on poetic license, however, it is not to maintain a notion that history's problem is "verification," while fiction's problem is "veracity" (Berthoff 1970, 272), and then to give priority to the latter in the representation of the past. Instead, their historical novels overtly employ poetic liberty in order to confuse that notion and stress the fictionality of historical representation. History and fiction are considered as the artificial modes of "mediating the world for the purpose of introducing meaning" (Doctorow 1983, 24). Those five historical novels admit and reveal that the
historical past, whether factualized or imagined, is "made," in other words, "signified" as "discursive" reality in the narrative constructs of history and fiction.

The postmodernists develop this self-consciousness of historical reconstruction in two different ways, purely fabulationist approach and socio-critical approach. First, the fabulationist approach treats all writing, including history, as verbal fabrications that can be infinitely invented by an imaginative fabulator. Language is not a pure mirror of the 'real' in which the world exists as it is. Based on the assumption that the world is made in language, the fabulationist approach questions a common-sense view of language as an ideally transparent medium guaranteeing the unequivocal presence of meaning in discourse. This critique of language leads to a metafictional critique of the conventions of realism.¹¹ Realism is attacked for two reasons, on the one hand because it depends on an illusion of innocent representationalism to suppress the fact that it constructs a world in language and makes the very constructed world appear to be 'naturally' given, on the other hand because it is impossible that even though realism pretends to, it can immediately transcribe the 'real' which is ultimately out of reach.

But the fabulationist approach attaches too much importance to the aesthetic side of its counter-realistic attitude that all writing is construction, leaving
historical presentation to be imprisoned into the formalistic self-closure of verbal or narrative play. As in Barth's "frankly fabulous" historical novel, The Sot-Weed Factor, the epistemological "attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality" (Scholes 1979, 8, 206) is in danger of remaining as a purely aesthetic emphasis on the skill and delight in fiction-making itself, that is, in storifying infinitely possible stories for their own sakes. As Pynchon warns in V, self-indulgent "finagling" serves for "Decadence" because it can ultimately result in "the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations [which] was death" (259, 277). This fabulationist approach exercises, as it were, an attitude of "the 'anything goes' variety" that Andreas Huyssen argues to be a trait of "easy postmodernism" (220). In that approach the worldly contexts implicated in the fabulation of the past tend to be marginalized or felt as lost.

The socio-critical approach contrasts with the fabulationist approach in exposing "the intimate connection between historical knowledge and political power" (Wesseling 1991, 110), between language and ideology, which is inherent in the narrative construction of the historical past. What this socio-critical approach insists is "not only that the realistic novel is a series of conventional signs masking reality, but that history itself depends on conventions of
narrative, language, and ideology in order to present an account of 'what really happened'" (Mazurek 1982, 29). The Armies of the Night, The Public Burning, and The Book of Daniel, for instance, incorporate the official historical narratives into their fiction in order to suggest that these narratives are ideological constructs inseparably connected with the legitimation of political power. Borrowing Coover's words, those novels work as self-conscious "variations" (McCaffery 1992, 101-102) against the authoritative narratives of the historical events by government, mass media, political groups, and other social or cultural institutions. Each novel lays bare the fictionality of historical reconstruction through the self-conscious historian-character, which is to undermine these authoritative narratives that conceal their own fictionality and appropriate the historical events for the political purpose. In so doing, the socio-critical postmodern novelists challenge the ideological closures inscribed in the official discourse and reveal the political and cultural exploitation of the 'real' in liberal capitalist society.

When those postmodern novelists pose their self-conscious constructs as counter-narratives to demonstrate that the historical 'real' is subject to uncontrollable textualization, a task of historical reconstruction is necessarily confronted with a question about the condition of an individual perceiver committed to the task. If
History, the 'real,' or the world, can be known only through its verbal and ideological constructs, can the knowing individual subject be assumed to be an autonomous entity which becomes its own coherent and unique source of knowledge, presentation, and action? This question of individual subjectivity refers to the other major part of the postmodern condition, in which both contemporary literary theory and postmodern historical fiction undermine the privilege of the individual subject sanctified by liberal humanism.

Emerging with seventeenth-century bourgeois individualism, liberal humanism depends on a belief that the individual or "man" is an entity which is not touched by historical, cultural or material circumstances but is instead both autonomous and stable in essence. Liberal humanism claims to be "natural and universal" (Belsey 1985, 7) by making the belief appear to be obvious common sense. Catherine Belsey offers a succinct articulation of the nature of common sense legitimated by liberal humanism:

Common sense proposes a 'humanism' based on an 'empiricist-idealist' interpretation of the world. In other words, common sense urges the 'man' is the origin and source of meaning, of action, and of history ('humanism'). Our concepts and our knowledge are held to be the product of experience ('empiricism'), and this experience is produced
and interpreted by the mind, reason or thought, the property of a transcendent human nature whose essence is the attribute of each individual ('idealism'). (1980, 7)

This liberal humanistic conception of the individual as an autonomous source of meaning takes its philosophical support from a Cartesian faith in the unity of a transcendent self. In his Discourse on Method and Meditations on the First Philosophy, which provide "the most classic demonstration of private consciousness, of a cognitive operation which believes itself to be both independent and authentic for all time" (Silverman 1983, 127), Rene Descartes argues that every kind of philosophical doubt, reasoning, and knowledge derives from "the first principle of the philosophy" (Descartes 1968, 54), that is, from the awareness of the self as one single undoubted and self-evident source of thought (the 'cogito').

Descartes's discourse is really remarkable for the first person pronoun "I," which is ubiquitously used as a transparent and self-present reflection of Descartes's pre-linguistic essence.

For Descartes, the knowing subject assumes itself to be by its nature not only self-knowable but also absolutely individual or 'indivisible.' He argues for the coherent subject in the sixth Meditation, writing that "when I consider my mind, that is to say myself in so far as I am only a thinking thing, I can distinguish no parts, but
conceive myself as one single and complete thing" (1968, 164).

The Cartesian individual subject bases the knowledge of its transparent and self-reflexive subjectivity on its thoughts having "the status of intuitions, which are immediately true" (Berressem 1993, 2, the author’s italics). With that knowledge, the individual subject embarks on complete doubt. In so doing, Descartes insists in the "Preface" to the Meditations that the subject should be "capable of freeing the mind from attachment to the senses and clearing it entirely of all sorts of prejudices" (1960, 69). Thus Descartes establishes the transcendent mind of the individual independent of linguistic or external contexts as the matrix of conscious subjectivity.

The liberal humanistic conception of the individual represented by the Cartesian self has been seriously challenged in the structural and poststructural positing of the individual as "subject." Contemporary theorists reconsider the status of conscious subjectivity, insisting that the individual can no longer be conceived of as a transparent unity, as an originating intention upon a purely instrumental language, or as the neutral locus of immediate perception. Instead they argue that the individual should be regarded as "subject" which is in the process of being "constructed in language and in discourse and, since the symbolic order in its discursive use is closely related to
ideology, in ideology" (Belsey 1980, 61).

One of the early attacks on the transcendental self is found in the pragmatic account of the self by Charles S. Peirce, American founding figure of semiotics. Peirce explicitly challenges the Cartesian values of autonomy and neutrality, writing that "we cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices that we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy" (Michaels 1980, 192). Especially, the intervention of language is crucial in Peirce's account of an individual's knowledge of both the world and the self. For Peirce, the individual cannot precede nor transcend the linguistic and social contexts in which he is involved. He suggests that man can only know the self as a sign, because the knowledge of the self is produced not by intuition but by inferences or thoughts, all of which are no more than signs. While Descartes insists on the self independent of any external constructs, Peirce argues that the self as a sign is "already embedded in a context, the community of interpretation or system of signs" (Michaels 1980, 199) and always in the process of construction.

The individual continues to be discussed as a linguistic and ideological construct in the works of such theorists as Lacan, Benveniste, Barthes, Foucault, Althusser, and Belsey. Their emphasis on the primacy of language over subjectivity demonstrates that language is not
a transparent medium employed by a pre-linguistic self that originates meanings. As Lacan argues, the individual cannot generate meanings independent of a linguistic system. It is language that precedes the individual: "language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it" (148).

A more radical point in the assumption of the primacy of language is that language does not only exist prior to -- but also defines -- subjectivity. According to Emile Benveniste, language is the very basis of subjectivity. Defining subjectivity as "the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as 'subject'" (224), he argues that it is only in language that the speaker can designate himself as "I," the "subject" of speech. But "I" is not a term which has a single referent in language or refers to a static extra-discursive entity of the individual. Drawing on the Saussurean formulation that language is not a nomenclature, "a name-giving system" (Saussure 1959, 16), but a system of signs primarily dependent on the principles of arbitrariness and differentiality for signification, Benveniste explains that "I" constantly shifts in the sense that it is provisionally established only in terms of its reciprocal relation to "not I." For him, "I" is a sign referring to the reality of discourse, to "the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced" (226).
Benveniste's attribution of individual subjectivity to the discursive act similarly recurs in the poststructural critiques of a sovereign author-individual. In "The Death of the Author," for example, Roland Barthes proclaims that a Cartesian author is dead. For Barthes, the concept of the author as an originating 'person' is a social product of capitalist ideology that mythologizes the prestige of the individual. Barthes argues that writing is no longer an expression emanating from a transcendental and unified origin, but "a multi-dimensional space" (1977, 146) in which various writings are intertextually inscribed. In that space, he claims, "it's language which speaks, not the author" (1977, 143), and the author remains as the "subject" which is empty outside of the enunciative act. The author-individual turns into the author-subject, which is, as Barthes defines in a way similar to Benveniste, "never more than the instance writing, just as 'I' is nothing other than the instance saying 'I'" (1977, 145).

Michel Foucault's essay, "What is an Author?," appears to challenge Barthes's argument about the concept of the death of the author, but affirms it in the end by suggesting that one should reexamine "the fluid functions released by [the author's] disappearance" (1977, 121). In the essay, Foucault postulates that the notion of the author as entity, which is similarly construed to be the product of "individualization," should be replaced by the author as
function ("author-function") in texts and in the culture at large (1977, 115, 125). From this perspective, four different features of the "author-function" can be isolated: the "author-function" appears as an institution tied to the legal and institutional systems which regulate the circulation of discourses in a particular society; it does not operate universally or constantly in all discourses but varies with discourse, time, and culture; it is not formed through the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its creator, but defined as a construct of the way of reading texts; it is characterized by a series of discontinuous subject-positions that do not refer, purely and directly, to an actual individual author. What these features of the "author-function" suggest is not so much to entirely deny the presence of the author as to disintegrate and disperse the sovereign territory of the author into the larger social and discursive contexts constructing the author-concept. As Foucault argues, the author is not a unique and autonomous source of meaning that exists before and above discourse and its signifying context, but a construct that operates as "a complex and variable function of discourse" (1977, 138). As the fourth characteristic of the "author-function" implies, it is significant that the relationship between self and language is no more considered to be continuous or transparent. Insofar as it is language or discourse as a particular use of language that always precedes the
individual, the individual cannot lay claim to be a privileged transcendental center that employs language as a direct and self-present expression of pre-linguistic reality or thought. On the contrary, the individual, who becomes a full subject only with his entry into language, is structured and effected by language and the meanings he seems to possess. And the entry into language disunifies the self by dividing it into the self which perceives or speaks and the self which is perceived or spoken. This contradictory and discontinuous aspect of the self leads Lacan to question the transcendental unity of the Cartesian subject: "Is the place that I occupy as the subject of a signifier concentric or excentric, in relation to the place that I occupy as subject of the signified? -- that is the question. It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak" (165).

For Lacan, the self cannot be directly present in its self-expression or self-knowledge. As he suggests, there is always a contradiction between the self: the "I" that speaks is not the same as the "I" of which the former speaks. It is because the entry into the symbolic order, whose supreme example is language, necessitates a division of the self which has been prepared since the mirror stage, that is, a split between the speaking "subject" (the "subject" of the
enunciation) and the "subject" of speech (the "subject" of
the enunciated) or, in Benveniste's terms, between
"referent" as the individual who utters the present
discourse and "referee" as the linguistic instance through
which the uttering individual finds his subjectivity (218).

If the split subject is fundamental to the accession of
the self to the symbolic order, the gap formed by the
division becomes a problematic site in which the self is
perpetually in the process of construction. It is in the gap
that the self's desire to "[become] what I am, to [come]
into being" (Lacan 1977, 165-66) emerges as a source of
potential disruption of the symbolic order, begins to be
articulated, and in so doing, is also betrayed by the
symbolic.

The subject-in-construction is made more complicated
when the symbolic order confronts the self with multiple
positions dispersed by a set of signifying systems. For
instance, as Belsey explains, a child learns to speak of
itself and communicate its needs by identifying with the
first person singular pronoun. This identification is made
possible when the child distinguishes itself from others,
that is, "I" from "you." Subsequently, "it learns to
recognize itself in a series of subject-positions ('he' or
'she,' 'boy' or 'girl') which are the positions from which
discourse is intelligible to itself and others" (Belsey
1980, 61). Subjectivity, in short, consists in the
interchange of different subject-positions which are linguistically and discursively constructed.

Subject-positions which form subjectivity are also constructed in ideology, insofar as language or discourse as a way of articulating experience necessarily participates in ideology that refers to the sum of the ways of "[representing] the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1989, 87). In other words, language and its signifying practices become the site of ideology, in which "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (96). On the one hand, ideology always exists materially "in an apparatus and its practice or practices" (90). For instance, the ruling class of the State employs the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) -- churches, parties, trade unions, families, schools, mass media, cultural ventures, etc -- as its ideological agents that operate "beneath the ruling ideology" (75, the author's italics). Relying on the imaginary representation of the real conditions of existence, the ISAs serve to ensure the reproduction of the submission of individuals to the ruling ideology.

Ideology at the same time only functions by "constituting concrete individuals as subjects" (93). Indeed, as Belsey clarifies, "the destination of all ideology is the subject" (1980, 58). As the police hails,
"Hey, you there!" (96), notes Althusser, ideology interpellates individuals, "you" and "I," as "subjects" fixed in the discourses of the ISAs, in order to consolidate the cohesion of established social formation.

This ideological interpellation is ambivalent, which derives from the two contradictory senses of the term "subject." First, ideology interpellates individuals in capitalism as "a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for [their] actions," in order that they could "recognize" themselves as the locus of a free choice, as creators of their own identity, and thus willingly "work by themselves" (101). In so doing, ideology suppresses the ideologically mediated discursivity of interpellation and imposes such a concept of individual subjectivity as an "obvious" and natural 'given': "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!" (94). This "'obviousness'" of a unique and autonomous identity is the same "ideological effect" as "the obviousness of the 'transparency' of language" (94). The individuals are allowed to "recognize" their autonomy in calling themselves by their names and identifying with the "I" of language and other positions (boy, girl, worker, etc.) imposed by the existing social formations.

Meanwhile, the ideological interpellation functions only by concealing the fact that the recognition of a free subjectivity is illusion and misrecognition. In other words, ideology also functions to facilitate misrecognition: the
individuals fail to recognize their real condition in perceiving themselves as an individual subject. Thus ideology ultimately suppresses the fact that each individual is "a subjected being" (101) who submits to the higher authority of social formation, that is, to the "Absolute Subject," such as God, conscience, priest, boss, etc. Under this ideological effect, the individual as a center of meaning and action is decentered, and subjectivity is possible only when the individual paradoxically becomes the "subject" freely subjected to the "Absolute Subject" that occupies a unique place of center. Ideology fixes the individual, in short, by interpellating him "as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject" (101).

As to the structural and poststructural theorists, a critique of the liberal humanistic individual also becomes one of the major concerns to Pynchon and the other postmodern novelists. Through the dramatization of a self engaged in a process of historical reconstruction, these postmodern novelists demonstrate that the individual subject is "a highly precarious construct" (Berressem 1993, 3). As Richard Poirier points out, the individual subject and his knowledge of reality are continuously conditioned by the forces of discourse, ideology, and culture, the "forces existing prior to any individual human presence and eager merely to use it as a tool of expression" (1971, 9).
Confronted with the constructedness of subjectivity, these five postmodern novelists seem to acknowledge "the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual (Jameson 1991, 15) in a culture of late-capitalism. But this acknowledgement does not mean that these postmodernists, as Terry Eagleton asserts, "mistak[e] the disintegration of certain traditional ideologies of the subject for the subject's final disappearance" (1985, 144). Instead, the postmodernists eclectically problematize the concept of a unified self at the core of liberal humanistic individualism. As Linda Hutcheon argues, they do "not deny the individual, but 'situate' her/him" (1988, 46) in the constructing contexts of discourse, ideology, and culture.

The self-conscious use of a historian-narrator-character as an "individual subject" becomes an important means of situating the humanistic individual. Each novel similarly focuses on the historian-character's efforts to "organiz[e] a self and a destiny for a self within the contexts that impose a self and a destiny," and in so doing, to "keep within and yet in command of" the very contexts (Poirier 1971, 13, xiii). In seeking to find or if necessary create a narrative of the past, the historian-character tries to "shape a self out of the materials in which [he] is immersed" (Poirier 1971, xiv).

The five postmodern novels present this constructing self ambivalently, that is, by "both installing coherent
subjectivity and subverting it" (Hutcheon 1988, xii). On the one hand, each novel overtly reveals the historian-character's liberal humanistic aspect in foregrounding his aspiration for a coherent and autonomous self and his effort to perceive or create a unified meaning of the past. But on the other hand, as Brian McHale suggests, each novel "constructs [this] subject of cognition only to deconstruct it" (1992, 37), to reveal that the individual subject is not a coherent origin of identity and meaning but a construct positioned in an order of signification. As each novel shows, the historian-character's self is not only dispersed into the multiple roles of character, narrator, and writer but also "divided between a narrating self and narrated self" (McHale 1987, 201) in the act of narrative-making. And this discontinuous self is also structured in a social context as a "subject," one whose identity or role is defined by a ruling ideology. The following chapters explore the problematics of a constructing self that each novel embodies in the historian-character's self-search through historical reconstruction. As I will discuss, these chapters focus on how the historian-character copes with his situation as an "individual subject," how he creates a viable form of self in reconstructing the past, and finally how this constructing self negotiates the yearning for individual selfhood with the problematic constructedness of a self.
CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND SELF-IN-REIFICATION IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S V.

Thomas Pynchon's V. is about the problem of searching for a viable form of self in a world from which humanity itself may disappear. As marked by the two most frequent catchwords of the novel, "inanimate" and "decadence," an entropic tendency of reification and disorder overwhelmingly pervades the human environment in twentieth-century Western culture. Above all, twentieth-century man has dedicated himself to "a deterioration of purpose" in the world with all his inventiveness. Too much "[love] for an object" (14) deepened through colonialism, consumerism, and reifying technologies precipitates man into "a falling-away from what is human" (380) by reducing the 'other' and the possessive self to "an object of pleasure" and a mere desiring and consuming machine, respectively. In his dehumanized society, man is defined as 'both a 'real' and a 'symbolic' robot' (Berressem 1993, 53), rather than as a self which acts as an organic entity preserving an essential and genuine inner depth, or as an autonomous "individual agency" (183) freely choosing his identity and controlling his experience for "personal" and "social progress" (433).

With the collapse of humanity into increasing
inanimateness, God has lost a function that enabled man to imagine that an otherwise chaotic and hostile world was contrived by a divine plan. A "belief in a transcendent God who imposed an order on a formless universe" (Patteson 1974, 33) has given way to the anxiety that "millions of inanimate objects produced brand-new every week" (134) have become an uncontrollable agency of control that mechanizes human beings who invented them. Society indeed develops, but by driving itself in a "progression toward inanimateness" (385). Purposelessness and formlessness thus prevail over the entropic world stagnant in randomness and inertia.

It is within this decentered world, in which the possibility of both self and order seem to be absent, that Herbert Stencil, a historian-character in V., struggles to find the meaning of his existence. In tracking a mysterious woman called V., Stencil works as "a negentropic force" (Maltby 1991, 135) that tries to generate meaning by looking for an "undivided truth of history and self" (Putz 1979, 146). His historical reconstruction is a paranoiac search of a coherent pattern of historical events from which an equally coherent concept of self, that is, a unitary self-identity, may be inferred. But the supreme irony of the novel is that Stencil's search only reveals that there is no such thing as the "undivided truth of history and self," and that in seeking to overcome the absence of order and self, Stencil instead accelerates inanimateness and reification.
Though Stencil and Benny Profane represent two opposite attitudes toward their entropic environment, which will be discussed a little later, Stencil's paranoiac search drives him back into the same inanimate world in which Profane himself participates despite his early struggle to seek human authenticity in constant danger of disintegration. Like Profane, Stencil becomes one of the "figures" (Tanner 1971, 158) who illustrate a process of decadence, one of those who "[foisted] off the humanity [they] have lost on inanimate objects and abstract theories" (380). But the novel is not thoroughly negative in dealing with the crisis of a self in search of order. Through Fausto Maijstral's "Confessions" the novel explores the possibility of a self which can cope with a world of fragmentation and discontinuity by keeping a self-conscious vision of the constructedness of selfhood and order.

Stencil and Profane illustrate two extreme cases of the twentieth-century self drifting in an inanimate modern world. These two characters resemble each other in grappling with a crisis of self frustrated between alienation and reification with some shared "concern with retaining humanity" (Patteson 1974, 41). With no origins known or with no place to feel at home, both men are orphans alienated from any sense of roots and furthermore threatened by the growing mechanization that reduces human existence to inert matter. For them, continuous motion is the only mode of
existence that prevents the fall into inanimateness. Stencil keeps questing, while Profane keeps meandering, in order to escape from their meaningless world.

But Stencil and Profane are different from each other in embodying the two opposed sides of "an intolerable double vision" (440) of the modern world, as hothouse and street, respectively. Like the V-shape of streetlights in Chapter One (2), a general structure of V is based on a parallel of the "double vision." Through those two characters the novel presents a world of "twilight" (2, 12, 42) in which the reality of absence or "emptiness" is simultaneous with a vision of "waiting presence" (2). Obsessed with origins, Stencil isolates himself in the hermetically sealed hothouse of the past, in "his own rathouse of history's rags and straws" (209), to construct a constant order impervious to the chaos of the outer world. Meanwhile, repeating a motiveless wandering up and down the generic street of the twentieth century, Profane spins through the chaos of mechanical objects and momentary experiences he can neither understand nor change. If accidents rule Profane's horizontal yo-yoing through the inanimate landscape of contemporary society in which meaninglessness is the only possible meaning he can find, "a ministry of myth" (423) rules Stencil's vertical search into the past in which he believes a certain meaning must be present. And whereas Profane witnesses only the reign of the inanimate that
threatens to dissolve him in a chance accumulation of inert matter, Stencil is obsessed with finding or producing a pattern of coherence that would allow him to find himself.

For Herbert Stencil, the problem of origin is indeed a crucial motive that urges him to search into the past. Before he pays attention to a passage on V. in his dead father's journals, his own lack of origin has not troubled him. As an orphan who knows nothing of his mother's disappearance and his father's mysterious death, Stencil, like Profane, has been a motiveless yo-yo drifting in a number of foreign countries. The references to "sleepwalk" or "half-consciousness" (44) signify the state of his inanimate existence alienated from even a 'sense' of alienation. In that state the absence of origin is like a forgotten reality. But finally Stencil's "blood-conscious 'contacts' of his legacy" (43) awaken him to an "acquired sense of animateness" (44): "There is more behind and inside V. than any of us had suspected" (43). This remark on V. endows him with an impetus that would transform his life "from inertness to ... activity" (44). Believing that a mystery related to his origin remains to be pursued, Stencil regards a quest for the mystery as the very reason of existence.

Acquiring a momentum of activity from the V-remark, Stencil begins to deepen his concern with origin as an obsessive absolute to the point that he sees the world
around him only in terms of origin and pursuit. This obsession stems from his abiding suspicion that something must be working behind the universal disorganization of the modern world that threatens not only the general welfare but also his personal existence, making him lapse into randomness and inertia. What Stencil the paranoid fears but cannot accept is that there may be no purpose, no pattern, and thus no meaning behind this apparently chaotic world, and that he is left to "[fall] outside the pattern" (209). For him, meaning, which is not possible without the existence of purpose or order, is inseparable from pattern or form.

Urged by this paranoic obsession, Stencil proclaims himself to be "the century's child" (42), who born in 1901, pursues not only his mother but also the century's mother, "who or what it was that gave birth to the twentieth century and caused it to move so rapidly towards ... the approach of total entropy" (Tanner 1982, 45). Rather than admit the possibility of randomness, Stencil postulates and 'factualizes' the existence of V. from his encounters with a figure named V. that turns up at key moments of political crises during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then he presumes that there must be "The Big One, the century's master cabal" (210), and that V. fits in with it. In other words, in searching for V., Stencil is pursuing a "basic" or "core story" (Patteson 1984, 300), a master
narrative that reveals the very origin of the plot of his own history and thus of modern history.

As such a grand ambition implies, Stencil's paranoiac quest for the origin is distinctively logocentric and holocentric. First, it is primarily based on a logocentric faith that something is 'out there' as the meaning of meanings, as "'the' truth, not 'a' truth" (Chambers 1992, 50). Unable to accept that "no Situation [has] any objective reality" (174), Stencil believes in the indisputable existence of an ultimate truth, presence, or 'real' which will act as a transcendental signified anterior to an infinite number of manifestations or versions of V. V. here plays the role of a transcendental signifier which will give meaning to all those fragments. V. is at it were 'the' sign in which the ultimate truth is assumed to be immediately present. Like something that is 'there,' Stencil says, "V. [is] there to track down" (44).

Though Stencil's logocentric paranoia underlies his historical search, the meaning of an ultimate truth can be known only through V. and what he calls a "V-structure" (209). V. is such a supreme sign that Stencil apprehends and patterns reality only according to his single obsession with V.. Literally it is an entry about V. in his father's diary that 'causes' him to launch into a search for origin. But the deeper his obsession with V. grows, the weaker his "sense of 'blood'" gets, until he feels "he and V. [are] all
alone" (44). Whether V. is a woman, a thing, a quality, or whatever else, the fact that V. is 'there' is just good enough to let him assume that she/it retains, though he does not know what it is, an "ultimate shape" (209) which will also retain an ultimate truth. There is a truth behind the "ultimate shape" of a "V-structure," but none of the truth can be known without V. In this sense, Stencil's logocentric faith tends to treat a truth as close to the 'absent' real, that is, the 'real' that is 'absent' 'outside' the structure of its V-significations.

As this shift in the epistemological location of the 'real' suggests, Stencil's paranoic search is also holocentric in that he regards the truth as a desired center immanent in the world as the closure of an ordered whole. What most seriously threatens Stencil is the thought that the modern world, having lost sight of the "Golden Mean" (440) or of "rapport," seems to be drifting into a chaos of so many "mongrel" (174) accidents, signs, events, versions, and experiences. Against this overwhelming tendency of randomness, Stencil believes that everything is connected in a certain pattern of a plot. Then he attempts to look for or if necessary to construct "a determinate structure of meaning" (Patteson 1984, 300) which will allow him to "incorporate all fragments into an imagined whole" (New 1979, 395). A key passage of V succinctly articulates Stencil's obsession with an "ultimate Plot" (210): "Cavities
in the teeth occur for good reason, Eigenvalue reflected. But even if there are several per tooth, there's no conscious organization there against the life of the pulp, no conspiracy. Yet we have men like Stencil, who must go about grouping the world's random caries into cabals" (139).

Based on such holocentrism, Stencil projects his obsession with a "V-structure" or a V-pattern onto historical events in order to reorganize the fragmented modern world into a cohesive pattern. V. here works as a metaphor for the causal connection that makes any meaning, knowledge, or humanity possible. As Fausto Maijstral describes it, Stencil's historical reconstruction is motivated by the desire to create "the fiction of continuity, the fiction of cause and effect, the fiction of a humanized history endowed with 'reason'" (286).

In creating a teleological fiction, Stencil realizes that, as one of his characters says, "a whole [can be] arrived at by some operation more alien than simple addition of parts" (143). "Stencilization" is the "operation" he employs as a way to find a whole out of "a past he [doesn't] remember and he [has] no right in" (51). Throughout the four "Stencilized" Chapters 3, 7, 9, and 14, he relies on "inference, poetic license, [and] forcible dislocation of personality" (51) to imaginatively organize what might have happened in the past according to his obsession with finding a V-pattern. Created or filtered by his prism of hothouse
mentality, random sources of historical events, including "the imperfect vision of humans for his history" (364), undergo considerable change to the extent that it is almost impossible to distinguish between events and versions, between external reality and internal construction.

The epistemological dilemma and the pitfalls of paranoiac construction are in fact embedded in Stencil's "Stencilized" stories. Three stories in particular, stories improvised and retold by him, call into question his fabulationist "finagling" (259). They hint at his implicit anxiety that his paranoic search for a coherent truth may be a futile attempt to impose a plot on a plotless reality.

While on the one hand V suggests that historical knowledge is inaccessible except as personal reconstruction, the novel on the other hand reveals that the personal reconstruction, as in Stencil's, can be illusory, evasive, and finally pro-entropic.

From an early stage of his historical search, Stencil has been haunted by a sense of fear that something sinister hides inside each seed of a dossier tamed for the purpose of historical pattern-making. As the external narrator of V comments, "[Stencil] tended each seashell on his submarine scunguille farm, tender and impartial, moving awkwardly about his staked preserve on the harbored, carefully avoiding the little dark deep right there in the midst of the tame shellfish" (51, my own italics). In attempting to
impose order on reality, Stencil, like a seashell, encapsulates himself as a means of protection against something chaotic that threatens not only the outside world but also the pattern-making itself.

"[The] little dark deep" avoided by Stencil begins to reveal itself in a story by a barmaid, Hanne. In the story Hanne is puzzled by the identity of a triangular stain on the plate she is washing. The stain appears to her both real and illusory: according to how she tilts the plate or focuses her eyes, the stain shifts its shape or fades away altogether. She asks, "Was the stain real?" or was it a projection of subjective perception or elicited by "her headache" (78)? The same questions may arise about Stencil. Is there anything like a truth, a basic story, or a plot in this world? Or is it an illusion by the paranoid who can never bear the randomness of the world?

Mondaugen's story more concretely reveals the dilemma epitomized in the barmaid's story. Sent to the Southwest Protectorate to investigate atmospheric radio disturbances, or "sferics" (213), Mondaugen, like Stencil, is searching for a certain pattern or code. As Stencil "Stenciliz[es]" the past beyond his knowledge, Mondaugen approaches the knowledge of reality mostly through "his peculiar habits of [voyeuristic] observation" (237). Toward the end of his mission, however, he is uncertain if it is possible to find any pattern, to know anything, when the knowledge gained is,
as it is his case, mere speculation, fantasy, or delirium.\textsuperscript{15} Ironically, "a regularity or patterning which might have been a kind of code" (228), which he detected during his sferics search, offers an anti-visionary answer to his dilemma. When Lt. Weissmann breaks Mondaugen's "code," the message is only that there is no message, no secret, no pattern, and thus 'nothing': "'The world is all that the case is" (259).\textsuperscript{16} What "the little dark deep" holds begins to become obvious here: something is 'not there' where it is anticipated.

This fearful anti-vision is most vividly featured in the story of imperial adventurer Hugh Godolphin. The story is about Godolphin's discovery of a mysterious country of Vheissu, another sign of V.. As Godolphin speaks to Victoria, Vheissu is "no different from any other godforsakenly remote region" that English colonists "jaunt[ed] in and out of" (155). But it is the constantly changing surface of Vheissu that both attracts and repels him. As V. pursued by Stencil consists of so many versions and signs, the country shows so many surfaces in "[so] many colors" that it is "[as] if you lived inside a madman's kaleidoscope" (155).\textsuperscript{17} But this multi-colored surface is Vheissu's skin, Godolphin believes. Like "a dark woman tattooed from head to toes" (156), Vheissu surely has "a soul" (155) beneath that skin. Godolphin wants to be in love with the woman, but the skin's "gaudy godawful riot of
pattern and color" (156) prevents him from reaching inside and possessing her. The frustrated lover betrays his failed desire by picturing a flayed native woman: "you would begin praying to whatever god you knew of to send some leprosy to her. To flay that tattooing to a heap of red, purple and green debris, leave the veins and ligaments raw and quivering and open at last to your eyes and your touch" (156).

Godolphin's story serves as a paradigm for the entire novel. First of all, his sadistic desire for Vheissu reflects the psyche of imperialistic exploitation as part of Western culture's fetishistic quest to reduce everything to inanimate objects. The image of the flayed woman links Vheissu to Mantissa's desire to possess Botticelli's "Venus," to a group of women reified into "an object of pleasure" (379), including Esther, Fana, Paola, and Melanie, and finally to V's vivisection in Chapter 11.

Godolphin's search for the soul at the same time mirrors Stencil's search for an origin. Vheissu, "a dark woman," is to the old adventurer what V., "a beast of venery" (50), is to the younger "world adventurer" (41). Both quarries evoke the subtle, tantalizing duality of reality, of surface and depth, in which the 'real' appears to be found beneath so many appearances, so many V-signs. The two adventurers are basically one: as Stencil seeks for an ultimate truth behind an ultimate shape of V-signs,
Godolphin desires to penetrate the tattooed surface of things to discover the soul beneath.

Godolphin's story finally provides an answer to V's riddle when he scrapes through the "entirely lifeless and empty place" (189) of the south pole to discover a Vheissu spider monkey frozen in the ice. He tells his friend Mantissa that he saw what was beneath Vheissu's skin: "Nothing ... It was Nothing I saw" (188). At "the dead center of the carousel" (189) assumed to give an answer, he finds that there is no answer but the monkey's "rainbow-colored" (189) fur that covered all the surface of Vheissu.

But Godolphin cannot accept the "Nothing" as it is. The "Nothing" itself should be 'explained' or 'interpreted' as "a sign of nothingness" (Cooley 1993, 319, the author's italics), in other words, 'patterned' as 'something' intended by an unknown force. At the moment he realizes that at the core exists nothing but the same random surface, Godolphin is driven to 'Stencilize' a plot and 'think' that Vheissu is "a dream of annihilation" (190), a plot "planted" by "[them]." As he argues, what is really important to him is not "what I saw or believed I saw" but "what I thought" (190). Unable to face up to the terror of the void, Godolphin sticks to his own dream of order which will allow him to impose a pattern, however malevolent, on the void.

The anti-visionary void foregrounded in those stories-within-a-story threatens Stencil's own historical search.
Particularly in two accidents that make him encounter something unexpected, Stencil, at the moment that the secret of V. may finally be open to him, realizes that he has mastered or achieved nothing.

First, Fausto Maijstral's "Confessions," the only text directly 'given' to him rather than "Stencilized," makes Stencil confronted with what he can never accept, the death of V. called the Bad Priest in her final stage in Malta. Through the text Stencil is exposed to a record of "the disassembly of the Bad Priest" (322), realizing that inanimate fragments are what V. is all about. If the vivisection of V. symbolizes man’s sadistic quest to possess or know the unknown, her own body, which turns out to be planted with inanimate objects, testifies to the effect of the quest, to "decadence" itself. The human or the mysterious collapses into "fetish-constructions" (386) as in the future "all-electronic woman" called "Violet" (361) or as in Stencil's "intellectual fetishism" (Newman 1986, 36) of V. as an abstract concept.

Meanwhile, V. proves the sadistic quest futile by showing that she is a "decorative [void]" (447). While V. comprises all the constantly changing colors, shapes, signs, and versions that make up the dazzling outside like the surface of Vheissu, V. is also the 'nothing' beneath the decoration. As Godolphin’s flayed woman discloses no soul to discover beneath but a "heap of red, purple and green
debris," V. reveals 'no depth,' 'no truth,' and 'no answer' behind the fragments of inanimate parts. Despite his protest later in Malta that he can feel V. "[in] the light." (421), Stencil is not sure of it. "If the soul is light. Is [V.] a presence?" asks Maijstral, and "Damn the word" (421) is Stencil's reply. Stencil's dilemma is that his search is "an attempt at something which should have existed but did not" (143). V. is as it were a transcendental signifier without a transcendental signified. Opposed to his paranoic project, an ultimate truth desperately pursued by him is 'not there' where he has believed it must be, that is, in his arbitrary V-pattern. V's own bleak remark mocks a search for the truth: "How pleasant to watch Nothing" (459).

Though he is scared by the encounter with V.'s death, Stencil will not accept the event that only exposes him to the inexorable existence of the void. He denies V.'s death because it means to him the end of his V-search, which he is really afraid of because the end of the search means again the end of his animate existence as a ceaseless seeker. Furthermore, regarding the death as an event that has happened by chance could mean that he yields to the invasion of "coincidence" (324) into the hothouse of an absolute causal connection. As soon as he finishes reading the "Confessions," he asks himself, "[had] his coincidence, the accident to shatter the surface of this stagnant pool and send all the mosquitoes of hope zinging away to the exterior
night; has it happened?" (324). He cannot believe it has happened to him. Meeting Maijstral to confirm V's death, he cries, "she cannot be dead" (421).

But crisis arrives for Stencil in the coincidence of Father Fairing, of whom he has once heard in a legendary tale of Fairing's Parish. Father Avalanche, who has been in Malta since 1919, informs Stencil that his predecessor was the same Father Fairing who has been known in the tale to have preached Christianity in the New York sewer in the 1930's. This unexpected information nearly panics Stencil. Coming on the same name twice, which may be no more than an accident, Stencil finds himself "out of condition" and "hardly able to stand" (423). It is because the Fairing coincidence reveals that Stencil's historical reconstruction is an illusory projection of orderly continuity into a reality which is itself accidental and discontinuous. As one of the "surface phenomena" that "[show] nothing at all of what [comes] to lie beneath" (463), the Fairing coincidence becomes an example of such reality not as it is ordered but as it is, as it is before explanation or connection. The example suggests that while reality necessarily involves illusion because it cannot make itself visible or cognizable without an image or a narrative order being imposed, reality is always larger than illusion and thus cannot be enclosed with or "represent[ed] ... coherently and fully from any single perspective" (Holton 1988, 331) like Stencil's
totalizing vision.

Reality as it is, however, is too inhuman for Stencil the paranoid to bear. Stencil's pursuit of V. has been in fact a means of continuing to evade reality. In other words, in searching for an ultimate truth which will help him structure historical events in a coherent pattern, Stencil seeks 'not' to find and confront an answer always waiting for him, "the little dark deep" of the 'nothing' at the heart of illusion. And in evading the 'nothing,' he disregards not only the 'absence' of the desired truth 'in' his projection but also the possible presence of the absent 'real' that has no shape of its own and 'is beyond' any order of construction and signification.

Stencil avoids seeing the 'nothing' by retreating into the safety of his paranoiac vision and the pursuit of a redundant clue. The more seriously his search is threatened by unexpected accidents, the more severely Stencil clings to an attempt of "intellectual imperialism" to "make the world conform to a single vision" (Cooley 1993, 316). The 'nothing' seems to him a 'sign' of "what's missing," of a "gap" (419), which only exists to be filled with his single vision. For him, there are only two colors, "white or black" (420), only two states of reality, absence or presence. With any middle colors or states excluded, however, the two extremes are actually one and the same to Stencil, in whose obsessive mentality absence calls for or even highlights the
presence of a more overwhelming order.

This mentality enables Stencil to delete a gap made by the Fairing coincidence by presuming that the coincidence can be created "by what only could have been design" (424). Based on this presumption, Stencil judges that what he has encountered is not just "a history at all, but something far more appalling" (424), that is, a terminal fact that "Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic" (423). In the same way Godolphin imagines from the 'nothing' a plot of annihilation, Stencil constructs from coincidences a logic which means to him an order necessarily inherent in the world, not "a human attribute" (455) to define what the world should be.

Stencil does not retreat into the evasive vision without recourse to the redundant pursuit of a V-sign. Unable to accept the futility of his vision, Stencil toward the end of the novel runs away for another V., Viola. But this pursuit is not to see through and confront the 'nothing' behind and beyond V., but to stay on V.'s "permanent, indestructible surface" (New 1979, 405-6) that consists of an infinite number of multifarious V-signifiers. Like Vheissu's multi-colored surface, the V-surface is the real present without which Stencil cannot live. He deliberately prolongs the present by ceaselessly iterating V.. In doing so, however, he only conflates all differences among them into one single undifferentiated sign, one and
the same V.. It does not trouble him at all who or what V. is. For him, V. is such an over-integrated word that it means everything, and at the same time nothing: "V. might be no more a she than a sailing vessel or a nation" (210). Whatever V. might be, what is most important to him is V.’s "being there ... even as a symptom [of any cause]" (362). Instead of stepping away from this illusory construction, Stencil repeats it to prolong his frustrated quest which is itself "its own motive" (Schaub 1981, 80).

The V-quest thus becomes a means that helps Stencil avoid reality and an end itself that drives the questor to vanish into a treadmill of inanimate V-signifiers. Stencil’s ceaseless intellectual abstraction puts him in "alignment with the inanimate" (88) that has always appalled Benny Profane: "talking, talking, nothing but ... inanimate words [Profane] couldn’t really talk back at" (18). Profane regards communication as impossible because his contemporary world is filled with "nothing but wrong words" (123) cut off from any spiritual depth of meaning. Both Stencil and Profane ultimately participate in the inanimate world by dedicating themselves, like a decadent artist of the Whole Sick Crew, to "’the ultimate in non-communication’" (45). While Profane reduces communication to zero by abandoning any human efforts to understand messages from his friends, Stencil impoverishes communication by arranging and rearranging it according to what he expects in advance
without allowing for any possible differences of unexpected meaning.

Stencil's arbitrary and pro-entropic execution similarly occurs in his search of self. As discussed in the opening parts of this chapter, Stencil attempts to find or if necessary to create a coherent pattern of the past which will enable him to find an equally coherent form of self. In searching for the coherent self, however, Stencil risks increasing the "decadence" of humanity by fragmenting and reifying both himself and others into mere instruments of historical knowledge and pattern-making.

It is an imperative demand that Stencil should establish a "persistent" and "unmistakable identity in respect to a given self" (Putz 1979, 29). Basically motivated by the fear of having no origin, no identity, Stencil's logo/holocentric paranoia urges him to realize a presupposed faith in such a unitary self-identity as "the correlative 'whole' human [individual] subject" (Smith 1988, 89) that can perceive and reconstruct an all-encompassing constant pattern of order in an entropic world of inanimateness and randomness. If in Stencil's paranoiac mechanism the self cannot be 'whole' without assuming an invariable order, order cannot be as such without a unitary self-identity, either.

Stencil's key strategy to meet the demand of the self is what he calls "forcible dislocation of personality" (51)
which becomes one of his ways of "Stencilization." The strategy of "dislocation" initially leads the dislocator to mutilate himself. Stencil does so by always referring to himself in the third person. This overtly objectified part of the split self, that is, Stencil as the third-person "subject" of narration, is not a mere manifestation of self-detachment, narrative objectivity, and thus authority of knowledge Stencil actually does not possess. Stencil instead employs the objectified 'subject' as the desired constant form of self. He enforces on himself identification with an 'absolute cause' which is believed to have been effecting the past events. Thus in factualizing the truth of an "ultimate Plot" evidenced by V., Stencil becomes "the quest itself" (Greiner 1977, 4). The V-quest defines him as "purely the century's man" (209) pursuing the origin of twentieth-century history, or as "quite purely He Who Looks for V." (210).

But in referring to himself in the third person, Stencil is "not even [close] to himself" (42). Stencil's objectified self is just a construct, a mask to conceal his having no identity. As his name implies, Stencil is in truth a stencil, "a vacancy, filled in with the colours of his obsession" (Tanner 1971, 164). As V. is a pure, 'absent' signifier or effect interpellated 'through' Stencil by a logocentric obsession with 'the' ultimate truth, Stencil is not so much a self as another pure signifier named for a
function of iterative V-interpellation that operates on the principle of the obsession. In "Stenciliz[ing]" himself into a pure V-questor, Stencil indeed 'objectifies' himself into an abstract object from which any sense of authentic self has been expunged.

The process of self-objectification gets more complicated when the strategy of "dislocation" leads to Stencil's self-fragmentation into "a repertoire of identities" (51). Ironically, Stencil is no identity and therefore all identities: he tries to solve the problem of having no identity by endowing himself with the authority freely to simulate "all the identities he could cope with conveniently right at the moment" (210). But this strategy is "not exactly the same as 'seeing the other fellow's point of view'" (51) as it is. He "Stenciliz[es]" "the imperfect vision of humans for his history" (364) by intruding his single obsession with V. on their experience.

All the four "Stencil" Chapters are indeed like a hall of mirrors, of simulated identities and consciousnesses. In Chapter 3 Stencil invents V.'s Egyptian adventure in 1898 from eight points of view, in which he impersonates seven marginalized natives and ex-Europeans and finally leads to a pure "vantage point" (Patteson 1974, 32) from which the observer's identity is totally effaced. In Chapter 7 Stencil as Evan, the son of Hugh Godolphin, fragments himself into multiple consciousnesses to imagine V's Florence life in
1899. In Chapters 9 and 14, he merges with Kurt Mondaugen and Porcepic to revise their own stories about V. in Southwest Africa, 1922, and in Paris, 1913, respectively.

In those chapters Stencil's strategy contributes to the expansion of an inanimate landscape of tourism. Above all, Stencil is himself a tourist. Keeping the father's journals as his Karl Baedeker guidebook, Stencil retraces the father's steps and searches through various lands and people to find V.. But Stencil experiences those others as inanimate objects that always "evoke identical responses" (384) from him. As tourists insulate themselves from any real contact with the lands they pass through by burying themselves in Baedeker versions, so does Stencil refuse to confront the human reality of other people by depersonalizing them into instrumental consciousnesses reflecting his obsessive vision, as if they were transparent eyeballs of his own.

Such an imperialistic treatment of others' experience is notable particularly in Chapter 3, in which the seven impersonations serve vicariously to observe the European spies and tourists including V.. On the one hand, Stencil appears to put at the center of narrative those seven marginalized figures, who have been treated in Baedeker versions as "automata," as the stereotyped features like "waiters, porters, cabmen, clerks" (59) who simply fill part of the inanimate tourist landscape. Preoccupied with a
private life, they seem to be allowed to narrate from their own experience. As the title of the chapter insists, however, all of them are no more than all creations of imagination forcibly made by Stencil's obsession with a V-story. They again become automata: in this case dictated by Stencil, they function as fragments of points of view disconnected from the narrators' human reality. One of them ironically articulates the non-humanity of Stencil's depersonalizing strategy: "there remains a grand joke on all visitors to Baedeker's world: the permanent residents are actually humans in disguise" (66).

But Stencil does not realize that the strategy turns both others and himself into inanimate objects and worsens the entropic state of randomness and sameness. The more manifoldly he repeats identification with others, the more seriously it causes his own disintegration and the forfeiture of diverse individuality those others have. Furthermore, Stencil does not realize either that like his historical pattern-making, the construction of an objectified self and the depersonalized consciousnesses are the illusory projections of his obsession. For him, the self is all that the case is. Any sense of the authentic "Stencil" dissolves in the infinite number of simulated identities, and he exists only "as an intersection of stories" (Fokkema 1991, 98). In the same way the inability to accept the void behind his historical pattern-making
leads him to make ceaseless iterations of V., Stencil continues to repeat self-fragmentation without confronting the fact that there is no real self behind his simulations: "Stencil that way had left pieces of himself--and V.--all over the western world" (364).

Stencil's strategy makes him become the same as what he has been searching for, that is, V.. Truly, Stencil has been "seeking in [V.] his own identity" (386), not only to find the personal origin but also to be one with V.. Like V., Stencil turns into "a remarkably scattered concept" (364) whose major attribute is "[d]isguise" (363). As a V-structure is to include all manifestations of V., Stencil is to be all identities, too. But again like his V-signifiers, Stencil's impersonations become "the decorative voids" (447) that mean everything and at the same time nothing. All his impersonations serve to converge into one and the same "Stencilized" consciousness. Only to prolong his quest and his invariable role as "quite purely He Who Looks for V.," which means all he should be, Stencil dissolves himself in "the exhaustion of all possible permutations and combinations" of identities, which indicates the very state of "Decadence" and "death" (277). In this sense, Stencil's quest is the cause of his own destruction rather than salvation. In seeking for an ultimate order of history and self, Stencil is "[after] his own extermination" (425).

Stencil's quest has caused his own disintegration and
makes him join a world of inanimateness which always frustrate Benny Profane. Finding himself in constant danger that he, "a great amoebalike boy" (27), may be at any time disintegrated and formless in his inanimate world, Profane feels that "if he kept going down that street, not only his ass but also his arms, legs, sponge brain and clock of a heart must be left behind ... be scattered among manhole covers" (30). The fear of disintegration also occurs in his attitude toward language that always causes him anxiety. Everywhere he encounters the words that fail him: "There were neon signs scattered here and there, spelling out words he wouldn't remember when he woke" (30). This fear leads Profane to struggle to establish in vain a relation between himself and his world of uncaring objects: he looks for "something ... to make the fact of his own disassembly plausible as that of any machine" (30).

From the start of the novel, Profane is presented as a cluster of inanimate goods in a contingent world: "Christmas Eve, 1955, Benny Profane, wearing black levis, suede jacket, sneakers and big cowboy hat, happened to pass through Norfolk, Virginia" (1). As the brand-name "levis" implies, fetishized commodities in consumer society "have usurped the place of the human subject, no longer background to character but proclaiming themselves as 'living' presences" (Currie 1987, 65). There remains little intrinsic distinction between objects and humans. Profane protests
against the inanimate world by trying to show that he has some human intention to do and want something from his own necessity: "Inanimate objects could do what they wanted. Not what they wanted because things do not want; only men. But things do what they do, and this is why Profane was pissing at the sun" (17). Cursing at the sun going down, Profane parodies an absurdistic rebellion against God which has lost authority as an absolute center of meaning. Man cannot any longer do what he wants, for as Profane realizes, what he wants is already manufactured by his consumer society. In that society man exists not so much as an organic entity which wants something from his own genuine desire, but only as a mechanical body whose key function is to inexhaustibly consume objects. As a result, man becomes a consuming machine-object, part of his inanimate world. As Profane says, it is as if he "walked ... the aisles of a bright, gigantic supermarket, his only function to want" (27).

Moreover, what really scares Profane is that man has foisted off his lost humanity on the "[love] for an object" (14) to the extent that "the highest condition [man] can attain is that of an object" (93). Scared by Rachel's affinity with her '54 MG and Da Conho's bizarre attachment to the machine gun, Profane begins to feel that "something had been going on under the rose" (14). Finally when he volunteers in a chase of alligators that have made trouble all over the sewer system of Nueva York, Profane commits
himself to a brief search for some clues or for some meaning that may enable him to retrieve humanity. The baby alligators were once very popular pets for kids, but as the kids grew bored with them, most of them were set loose into the sewers and turned cannibal. Somewhat fascinated with something being "under the Street" (33), Profane temporarily stops drifting in the inanimate street to look for it.

The alligator-chase episode provides the most serious moments of Profane's life in the novel. First of all, the baby alligators represent nature that is doomed to be domesticated and reified into objects to meet man's fetishism. Possessed as pets, they turn into "only another consumer-object" (133), one of the various alligator merchandise displayed in a shopwindow. At the same time those alligators symbolize the unexploited human desire which is also doomed to be fabricated and forfeited by the society of "fetish-constructions" (386). In this sense, in going underground, Profane attempts to find out even a little possibility of the human that may remain beneath the non-human surface of his world.

But Profane's search turns out to be vain. Though he has been "waiting for something" like "the gift of tongues" (110) to bring any meaningful clue, no revelatory vision happens to him. Instead, only an alligator waits alone to be killed, like Profane himself, to be disintegrated. The alligator makes Profane see himself in his confrontation
with it. The more he faces it, the more lost he gets in talking with it, as if he were talking to himself. Both of them undergo the same fate of being exiled from the mechanical world just above them. When Profane finally fires and watches the alligator’s blood seeping out "amoebalike" (110-11), it seems that he, "a great amoebalike boy," witnesses his own dissolution.21 Similar to Profane, the alligator does not even resist, either. As if he were referring to the complete futility of his own fight against the empire of inanimate objects, Profane tells the corpse: "Baby ... you didn’t play it right. You don’t fight back. That’s not in the contract" (133). In a sense Profane experiences a suicidal moment when he kills the alligator. But he fails to transform the experience into something redemptive that will motivate him to move beyond the state of a motiveless and inert existence. Instead this figurative self-confrontation leads him only to lapse into a deep frustration and thus surrender to the mechanical world of the street.

Returning to the street, Profane repeats one single mechanical movement of yo-yoing. With "no guarantees" of "[any] sense of home or safety" (303), the street of the twentieth century is indeed "nowhere" (426); it is a place where meaninglessness is the only meaning Profane can find. In contrast to Stencil, to Profane, the inanimativeness and randomness of the meaningless street is absolute. He thinks
that everything in the world has happened to him like
fragments of accidental objects; he is, he thinks, but "[a]
disembodied object of a corporal work of mercy" (121).

What Profane can do against his environment is to
become an inanimate schlemihle and to do nothing against it
but remain to be as one with it. The motion of yo-yoing
represents not only his principle of action but "a state of
mind" (344) that has been reified. Profane only "[keeps]
cool but [does not] care" (345). Women always seem to him
mere "accidents, broken shoelaces, dropped dishes, pins in
new shirts" (121). Instead of attempting to care, to
understand, what his female friends try to communicate to
him, Profane remains as an impassive apparatus and leaves
himself to be even identified with "a band-pass filter"
(410) filtering out anything human from communication.
Ironically communication becomes possible when he 'speaks'
at ease with two manikins, "SHROUD: synthetic human,
radiation output determined" (264) and "SHOCK -- synthetic
human object, casualty kinematics" (265). Profane feels "a
certain kinship" (265) with those two "human object[s]" and
moreover receives a message that "make[s] the fact of his
own disassembly plausible as that of any machine": one of
the manikins 'says' to him, "Me and SHOCK are what you and
everybody will be someday" (266).

In the eyes of Profane, everybody, including himself,
looks like a hollow "human object" which, like "the
scungille shell," has "nothing inside" (347), is nothing at all but the hard and inanimate outside. At the end of his journey, Profane, having again "donned suede jacket, levis and big cowboy hat," once more confirms the hollowness of humanity "in the form of one Brenda Wigglesworth" (426). Owning "72 pairs of Bermuda shorts" and a junkyard "filled with a hundred black bicycles" (426), Wigglesworth is an assemblage of "all the appurtenances of night" (428), as it were, a synthetic human of various cultural "fetish-constructions."

The fragmented decorative surface is all she has as a contemporary V.: "Skeletons, carapaces, no matter: her inside too was her outside" (426). This should be no surprise to Profane, because she is only another illustration of the inanimate landscape which he knows too well, in which "[he hasn't] learned a goddamn thing" (428). For Profane there is nothing to learn but the fact that he must continue "to run through the abruptly absolute night" (428) of the twentieth-century street.

If both Stencil and Profane reveal themselves as failed humanists ultimately lost in self-fragmentation and self-reification by their own compulsive questing and aimless yo-yoing, a Maltese poet, Fausto Maijstral, offers a notable contrast to them through his self-conscious struggle for "a resurgence of humanity in the automaton, health in the decadent" (316). The personal history of Maijstral's fragmented selves in Malta embraces the experience of "a
physically and spiritually broken world" (286) from which Stencil and Profane have sought to escape in vain. But unlike them, Maijstral is a "fragmented humanist" (Berressem 1993, 81) who tries to re-create the lost unity of self and the lost balance between reality and illusion, between the animate and the inanimate. It is his self-consciousness that enables him to develop a more flexible and matured perspective of both order and self without turning himself into another inanimate object.

Maijstral's salvation derives from his "eyes clear enough to see past" (286) the fictionality of human artifice, like metaphor, history, and impersonations. In his "Confessions," Maijstral says that "life's single lesson" he has learned is "that there is more accident to it than a man can ever admit to in a lifetime and stay sane" (300). This is the reason why he says that "It is the 'role' of the poet, this 20th Century. To lie" (305). The poet employs metaphor as a means to impose order. By investing objects with human qualities, the poet creates a temporary illusion that enables civilization to continue.

But human artifice enables one to confront reality only as long as it is recognized that the artifice is a construct. Maijstral claims that "metaphor has no value apart from its function," because it is not a substitute for reality, which is still unknowable, but "a device, and an artifice" (305), in short, a fiction. Without this reserved
view of reality, and without this self-conscious view of artifice, Maijstral argues, "the Great Lie" of metaphor not only disguises reality but also makes men feel "confident that the machines, dwellings, streets and weather share the same human motives ... as they" (305) and thus blurs the distinction between the animate and the inanimate. This is the very pitfall both Stencil and Profane fall into. Wherever Profane walks, every person, every object, becomes an absolute metaphor of the purely accidental and inanimate world. And Stencil, unable to accept the contingency of his vision, believes that what he sees is 'the' absolute truth. Unlike Maijstral, Stencil does not realize that V. is no more than a metaphor, a "Great Lie," which promises the presence of 'the' truth but retains nothing but his projected illusion. Thus Stencil, in resting in an illusion, permits the intrusion of the inanimate.

Maijstral's recognition of the fictionality of artifice continues in his self-conscious views of history and self. First, his "Confessions" is based on a 'narrative-conscious' assumption that history-writing is an artificial effort to narrativitize, that is, to impose coherence on "the colorful whimsy of history" (287). Opposed to Stencil who fails to read his "ultimate Plot" as a mirror of his own fear that he has no absolute cause, Maijstral argues that "continuity," "cause and effect," and "a humanized history endowed with 'reason'" (286) are all fictions constructed by a
logo/holocentric demand of order and logic.

In a similar way, Maijstral insists that memory or "self-memory" is "a traitor: gilding, altering," because it is based on "[a] false assumption that identity is single, soul continuous" (287). For him, identity is provisionally "'produced’" (McHoul and Wills 1990, 165) in the self's various involvements in the external world. Identity continues to be constructed as the self identifies itself with what it is to experience and perceive. Then it is necessary that those identifications should be understood as illusory, or as "meconnaissances" (misapparceptions) that result in "the illusion of autonomy" (Lacan 1966, 6). This perspective of identity underlies Maijstral's device of what he calls "a fracturing of personality" (294). Linking identity to an artificial metaphor, Maijstral takes on provisional personalities or identities. In doing so, he tries to control the very construction of identity by making "a successive rejection of personalities" (286), so that he may not succumb to an illusion of self that will only ossify him in a world of artifice.

Maijstral's fracturation of identity is to read himself with a sense of balance that enables him to survive his plunge into a nightmarish history of Malta. Maijstral traces his changes in four different stages of self, and those four fragmented Faustos epitomize a history of self in a twentieth-century wasteland. Fausto I represents a stage of
innocence that believed in the god-like omnipotence of a self as "[a] young sovereign, dithering between Caesar and God" (286), which is followed by Fausto II, who grew inanimate by retreating into "religious abstraction" (295) with the World War II. Maijstral changes into Fausto III who was "born on the Day of the 13 Raids" and "the closest ... to non-humanity" (286). Finally he returns from inanimateness to "consciousness or humanity" (286) through Fausto IV, his latest mask, whose self-conscious insight helped him keep convinced of humanity without foisting himself off on the decadent world.

Maijstral’s self-fragmentation appears similar to Stencil’s. Referring to themselves in the third person, both men are Protean authors who succeed in reading themselves into their creations. But whereas Stencil fails to recognize that his objectified form of self and his impersonations are projected or identified constructions, Maijstral knows throughout his changes "how to read himself out of his creations, how to reclaim his projections" (Raper 1992, 53). Opposed to Stencil whose failure swamps him in the entropic world he seemed to oppose, Maijstral knows that his four personae, like Malta the "inviolable womb of ... rock" (298), are metaphors invested with human qualities that originate in himself.

While Stencil, as his name suggests, remains an empty hole, Maijstral’s essential self survives his changing world
that shapes him, and it controls the process of the construction of identity. He realizes that there is a gap between the self that speaks and the self that is spoken of. On the one hand he accepts that the self, actually "the subject," is constructed in the process of writing: "the writing itself even constitutes another rejection, another 'character' added to the past" (286). But his fracturation itself implicitly reveals that just as Malta's rock, not as a humanized metaphor or artifice but as the world as it is, remains hiding what lies beneath it, the speaking Fausto's unknown essential self is "being represented underneath" (Fokkema 1991, 96). In fact the four Faustos are not so much, as he says, "separated characters" (286), but close to a series of progressive identities developing from one identity to the other, which is also implied by his unchanging name and consecutive numbering.

Thus in applying self-fragmentation to the self dissolved in the decadent world, Maijstral survives the terminal dissolution in which both Stencil and Profane are swamped. For him, the balanced ability of self-consciousness to have "eyes clear enough to see past" the fiction of order and at the same time to keep faith in an essential self is the only way he can keep "convinced of [his] humanity" (302). With that ability, Maijstral acts as a counterweight to the reified selves drifting in an inanimate world.
John Barth’s The Sot-Weed Factor is notable for its fabulationist exploitation of the interrelationship between self-search and the act of storification, of fictionalizing reality as a narrative construct. Planned as the third one in "a series of three nihilistic amusing novels" (Enck 1965, 11), The Sot-Weed Factor continues to develop a notion that there is no intrinsically ultimate, absolute, and constant truth in reference to world and self. While the first two novels, The Floating Opera and The End of the Road, demonstrate the notion in the manner of the novel of ideas, Barth’s third novel applies it to the concrete process of reconstructing history, ‘his story,’ from which a definable form of self can be created. In the novel, both self and history are treated as creations that can be freely made: Barth suggests that in "invent[ing] our pasts ... at the dictates of Whim and Interest,"¹ we also arbitrarily invent roles with which to cope with a world of entire relativity.

Meanwhile, it needs to be noted that Barth’s fabulationist storification tends to turn into a purely self-sufficient verbal play cut off from reality. Furthermore, though Barth self-consciously foregrounds the...
artificiality of (hi)story-making in order to challenge the liberal humanist assumption that reality as a transcendental referent can be objectively represented by a coherent individual subject, his novel does not so much refuse as reproduces an undefeated ‘master-story’ of liberal humanist ideology. As I will explain, Barth’s novel implicitly serves to perpetuate a present social conflict by enforcing the transcendental lessons of universal human essence, unlimited freedom of choice for self-creation, individual moral conscience, and cosmic brotherhood.

John Barth’s strenuous denial of absolutism starts from an awareness that reality is fundamentally impossible to know and represent as it is. Reality is always in flux, and human perception is subjective and imperfect. Todd Andrews in *The Floating Opera* is led to the same epistemological understanding toward the end of his inquiry into the father’s suicide. Todd determines that he cannot get at the real cause of the death. Despite his continuous inquiry, a gap constantly remains between appearance and reality, or in his words, between "what we see" and "what we can’t see." The eternal gap primarily derives from the nature of reality: Todd realizes that "there is no will-o’-the-wisp so elusive as the cause of any human act" (FO 214). Reality is like "a floating opera" (FO 7), which man can see only in fragments that evade ultimate meaning. And the gap can be leaped only through imaginative "causation," which is "never
more than an inference" (FO 214). Todd finally remarks that since "[Nothing] has intrinsic value" (FO 218), reality thus has no meaning of its own except as that which man imposes on it, and no imposed explanation can be final and conclusive.

The absence of absolutes on which any system of meaning or value can claim to be built produces "a mood ... of ambiguous freedom" (Tanner 1971, 230) that results in both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, "[if] there is no one fixed 'reality' then the self can improvise a theoretically endless succession of roles to play in the world" (Tanner 1971, 230) and in the same way can invent all possible versions for the world. On the other hand, the potential totality of possibilities may be seen to be "equal to no possibility at all" (Putz 1979, 68): confronted with too many possibilities, one experiences the despair of those who are unable to choose any particular one. In addition, in assuming multiple roles, one is in danger of falling a victim to his "ambiguous freedom" by diffusing into total fluidity.

This dilemma of self-definition and choice drives Jacob Horner in The End of the Road into a malady that he calls "cosmopsis," a state of complete paralysis. Jacob finds himself immobilized between two opposites that face him, that is, between too many ways to go and his own desperate indecisiveness, and between too many roles and no stable
self. As his first words in the novel suggest, Jacob lacks any sense of purposiveness or ultimacy: "In a sense, I am Jacob Horner" (ER 1). He is "no character at all" (ER 89), no person of specific contours. Seeing "no reason to do anything" (ER 74), having no desire to choose any definable form of self, he is, as Rennie thinks, all masks and no center: in canceling himself out in multiple roles and appearances, Jacob falls into a statue-like self-petrification.

Jacob encounters an alternative to his cosmopsis through the Doctor's "Mythotherapy" (ER 28, 89), "a strategy of deliberate and arbitrary self-formation" (Putz 1979, 66). For the Doctor, "[the] world is everything that is the case" (ER 81) in the sense that the 'case' of the world and the self itself is not predefined but randomly made. So if one seeks to survive the randomness of the world, he must be able to choose anything in order to create a 'case': "Choosing is existence: to the extent that you don't choose, you don't exist" (ER 83). The Doctor teaches that life is as many dramas as man chooses, in which he becomes a myth-maker writing the scripts, a director assigning the roles, and an actor playing the roles. But there is no supervising or central self antecedent to the Mythopoeic role-assigning and fiction-making. It is "extremely important," proceeds the Doctor, that "you learn to assume those masks wholeheartedly" -- but also arbitrarily; "[don't] think
there is anything behind them: there isn't. 'Ego' means 'I,' and 'I' means 'ego,' and the ego by definition is a mask. Where there's no ego--this is you on the bench--there is no 'I'' (ER 90). Arbitrariness becomes an inevitable principle to rely on in a world where "what the case is is not a matter of logic" (ER 81-82). Based on this principle, man functions as a performing self that seeks the justification for its existence only in the act of performing itself, of playing contradictory roles as situations change.

John Barth's fabulationist storification is an equivalent to the Doctor's Mythotherapy. Barth takes advantage of the undecidability of reality and a concomitant relativity of all meaning-making, as an aesthetic ground for giving priority to the poetic liberty of imagination. If there is "no one fixed reality," every person is free to fabulate his alternative story (or stories) about the world, in order to not merely fill the gap between appearance and reality but replace the 'real' with the imagined. In an interview Barth argues he has no interest in writing about reality. Instead, he emphasizes, it is his highest artistic goal to "re-invent the world" (Enck 1965, 8) as a linguistic construct. Realizing that it is impossible to let reality be accurately represented because of a disparity between words and world, he makes a linguistic turn and "[lets] what language creates be reality" (Tharpe 1974, 12). For Barth, as for the Doctor, what the 'case' of reality is is not
'absolutely' given but 'provisionally made' through language. As it were, language effects the 'case': "the edifice that exists is whatever edifice the language constructs" (Tharpe 1974, 12). The actual given world is denied any inherent stable meaning or permanent value, in which the act of verbal construction is regarded as the only way man can claim a 'case' of reality and at the same time, like Jacob Horner, his manhood as well:

Articulation! There, by Joe, was my absolute, if I could be said to have one. At any rate, it is the only thing I can think of about which I ever had, with any frequency at all, the feelings one usually has for one's absolutes. To turn experience into speech--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.
In other senses, of course, I don't believe this at all. (ER 119)

Jacob's remark on the artificiality of articulation is in accordance with the Doctor's earlier stress that "all fiction and biography, and most historiography, are a lie" (ER 88). The Doctor proceeds to teach that every fiction-making yet should be performed with the self-conscious recognition that fiction is, paradoxically speaking, "a true representation of the distortion that everyone makes of life" (ER 89). "Capital-R Reality," Barth himself argues in a lecture, "is our shared fantasy," and we have to be aware that "our reality ... is our representation ... our fiction" (Barth 1984, 221, the author's italics) made through Mythopoeic construction.

Storifying or story-making as an act of articulation is a central concern in The Sot-Weed Factor. Barth's 819-page novel may be called a collection of stories; it contains, according to a critic's tabulations, at least twenty-five interpolated stories narrated by no less than seventeen storytellers (Harris 1983, 65). Most stories are intermixed with the history and the political vicissitudes of Maryland involved in a larger story of assumed plots and counter-plots. As a minor character says, the world is like "an ocean of story" (582): stories of personal life turn into accounts of historical plots, and those plots turn into stories of unwitting personal involvements. In that "ocean"
storification indicates a means of self-formation, and the entangled stories "function as reference-system in relation to which the various storytellers locate and define themselves" (Putz 1979, 76). Structurally those stories tend to bring coherence to narrative accounts by resolving puzzling events at moments of heightened confusion. These stories, which include a story of assumed plots, also frequently reveal themselves as the products of an artificial effort to bring order to a disordered world by means of Mythopoeic fabulation. The story-making characters create fictional worlds around themselves which will assign them a series of roles to play.

In defining the topical relation between self-definition and storification, The Sot-Weed Factor focuses upon the two different modes of role-assigning embodied by two contrasting protagonists. Ebenezer Cooke and Henry Burlingame are similar to each other in that they possess no such thing as a self, an entity 'given' as "the central core of [a person]" (Fokkema 1991, 70) or as a stable essence: "how can you be a self if you are a series of roles?" (Tanner 1971, 231). A form of self Ebenezer and Henry seek to define refers to the self as an 'assumed' role or roles, in other words, to the 'subjects' or the 'subject-positions' without self, which are provisionally constructed in the act of storification.

Despite the similar condition of self they share,
Ebenezer and Henry are opposed to each other. While Ebenezer overcomes his early malady of cosmopsis by choosing an absolute role to be assumed as a supreme form of self-identity, Henry, preacher and chameleonic performer of Mythopoesis, fabricates multiple roles with which to take advantage of a world of complete relativity. This contrast between those two characters suggests that they are confronting pairs of opposites, such as a singular choice versus multiple choices, integration versus fragmentation, fixity versus fluidity, and a danger of immobility versus a danger of diffusion.

Describing some motives he had for writing The Sot-Weed Factor, Barth manifests in an interview a strong dislike for an assumption that fact is indisputably real:

God wasn’t too bad a novelist, except he was a Realist ... But a certain kind of sensibility can be made very uncomfortable by the recognition of the arbitrariness of physical facts and the inability to accept their finality. Take France, for example: France is shaped like a tea pot, and Italy is shaped like a boot. Well, okay. But the idea that that’s the only way it’s ever going to be, that they’ll never be shaped anything else ... it’s enough to make you scream. (Enck 1965, 8, the author’s italics)

The same antipathy to finality recurs in Ebenezer, who has
been greatly indulged in fanciful recreation like "play-acting" and "word-games" (6, 7) since his childhood with his twin sister, Anna. Like Barth, Ebenezer knows that "'France is shaped like a teapot,' but he [can] scarcely accept the fact that there [is] actually in existence at [this] instant such a place as France" (9). Making little distinction between historical or physical facts and "fairy-stories," he finds "the notion preposterous, almost unthinkable, that this was the only way it happened" (9). Instead, "[Ebenezer's] great imagination and enthusiasm for the world," which was partly encouraged by Henry's early tutoring, leads him to "a great sense of the arbitrariness of the particular real world [without] endow[ing] him with a corresponding realization of its finality" (9).

Just as the attachment to a sense of arbitrariness makes him discredit finality at all, so does the idea that all possibilities are available lead Ebenezer to abandon choice itself. Dangling between "the beauty of the possible" (12) and the incapability of choice, Ebenezer suffers from cosmopsis: "All roads are fine roads," he writes to Anna, and thus "to choose one, impossible" (11). Like Jacob Horner, he lacks any inside momentum of mobility that will move his life from inertia to activity. In choosing no self-contour, he gives up even trying to act and reveals himself as "no special sort of person" (12).

The lack of inner impetus leaves Ebenezer to be
entirely moved by the outer impetus. In early episodes of the novel, he is endowed with recognizable contours when he is forced to play the roles of student at Cambridge, teacher in London, and clerk in a merchant’s office. But these forced fixations bring him a frustrating awareness of his own fluidity that cannot be pinned down to compulsory roles from the outside. He sarcastically diagnoses the fluidity as a proof of selflessness: "insofar as to be is to be in essence the Johnny-come-Friday that was John o’Thursday, why, this Ebenezer Cooke [is] no man at all" (49).

Ebenezer’s selflessness encounters a paralysing challenge through an affair with the prostitute Joan Toast. Compelled to decide to accept or refuse the prostitute’s services, he comes to a full stop and can do nothing at all: "his mind ran to no end like a rat in a race and could not engage the situation ... it was all a dry heave, a false labor: no man issued from it" (53-54). It is in this episode that Ebenezer escapes from cosmopsis by making a Mythopoeic fictionalization of his own being. If he has no predefined essence and his identity is always to be forced, there is no reason at all he should not create his own essence and identity. Suppressing his lust for Joan, he declares himself: "What am I? Virgin, sir! Poet, sir! I am a virgin and a poet ... not a man, but Mankind!” (67). With this self-declaration, Ebenezer creates a supreme story of self. In the story, Ebenezer Cooke becomes an innocent hero who
worships and praises the virtues of chastity and immortality in an earthly world, and Joan Toast the untouched seductress functions as a Muse, as a medium existing for the sake of the hero's narcissistic adherence to the illusion of integrity: "I love thee for my savior and inspiration!" (64). As part of his first poem shows, he creates a story of innocence that will protect him from reality: "Preserv'd, my Innocence preserveth Me/ From Life, from Time, from Death, from History" (66).

Ebenezer's self-creating storification allows him to invent an absolute role and at the same time an imaginary version of reality through which he can assume the role. Ebenezer, who has never written a poem, arbitrarily chooses the roles of Poet Laureate of Maryland and virgin lover in terms of his naive illusion of reality. His naivety culminates in an idealization of Maryland. In an audience with Lord Baltimore, proprietary of Maryland, who later turns out to have been Henry Burlingame in disguise, Ebenezer vows that he would write an epic named Marylandiad to glorify the colonial enterprise and history of the province as a new Eden. His poetic mission, speaks he, is to versify "[the] courage and perseverance of her settlers in battling barb'rous nature and fearsome salvage to wrest a territory from the wild and transform it to an earthly paradise," to "spur the inhabitants to industry and virtue, and thus to "ennoble, empower, and enrich him who owns and
rules her!" (84).

Even though he has chosen the personal absolutes of self and reality, a doubt still bothers Ebenezer. It is his fear that he has no inside momentum towards choosing anything. Declaring that he shall be virgin and poet, he asks himself: "Did I, then, make a choice? Nay, for there was no I to make it!" (66). But in a moment Ebenezer reverses this self-doubt into a conviction to rationalize his own fictionalization: "'Twas the choice made me: a noble choice ... bespeaks a noble chooser" (66). This idealization of the choice itself implies that Ebenezer's self-definition is an ideological product. He imagines himself to be an agent 'called for' by a larger cause to serve for a manifest meaning of the world. Indeed in choosing virginity as the basis of his code, Ebenezer the new Adam works as an agent, a 'subject' of a Platonic Christian humanism, who is named and destined to justify in a new world a set of essential values that precede existence, not only virginity, but "Justice, Truth, Beauty ... that live not in the world, but as transcendent entities, noumenal and pure" (419).

While Ebenezer's Mythopoetic choice initially aims at acquiring a possibility of activity through the reduction of the totality of all choices to a single objective, the very essentialistic fictionalization puts him in danger of being fixed to the absolute choice. A supreme irony in his fiction-making is that while regarding every explanation as
a human construct, he constantly takes for essence his self-imposed role and his version of reality; that is, he does not accept their fictionality. For him, "[the] sum of history" amounts to "no more than the stuff of metaphors" (11), but he himself is, as Henry criticizes, "seduced by metaphors" (138) and cannot recognize that his idealism may also be a metaphor, a product of his fancy. In a similar way, he explains to Henry that a virtue itself is arbitrary, for it is "but a sign" (172). Just as there is a disparity between a sign itself and what it refers to, "[all virtues] mean naught when taken by themselves, like the strokes and scribbles we call writing" (171). Meanwhile, the reason the virtues are so significant to him is that "their virtues lie in what they stand for" (171). Based on this reason, he proceeds to argue, his virginity is to him more than a sign or a virtue, for it signifies "the very emblem of [his] self" that points to his essence" (172), or his "true self" (205). But, again, Ebenezer is not aware that what he believes virginity to stand for is not so much an objective entity as an imposed meaning. In rendering a virtue absolute, he seeks to create an absolute role to assume.

As the novel proceeds, however, a succession of episodes defeats Ebenezer’s single-minded storification through which he tries to force reality to "measure up to his expectations" (231). An early harsh blow against his story of innocence is no sooner struck than he declares
himself a virgin and poet. John McEvoy, Joan Toast’s pimp, attacks his illusion of a virgin love for the prostitute, scoffing: "Everything ye say proves ye know naught whatever concerning love. Think not ye love Joan Toast ... ‘tis your love ye love ... As for this vision ye speak of, ‘tis the vision ye love, not the woman" (68-69). McEvoy continues to charge Ebenezer’s entire ignorance of the world: "‘tis not simply love ye know naught of, ‘tis the entire great real world! Your senses fail ye; your busy fancy plays ye false and fills your head with foolish pictures. Things are not as ye see ‘em, friend -- the world’s a tangled skein, and all is knottier than ye take it for. You understand naught o’ life" (69).

McEvoy’s criticism succinctly epitomizes the pitfall of Ebenezer’s fanciful vision and the complexity of reality he should be confronted with. Intricate with a multiplicity of contradictory plots, versions, and roles, reality does not measure up to his naive expectation. Reality instead happens to him unexpectedly: while he continues to impose a single abstract vision on reality before trying to find out and recognize what it is, reality is always met by chance before being sought.

Ebenezer’s frequent encounters with reality lead him from illusion to disillusion, from innocence to harsh experience. Above all, he learns that Maryland is not at all as paradisial or virginal as he imagined. Malden, his
inherited estate in the colony, turns out to be the exact opposite of Walden. Arriving at the estate, he realizes it becomes every day "a sewer" (493), "a gambling house, tavern, brothel, and opium den" (495). His adventures also prove that he himself is not as chaste as he wishes he were in essence. After having escaped being sodomized by pirates, he comes near to raping the same woman twice, at first as a woman on the Cyprian, a whore ship, in which he watches the pirates rape more than one hundred women, and later as the swine-maid, Susan Warren, in Malden. Much later in the novel it is revealed that the woman was Joan Toast, to whom the unravished poet devoted his virgin love.

Ebenezer's fancy of an absolute self-identity undergoes an education of disillusion, too. Before starting his voyage to Maryland, he is involved in political intrigues between Lord Baltimore and John Coode. Taken for a secret agent sent to thwart John Coode's scheme for revolt in Maryland, Ebenezer is nearly captured and escapes by dropping his laureateship. In his flight, he is forced to act such unexpected roles as John Coode's servant, Sir Benjamin Oliver, and Edward Cooke, or to exchange his identity with his own servant, Bertrand Burton. Furthermore, Henry also disguises himself as another Ebenezer Cooke, while Ebenezer, indentured as a servant of the new master of Cooke's Point which he unwittingly signed away, never fully regains his identity until the end of the novel.
This series of experiences makes Ebenezer recognize that the falsity of his self-creation results from his ignorance of the world. He becomes aware that life is "a shameless, marvelous dramatist" (690) that entangles the world in a skein of unpredictable fictions, schemes, and disguises. Most characters he encounters impersonate at least two identities and participate in a succession of role-play and story-making. And when he knows that "both Baltimore and Coode did not exist save in Burlingame's impostures" (710), the fictionality of reality and self alike almost stuns him. "When I reflect on the weight and power of such fictions beside my own poor shade of a self," he says, "that hath been so much disguised and counterfeited, methinks they have tenfold my substance!" (764). Thus Ebenezer's initiation into life leads him to realize that his own story of an innocent self in an idyllic world was a pure illusion designed to fix reality into a single version:

What moral doth the story hold? Is't that the universe is vain? The chaste and consecrated a hollow madness? My brave assault on Maryland--this knight-errantry of Innocence and Art--sure, I see now 'twas an edifice raised not e'en on sand, but on the black and vasty zephyrs of the Pit ... 'Tis no mere castle in the air ... but a temple of the mind, ... (680)
It is Henry Burlingame who demonstrates the limit of Ebenezer's essentialistic fictionalization by posing an antithetical alternative to it. As the poet's mentor, Henry teaches that man is free to invent any role, any story, insofar as there is no one fixity in reference to reality and self. Henry's "'burly game'" of role-play and story-making indicates a strategy to embrace such unfixed reality: in storifying reality, he creates various roles to play in the fictionalized world, not "as appearances hiding reality, but as adaptations or manipulations of [the] very reality" (Ziegler 1987, 37). Henry's storification also differs from Ebenezer's in self-consciousness. While Ebenezer's innocence makes him regard artifice as the real or as essence, Henry's sophisticated consciousness enables him to be fully aware of the fictionality of his 'game.'

Henry's idea that there are no absolutes in the world deeply relates to his personal originlessness. Henry is both physically and mentally an orphan. Having no knowledge of his father, he has no connection with the world in the sense that, as Anna points out, "[a] man's father is his link with the past," "the bond 'twixt him and the world he's born to" (34). Pastlessness produces for Henry the very mood of "ambiguous freedom" that drives Ebenezer into cosmopsis. As Henry says, his "want of history" offers him "a freedom ... that's both a blessing and a curse" (181). The lack of the past "can as well demoralize as elevate" (181) an orphan
like him: on the one hand, it leaves him "free and unencumbered" (34), but the freedom cannot hide from him the accidentality and anonymity of his existence. He speaks out on this pain: "what a burden and despair to be a stranger to the world at large, and have no link with history! 'Tis as if I'd spring de novo like a maggot out of meat, or dropped from the sky. Had I the tongue of angels I ne'er could tell you what a loneliness it is!" (143).

But Henry overcomes the burden of being alienated from origin by having recourse to an alienator's "ambiguous freedom" as fully as possible. Whereas Ebenezer reduces the freedom into a single choice, Henry engages it as a ground for the autonomy of an infinite invention. Henry's rootlessness permits him a "philosophic liberty" (181) to define both world and self as totally arbitrary. He views the world as chaos or "black Cosmos" (373) which does not preserve any absolute order or cause. Man in such a world is little better than "a mayfly flitting down the winds of Chaos" (372). Henry exhales that in order to remain sane in the world, man must supply what the world lacks by ceaselessly making self-articulating assertions:

the truth that drives men mad must be sought for ere it's found, and it eludes the doltish or myopic hunter. But once 'tis caught and looked on, whether by insight or instruction, the captor's sole expedient is to force his will upon't ere it
work his ruin! ... One must needs make and seize his soul, and then cleave fast to't, or go babbling in the corner; one must choose his gods and devils on the run, quill his own name upon the universe, and declare, 'Tis I, and the world stands such-a-way! One must assert, assert, assert, or go screaming mad. What other course remains? (373)

Henry’s self-assertion indicates a selfless self’s effort to cope with the arbitrary and elusive world by becoming its own role-creator before the world pins him down to a certain role. Henry believes that before "[the] world can alter [him] entirely," "[man] can alter himself, down to his very essence" (137). Man is able to do so because a self is at least as arbitrary and fluid as the world. Just as "the very universe is naught but change and motion" (138), the self is "a Heraclitean flux" (357) like "a river" that is "ne’er the same from hour to hour" (137).

Henry continues to remind Ebenezer that there is nothing like an essential or stable self: "your true and constant Burlingame lives only in your fancy as doth the pointed order of the world" (357). The continuity of self resides only in man’s memory. Against Ebenezer’s claim that constancy against change, order against chaos, can be still made because "memory," as "the House of Identity, the Soul’s dwelling place," enables him to "know that [he is], and
[has] been" (138), Henry argues that memory itself is not only uncertain but a subjective fiction: "we recall whate’er we wish, and forget the rest," and "e’en those things [memory] holds, it tends to color" (139).

Self-assertion itself is revealed as an artificial act to articulate man’s mutable self by means of the provisional impersonations of multiple roles. Henry emphasizes the arbitrariness of the act by explaining that "all assertions of thee and me, e’en to oneself, are acts of faith, impossible to verify" (141). But it is "a grossness of perception" that lets man regard "Thames and Tigris ... but especially me and thee, as though what went by those names or others in time past hath some connection with the present object" (137-38). This very unverifiability of reality makes Henry proclaim that a self is entirely up to how man verbalizes himself. For him, articulation is an absolute: "The man is whate’er he chooses to call himself" (159).

Throughout the novel Henry becomes whatever he wants to fictionalize himself to be. A number of characters turn out to be masks assumed by Henry in disguise: Peter Sayer, John Coode, Timothy Mitchell, Lord Baltimore, Monsieur Casteene, Nicholas Lowe, Bertrand Burton, Ebenezer Cooke, and Gov. Nicholson. "Henry" the ‘I’ who searches for information about a personal past, refers to one of the many ‘I’s assumed in the panoply of multifarious characters. That is, Henry’s identity is "as much invented as discovered" (Harris
1983, 65). Despite a pastiche of information assembled from diverse sources, there is no definite identification of Henry's origin. Confronted with his unverifiable past, he realizes that in order to establish a link with the past, he must infer the link, that is, make an act, an self-assertive, if arbitrary, "leap of faith" (Ewell 1973, 40) from "scanty facts" (387) of the past to the inferred identity or origin. Thus in choosing an Indian identity, he invents another role that will give his contingent existence a position in a world in flux.

As opposed to Ebenezer's story of an absolute self, Henry's multiple self-fictionalization embraces the flowing totality of reality from which his originlessness makes him feel disconnected. If change is the only constant of reality, man can be in one with reality by virtue of Protean metamorphoses. With his ability to show that he can become any identity he asserts, Henry claims a bond between himself and the world and in doing so transforms his orphanage into what he calls Cosmic Love or "Cosmophilism" (762). For him, a self is at least equal to or surpasses the world because of its all-inclusive yearning for "the entire parti-colored whole" (529). As he declares, the transcendental destiny of his existence aims at becoming "[the world's] lord and spouse" (537), that is, "Suitor of Totality, Embracer of Contradictions, Husband to all Creation, the Cosmic Lover!" (536).
The strategy of fictionalization also serves the purpose of manipulating reality. Henry insists that fiction should be made against the possible intrusion of patterns from without. For the same reason that man should be able to alter himself before the world alters him into a fixed form, man should impose his version on the world in order to prevent the world from imposing its scheme on him. "If you'd live in the world, my friend," he advises to Ebenezer, "you must dance to some other fellow's tune or call your own and try to make the whole world step to't" (357).

In addition, Henry realizes very well that reality, which has no shape or meaning of its own, is always vulnerable to deliberate distortion. This vulnerability is particularly the case with the reality of the historical past. Facts are "dark" (525), distorted, and, in many cases, "beyond recognition" (Gladsky 1981, 40), because they "vary with standpoint, latitude, circumstance, and time" (525). "History," Henry says, "is like those waterholes ... in the wilds of Africa," and then "the most various beasts may drink there side by side with equal nourishment" (525). Therefore, in order to master and control history and its uncontrollable reality, Henry suggests, man has to be a chameleonic impostor who knows to manipulate its shapelessness and indeterminacy with various impersonations, perspectives, and versions.

With his skills at manipulating both self and world,
Henry reveals himself as a supreme impersonator and plotter in an environment full of impostures and conspiracies. Throughout the novel the whole world indeed steps to the tune of his fictionalized story of an intrigue between Baltimore and Coode, in which he acts those two antagonists of the political drama as well as other minor partisans. Which side is good or evil, or whether or not they actually exist, does not really matter in this storification of reality, for both Baltimore and Coode have no "substantial" (806) quality save in Henry's impersonations. In other words, his story-making, which basically aims at leaping a gap between what is known and what is unknown, turns into an act of "imaginative appropriation" (Putz 1979, 84) or constitution of reality rather than becomes an act of imaginative apprehension of the unknown. In creating a fiction of the past, he confirms an assertion made by "the Author" figure in Part V that history or its reality is "all grounded on meager fact and solid fancy" (806).

Even as it serves a selfless self seeking to construct a definable identity or identities, a fabulationist act of story-making reveals its own limits and produces its own dangers. Particularly related to the novel's purely formalistic aesthetics that justifies an act of verbal construction for its own sake, storification becomes a self-sufficient play, serves for an illusion of infinite invention and an evasion of reality, and finally contributes
to reproducing and solidifying a dominant ideology of liberalist humanism whose assumption of representation the novel tries to undermine.

Seen from a dimension of historical reconstruction in the novel, storification is basically intended as a means of foregrounding a view that history is a narrative artifact rather than a realistic reproduction of the past. Frequently comparing history-writing to storytelling, the novel shows itself to be a virtual collection of 'his stories,' written and oral, real and imagined, in which most characters and the author alike are involved in creating various stories of the past. In those acts of story-making, so-called facts are frequently foregrounded to be fictional as well, and thus "the Author" calls history as a borderstate in which "the rival claims of Fact and Fancy ... may [be] overrid[den] with fair impunity" (805).

In actualizing this self-consciousness of story-making in his novel, Barth himself plays the role of "an impostor" (Davis 1985, 57), a writer who, as Barth expresses in his well-known essay "The Literature of Exhaustion," deliberately "imitates the role of Author" and "imitates the form of the Novel" (1984, 72). Barth means by "the Novel" or by "a proper novel" a direct imitation of life and its actions, while he refers to a novel like his own Sot-Weed Factor as an "attempt to represent not life directly but a representation of life" (1984, 72). Barth's self-imitative
novel ironically uses the conventions of "the Novel," such as "cause and effect, linear anecdote, characterization, authorial selection, arrangement, and interpretation" (1984, 72), rather than merely obviating them as obsolete notions. Barth reinstalls them into his novel in order to show that they are artificial devices for fiction-making, that the novel he writes is a narrative construct.

A brief glance at various titles of the Parts and Chapters of *The Sot-Weed Factor* offers some hints at Barth's self-conscious fiction-making. In several headings Barth makes repetitive use of terms signifying that the plot is structured according to the progress of action, such as "introduce," "issue," "commence," "depart," "return," "arrive," "proceed," "confrontations," "ultimate objective," "attain," and "result." Those chapter titles suggest that Barth aims at presenting a 'fictional' biography in an assumed order of realistic narrative representation. At the end of the novel, Barth explicitly accepts the novel's fictionality through "The Author" figure's remark that "[the] story of Ebenezer Cooke is told" (806).

While it imitates "the Novel," *The Sot-Weed Factor* also imitates the historical novel and its "documental imitation" (Walkiewicz 1986,45). Barth actually uses the real sources of colonial history, such as *The Archives of Maryland*, the real Ebenezer Cooke's poem *The Sot-Weed Factor*, and Captain John Smith's *General History of Virginia*. But as he
describes in an interview how his pseudo-historical novel differs from the conventional historical novel based on mimesis, Barth employs "historical or legendary material ... in a farcial, even a comic, spirit" as an "opportunity for counterrealism" (Barth 1984, 59). In other words, he emphasizes, his novel "isn't finally 'about' Colonial Maryland at all" (1984, 180), but instead about the artificiality of historical reconstruction. He deals with the specific historical past to suggest that "history is itself impossible" (Bergmann 1983, 32) in the sense that since history varies the ends of a person interpreting and reconstructing it, history and its facts cannot be reestablished accurately or objectively.

Barth demonstrates this arbitrary treatment of history through characters deliberately revising it "at the dictates of Whim and Interest" (805). Lord Baltimore gives Ebenezer a lengthy self-serving account of the tribulations of governing Maryland. Ebenezer's father, Andrew Cooke, omits his love relationship with his employee Russecks when he tells Ebenezer the story of his birth. One of the most overtly distorted revisions can be seen in the Jesuit Father Smith's storytelling of an "unknown history" of Father FitzMaurice, whom he calls "the first martyr in America" (378). For the purpose of creating "a better tale" of the Father's hardships in Indian territory, Father Smith affects "the martyr's point of view," adds "what [he] can surmise"
to scanty facts and rumors, and leaves out the sexual aspects of his martyrdom.

The episode related to a review of Ebenezer’s own poem provides another relevant example of the arbitrary interpretation man makes of the past. Realizing that his initial fictionalization of Maryland was a purely innocent illusion, Ebenezer revises *Marylandiad* and writes a Hudibrastic satire named *The Sot-Weed Factor* to "scourge the Province ... catalogue her every wickedness" (494). But when it is published in London, English readers do not accept the poem as an attack on Maryland’s corruption but praise it as an "initial proof of Maryland’s refinement" (816). Furthermore, partly thanks to the popularity of the poem, Maryland, as Lord Baltimore hoped, acquires a reputation comparable to Virginia, and the aging poet is granted another laureateship by Lord Baltimore V.

The distortion of history is also explicitly made by the author himself who opposes a clear distinction between fact and fiction. Barth’s aggressively counter-realistic attitude toward historical representation allows him to take the liberty of re-inventing the past and insinuate that fictitious history is as valid as factual history. In the novel Barth juxtaposes to actual historical sources fake documents like *A Privie Journall of Sir Burlingame* and John Smith’s *Secret Historie of the Voyage Up the Bay of Chesapeake From Jamestowme in Virginia*, in such a way that
the fake history can be substituted for the version of the actual history. One of the most outrageous parts in those juxtapositions concerns Captain John Smith’s famous story of how the Indian girl Pocahontas saved his life by throwing herself between him and club-wielding tribesmen. Barth offers another version of the Smith-Pocahontas affair through a certain Sir Henry Burlingame, who claims to have been an eyewitness to the incident. According to Sir Henry’s account in his Privie Journall, John Smith befriends the hostile Indians by means of his dirty postcards and other erotica. When he is about to be executed for exchanging lewd glances with Pocahontas, she hurls herself upon him. The Indian emperor Powhatan decrees that Smith’s life depends on his breaking her hitherto impenetrable maidenhead. The alleged eyewitness goes on to recount how Smith fulfills a superhuman feat with a secret trick of the Rites of the Holy Eggplant. Finally an entirely satisfied emperor sets free Smith and his party in reward for his potency recipe.

While this parodic revision of history and its sources truly contributes to Barth’s iconoclastic debunking of a myth about early America as a New World, the revision is not intended to offer any new truth about the past. Instead, Barth toys with history to suggest the absurdity of expecting objective truth or adequacy in the rendering of the past. Barth’s attitude toward history exactly corresponds to Henry Burlingame’s Cosmic Love for all parts
of the world. Insomuch as there is no absolute truth or form with regard to historical knowledge or representation, Barth wants the freedom to embrace simultaneously an infinite variety of all possible versions of history which are, as Hayden White also supports, "all equally relativistic" (White 1978, 117) to how a person storifies the past in linguistic constructs. Ironically, Barth, who consistently refuses the finality of any fact, truth, or pattern, finds "a final image of history" from his "desire to 'play' with history" (Holder 1968, 603).

Playfulness indeed becomes a fundamental aesthetic stance in Barth's novel. Particularly through linguistic playfulness Barth not only exposes but also celebrates the arbitrariness and the artificiality associated with story-making. However, Barth's "sport on lexical playfields" tends to dominate the whole world to the extent that "verbal play precedes existence and experience" (Tanner 1971, 240, 230). While it is to testify self-consciously the inherent inadequacy in the linguistic construction of reality, Barth's verbal play turns into a self-sufficient formalistic act entirely independent of the substantiality of the world.

Barth's tendency toward playful verbalization begins to appear from the novel's one-sentence and thirteen-line opening paragraph:

In the last years of the Seventeenth Century there was to be found among the fops and fools of the
London coffee-houses one rangy, gangling flitch called Ebenezer Cooke, more ambitious than talented, and yet more talented than prudent, who, like his friends-in-jolly, all of whom were supposed to be educating at Oxford or Cambridge, had found the sound of Mother English more fun to game with than her sense to labor over, and so rather than applying himself to the pains of scholarship, had learned the knack of versifying, and ground out quires of couplets after the fashion of the day, afroth with Joves and Jupiters, aclang with jarring rhymes, and string-taut with similes stretched to the snapping-point.

This long prose mimetically introduces a protagonist by describing his physical appearance, his circumstance, and, more significantly, his particular quality. From the first, the novel stresses Ebenezer's penchant for linguistic sounds and versifying skills. But the major focus of the prose is on the contrived complexity of its texture that can be associated with that of the novel's plot. Stylistic verbalization becomes Barth's primary concern in this prose, which consists of various rhetorical features and decorations, such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, epithet, archaisms ("afroth" and "aclang"), and other conventions. From the opening sentence, Barth makes the
reader conscious of his artificial patternings of words before he tries to decode what the sentence means.

The play of words as sounds permeates through the whole novel in such a way that the very concept of signification is also playfully undermined. At one point in the novel two female characters exchange a six-page list of French and English synonyms for "whore" (477-82). At another point Ebenezer and Henry engage in a rhyming contest between each other. Those two verbal plays reflect Barth's fabulationist attitude toward historical reconstruction. As a ceaseless number of fictions can be proliferated independently of historical facts, one can name ad infinitum without having to define or reveal the things he is supposed to name. For "significance," as Henry reminds Ebenezer, is not a "criterion" (417) for judging those verbal bouts. A real attention is instead drawn to the potency and autonomy of sheer language separated from sense and to the craft involved in playing with language.

Another relevant example can be found toward the end of the novel, where Ebenezer tries to divert Mrs. Russecks from her fears by speaking of "sundry theories of history," including "the retrogressive," "the dramatic," "the progressive," "the cyclical," "the undulatory," and "even the vortical" (737). This listing of theories is suggestive because of not only Ebenezer's lampooning of the ideas of history but also his "sophistical cajolments" (737).
rhetorically employed to influence his audience. This passage is intended not so much to define what history is, as it is to imply that "the only patterns which characterize history are the rhetorical patterns employed for rhetorical purposes" (Walkiewicz 1986, 59).

Self-sufficiency of verbal construction continues to be suggested in the novel’s frequent emphasis on the autonomy of storification. Deeply governed by Barth’s authorial impulse to "intoxicate, engorge oneself with story" (Barth 1984, 57), the novel does not only reveal a storified world as having a reality of its own, but it also regards the means of performing storytelling as an end no less important than the story itself.

Many characters elucidate and execute the art of storytelling in terms of the significance of the way a story is narrated. Ebenezer explains to Baltimore that a prince’s greatness does not lie "in the deeds ... but in their telling" (82). Henry develops Ebenezer’s view by defining that the key to a good story is "the how of’t" (146). To Ebenezer, who teases him to tell quickly the end of his adventure story, Henry tenders a piece of advice to "[make] not such haste to reach the end," for "it spoils the pace and mixes the figures" (160). Henry is such a manipulative storyteller that he always establishes the proper circumstance and paces his story, even to the point of spreading it out over several days.
As for Henry, the way of storytelling serves Henrietta Russecks as a key element through which the same story can be re-created differently. She rebukes Ebenezer for his impatience: "What matter if you've heard the plot already?" (723). She assumes the manner of a professional storyteller, narrating her story with a dramatist's skills, by arousing the audience's curiosity, inventing colloquies "for the sake of interest" (726), and mimicking the characters' manners and voices. If Henrietta offers an example of good storytelling, Harvey Russecks presents clear statements on its art. For him, the primary principle of storytelling is that a tale should be "well-spun": "a tale well wrought is the gossip o' the gods" (636-37). He considers a complex plot to be an important trait of a good story: "Is't more knotful or bewildered than the skein o' life, that a good tale tangles the better to unsnarl" (636). Meanwhile, he warns, the meaning of the complicated plot should not be explained within the story, for what is intended is one thing, while what is narrated is another. For him, storytelling is an art that keeps its own reality separated from external meaning: "'Tis a great mistake for a tale-teller to philosophize and tell us what his story means; haply it doth not mean what he thinks at all" (639).

While self-sufficient and arbitrary storification underlies the aesthetics of the whole novel, it becomes, as Ebenezer betrays, a dangerous means of avoiding reality. For
Ebenezer, literature is always a discipline of transcendence and universality. Comparing it with other arts and sciences, he idealizes literature as the most valuable in that it concerns "eternal verities and timeless problems" that comprehend "the entire range of man's experience and behavior" (189). It is detachment from the world that a poet needs in order to deal with those immutable things. But Ebenezer's insistence on detachment is not merely for an artistic distance. He advocates it not to have a meaningful insight into the world, but to escape from it, and then enclose himself in his self-indulgent art. For him, poetry is "but a game played for the sport of't" (512), and the world is "his subject matter only" (511) for the game.

Barth's own remark in a 1965 review article -- "Muse, spare me ... from social-historical responsibility ... from every other kind as well, except artistic" (1984, 55) -- is repeated in Ebenezer's playful speech: "'What business hath a poet with the business of the world?' he asked rhetorically" (511).

The aesthetic appropriation of the world similarly occurs in Ebenezer's early phase of story-making for self-definition. In constructing a story for the fixation of a transcendental and absolute identity, Ebenezer views the reality of life itself as only part of a fictitious story. In other words, Ebenezer's exclusive recourse to the act of storifying reality cuts him off from the less arbitrary
references of human experiences, instead imprisoning him in a funhouse of evasive and arbitrary storification. Thrown into the sea and experiencing a moment of death, he is exposed to a thought that he cannot accept, a thought that his story-making must end when he realizes that death is part of a reality that resists being storified. He tries to escape from this intrusion of reality by regarding himself as the function of, or as a figure in, an evolving story, in which he merely plays a fictitious part of dying:

But in his heart the fact of death and all these sensuous anticipations were to Ebenezer like the facts of life and the facts of history and geography, which, owing to his education and natural proclivities, he looked at always from the storyteller's point of view: notionally he admitted its finality; vicariously he sported with its horror; but never, never could he really embrace either. That lives are stories, he assumed; that stories end, he allowed—how else could one begin another? But that the teller himself must live a particular tale and die—Unthinkable! Unthinkable! Even now, when he saw not the slightest grounds for hope and knew that the dread two minutes must be on him soon, his despair was as notional, his horror as vicarious, as if he were in his chambers in St. Giles playing
the dying-game, or acting out a story in the summerhouse. (294)

If Ebenezer’s story-making becomes a means of evading reality through his single version of self and world, Henry’s becomes a means of transcending reality in the name of unlimited freedom to invent provisional roles and stories. Henry’s doctrine of free invention indeed rejuvenates a stereotyped slogan of liberalist individualism about free choice: as much as you assert yourself, you can be your own man; you can become all you want to, and you can infinitely claim any meanings or any alternatives you imagine. This appeal to freedom exactly invokes what Jonathan Culler calls “the myth of the innocence of becoming: that continual change, as an end in itself, is freedom, and that it liberates one from the demands that could be made of any particular state of the system” (1975, 251). Henry pursues “perpetual self-transcendence” by claiming “the right to produce meaning ad libitum” (Culler 1975. 251, the author’s italics) through random storifications and extremely fluid impersonations.

Henry’s notion of unlimited invention has its flaws. First of all, the notion seems illusory. Henry’s manipulative fabrications are motivated by an awareness that an individual is necessarily situated in an ideological context insomuch as reality and self alike are doomed to be controlled by political manipulation. But in excessively
depending on the infinite possibility of fictionalization, Henry dreams of an 'apolitical' self completely freed from the imposed patternings from without.

Second, the multiplicity of arbitrary invention superimposed on an undefined self and ambiguous historical facts tends to neutralize various constructs as being basically one and the same with one another. Though he declares that he can be "whate'er he chooses to call himself" (159), Henry is in himself nothing, no one; in becoming all, he cancels himself out in a series of role-plays. Ironically, when he commits himself to his inferred Indian origin, he vanishes into obscurity and disappears from the world that he has proclaimed to be his mistress. In a similar way, an idea that all versions can be all equally made without restraint implies that no meaning may exist in any of them. For a meaning is possible only through its discriminate difference from other meanings of other versions. Making too much of the concept of arbitrariness, Henry's free invention is in danger of eroding the possibility of self and meaning.

The limit of storification is more obviously revealed through its ideological complicity in reinforcing a social status quo in the interest of an exploiting class. As a whole, an act of verbal construction in Barth's novel reflects an economic activity in a consumerist capitalism of commodification the author himself belongs to. Throughout
the novel, the author and most of his characters delight in producing and consuming verbal commodities through the processes of rhetorical play, storytelling, and parodic revision of history. However, a problem arises because, as both Ebenezer and Henry show, such fictionalization eludes the real human inequity with which that act is confronted. Ebenezer and Henry work together to neutralize the resistance of the fugitive slaves and disaffected Maryland Indians by incorporating it into their liberal humanist storification.

Ebenezer plays a major role in such an imperialist maneuver. When he is captured by the rebellious races and encounters another intrusion of unexpected reality, Ebenezer tries to avoid it by subjecting those excluded others' history to his own self-serving storification. Throughout, the "storyteller's point of view" (294) continuously leads him to view his experience as fictitious. Finding his boat at the mercy of fortune near Bloodsworth Island, the fugitives' hideaway, he compares the present predicament to a dream: "I wonder if I am ... still wrapped in sleep, and all this parlous history but a dream" (556). And he proceeds to recall a game of "play-acting" (6) he played with Anna: "There was a trick we knew as children: when the lions of Numidia were upon us ... we'd say, 'Tis but a dream, and now I'll wake" (556).

Ebenezer does not so much overcome as restrengthens his
evasive attitude toward reality by enclosing it in his narrative of "moderate liberal moral" (Henderson III 1974, 284). As discussed earlier, a series of disillusioning experiences make him realize that his initial storification of an innocent hero results from a naive illusion of reality. Nevertheless, this realization does not stop him from imposing his single vision on both himself and others. He imagines himself to be an experienced Adam in his "spiritual autobiography" (589) who must pay for his sin of ignorance by taking upon himself the burden of responsibility for all incidents and losses that happened around him. Moral responsibility and individual conscience become his new principles of self without which the world cannot be faced: "he suffered not from his loss alone, but from McEvoy's as well, and Anna's, and Andrew's, and even Bertrand's--from the general condition of things, in sum, for which he saw himself answerable--and that the pain of loss, however great, was as nothing beside the pain of responsibility for it. The fallen suffer from Adam's fall" (751).

This code of responsibility underlies Ebenezer's politics of "moderation" (Henderson III 1974, 284) when he attempts to resolve the revolt of the exploited who face genocide and slavery. On the one hand, as a white man coming from "the class of the exploiters," Ebenezer admits that "it was [the Indians' and Negroes'] exploitation by the English
colonists that had rendered them hostile" (589). He adds
that "as an educated gentleman of the western world he had
shared in the fruits of his culture's power and must
therefore share what guilt that power incurred" (589).

But immediately thereafter Ebenezer reproduces the
ideology of an imperialistic society and justifies both his
own moral cause and the interest of his class. At first, his
appeal to the 'human' and 'brotherhood' serves to deny any
difference between oppressor and oppressed and, by so doing,
to transcend any concrete social conditions in which the
cases of human inequity have been committed: "if it was the
accidents of power and position that made the difference
between exploiters and exploited ... it was as 'human' for
the white man to enslave and dispossess as it was 'human'
for the black and red to slaughter on the basis of color
alone; the savage who would put him to the torch anon was no
less his brother than was the trader who had once enslaved
that savage" (589). In this doctrine of universalism, shared
human nature becomes a transcendental imperative by which
every human being is homogeneously united without regard to
the demands made from such divisions as color, history, and
social position. As Ebenezer insists, the revolt of the
exploited races is understandable in the sense that every
man inherently possesses the dark human nature they
represent: "there's a deal of the savage in all of us"
(638).
With this universalist generalization of a particular racial problem, Ebenezer at the same time abstracts the present crisis from its social context by interpreting it as part of his personal moral story. The crisis is considered to be an event that "his secular Original Sin" is at last punished, and thus, Ebenezer assumes, if he were killed by those oppressed brothers, it would mean "a kind of Vicarious Retribution" (589) that he should have exacted as a self-punishment. In this way, Ebenezer's principle of responsibility is meant not so much to understand and help the others' suffering as it is to accomplish the "spiritual autobiography" (589) of his moral integrity. As McEvoy asserts, Ebenezer's generalization aims at his own spiritual concern and redemption: "'Still the virgin,' he cried, 'with no thought for any wight's loss save his own!'" (751).

Ebenezer's value-neutral appeal to the human and brotherhood reveals itself to be a strategy to solidify the interest of his class against the fancied danger of violent uprising. Ebenezer seems to refer to the universality of human nature as an indication that every race is equal insomuch as it shares intrinsically common humanity. But the view is itself based on an abstraction of the unknown others. For him, the present crisis is more than a conflict between exploiter and exploited. As he declares, it is the case between light and darkness, "the case of humankind, of Civilization versus the Abyss of savagery" (716). Ebenezer
acts to moderate the uprising for the benefits of his class which does not need to sacrifice anything in a social order, while the excluded races are condemned to brutal exploitation.

In performing his politics of moderation, Ebenezer has recourse to Henry’s manipulative scheme-making and role-playing. It is not surprising that both Ebenezer and Henry ultimately work for the common cause of liberal humanist individualism: Ebenezer’s universalist storification is consistent with Henry’s insistence on the freedom of incessant self-assertion and unlimited invention of versions in that both assume that those individual story-making and choices transcend the social and historical contexts within which they are made. Moreover, Henry’s Cosmophilism effectively contributes to promoting a code of brotherhood. Including all the categories of identity, political party, and race, his all-encompassing Cosmic Love, like Ebenezer’s universalism, tends to depoliticize concrete social reality by contending that in order to imagine all possibilities of the world, every individual should be independent of any present system or division and embrace transcendentally all the contradictions between each other.

Meanwhile, it is ironic that they employ those seemingly transcendent and value-neutral acts as political tools. Ebenezer suggests that the best way to nullify the plan of revolt is to make the blacks and Indians fight
against each other: "Faction and intrigue ... were the only weapons that could save the English until their position was stronger in America" (769). A supreme plotter, Henry departs to plant the seeds of faction in his native origins, and finally, as Ebenezer hoped, a social status quo is reaffirmed at the end of the novel, while nothing is heard of the fate of the races. Thus as its concept and its practice suggest, storification in Barth’s novel becomes a means of constructing self and reality in the service of a dominant ideology.
CHAPTER V

THE DISPERSIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF SELF
AND HISTORY IN NORMAN MAILER'S
THE ARMIES OF THE NIGHT

In *The Armies of the Night*, Norman Mailer's self-conscious fictionalization of self and history aims at a severe critique of the ideological fixation and conformity perpetuated by mass media in liberal-capitalist America during the sixties. Mailer's indictment of the media as an instrument of political integration is generated by an awareness that all aspects of society are ideologically permeated with totalitarianism. In reconstructing the 1967 Pentagon March, Mailer considers it as his crucial political task to produce a medium in competition with the media's authoritative and seemingly objectivistic factualization of an individual and an event.

Against a culture of consensus, Mailer emphasizes that the indeterminacy of self and history denies any monolithic approach that confines them in a fixed image and version or in a unitary form. For Mailer, both self and history are not so much self-sufficient or transcendental constants but provisional constructs mediated by discourse and ideology. Mailer questions the concept of a unified individual subject at the core of liberalist ideology by assuming a self-
undermining and self-dispersing author-figure who is overtly
diverse and discontinuous and at the same time lays little
claim to the wholeness or ultimacy of knowledge or
representation. And Mailer's fictionalization of a
historical event challenges a dualistic separation between
novel and history, between fiction and fact, and further
between the private and the public.

Mailer's attack on a totalizing culture is influenced
by the philosophy of the New Left. As Jean Radford suggests,
the political concern of American intellectual radicals in
the sixties changed from considerations of Right or Left to
cultural criticism of totalitarianism regarded "as the
result of state power directed towards a single ideological
position" (54). All social, psychological, and cultural
spheres were radically politicized for the scrutiny of the
centralized state and its power to enforce "standardisation,
political conformism and cultural mediocrity" (54). Like the
New Left radicals, Mailer pays more attention to the socio-
cultural centralization than to party politics.

In writing against the threat of ideological
standardization, Mailer is well aware that the critical
position should be predicated on a recognition that no human
activities, including his own literary act, can be separated
from the political. As he reflects on his changed "'social
ken'" in Advertisements for Myself, "politics as politics
interests me less today than politics as a part of
everything else in life" (271). In *The Armies of the Night*, Mailer insists that a writer should adopt an aggressively political voice to awaken America from the mass media's reinforcement of ideological conformity. For Mailer to separate the aesthetic from the political is to seek a political sanctuary, which indicates an implicit acceptance and consolidation of the structures through which power is exercised:

As the power of communication grew larger, so the responsibility to educate a nation lapped at the feet, new tide of a new responsibility, and one had become a writer after all to find a warm place where one was safe ... writers were born to discover wine. It was an old argument and he was worn with it--he had written a good essay once about the failure of any major American novelist to write a major novel which would reach out ... to a major part of that American audience brainwashed by Hollywood, TV, and *Time.*

Throughout *The Armies of the Night*, the mass media is made the target of Mailer's criticism. Mailer charges that the mass media perpetuates the existing power structure by carving "the ideas of America" into the mind of an American majority, "ideas like conformity, cleanliness, America-is-always-right" (177). Particularly in subjecting the American subject to the unquestioned, transcendental idea of
patriotism, the mass media becomes a cultural agent to serve for various other means of maintaining the current political center, such as the Pentagon, politicians in power, and law enforcement agencies. While the Pentagon, "the true and high church of the military-industrial complex" (132), is "the most authoritative embodiment of the principle that America was right, America was might, America was the true religious war of Christ against the Communist" (311), the patriotic principle is naturalized by the media: "The brain is washed deep, there are reflexes: whiteshirts, Star-Spangled Banner, saluting the flag. At home is corporation land's whip--the television set" (281). Mailer indicts the media for making the ideology of patriotism absolute and "creating a psychology over the last twenty years in the average American which made wars like Vietnam possible" (95).

The march against the Pentagon, argues Mailer, thus means a resistance to authority which "lied through the teeth of corporation executives as Cabinet officials and police enforcement officers and newspaper editors and advertising agencies, and in its mass magazines" (104). Mailer judges the press media to be even "the silent assassins of the Republic" (64). Receiving their misrepresentation "in systematic form," America suffers from "mass schizophrenia" (161), a disease caused by the rupture between the real and the imaginary or the represented. Raymond Federman claims that such a rupture has become worse
for the sixties because "most REAL events were productions, elaborate technological, and electronic productions" (8). Like in the case of the Vietnam war, a historical event "lent itself to the kind of distortion of reality that refraction produces" (Olster 1989, 56). Mailer’s criticism reflects the increasing distrust of official discourse in the decade, whether spoken, written, or televised as images.

Instead of portraying the Vietnam war in The Armies of the Night, Mailer takes the occasion of a protest against that war as an event demonstrating the problems in the media’s reportorial treatment of human experience. Mailer claims that the media’s "fetish with factology" (286) tends to superficially treat or overdetermine such indeterminate subjects as history and self. Furthermore, the media ‘makes’ an event or distorts its message, as well as reports it. In the guise of objectivity the media constructs meaning and factualizes it as reality; it leaves no room for incompleteness and artificiality in dealing with complex human experience.

Mailer both starts and ends Book One of his novel with the press versions of his activities related to the march. He thereby suggests that the media’s report itself is an event. The banal coverage of Time magazine only focuses on Mailer’s obscene conduct without truly describing what happened in Mailer’s 1967 performance at the Ambassador Theater. The Washington Post cannot even deliver the sense
of spiritual experience after his stay in the Occoquan jail, the experience he metaphorically presents to the press. Instead, the paper regards his speech as a sermon reflecting his Jewish origin. Mailer ironically comments on this press version by saying that "[it] was obvious the good novelist Norman Mailer had much to learn about newspapers, reporters, and salience" (240).

In opposition to the fixation of human experience Mailer seeks a means of support in what he calls the "political aesthetic" (104) of the New Left. Greatly attracted to the New Left's refusal of any totalizing ideological constants, Mailer deduces that such a refusal results from their belief that "[the] future of the revolution existed in the nerves and cells of the people who created it and lived with it rather than in the sanctity of the original idea" (104). Those new radicals challenge the authoritative nature of established organizational politics by refusing to define any ideological ends in their action, which makes the authorities unable to "comprehend nor contain nor finally manage to control" (104) their movement.

Similar to the New Left, Mailer contends that while the media legitimatizes its own report as factually true and serves for a culture of consensus, experience or its meaning, whether in history or in self, cannot be fixed or represented as an objective and ultimate whole. As he argues, "the truth about oneself is never told" (161), and
likewise "a history of the March on the Pentagon which is not unfair will never be written, any more than a history which could prove dependable in details!" (292).

Though Mailer has a deep sympathy with the New Left about the necessity for being liberated from the dogmatic abstraction of experience, he does not mystify the experiential as having transcendental values. For Mailer, experience is an open-ended flux whose meaning is not inherently given or stabilized but arbitrarily generated in terms of how that experience is perceived or interpreted. Nor is perception or interpretation itself a transparent act. What is significantly suggested in Mailer's emphasis on the New Left's "political aesthetic" is that language is not politically innocent, and that interpretation is based on the verbal constructs of a particular language-use or what he frequently calls "style" through which interpretation is performed. In the analysis of the New Left, Mailer claims that "the truth of his material was revealed to a good writer by the cutting edge of his style (he could thus hope his style was in each case the most appropriate tool for the material of the experience)" (104). It is style, not any previously defined or imposed idea, that enables the truth of experience to be discovered. As he observes early in the novel, "the clue to discovery was not in the substance of one's idea, but in what was learned from the style of one's attack. (Which was one reason Mailer's style changed for
every project.)" (37).

As these quotes indicate, Mailer is very sensitive to searching for an appropriate style or form for reconstructing experience. Above all, to recapture the multiplex nature of experience requires the multiplicity of a perceiving self as it is constructed by a narrative form. Mailer employs an authorial self that disperses itself into a series of multifarious images and voices in a kind of double-generic text that keeps both novel and history interfused. Meanwhile, Mailer is always conscious of his own meaning-making. Recognizing that in an age of the media "the mode by which we perceive reality can indeed become our reality" (Mailer 1963, 77),3 Mailer incorporates self-consciousness in his own act of historical reconstruction to remind the reader that every perception is partial or incomplete, and that every mode of reconstruction is an artificial means of meaning-making. Mailer's writing thus catches up with the "political aesthetic" of the New Left in attempting, as an equivalent to their ideologically decentered revolutionary activity, an aesthetic of self-conscious dispersion, of deliberately disunifying the unified and monolithic form of self and history-writing.

In The Armies of the Night the self-conscious dispersion is most remarkable in Mailer's fictionalization of an authorial self who writes about the anti-war march as an eyewitness and participant of that event. For Mailer, the
authorial self occupies a significant meaning, for the ambiguity of history cannot be approached without the perceiving power of the self. History is uncertain, he explains, to such a degree that it may be impossible to define historical reality itself: "the March of the Pentagon was an ambiguous event whose essential value or absurdity may not be established for ten or twenty years, or indeed ever" (67). On the one hand, he wishes to believe that a true interpretation would be available if he were able to find the form of the event: "There was an explanation to the attack on the Pentagon. It was somewhere in the shape of this event" (224). But the problem is that the explanation is hard to find because of the event’s indefinable "interior" (284). As he puts it, "the difficulty is that the history is interior" : it contains "experience" which is "sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural" (284). The event has so many intricate layers of "nuances" that it is as if it "took place in one of the crazy mansions ... the crazy house of history" (68).

Mailer asserts that such an intricate inside of experience demands that we "write an intimate history of an event which places its focus on a central figure who is not central to the event" (67). This claim echoes Sidney Stencil’s notion in Thomas Pynchon’s V. that if "no Situation had any objective reality ... it only existed in
the minds of those who happened to be in on it at any
specific moment" (174). In a similar way, the reality of a
past event resides only in the inside of a particular
participant; to know what truly happened, therefore, cannot
but depend on examining the participant's personal
experience at those moments of the event. Thus, the event of
the anti-war march cannot be known without reconstructing
the experience of Mailer's "Mailer" as "an eyewitness who is
a participant but not a vested partisan" (67). For this
reason, historical reconstruction means to Mailer a
necessarily egotistic task. "Once History inhabits a crazy
house," declares he, "egotism may be the last tool left to
History" (68).

Mailer's egotistic approach, particularly in Book One
subtitled "History as a Novel," leads him to write a kind of
autobiographical history, which is variously called "his
history of the Pentagon" or "a history of himself over four
days" (241). In this personal history Mailer reconstructs
his experience by fictionalizing himself as a literary
object: "he can comprehend [himself]," he insists, "only by
creating himself as a 'literary' character" (EE 165). In
other words, in writing a personal history, Mailer produces
an "autobiography-as-fiction" (Sauerberg 1991, 69), by means
of which he might "recapture the precise feel of the
ambiguity of the event" (68) to the extent that he succeeds
in creating a protagonist who is as much "ambiguous in his
own proportions" (67) as the event and can register its various nuances in himself.5

This self-fictionalization as a way of history-writing is not to represent an individual whose selfhood and experience have an indivisible self-identity and a transcendental meaning, respectively. As suggested earlier, it is instead an act of contingent construction in which Mailer tries to discover the truth of the self as it is revealed by the process of writing. Finding himself "caught in the act of writing," Mailer believes "he will encounter his experience on the point of his walking stick: here, his pencil" (EE 165). And the self is a fiction created through this enterprise of writing. The self, as it were, is a plural and provisional fiction insomuch as it relies on "a composite of roles" (Bailey 1979, 5) and a variety of changing styles and contexts for its tentative definition.

Mailer's public life, however, makes him realize that the mass media deprives the self of its undefined ambiguity and mobility by reducing it to an image or version. The Time version of his performance at the Ambassador Theater teaches him that the self exists only as it is 'imaged' by the media. From this fate of the self in the media-oriented society arises "the most developed sense of image" that he has:

people had been regarding him by his public image since he was twenty-five years old. He had in fact
learned to live in the sarcophagus of his image—at night, in his sleep, he might dart out, and paint improvements on the sarcophagus. During the day, while he was helpless, newspapermen and other assorted bravos of the media and the literary world would carve ugly pictures on the living tomb of his legend. Of necessity, part of Mailer’s remaining funds of sensitivity went right into the war of supporting his image and working for it ... In any event, Mailer worked for the image, and therefore he detested the portrait of himself which would be promulgated if no one could ever reach him. (16)

Always "militant with positions fixed in concrete" (37), Mailer proclaims a battle with the media for the house of his image. His strategy is to make himself become his own image-manipulator and role-player, or what he calls, "a quick-changing artist": he can prevent the media from pinning him down to the wall if he keeps himself in motion, in constantly changing diversity, by "send[ing] [his] style through a circus of variations and postures" (AM 18).6

The Armies of the Night is indeed Mailer’s "house of mirrors" (68) throughout which a number of "Mailers" are dispersed. From the opening sentence of the novel, Mailer summons those "Mailers" by writing, "[from] the outset, let us bring you news of your protagonist" (13). Explicitly
referring to the presence of an intrusive author as in the traditional realistic novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the "us" at the same time implies the plurality of the author-presence committed to a concrete act of signification. And the act is obviously discursive, as is signified in the sentence itself: a particular authorial self, Mailer, multifariously--by way of diverse "Mailers"--speaks of an objectified self, "Mailer" the protagonist, to a particular audience, the American masses brainwashed by the media.

Mailer's "us" varies with its narrative-discursive function. First of all, Mailer consistently uses a fictional Mailer as a kind of "the third person personal" (Lennon 1977b, 176) point of view: in narrating the private history in the guise of biographical "he," Mailer attempts to indirectly produce the effect of the voice of an autobiographical "I." Although an effective narrative vehicle for his fictional autobiography, however, this ambivalent viewpoint should not be understood as indicating that Mailer identifies the speaking "Mailer" with the "Mailer" spoken about. The self, instead, discontinuously functions in the act of self-fictionalization. As he comments on the difficulty of the act, "one is forced to examine oneself existentially, perceive oneself in the act of perceiving (but worse, far worse--through the act of perceiving, perceive a Self who may manage to represent the
separate warring selves by a Style)" (ER 165). Mailer recognizes that while the self is primarily split into two selves, perceived and perceiving, there is another self that perceives the perceiving self involved in its own act.

In the same way, it can be said that three "Mailers" act in a narrative discourse of The Armies of the Night -- as a character participating in the march of the Pentagon; as a narrator observing the character perform and writing about the march; and as a self-conscious authorial self observing and writing about the narrator's act. Mailer does not so much conceal but deliberately reveals that the authorial self is dispersed into these narrative "subjects" in the process of producing a fiction. This foregrounding renders Mailer's novel particularly visible in the sense that Mailer fully exposes his position not only as a character but as an author and, by so doing, narrows the distance between the novel and the author.7

It is Mailer’s self-conscious authorial self that heightens the very visibility by drawing attention to the constructedness of his work. It is notable that self-consciousness functions ambivalently, on the one hand seemingly emphasizing the factuality of historical reconstruction but, on the other hand, reminding the reader that the actual event is shaped in a fiction by the perceiving consciousness. First, Mailer attempts to convince the reader that his novel is a factual account based on his
original involvement in the march, actual observation, and research. The novel opens with a map of the Pentagon's Washington grounds. Detailing all the access roads and parking lots, the map represents every geographic location which will figure in the novel. Besides this referential source, Mailer brings in other historical sources, including a number of journalistic reports, actual living persons, and his own vivid memories. And also the novel imitates the manner of a documentary record in arranging Mailer's personal history in a strictly chronological order.

Progressively describing his arrest, confinement, and release following the involvement in the march, the four Parts of Book One are subtitled "Thursday evening," "Friday Afternoon," "Saturday Matinee," and "Saturday Night and All of Sunday," respectively.

Despite this factual or documentary aspect that evokes a sense of actuality, Mailer's book does not aim at an objective representation of the actual event. Instead, Mailer overtly uses the factual to remind that his work is the personal construct of a meaning-making authorial self who continuously engages in selecting, interpreting, and shaping the experience and the facts of the event into a text. Mailer openly comments on his authorial strategies, characters, and narrative devices. These comments function as a metafictional frame which demonstrates that his text has an artificial form and perspective. By laying bare the
fiction-making process, this self-consciousness makes Mailer's authorial self central to his fiction.

Mailer displaces this central self by a multiplicity of voices or styles. Feeling himself to be an arena of "the separate warring selves" (EE 165), Mailer has trouble locating a unified and continuous identity. This lack of a coherent form of self means to him that the self has no stable and singular voice in representing a historical event. Mailer, however, takes advantage of or even celebrates the very instability of voice by openly dispersing himself into a succession of provisional personalities and voices. Although he insists that a novelist should take "the responsibility to educate a nation" (178), Mailer does not rely on a unitary and autonomous voice. Instead, Mailer's writing takes its form from "a species of debate or dialogue or 'war' among the possible and competing voices" (Poirier 1972, 48) that are alive within the unstable self. Through this dialogical form, Mailer undermines the liberalist assumptions of an 'indivisible' subject and its monolithic language by acknowledging the traces of multifarious social, literary, and political voices in his discourse.

Mailer's disunified selves begin to appear in the various guises that he assumes. Feeling himself to have no particular age, the middle-aged writer declares that he carries "different ages within him like different models of
his experience" and can "[go] back abruptly from fifty-seven to thirty-six" (20). This flexibility of the self becomes immediately obvious through a succession of different personae of "Mailers" who participate in and analyze the anti-war march. Mailer presents himself as the "Novelist," the "Historian," the "Critic," the "Ruminant," the "Comic Hero," the "Participant," the "General," the "Left Conservative," the "Existentialist," the "Beast," the "Snob," and the "Showman." These protean characterizations are not so much purely imaginative self-inventions but ideologically motivated self-dispersions. Mailer denies a fixed self-identity by showing that the self is multifariously constructed and spread in the diverse social contexts in which he acts.

Mailer's self-dispersion culminates in the hybridity of the authorial voice. Just as he denies the fixation of the self by becoming a multi-facing self, Mailer frees himself from a unitary language by becoming a multi-voicing ventriloquist. The instability of his voice enables him to speak through different voices. This ventriloquistic multi-voicing begins to operate through the changing rhetorical styles Mailer uses in his own version of the Ambassador Theater speech. Mailer starts his speech in "a Southern accent" and shifts into a rhetoric that suggests the "shades of Lincoln in hippieland" in announcing "'We are gathered here'" (60). The use of the word "shit" finally drives him
to assume an aggressive voice of Cassius Clay and threatens that "'I'm as full of shit as Lyndon Johnson ... I'm nothing but his little old alter ego ... How you like him?" (63). While *Time* only focuses on Mailer's obscenity in defining his performance as a "scatological solo" (13), this speech is intended as a severe parody of the political corruption in the nation's leadership. Furthermore, the conscious quick-change of voices in this political performance challenges an authoritative discourse of American patriotism that integrates the mass into an ideological constant by its totalizing voice.

Throughout *The Armies of the Night*, the multiple voices are intertextually dispersed without giving way to any single voice. While celebrating the diversity of voices within his authorial self, Mailer keeps those voices interacting with one another. They are provisionally installed in the text, in which the authorial self constantly refracts other voices, replaces one with another, and subjects all of them to disruptive commentary and questioning. Comparing his march past the Washington Monument to the excitement of his combat experiences, for example, Mailer writes as follows:

The flat breast of the hill at the foot of the monument had that agreeable curve one finds on an athletic field ... Going to battle! ... he realized that an odd, yes a zany part of him had
been expecting ... he would lead an army. (The lives of Leon Trotsky and Ernest Hemingway had done nothing to dispel this expectation) ...

Probably there were very few good wars (good wars being free of excessive exhaustion, raddled bowels, miserable food, and computerized methods) but if you were in as good shape for war as for football, there was very little which was better for the senses. They would be executing Ernest Hemingway in effigy for every ten years for having insisted upon this recognition ... but Mailer now sent him a novelist’s blessing (which is to say, well-intended but stingy) because Hemingway after all had put the key on the table. If it made you feel good, it was good. That, and Saint Thomas Aquinas’ "Trust the authority of your sense," were enough to enable a man to become a good working amateur philosopher, an indispensable vocation for the ambitious novelist since otherwise he is naught but an embittered entertainer, a storyteller, a John O’Hara! (Born January 31, same birthday as Mailer). (106-107, the author’s italics)

This long passage provides a good example of intertextual voices diversely immanent in Mailer’s authorial voice. Mailer acknowledges that the numerous voices of others, such
as Hemingway, Trotsky, and Aquinas, are included in the philosophical meditations of the authorial self. This inclusion reflects Mailer’s refusal of a unified and autonomous self in favor of an intertextual "subject" that is formed by and speaks through other voices. Mailer, however, does not give prior authority to those voices. By subjecting the quotes from Hemingway and Aquinas to comic contextualization, Mailer instead deprives them of any privileged status. Hemingway’s slogan about the goodness of feeling "good" is caricatured when it is verbally associated with "good" wars and "good" physical shape. And Hemingway’s and Aquinas’ lessons of the senses are ironically pulled down by the suggestion that they are mere instruments for amateur philosophizing. Thus, while foregrounding the functional importance of other voices in his discourse, Mailer refuses to treat any of them as final or privileged.

In a similar way, Mailer adopts in turn the voices of an army leader (the "General"), an amateur philosopher, an ambitious novelist, and an embittered entertainer, and these intermingled voices take the form of ironic displacement by commenting on and modifying each other. The elevated voice of the army leader, for instance, is mocked by its abrupt shift into the voice of the amateur philosopher, a shift which implies that theoretical justifications of war are phony. Likewise, the voice of the ambitious novelist is ridiculed when it turns out to be an expedient guise for the
voice of the embittered entertainer who may be little better than a mediocre storyteller.

This inter-modification of voices is supported by Mailer's recurrent use of the parenthetically inserted voice that offers qualifying commentary on the descriptions antecedent to the parentheses. Mailer undermines the worship of Hemingway's theory of the senses by suggesting that his concern is more with professional status -- he is therefore "stingy" in praising the older novelist -- than with finding any theories. Similarly, Mailer mocks his own scorn of storytellers like John O'Hara through the parenthetical implication that he has more in common with O'Hara than he thinks.

Mailer's commitment to a dispersive discourse is also evident in the double-generic form of The Armies of the Night, a form that challenges the strict separation between novel and history. Written in two seemingly independent Books, subtitled "History as a Novel" and "The Novel as History," respectively, Mailer's work has led many critics to categorize the work in terms of the two fixed entities, novel and history, which seem opposed to each other. Philip H. Bufithis, for example, finds Mailer's work novelistic and historical because it "sensitively describes the effects of the march on a participant-protagonist" and at the same time it "scrupulously describes the facts of the march" (86, the author's italics). It is true that Mailer's metafictional
comments on his own historical reconstruction often evoke such a dualistic distinction between the novelistic and the historical. Whereas history in Mailer's definition is "either pseudo-scientific or external" (Radford 1975, 120), the novel is regarded as imaginative, internal, and personal; if the former deals with facts for the purpose of presenting the objective explanation of an event, the latter is, Mailer declares, "the personification of a vision" (245) based on one's own personal experiences. From this general perspective, Mailer speaks of Book One as a novel which focuses on the protagonist "Mailer" and Book Two as "a most concise Short History" (241) that takes up only the last quarter of the whole work, a history "dutiful to all newspaper accounts, eyewitness reports, and historic inductions available" (284).

Mailer, however, does not conceive of novel and history as entirely separate entities. Instead, he deliberately creates these separations only in order to undermine them. The subtitles themselves implicitly tend to mislead the reader. They imply that Mailer plays with "such comfortable opposites" (284) and treats them as interchangeable forms. And in comparing Book One and Book Two, Mailer reverses the labels he has assigned to each of them and redefines the former as a history and the latter as a novel. At first, Mailer argues that Book One, while written as a novel, is also "a history in the guise ... or manifest of a novel"
(284). It is rigidly called even "a document," insomuch as it relies on "the best of the author’s memory scrupulous to facts" (284). What this explicit definition suggests is that the factual is blended in Book One as part of a ‘novelized’ or personalized history of the march rather than that the first book is strictly a history in a conventional sense of the word. Exemplifying the only kind of historical writing possible when no objective reality can be found, Book One offers an alternative to historical representation in which writing about oneself and one’s interpretation can, however partially or incompletely, offer significant revelations about one’s time.

In appearance, Book Two seems to be a factual history. It affects an objective tone and "a general style of historical writing" (284) and, in addition, quotes in length six newspaper reports of the battle between the soldiers and the demonstrators within the Pentagon. Despite these factual aspects, however, Book Two does not constitute the journalistic account but "unashamedly" proclaims itself as belonging to "[the] world of ... intuitive speculation which is the novel" (284). Compared with Book One, Mailer claims, Book Two is "a real or true novel" in the sense that the author projects his imaginative power into the moments of the event that remain mysterious in "the welter of a hundred confusing and opposed facts" (284). Indeed, Mailer creates an imaginary dialogue between David Dellinger and Jerry
Rubin (270-71) and gives an imaginary picture of what might happen in "the six inches of no-man's-land between the U.S. Army and the demonstrators" (285). Thus, in the second book, Mailer poses a fictitious version of the event against the fact-oriented versions.

Meanwhile, in imagining the past, Mailer makes no claims to factual authenticity. Instead, Mailer lays bare the arbitrariness of such "conjectural" (Olster 1989, 60) creations by frequently using phrases like "this is sheer speculation" (269), "one can only guess," and "the answers cannot be definitive" (281). To write a personal history itself is also acknowledged as an artificial act of meaning-making. Mailer likens the egotistic history of Mailer's "Mailers" in Book One to "a tower fully equipped with telescopes" that "the Novelist working in secret collaboration with the Historian" has built to scrutinize "a forest" (245) of facts and versions of the event. As an instrument produced to have a better view of the event, then, the tower is not so omniscient or objective as to claim its vision to be true. For, as Mailer adds, "the tower is crooked, and the telescopes warped" (245).

This imperfection, to Mailer, is the same with history. "[The] instruments of all sciences," including history, "are always constructed in small or large error" (245), while history or journalism can only pretend to be scientific and objective. Mailer quotes a series of newspaper accounts in
Book Two to show that the factual writings do not merely report an event but make or distort it. In this arbitrariness, history is fundamentally as much a fiction as is a novel. Intermixing the two forms of discourse, Mailer suggests that both novel and history are fictions, human constructs that make meanings or versions into a reality.

Mailer's decision to write two narratives of the march arises from his awareness that such arbitrary construction of meanings or versions of the event is necessarily provisional and thus always subject to revision. For Mailer, all inscriptions are incomplete. Indeed, with no primacy fixed on either part, the two narratives of Book One and Book Two become a pair of complementary parts that counterpoise each other. Especially, Book Two poses counter-versions of the march that contest the articulations of Book One. While waiting to be set free from the Occoquan prison in Book One, for example, Tuli Kupferberg's refusal to stay away from the Pentagon at the risk of further imprisonment seems to Mailer to imply a moral excuse to escape from a sense of guilt. Kupferberg "eject[s] [him]self from guilt by climbing," as Mailer calls it, "the [moral] ladder" (219). In Book Two, however, climbing the moral ladder is considered as an act of courage. It turns into a necessary and commendable assertion of political will as in the protestors who, despite being beaten by the police, continue their late vigil outside the Pentagon. "The rite of passage
was invoked, the moral ladder was climbed, they were forever different in the morning than they had been before the night, which is the meaning of a rite of passage" (311-12).

These counter-interpretations also appear in Book Two where Mailer subjects media accounts to different interpretations including his own speculations. Jimmy Breslin's story about the physical and verbal attack made on the soldiers by the protestors (289-90) seems to confirm part of Mailer's speculations about the protestors who "taunted the soldiers, derided them" (288). A little later, however, by deliberately juxtaposing the Breslin story with a biased account of police brutality from the *National Guardian* (290-92), Mailer implicitly equates the two and suggests that the Breslin story is similarly exaggerated.

While the dispersive reconstruction of self and history becomes a means of challenging a liberalist culture of uniformity, Mailer does not completely dissociate himself from the idea of unity. Realizing that a disease of disruption pervades American culture, Mailer often reveals the traces of a nostalgia for some liberal humanist values. For example, his frequent statements on the necessity of the two-halves of America to come together attest to some need for wholeness. "The center of America," Mailer diagnoses, "[is] insane," because Americans have been living in "a controlled ... schizophrenia" by being both Christians believing in "mystery" and residents of "the American
Corporation" (211) believing in technology. This nostalgia for wholeness is also found in Mailer's attachment to the American past. The Hey-Adams Hotel in Washington, D.C., for instance, reminds him of the time of Henry Adams, "when men and events were solid, comprehensible, often obedient to a code of values" (69). And Mailer tries to view the march as a continuous part of respectable American history by often linking it with the Civil War. In fifty years, he thinks, the day of the march "may loom in our history large as the ghosts of the Union dead" (105). In these comparisons, the past seems to Mailer a repository of values by which the present may be evaluated.

This nostalgic concern for wholeness has caused some critics, like Stanley Gutman, to suggest that "Mailer begins with divisions which, through dialectical confrontation, are eventually united into a coherent whole" (191). Although the prophetic ending of Book Two implies Mailer's move toward lifting the counterpoising narratives of Book One and Book Two into a synthesis, that move itself is undermined by Mailer's self-conscious authorial self. Mailer ends his work predicting an apocalyptic future of America "heavy with child" (320), but leaves indeterminate the results of the birth. Is this labor a symptom signifying the beginning of "the death of America" or is it a promise of "a new world brave and tender, artful and wild"? (320) Mailer also undercuts this prediction by foregrounding his feeling that
it is a "false" prophesy (Solotaroff 1974, 233), a fiction or metaphor consciously mediated to the reader by the prophetic voice assumed by the author. Similar to the opening chapter of Book Two, entitled "A Novel Metaphor," the chapter of prophesy is titled "The Metaphor Delivered." In thus acknowledging the fictionality of his narratives Mailer resists finalizing any single unified meaning and form.

Mailer is indeed ironic in challenging a liberal culture of consensus. Mailer seems to yearn for a missing coherence yet denies that the undefined, unexplored truth of self and history can be wholly defined and imprisoned in the closure of any unitary language, ideology, or narrative form. As embodied in the self-conscious reconstruction of self and history in The Armies of the Night, Mailer believes that the truth of self and history can be grasped only as they are diversely and provisionally constructed in the process of meaning-making. While this discourse signals Mailer's freedom from a totalitarian consensus, Mailer does not completely discard a desire for wholeness. Mailer, instead, creates a dispersive discourse in which a unity is positioned as something tentatively imagined or arbitrarily signified by the meaning-making author.
CHAPTER VI

SELF-IN-IDEOLOGY: THE POSSIBILITY OF A RESISTING SELF IN ROBERT COOVER'S THE PUBLIC BURNING AND E.L. DOCTOROW'S THE BOOK OF DANIEL

As in V., The Sot-Weed Factor, and The Armies of the Night, a search for self through historical reconstruction also constitutes one of the major concerns in Coover's The Public Burning and Doctorow's The Book of Daniel. But Pynchon, Barth, and Mailer do not dramatize this concern so concretely as Coover and Doctorow, especially in an immediate context of Cold War ideology embodied by the Rosenberg case. Even though Mailer also focuses on a specific current event related to Cold War America, his historical revision tends to be more journalistic than dramatic. Meanwhile, in dealing with the two interrelated issues of self-search and historical reconstruction, The Public Burning and The Book of Daniel are remarkable not only for the critique of an objectivist assumption of history that underlies the official discourse of history but also for, more importantly, the exploration of the fate of the individual in Cold War America who struggles to find an acceptable position through his own meaning-making.

In fictionalizing the trial of the Rosenbergs who had to be executed for supposedly betraying the secret of the
atom bomb to the Russians, Coover and Doctorow do not merely transcribe the documented past into a fictional form; they invent a fiction from that politically charged event. If Coover transforms the Rosenberg trial into an all-American entertainment staged by Uncle Sam and culminating in a public electrocution in Times Square, Doctorow imaginatively draws from that event a story of survival that depicts how one of the Rosenberg children has overcome the family tragedy.

Coover and Doctorow present a process of history-writing itself as one of the major actions in their historical revisions. Even if Richard Nixon, historically, was not directly involved in the espionage trial, Coover creates a Nixon as an inquirer of that case. Every second chapter of _The Public Burning_, narrated by Coover’s Nixon, constitutes ‘the book of Nixon,’ one that deals with Nixon’s own historical inquiry and narrative-making. Similarly, Doctorow fictionalizes one of the surviving Rosenbergs as a Daniel Issacson, a character committed to composing a history of his family in the course of researching his doctoral dissertation in history in the library of Columbia University. As the title suggests, _The Book of Daniel_ is Daniel’s personal reconstruction of history and at the same time a book about his efforts to face the past through the historical writing.

Such historian-characters are invented as reminders of
the fictionality of history. As Coover puts it in an interview, "every effort to form a view of the world ... to speak of the world," including historical writing, "involves a kind of fiction-making process" (McCaffery 1979, 101). History is, in short, a fictional narrative. Doctorow even claims that "[t]here is no history except as it is composed" (1983, 24). This claim, however, does not mean that historical reality does not exist. It indeed exists, yet as an elusive reality, one that can be known only as it is signified and even distorted in texts. Fiction becomes history, and in this process historical reality falls victim to fiction.

This blurred distinction between history and fiction leads Doctorow to contend that "history is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive" (1983, 25). The world or history that we think we know is never "naturally" given but constructed out of ideologies and imposed on us, to the extent that the history that is fiction structures our understanding of reality and our identity in society. It is in this structuring context that Coover's Nixon and Doctorow's Daniel are precariously situated as an "individual subject." Although they belong to politically opposed sides, Nixon and Daniel similarly find themselves dangling between the desire to become a free and private individual who can generate his own meaning and the social and historical demands that continuously confine this
desiring individual in a fixed position of "subject" and an unacceptable version of reality.

These two "individual subjects" employ the personal reconstruction of history as a crucial means to claim the possibility of selfhood in confrontation with the history that is fiction and the self that is "subject." Such a task of historical reconstruction, as will be discussed, leads Nixon and Daniel to discover the constructed nature of all narrative and ideological order, especially in the political regime's manipulation of the Rosenberg case. Both of them similarly play the role of "a detective-historian" (Bevilacqua 1990, 100) in constructing an imaginary script of how "[t]he Crime of the Century" was committed. The ultimate purpose of this detective role, however, does not lie in inferring a final causality from discontinuous clues, bridging gaps with that unifying logic, and ascertaining the innocence or guilt of the criminals. Nixon and Daniel transgress a boundary of the detective's positivistic or logocentric search for truth in revealing that the unifying system of order is a contingent product of meaning-making enforced on an abyss of indeterminacy. There is no such thing as objective truth or order to Nixon and Daniel. Instead, the very potential abyss opens a field of provisional meanings or versions in which they can create their own narrative constructs.

In The Public Burning Coover dramatizes human society
as an enormous circus or play directed by a master. The master turns a dominant ideology of society into a master script of his play, according to which each individual is assigned a role to perform. It is in this theatrical society that Coover’s Nixon is revealed as a complicated role-player, one whose performing self is divided between two different stages of self-fulfillment: the public and the private. While devoting himself to a public performance by playing the clown to Uncle Sam’s ringmaster, Nixon struggles to find or if necessary construct a new role that may enable him to realize the freedom and possibility of his own inner self.

Coover juxtaposes two seemingly irreconcilable worlds, the social or ideological and the individual, in the two different types of chapters that alternate throughout the novel. At first, narrated in an impersonal narrative voice, a Prologue and the even chapters cover the events of the three days leading to and including the execution of the Rosenbergs. These public chapters, consistently written in the present tense, are remarkable for the panoramic prose that consists of a collage, a mass of journalistic sources and historical figures related to those events. The fantastic activities of Uncle Sam dominate the action in the public chapters. "[T]his is my circus!" (PB 95), declares the architect and ringmaster of the national festival of the public burning. Sam is a protean shape-changer who
"incarnates" himself into those who he selects as President. His appearance is an eclectic mosaic of the features of past Presidents, and his speech is a pastiche of the nation's idioms past and present. Sam thus has total command of the language of the nation's Founding Fathers, sages, and Presidents to the extent that their voices merge through him.

Beneath his apparent plurality, however, Uncle Sam represents a single ideology of Americanism, projecting America as 'the' nation of Freedom, Reason, Opportunity, Progress, and God. Sam tries to consolidate the hegemony of America by propagating a Manichean version of reality that America, the Sons of Light, is besieged by the communist Phantom's Sons of Darkness. This paranoid politics aims at integrating the nation into a coercive whole, in which Sam presides as the "Absolute Subject." In positioning an American subject as the first and foremost free individual, Sam produces the "subject" that can freely submit to the established order of liberal capitalism.

If the public chapters present the outer world of political events controlled by Uncle Sam, the odd chapters and an Epilogue of the novel focus on Nixon's inner conflict between two different desires of self-fulfillment. Consistently written in the past tense, these private chapters are narrated by Nixon's retrospective and self-analytical first person voice. As Nixon analyzes himself,
"[his] trouble" derives from the fact that he is "an introvert in an extrovert's profession" (PB 410). On the one hand, Nixon's life has been a performance of "endless self-exposure" (PB 652) to have his worth recognized by others in public arenas, ultimately as the most ambitious and successful American dreamer who reaches the center of political power. To Nixon, this "socialized desire" (Cope 1986, 107) leads to a necessary demand that he should meet in order to relinquish his position as outsider. From his childhood to early political career, Nixon has continued to feel "unwanted" (PB 421) by his parents, his girls, the Navy, his clients, the electorate, his political party, and Uncle Sam. Nixon attempts to secure his social position by performing the roles that appeal to the public and, further, to Uncle Sam. The ambition to be interpellated as the most 'wanted' new incarnation of Uncle Sam particularly makes Nixon accept a clownish role. Nixon assists his ringmaster's circus by creating laughter and, above all, by contributing to making the Rosenberg execution "a consecration" which will bring "a new chapter of the moral and social order of the Western World" (PB 112).

But, as Nixon realizes it, to achieve the desire of public self-fulfillment requires him to sacrifice his own freedom and individuality. When he stepped in the public career, Nixon complains, "[he] was no longer a free agent" (PB 216). Instead, he should consider himself as "public
property" (PB 325), one who should conceal anything personal or emotional and have his speech and even his look set for the public. An irony of political power thus lies in the fact that "to lead a nation of free men is to be the least free among them" (PB 325). In this sense, argues Nixon, "Eisenhower, who thought himself free, was in fact the real captive [and] victim" (PB 325).

For Nixon, giving up his freedom is as almost unimaginable as abandoning his political ambition. Interestingly, the more involved he gets in the public performance toward the national leadership, the more attached he grows to preserving his private and self-sufficient self: "I am a private man and always have been" (PB 652). Declarations such as this reveal that Nixon's egocentric "I" is frequently absorbed in a nostalgic memory of the personal past that allowed him to indulge in his inner emotion and desire. Especially, in Nixon's memory, "the old bell tower" (PB 410) in Whittier remains a sanctuary of pure privacy. Isolating himself in that sanctuary, Nixon as an adolescent craves for surrendering "[his] self-control" (PB 368) to the passion of love that he has dreamed of. While an obsession with success has prevented him from being lost in "[the] maze of emotions," Nixon wishes that such surrender could deliver him "[his] inordinate sense of mission" (PB 368) of public self-fulfillment. What Nixon indeed desires through this longing
for privacy is a freedom to act for his own "audience of one," to act as an autonomous individual who is not confined to any given order, who "ha[s] nothing to believe in except himself" (PB 288), except his feelings, his autonomous choice, and his counsel.

It is the Rosenberg case that tests Nixon's ability to keep a balance between the public and the private. Ideally, Nixon believes, he may successfully fulfill himself in both spheres as long as he "ha[s] nothing in excess to throw [him] off balance" (PB 218). As he gradually begins to inquire into the Rosenberg case, however, Nixon becomes aware of the fictionality of the case itself, and this awareness incites him to appropriate it for his own self-redemption, for his private realization of the free will and desire for love.

What strikes Nixon from the early part of his inquiry is the strangely theatrical quality of the whole affair surrounding the trial. To Nixon, everybody seems to "behav[e] like actors caught up in" what he calls "a little morality play for our generation" (PB 145, 147). The rigid script of "a struggle between the forces of good and evil" (PB 144) defines those actors' roles and perception of reality. This theatrical world is thus permeated with "[the] sense that everything happening was ... inevitable, as if it had all been scripted out in advance" (PB 448). The prosecutor Irving Saypol, for instance, represents an effort
to justify a causal structure pre-existent in "mak[ing] what might later seem like nothing more than a series of overlapping fictions cohere into a convincing semblance of historical continuity and logical truth" (PB 150). To him, as to other governmental agencies, a spy ring represents a symptom of evil that not merely exists but has to.

Even the Rosenbergs are "swept up in [the] sense of an embracing and compelling drama" and in "[a] zeal for pattern [and] story" (PB 145, 378). Wanting to be known as the first victims of American fascism, they accept the martyr roles with dignity, the roles they believe assigned to them by a transcendental cause of "History." As Nixon argues, the Rosenbergs fall victim to their "self-destructive suspicion that they were being watched by some superhuman presence" (PB 378).

Unraveling the reports filed by the FBI, however, Nixon finds no hard evidence that the Rosenbergs are spies. Furthermore, it occurs to him that the spy ring itself may be a pure fiction: "what if ... there were no spy ring at all? What if all these characters believed there was and acted out their parts on this assumption, a whole courtroom full of fantasists?" (PB 167). And this suspicion at once reveals to Nixon the arbitrariness of historical reconstruction: "What was fact ...what was essence? Strange, the impact of History ... it was nothing but words. Accidental accretions for the most part, leaving most of the
story out ... What if we broke all the rules, played games with the evidence, manipulated language itself, made History a partisan ally?" (PB 168).

What Uncle Sam meant earlier by "the fatal ... futility of Fact" (PB 106) begins to be obvious to Nixon through this awareness. Reproaching Nixon for thinking that the case should be legally proven, Uncle Sam emphasizes that just as history itself is "all ... bunk," "all testimony about the past" is also "a baldface lie" (PB 106). Moreover, facts themselves are always created and incorporated into a larger context of practical interests. "Practical politics," therefore, insists Uncle Sam, "consists in ignorin' facts" and their truth value and treating the trial as a set of "mettyfours," "a game" (PB 106) to highlight the necessity of a constant ideological order.

But Nixon has a great deal of difficulty accepting such an ideological fabrication of history. The suspicion continuously bothers him that history may have no intrinsic order or unity of its own. While history is known only as it is verbally and ideologically constructed, there may be a terrible abyss beyond the constructed order, an abyss in which "there are sequences but no causes, contiguities but no connections" (PB 237). Even Nixon is surprised at having this thought, for his political career "ha[s] schooled [him] toward a faith in denouement ... in cause and consequence" (PB 448). But Nixon finally recognizes that a complete
emptiness, "like a hole in the spirit" or "vacuum" (PB 449), lies behind the whole political performance of meaning-making:

There were no scripts, no necessary patterns, no final scenes, there was just action, and then more action! ... there was no author, no director ... perhaps there is not even a War between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness! Perhaps we are all pretending! (PB 448)

If nothing is inevitably determined, if reality is thus an unlimited field of possibilities where any order can be constructed, there is no reason that Nixon should not become an author and create his own action. While his critical inquiry into the trial gradually deepens, Nixon begins to see the Rosenbergs from his personal perspective, envisioning them as the figures very similar to him in many respects. Nixon imagines, for example, that Julius Rosenberg is his mirror opposite: "We were like mirror images ... familiar opposites. Left-right, believer-non-believer, city-country ... He moved to the fringe as I moved to the center" (PB 169). Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, like Nixon, were always anxious to "reach the heart of things, to participate deeply in life," but their lives were shattered when they, unlike Nixon, chose to "withdraw to the very center of the heresy that excited them" (PB 159).

Nixon's sympathy with the Rosenbergs, more
fundamentally, derives from the fact that they represent a secret side of himself that he has always longed to explore. Nixon is especially drawn to Ethel, for he finds in her the warmth, love, and passion that have been absent in his own life. In his daydreams of the courtship between Julius and Ethel, Nixon frequently projects himself into imagined scenes from their past. One of his striking fantasies involves the moment when Ethel says to Julius regarding his political involvements, "I'll help you" (PB 172). Nixon responds to this with bitterness and longing: "No one had even said anything like that to me" (PB 172).

The Rosenbergs also evoke from Nixon a yearning for freedom as well as for love. Both he and the accused couple, thinks Nixon, are the victims of a zeal for the higher order: "I was no more free than the Rosenbergs were, we'd both been drawn into dramas above and beyond those of ordinary mortals" (PB 454). Separated between Uncle Sam and the communist Phantom, they have believed that a master cause presides over the world. But as Nixon has realized it, this sense of order turns out to be an illusion, and there still remains room for being free if "they could say hell with History" (PB 378) with the naive belief in any governing presence that ignores the radical open-endedness of reality.

Nixon finally decides to work out his own script -- to go to Ethel Rosenberg, persuade her to make up a confession
that could save her life from "a meaningless martyrdom" (PB 539), and stop the whole play of executions. This individual action represents Nixon’s efforts to be reborn as a free and authentic self, as what he calls "just ... me" rather than as "Richard Nixon [the public performer], which was already, even in my own mind, something other than myself" (PB 453, the author’s ellipsis). An initial sense of freedom begins to elevate Nixon as he indulges in the pleasure of mobility on the train for Sing Sing Prison. "I knew you had to keep moving," muses Nixon, "if you wanted to find out who you really were" (PB 453). The train symbolizes to Nixon such a flow of movement, making him "pull back from the illusions of fixed places" (PB 453) and feel closer to himself without having to worry about what other people might think.

Nixon’s private self-fulfillment culminates in his few moments with Ethel in the death house. Confessing to her his secret desire for love and freedom that he has never been allowed to acknowledge publicly, for the first time in his life Nixon no longer feels "inadequate" (PB 540) and rejected by others. A joy of rebirth instead excites him in these eruptive moments of an affair with Ethel. Embracing Ethel, Nixon finds himself finally set free from the rigid confines of any governing order:

In this long chaste embrace, I felt an incredible new power, a new freedom. Where did it come from? Uncle Sam? The Phantom? ... From neither, I
supposed. There was nothing overhead any more, I had escaped them both! I was outside guarded time! I was my own man at last! I felt like shouting for joy! (PB 547)

Ironically, however, the freedom that Nixon believes to have obtained turns out to be a momentary and, further, impossible illusion. For Nixon can never escape from the order of a dominant ideology that constructs his social role. Throughout his personal chapters, Nixon has been uneasily conscious of the overlooking eyes of Uncle Sam who is "omnipresently there, jamming up all the corners" (PB 410). Even when Nixon no longer feels watched in the middle of an affair with Ethel, the superhuman presence suddenly intrudes into the private scene and transfers him to Times Square with his pants down.

A more fearful irony in Nixon's struggle for self-creation is that the individual choice and action as a way of claiming freedom may be an integral part of the whole scenario of liberal capitalist subject-formation directed by Uncle Sam. While Nixon is going to the prison to carry out his own plan, a sudden doubt occurs to him -- "was my breaking out a part of the script, too?" (PB 454). Nixon is unable to face this doubt. For he would rather believe that he still has free will to create and independently manage his own subjectivity than acknowledge that free will or individuality may be an ideological effect designed to
reproduce him as a "subject" that can more freely submit to the "Absolute Subject." Nixon’s naive belief in freedom, however, ultimately serves to reinforce the Cold War ideology. Opposed to his previous decision to break out the official fabrication of the Rosenberg case, Nixon instead "reenacts" it (LeClair 1982, 19) by becoming a fierce defender of Americanism, as is revealed in his Times Square speech, and an executioner rather than a savior of the Rosenbergs.

As embodied in the last personal chapters of the novel, Nixon’s journey of self-creation ends with this final transformation into the representative "subject" of Uncle Sam. While being sodomized by Uncle Sam, Nixon feels that he has been "ee-LECK-ted" and literally born again as 'his boy': "he remained inside me, throbbing and exploding" (PB 657, 660). But this public self-fulfillment seems to him still absurd, for it is "as if [he] were walking in ... somebody else’s dream, not [his]" (PB 650). There exists no more tension or distinction between the public and the private, insofar as an individual acts and dreams only as assigned by the higher authority. Indeed, Nixon represents this fate of an individual who completely loses his personality and becomes no man, no self at all, in his total surrender to the dominant ideological order.

While Nixon’s naive attachment to freedom and pure privacy only results in a loss of self, Daniel Issacson in
The Book of Daniel finds the possibility of a resisting self in refusing such individualistic idealism and challenging authority through his disruptive narrative construction. Similar to Nixon, Daniel also struggles to be free from the social and ideological forces that 'make' individual destinies. But Daniel's socio-critical self-search leads him to confront such compulsive forces rather than escape from them. To Daniel, the personal cannot be separated from the social or public, for to him, as to Jean-Francois Lyotard, "no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations" (1984a, 15). Reconstructing the history that brought his parents to death, Daniel analyzes a map of society and culture in which he is located, and this activity enables him to make a new connection with history.

Before his younger sister Susan's attempted suicide summons him, twenty-five-year-old Daniel Issacson had been a self-alienating and hard-shelled man who avoided facing the world. As his biblical name suggests, Daniel is "Isaac's son" (Levitt 1984, 161), the child of one who is offered as a sacrifice for the people, and as the biblical Daniel's brothers were sentenced to the furnace by the King, the modern Daniel's parents are sentenced to the electric chair by the "state." Indeed, history is the last thing Daniel wants to think of; "History, that pig," not only predefines his identity but also, he cries, "bit[es] into the heart's secrets." This family history torments him with a burden of
responsibility. His mother's last words, "Let our death be his bar mitzvah" (BD 73), ceaselessly ring in his ears like a curse. And Susan's suicide desperately demands that he reclaim his parents from injustice.

Furthermore, a number of influences or voices try to shape him. "All societies," says Daniel, "indoctrinate their children" (BD 203). Including his father Paul's powerful Marxist voice on historical materialism and class war that taught him to be "a psychic alien" (BD 45) who lives in the capitalist society to negate it, Daniel finds himself surrounded by such imprisoning influences as Cold War America's anti-communism, his foster father's middle class liberalism, the Old Left idealism, and the New Left anarchism.

If Nixon's problem is that he is not allowed to let his feelings out in the public, Daniel's problem is that he refuses to "let the world in" (Levine 1983, 191), to let these influences and the burden of history penetrate into his private world. Since childhood, Daniel has furtively yearned for a private and neutral territory of self completely free from the forces of history, politics, and ideology. His father's radio store, for instance, is a very secret place to young Daniel, in which he feels "safe" and "all enclosed" (BD 50) from the world that imposes a certain pattern on him. Watching his father fix radios as if he were fixing the capitalist society, Daniel enjoys vacuuming out
their insides, as if he were cleaning the dust of history and ideology from his mind. "In those moments," says Daniel, "History had no pattern" (BD 50).

Daniel’s memory is full of a series of images that imply a hard-shelled vacuum, a zone of self-encapsulation: a softball, subway booth, barred places, a cocoon of raindrop, diamond-shaped objects, a schoolyard, and a starfish. However, a sense of freedom or security Daniel feels in this enclosed world is not so much a state of real freedom as it is a guise of freedom. Susan’s death makes him realize that the world he tried to hide in was a world of inertia, absolute inwardness, and, indeed, “deathly narcissism” (Parks 1991, 48) that Susan herself had chosen.

To Daniel, Susan’s tragedy results from “a failure of analysis” (BD 317), of acutely looking into the ideological forces that surround her. It is “a sequence of analyses” (BD 296) that help reorient Daniel to history. First, Daniel, unlike Susan, refuses to romanticize history. Susan, blinded by her parents’ death, tries to make them the martyrs of the Left, but she cannot grasp the whole context of the past and its relation with the present, for history has already stopped in her obsessed mind. Her suicide is caused by a fact that she could not even imagine but had to realize: her family has been used and completely betrayed by everybody else. As it were nothing to the Old Left, her family is now nothing to the New Left.
If the Old Left represented by his parents was the victim of a naive belief in the American democratic system and a cause of 'History,' the New Left anarchism advocated by Artie Sternlicht represents "the 1960's rejection of history, its repudiation of the past (even the radical Left past)" (Hutcheon 1988, 203). For Artie, history has no significance, because "EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE IS ALL THE SAME" (BD 151). Artie abolishes diachronic historicity, instead insisting on the self-sufficient present that may bring about an immediate revolutionary action. This anarchism seems to Daniel to repeat totalitarian authority by using everything, including his parents' death, only for political purposes.

Daniel's position as "the outsider with yet the insider's view" (Parks 1991, 41) makes these analyses possible. Trained from childhood to be "a psychic alien," Daniel calls himself "a small criminal of perception" (BD 41), not only because he is a child of convicted traitors, but also because he subversively dissects and reveals the capitalist ideology and culture of America of the 60s. Indeed, the very ability to perceive and articulate how the dominant social forces deeply impinge on an individual becomes Daniel's source of resisting them.

Daniel overcomes and even subverts his father's optimistic faith in justice, cause, and order by demonstrating that such ideals are fictions that political
authorities employ to integrate the present social order and strengthen their power. In the Bible, analyzes Daniel, God is "concerned with the idea of his recognition by mankind" (BD 20). God plays the role of 'an Absolute Subject,' who "declar[es] His Authority, with rewards for those who recognize it and punishment for those who don’t" (BD 20).

Similarly, as presented in the first epigraph of the novel from the biblical Book of Daniel, the King calls for people to worship the "golden image" that He sets up or be cast into "a burning ... furnace" (BD 7). Daniel’s insight here is that each age needs a form "to achieve its recognition of Him" (BD 20). It is a trial that has been used as a master form that attests to justice as an incarnation of authority. In executing this political ritual, the Authority or the regime, as in Cold War America, fabricates a script of the trial and creates a hegemonic discourse to sustain political power. For the regime, indeed, narrative becomes "both an instrument and an effect of power" (Hutcheon 1988, 185). As suggested in the FBI’s authoritative narrative of the Issacson conspiracy, which Daniel terms "FRYING, a play in ten overt acts" (BD 172), a narrative’s "truth status" in this political appropriation of narrative does not ‘naturally’ exist but "depends on the power of the authorities that sanction it" (Harpham 1985, 84).

Daniel’s personal reconstruction of history is motivated by his insight into the political implication of
narrative. If narrative is an instrument through which the regime propagates its ideology and legitimates power, narrative is also a place, a battleground, in which the very regime may be challenged by an oppositional self. Daniel resists the imprisoning narratives of the regime and others by constructing his own "little narrative" (Lyotard 1984a, 60), one that challenges authority through a self-consciously local and disruptive narrative-making.

One of the reasons that makes Daniel question the authoritative narratives of history lies in the elusive and indeterminate nature of history. Daniel declares early in the process of narrative-making: "Everything is elusive. God is elusive ... Justice is elusive. Human character" (BD 54). However, this elusiveness does not mean that history exists out there as objective reality. To Daniel, instead, history itself is a sequence with no given causal order: "What is monstrous is sequence. When we are there why do we withdraw, only in order to return? Is there nothing good enough to transfix us?" (BD 262). Despite his attempt to fix a presence in language through narrative, Daniel realizes in despair that his epistemological dilemma is that he cannot know or decipher any certain truth from his parents’ conspiracy case, that the very truth, if any, remains as a void which is impossible to fill.6

But Daniel’s historical reconstruction is not designed to idealize this epistemological skepticism and the certain
uncertainty of history. Instead, Daniel seeks to claim his own authority by surrendering the authoritative narratives of others to his recognition of the very impossibility of finally fixing a truth. These narratives include several reconstructions of the circumstances surrounding his parents’ fate, such as the FBI version, a series of historical works that make different cases for and against the conviction, Artie Sternlicht’s New Left devaluation of the Issacsons, and Robert Lewin’s liberal analysis. Through these different narratives, Daniel suggests that history consists of only provisional constructs, that even though the narratives pretend authority in imposing a pattern of meaning or interpretation on events, they are only impermanent inscriptions perpetually susceptible to revision.

Daniel foregrounds this constructedness of history by revealing the artificiality of his own construction. In a scholarly essay titled "True History of the Cold War," for instance, Daniel plays with the notion of truthfulness, subtitling the essay "A Raga." A raga, in fact, is a form of Hindu devotional music characterized by improvisation. The suggestion here is that Daniel’s essay, like other historians’ works, should be read as only one of many interpretations of the Cold War.

Daniel’s narrative authority itself is challenged by his self-undermining narrative technique. Throughout the
novel, Daniel handles narrative authority ironically, both assuming and subverting it. On the one hand, he employs a series of devices that endow him with the power as an objective narrator. These devices range from the omniscient third person narrator and his narrative distance from the character Daniel and his past, to highly referential and didactic voices in a variety of scholarly and historical writings. But, on the other hand, these seemingly objectivist devices are continuously disrupted by many self-conscious devices, such as the irregularly interrupting first person narrator who overtly confesses the provisionality of his own memory and knowledge, the frequent switching between "I" and "he" and between the past and the present, manipulative chronology, and multiple endings. In addition, Daniel's narrative denies a monolithic literary form. Daniel counters the tendency of an authoritative narrative to monopolize the composition of truth with his polyphonic narrative. Daniel composes his 'book' as a pastiche that consists of a multiplicity of voices and discourses, such as autobiography, family saga, detective story, letters, biblical quotations, trial scripts, newspapers, historical writings, scholarly essays, and dissertation.

Through this disunifying narrative, Daniel challenges any liberal humanist notions of unity, objectivity, and unique individuality. For Daniel, these notions are
narrative and ideological constructs that authority uses to submit an individual to the illusion of a well-ordered presence in society, culture, and history. Thus, Daniel, unlike Nixon, cannot write "[t]he novel as private I" (BD 285), for an individual is not only fragmented but always permeated with the public or ideology that shapes his identities. Whereas Nixon's attachment to the private leads to his total subjection to ideology, Daniel goes beyond Nixon's fate in replacing individualistic idealism with a sequence of oppositional critiques of social, legal, and cultural institutions. For Daniel, the state psychiatric hospital, the federal court house, the prison, the Childern's Shelter, and, climactically, Disneyland, constitute ideological agencies that reproduce the first-class citizen who readily conforms to the demand of a ruling ideology. Disneyland, especially, under Daniel's analysis, functions as a powerful agency that educates the masses through "a process of symbolic manipulation" (BD 305) of reality. By a "radical process of reduction" (BD 304), Disneyland simulates human experience with technological imitations and raises the masses as the homogeneous crowd disconnected from historical and social reality. As Arthur Saltzman argues, this simulating process "both glamorizes and trivializes" (85) the reality of mercantilism and exploitation into cartoon shadows for mass consumption.

Indeed, it is Daniel's resistance to authority that
constructs the source of his own authority. Unlike Nixon, who has to merge with the all-American ideology for his first-class American citizenship, Daniel maintains a critical attitude toward the dominant order by becoming the oppositional second-class citizen. This oppositional self has its power in being continuously engaged in social and cultural concerns. At the end of the novel, Daniel’s narrative-making is interrupted by student demonstrators who intend to close down the library. Daniel has already known through his narrative-making and cultural analysis that he cannot isolate himself, even as a writer, from the practical world. "I have to smile. It has not been unexpected. I will walk out to the Sundial and see what’s going down" (BD 318). Finally, Daniel leaves the library to go his way -- "Go thy way Daniel" (BD 319) -- to act in the world as an oppositional citizen.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the two interrelated issues of historical reconstruction and a search for self in the five American postmodern historical novels. Discussing the constructedness of historicity and subjectivity that both contemporary theories and postmodern historical novels foreground to challenge liberal humanist individualism and its realist epistemology, this study has explored how each novel's historian-character performs as a constructing self and copes with the very constructedness.

As I have tried to demonstrate in each chapter, the historian-character is situated as an "individual subject," and historical reconstruction represents his efforts to create his own narrative and shape a self within the constructing contexts of discourse, ideology, and culture in which he is immersed. This self-making through narrative-making primarily undermines the liberal humanist assumption that both history and self are entities which are intrinsically given, that history can be transparently represented by a unified individual subject. Herbert Stencil's paranoiac V-search in \textit{V.} embodies an extreme case of this traditional attitude. While Stencil searches for a unified self in pursuing an ultimate pattern of order...
signified by V., he falls a victim to his own construction. Without recognizing that what he has been obsessively pursuing may be a projected fiction in which no inherent order or self exists, Stencil remains a selfless instrument of construction itself and becomes lost in a treadmill of V-signs.

It is an awareness of the constructedness of history and self that enables the historian-character to freely organize a form of self and create a version of reality. As I have argued, this self-conscious construction ultimately serves or challenges the ideology of liberal humanist individualism. In The Sot-Weed Factor, the fabulationist self-creation and storification embodied by Ebenezer Cooke’s absolutist self and Henry Burlingame’s Protean self results in reinforcing the ideology of an exploiting class that perpetuates the present social order by idealizing such humanist values as brotherhood, moral responsibility, and the individual freedom of choice.

Meanwhile, this covert complicity with ideology is contrasted with an overt critique of the hegemonic (ab)use of history and the ideological fixation of self in Cold War America in the novels of Mailer, Coover, and Doctorow. Mailer’s self-dispersive "Mailers" challenge a totalitarian culture of the 60s and the concept of a unified subject at the core of liberal humanist individualism. In self-consciously transgressing a traditional boundary between
novel and history, between fact and fiction, Mailer also attacks the mass media's "factology" and the seemingly objectivist narratives of historical events.

As the last chapter has discussed, Coover and Doctorow deal with the fate of an "individual subject" in confrontation with the imprisoning ideology and authoritative narratives. Nixon's critical inquiry into the Rosenberg case leads him to realize the fundamental arbitrariness of history, uncover the official fabrication of the espionage case, and finally decide to write his own script. But Nixon's illusion of a private self free from a dominant ideological order ironically makes him totally subject to the very order and reenact the official history that he wished to change. Opposed to Nixon, Daniel refuses a solipsistic illusion of the private "I" and resists the power of authority by means of his disunifying or disruptive narrative and his critique of surrounding ideological and cultural forces that ceaselessly structure the individual destinies. For Daniel, even though it must be a primary requirement that an "individual subject" should keep in constructing a self, self-consciousness itself is not enough to confront the constructing world. The constructing "individual subject" can keep within and yet in command of the very constructing world and thus claim his power when he continuously engages himself as an oppositional or resisting self, one who lives inside his culture but can view it with
a critical outsider's perspective. Indeed, the future of the postmodern constructing self lies in the possibility of this resisting self and his socio-critical self-consciousness.
Chapter I


In using the terms, individual and subject, this study basically depends on Paul Smith's definitions of them (xxvii-xxxv). First, defined as "the illusion of whole and coherent personal organization," the individual is "the term ideologically designed to give the false impression that human beings are free and self-determining, or that they are constituted by undivided and controlling consciousness." In other words, the individual is "understood to be the source and agent of conscious action or meaning which is consistent with it."

The subject or the individual subject, which will be put without quotation marks in this study, has been used synonymously with the individual to signify "the bearer of a consciousness that will interact with whatever the world is taken to consist in," "the intending and knowing manipulator of the object," or "the conscious and coherent originator of meanings and actions."

The "subject," which will be put in quotation marks in this study, is etymologically defined as "something that is subjected, thrown beneath," as "something at the behest of forces greater than it." Opposed to the individual, "the
subject" is "not self-contained, as it were, but is immediately cast into a conflict with forces that dominate it in some way or another -- social formations, language, political apparatus and so on." Smith complicates the meaning of "the subject" by defining it as a term describing "what is actually the series or the conglomeration of positions, subject-positions, provisional and not necessarily indefeasible, into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world that he/she inhabits."

As the third term, Smith introduces "the human agent," which is defined as "the place from which resistance to the ideological is produced or played out [by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject-positions]."

Actually Smith uses the phrase, "the individual subject," to emphasize a contradiction contained in the humanistic usage of the expression as a synonym with the word individual, that is, an oxymoronic opposition of the individual and "the subject." Similarly Foucault, while describing the effect of a form of power on individuals, introduces "two meanings of the word ‘subject’: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (1982, 781).
Chapter II

1 According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, any science endows itself with authoritative power by making an explicit appeal to a metanarrative which means a discourse that legitimates the science's own rules and knowledge as a norm. Lyotard points out two great legitimizing narratives: a narrative of emancipation in which humanity becomes the law of liberty and progress, and a narrative of Spirit in which the speculative spirit becomes the unity of all knowledge (31-34).

2 Louis Althusser actually uses the term when he discusses the concept of structural causality in Marxist epistemology: "The [non-economic] structure is not an essence outside the economic phenomena which comes and alters their aspect, forms and relations and which is effective on them as an absent cause, absent because it is outside them" (Jameson 1981, 24).

3 In his *Metahistory*, Hayden White explains that all historical work consists of four levels, such as emplotment, formal argument, ideological implication, and the metahistorical. White postulates that the first three are surface levels dictated by the irreducibly metahistorical basis of history-writing which is buried in a prefigurative and poetic level of consciousness. The entirely linguistic metahistorical level, which is comprised by "the dominant tropological mode and its attendant linguistic protocol,"
determines the form, the scope, and thus the content of historical works (1974, xi).

4 As White states in a footnote, Northrop Frye’s influence is absolute in his categorization of the plots of historical narratives. This is one of the reasons why White explicitly calls his own study a "formal theory of the historical work" (1974, 8, n6, ix).

5 It is not really surprising that White’s formal study has been criticized by critics. In his paracritical review of Metahistory, for example, David Carroll points out the liberal humanist ideology involved in the notion of the metahistorical level: "Metahistory ends with the ultimate liberal-humanist solution, the freedom of choice among equally acceptable ‘moral’ and ‘aesthetic’ alternatives, equally acceptable in so much as they pretend not to be political. The model for White’s ‘free subject’ is the consumer who is ‘free’ to choose among many different brands of products, regardless of whether there is any real difference between them or not. He feels ‘free’ as long as he does not question the system which produced the different brands and the context of his ‘freedom’ ... The real metahistorical level of Metahistory consists of the metaphysical presuppositions which govern and limit it, the defense of a ‘free’ subject who knows the ‘truth’ about form (how to manipulate it) but not its context" (1976, 64).

6 According to Jean Baudrillard, the postindustrial
culture has seen the age of simulation which begins with "a liquidation of all referentials" (4). In that age, signs of the real are substituted for the real itself, and every real process is deterred by its operational double. Baudrillard argues that "simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulacrum," and a sign as a simulacrum becomes a reified commodity in the sign-economy which is "never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference" (11).

Fredric Jameson criticizes postmodernism for its incompatibility with "genuine historicity" which means, what he calls, "ultimate objects--our social, historical, and existential present, and the past as 'referent'" (1991, 19). But it should be noted that postmodernism refuses to represent "genuine historicity" as a transcendent concept of the past, in order not to efface the past as referent but to contest the very ability to 'know' the "ultimate objects" of the past, on the basis that as postmodern historical fiction shows, the reality of the past is incorporated and modified as discursive reality when it is signified by way of a meaning-generating process.

An epistemology/ontology dichotomy has been one of the frequent topics in conceptualizing postmodernism. Brian McHale, for example, defines postmodernist fiction in terms of his dualistic approach to the difference between
modernism and postmodernism. According to him, epistemology which determines modernist fiction is "'backgrounded,' as the price for foregrounding ontology" which becomes a dominant of postmodernist fiction. (1987, 11). McHale’s somewhat rigid exclusion of a zone of epistemology from postmodernist fiction strangely justifies Terry Eagleton’s vigorous attack on postmodernism as a whole that "persuades us to relinquish our epistemological paranoia" (1986, 144).

But it is really hard to imagine postmodernist fiction without epistemology, ontology without epistemology. (Pynchon’s V, a typically postmodern novel of epistemological paranoia, simply rejects Eagleton’s simplification and even McHale’s classification of the novel into a group of (late) modernist fiction). Linda Hutcheon is more persuasive in rejecting such an either/or position on the basis of a both/and poetics of postmodernism. As she discusses, postmodern historiographic metafiction begins with a question of how the past can be known and self-consciously reveals the complicated constructedness of historical knowledge and representation. Elisabeth Wesseling holds a similar perspective by "situat[ing] the difference an epistemological and an ontological interest in the past within postmodernism" (118, the author’s italics).

Mailer calls "factology" in another coined word, "factoid," in his Marilyn. Both refer to a fetishism of, as Mailer describes, "facts which have no existence before
appearing in a magazine or newspaper, creations which are not so much lies as a product to manipulate emotion in the "Silent Majority" (Lennon 1977a, 181)

Warner Berthoff makes a distinction between history and fiction: "Ideally, then, history is descriptive, and its problem is verification. Fiction is constitutive or inventive, and its problem is veracity. Both, as modes of narrative, are composed. But in the first case the order of the narrative is meant to reveal a pre-existent order of actuality; in the second, though the narrative may imitate the form of a history, it is known from the first to be a particular writer's invention" (272).

Patricia Waugh's study provides a useful explanation of a metafictional critique of realism and its ordinary view of language: metafictional writers "[turn] inwards to their own medium of expression, in order to examine the relationship between fictional form and social reality. They have come to focus on the notion that 'everyday' language endorses and sustains such power structure [of contemporary society] through a continuous process of naturalization whereby forms of oppression are constructed in apparently 'innocent' representations. The literary-fictional equivalent of this 'everyday' language of 'common sense' is the language of the traditional novel: the conventions of realism. Metafiction sets up an opposition, not to ostensibly 'objective' facts in the 'real' world, but to the language of the realistic
novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality" (11).

12 According to Belsey, liberal humanism, which "denot[es] the ruling assumptions, values and the meanings of the modern epoch," is an ideological product made "in the interests of the bourgeois class which came to power in the second half of the seventeenth century" with "the victory of constitutionalism in the consecutive English revolutions of the 1640s and 1688" (1985, 7, 8).

13 Descartes declares a conviction of the 'cogito' as follows: "I became aware that, while I decided thus to think that everything was false, it followed necessarily that I who thought thus must be something; and observing that this truth: I think, therefore I am, was so certain and so evident that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy was seeking" (1968, 53-54, the author's italics).

14 Michaels quotes Peirce's view of self-knowledge from his writing: "By intuition, Peirce means 'a cognition not determined by a previous cognition,' that is, a direct knowledge of the thing itself, what he calls elsewhere 'the transcendental object.' By self-consciousness he means 'a knowledge of ourselves,' and furthermore of 'our personal selves.' 'Pure apperception,' he says, 'is the self
assertion of the ego; the self-consciousness here meant is the recognition of my private self.' The point of the argument that follows is that we don't have any such faculty of introspection; our notion of our selves is produced by inference not by intuition" (193). In addition, as Michaels quotes Peirce, "[every] cognition involves something represented, or that of which we are conscious, and some action or passion of the self whereby it becomes represented"; "the content of consciousness, the entire phenomenal manifestation of mind, is a sign resulting from inference"; and since "every thought is an external sign ... man [himself] is an external sign" (199).

In Saussure's linguistics, "[a]rbitrary and differential are two correlative qualities" that "carry signification." Those qualities derive from "differences" inherent in language, which Saussure strongly emphasizes: "Everything ... boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system" (118, 120, the author's italics).

For Benveniste, "I" is a reciprocal linguistic sign: "I
use I only when I am speaking to someone who will be a you in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of person, for it implies that reciprocally I becomes you in the address of the one who in his turn designates himself as 'I.'"

Meanwhile, there is "no concept 'I' that incorporates all the I's that are uttered at every moment in the mouths of all speakers, in the sense that there is a concept 'tree' to which all the individual uses of tree refer."

Finally, Benveniste asks: "Then, what does I refer to? To something very peculiar which is exclusively linguistic: I refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker. It is a term that cannot be identified except in what we have called elsewhere an instance of discourse and that has only a momentary reference. The reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse. It is in the instance of discourse in which I designates the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the 'subject.' And so it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. If one really thinks about it, one will see that there is no other objective testimony to the identity of the subject except that which he himself thus gives about himself" (224-25, 226, the author's italics).

Barthes regards the author-concept as a myth that has been growing with the emergence of individualism: "The
author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person.' It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author" (1977, 142-43).

18 A split of the self, according to Lacan, begins to occur as early as the mirror stage, in which the infant identifies itself with an "imaginary" unitary self by (mis)recognizing itself as "imaged" in the mirror, in other words, as an image both exterior to its own perceiving self and distinct from the outside world. This "infans" stage of "an alienating identity," in which the self can be known only through its external image alienated from the self, not only precedes but continues to coexist with the infant's entry into language (1-7).

19 All subsequent references to Althusser will be made parenthetically from the same 1989 edition.

20 Self-consciousness may implicitly explain the term "performing self," which Poirier tries to construct as an alternative self. Though Poirier uses it without any specific definition, the "performing self" might be regarded as a self which originates in the accumulations of culture
(not only through literature, but through all forms of pop culture, technology, myth, and scientific or psychological theories) and makes "self-discovering, self-watching ... self-pleasuring" or self-parodying responses to the intertextual pressure of these accumulated versions, artifacts, formulations, or styles (1971, xiii).

Federman argues that "[a] rupture between the official discourse and the subject" (7) began to take place around 1960, when President Kennedy took office and projected a kind of electronic image through mass media. "And it is ... that sublimated image, especially when it appeared on television, which structured the subject" (8) as "the one who receives the official (political, economic, social, cultural) discourse" (7). This rupture, points out Federman, "correspond[s] to the beginning of Postmodernism" (7).

As Hutcheon succinctly remarks, unresolvable contradiction or contradictory compromise underlies the paradoxical poetics of postmodernism in general. Aiming at a logic of "both/and" without an easy dialectic resolution, "postmodernism is the process of making the product; it is absence within presence; it is dispersal that needs centering in order to be dispersal; it is the ideolect that wants to be, but knows it cannot be, the master code; it is immanence denying yet yearning for transcendence" (1988, 49, the author's italics).
Chapter III

1 Norbert Wiener provides a precise explanation of entropy that indicates a gradual but inexorable leveling of energy: "As entropy increases, the universe, and all closed systems in the universe, tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist, to a state of chaos and sameness" (Putz 1979, 35-36).

2 Thomas Pynchon, V. (New York: Bantam, 1961), p. 89. Subsequent references to this novel will be made parenthetically in the text.

One of the minor characters remarks that several "agencies" have caused "a decay" in the modern world: "Others--politicians and machines--carried on wars; others--perhaps human machines--condemned his patients to the ravages of acquired syphilis; others--on the highways, in the factories--undid the work of nature with automobiles, milling machines, other instruments of civilian disfigurement ... They existed formed a body of things-as-they-are" (89).

3 Pynchon's attitude toward liberal humanist individualism in V. has been exposed to three different kinds of interpretations. First, John W. Aldridge firmly argues that "Pynchon is clearly not a major novelist," because he "[treats human beings] as if they had no free
will, no power of self-determination, no control over their environment, no emotional or ethical substance, and no individual dignity [and] reduce[s] them, in short, to interchangeable ciphers or phenomenological data programmed by a computer" (67-68). To Peter Cooper, V. is a novel that "seems to record the passing of a world which justifies a faith in human agency, which registers the effect of an individual's virtu, which recognizes the primacy of the human and the organic" (69). Yet more recently Pynchon has been regarded as a cultural critic of humanism. Hanjo Berressem argues that "[the] dark vision of modern society that Pynchon sketches ... functions as a critique of humanistic illusions concerning the status of the subject" (57). Major characters of the novel, Stencil, Profane, and Maijstral, are basically humanists struggling for lost humanity in their decadent world. While the first two characters turn out failed humanists who only increase entropy, Maijstral survives by critically revising humanism in terms of his self-conscious insight.

4 The overwhelming tendency toward formlessness is variously called in the novel -- "entropy, political anarchy, decadence, mindless sexual activity, tooth decay, irrational violence, and the apparent randomness of history" (Patteson 1974, 30).

5 Most of the Pynchon critics have been devoted to explaining V. as, in a critic's words, "an epistemological
fable, or fable of knowing" (Hite 1983, 47). Some of them include Richard Patteson (1974; 1984), Melvyn New (1979), Thomas H. Schaub (1981), and Robert Holton (1988). While that approach covers a truly fundamental theme of the novel, it is likewise true that the novel also deals with the problem of self in a fragmentary world. The first general study of the self in V. starts with Manfred Putz (1979). Putz is followed by Hanjo Berressem’s recent theoretical approach (1993), which focuses on only one chapter of the novel ("V. in Love") mainly in order to relate it to Baudrillard’s theory.

V. is structured by pairs of inter-mirroring opposites — order vs. chaos; presence vs. absence; paranoia ("conspiratorial connectedness") vs. anti-paranoia ("absolute unconnectedness") (Hite 1983, 14); the animate vs. the inanimate; form vs. formlessness; self vs. selflessness, etc.

It is interesting that V. introduces both characters in the twilight or with its atmosphere. In the moonlight (2) or with snow falling (12) the night seems to Profane "twilight," and Stencil in his first appearance is shown "watching the twilight" (42).

Fausto Maijstral regards V. as Stencil’s obsession, comparing it to "a hothouse: constant temperature, windless, too crowded with particolored sports, unnatural blooms" (422).
According to William Plater, paranoia can be defined as "a form of psychosis based on a logical structure of relationship that interprets reality in terms of evidence of persecution." Paranoia has, says Plater, two noteworthy characteristics: "is a psychosis of interpretation and it depends on a careful ordering of unconnected evidence to prove the existence of persecution. Paranoia is a highly rigorous, integrative, self-preserving mode of behavior amid assumed or real cultural chaos" (188).

Everything with an initial letter V. is included in Stencil’s V-structure. V. signifies, as a woman, Victoria Wren, Vera Meroving, Veronica Manganese, V. the Bad Priest, Viola, Violet, Hedwig Vogelsong; as a quality or a mythical, religious reference, venery, void, variety, versus (vs.), victory, Venus, the Virgin; as a thing or a place, the letter V., the bombs V-1 and V-2, V-shaped lights and TV antenna, V-tooth, V-jigsaw, the 'V.' of spread thighs or of migratory birds, V-note, Botticelli’s "Venus," Vheissu, Valletta, Venezuela, Vesuvius, etc.

Tony Tanner argues that while "[Pynchon’s] work is certainly about a world succumbing to entropy, it is also about the subtler human phenomena--the need to see patterns which may easily turn into the tendency to suspect plots" (1971, 153).

The O.E.D. defines a stencil as "a hole in a card which when washed over with colour leaves a figure," stenciling as
"a process by which you can produce patterns and designs" (Tanner 1971, 164).

According to Robert Holton, the problem of discerning order or pattern in the world and its history is what is all about: "is the pattern, order, meaning (if located) a property of the world and of history? Or is it a projection of the ordering perception of the one who is searching for meaning? If the order or meaning perceived is primarily a property of the interpreter's perception, how then, is that sublime object of interpretation -- historical reality -- to be approached?" (324).

Mondaugen explains that he has "a gift of visual serendipity; a sense of timing, a perverse certainty about not whether but when to play the voyeur" (228).

Mondaugen questions himself as follows: "[had] a new phase of the siege party begun with that dusk's intrusion from the present year, 1922, or was the change internal and Mondaugen's: a shift in the configuration of sights and sounds he was now filtering out, choosing not to notice? No way to tell; no one to say" (257).

Commenting on the origin of this passage in Wittgenstein's Tractatus ("DIE WELT IST ALLES DAS DER FALL IST"), Tanner says, "[as] a coded message it would be the supreme irony, like discovering that the secret is that there is no secret" (168-69).

Godolphin recollects Vheissu in details: "The trees
outside the head shaman’s house have spider monkeys which are iridescent. They change color in the sunlight. Everything changes. The mountains, the lowlands are never the same color from one hour to the next. No sequence of colors is the same from day to day. As if you lived inside a madman’s kaleidoscope" (155).

18  V. explains to Melanie "what a fetish is": it is "[s]omething of a woman which gives pleasure but is not a woman. A shoe, a locket ... une jarretiere. You are the same, not real but an object of pleasure" (379).

19  As Godolphin insists, "[the monkey] was quite real; not like the vague hints they had given men before. I say ‘they had given.’ I think they left it there for me. Why? Perhaps for some alien, not-quite-human reason that I can never comprehend. Perhaps only to see what I would do. A mockery, you see: a mockery of life, planted where everything but Hugh Godolphin was inanimate" (189-90).

20  Some critics have tried to point out the implications of imperialism in tourism. Plater remarks that "[c]olonialism is the most insidious aspect of Baedeker Land" (110). As Robert Newman insists, "[t]ourism serves as a motif that extends the colonial theme" of the novel: "The tourist possesses the colonial mentality in being unwilling to see the land on which he is trespassing from the native’s perspective. Instead, he chooses to interpret his experience from a familiar and self-contained viewpoint which differs
very little from that of other tourists. The Baedeker guidebook dictates what he sees and how he sees it, rendering travel a solipsistic rather than a broadening experience" (49). Most recently Ronald Cooley, regarding Stencil's theory of V. as "a kind of intellectual imperialism," claims that Stencil's "Stenciliz[ing] creation of the 'truth' of V. is "a kind of narrative imperialism in which one man's consciousness forcibly intrudes on the history of others" (316, 317).

21 Profane is like a human alligator dissolved in sorrow: "It was a desire he got ... to be cruel and feel at the same time sorrow so big it filled him, leaked out his eyes and the holes in his shoes to make one big pool of human sorrow on the street, which had everything spilled on it from beer to blood, but very little compassion" (128).

22 McClintic Sphere, one of the minor characters, suggests a way to survive the decadent: "the only way clear of the cool/crazy flipflop was obviously slow, frustrating and hard work. Love with your mouth shut, help without breaking your ass or publicizing it: keep cool, but care" (342-43).

23 Wigglesworth's "college-girl poem" depicts her as "the decorative voids": "I am the ragtime and the tango; sans-serif, clean geometry. I am the virgin’s-hair whip and cunningly detailed shackles of decadent passion. I am every lonely railway station in every capital of Europe. I am the Street, the fanciless buildings of government; the cafe-
dansant, the clockwork figure, the jazz saxophone; the
tourist-lady's hairpiece, the fairy's rubber breasts, the
traveling clock which always tells the wrong time and chimes
in different keys. I am the dead palm tree, the Negro's
dancing pumps, the dried fountain after tourist season. I am
all the appurtenances of night" (428).

Chapter IV

1 John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor*, rev. ed. (New York:
Bantam, 1967), p. 805. All further quotations follow this
dition and are cited parenthetically in the text. And all
italics used in quotations are the author's own.

2 John Barth, *The Floating Opera*, rev. ed. (New York:
Bantam, 1967), p. 214. All further quotations follow this
dition and are cited parenthetically with FO.

3 Early in the novel, Todd explains why he uses "a
floating opera" as a title: "It always seemed a fine idea to
me to build a showboat with just one big flat open deck on
it, and to keep a play going continuously. The boat wouldn't
be moored, but would drift up and down the river on the
tide, and the audience would sit along both banks. They
could catch whatever part of the plot happened to unfold as
the boat floated past, and then they'd have to wait until
the tide ran back again to catch another snatch of it, if
they still happened to be sitting there. To fill in the gaps
they'd have to use their imaginations, or ask more attentive
neighbors, or hear the word passed along from upriver or downriver. Most times they wouldn’t understand what was going on at all, or they’d think they knew, when actually they didn’t. Lots of times they’d be able to see the actors, but not hear them. I needn’t explain that that’s how much of life works: our friends float past; we become involved with them; they float on, and we must rely on hearsay or lost track of them completely ...” (FO 7).

4 John Barth, The End of the Road, (New York: Bantam, 1958), p. 74. All quotations follow this edition and are cited parenthetically with ER.

5 Rennie says to Jacob: “I think you don’t exist at all. There’s too many of you. It’s more than just masks that you put on and take off—we all have masks. But you’re different all the way through, every time. You cancel yourself out. You’re more like somebody in a dream. You’re not strong and you’re not weak. You’re nothing” (ER 67).

6 Early in the novel a minor character briefly explains to Jacob the significance of arbitrariness: “he is wise who realizes that his role-assigning is at best an arbitrary distortion of the actor’s personalities; but he is even wiser who sees in addition that his arbitrariness is probably inevitable, and at any rate is apparently necessary if one would reach the ends he desires” (ER 28).

7 Barth says, “Since I don’t know much about Reality, it will have to be abolished. What the hell, reality is a nice
Charles Harris suggests that an arbitrary relation between words and world is a primary question that Barth’s fiction-writing has been confronted with: "If language ... is by nature ‘irreal’ since it does not refer except in the most arbitrary sense to an antecedent reality, then how can the writer become a writer-in-the world? Can words and world resolve themselves into a unified harmony?" (ix).

Manfred Putz provides a suggestive definition of self. Self is not a ‘given’ but "the assumed essential inner being of a person" (29, my own italics).

Henry’s tutoring was to enhance a play of Ebenezer’s fancy and pure curiosity and lead him to enjoy inventing the cases of the world: "To teach [Eben and Anna] history he directed their play-acting to historical events; to sustain their interest in geography he produced volumes of exotic pictures and tales of adventure; to sharpen their logical equipment he ran them through Zeno’s paradoxes as one would ask riddles, and rehearsed them in Descartes’ skepticism as gaily as though the search for truth and value in the universe were a game of Who’s Got the Button. He taught them to wonder at a leaf of thyme, a line of Palestrina, the configuration of Cassiopeia, the scales of a pilchard, the
sound of 'indefatigable,' the elegance of a sorites" (8).

Walkiewicz quotes Barth's remark on the origins of the novel from Alan Prince's "Interview with John Barth" (Prism, Sir George Williams University, Spring 1968: 42-62): "The idea of writing a novel which imitates the form of the Novel, or which imitates some other form of document, is not so decadent as it sounds at first blush. In fact, that's where the genre began ... The novel seems to have its origins in documental imitation, really. So when we get people like Nabokov, writing a novel which is a poem-plus-commentary--in other words imitating another genre--one feels simply that the novel is coming to a full circle" (45).

Chapter V

1 All quotations follow this edition and are cited parenthetically with AM.
3 All quotations follow this edition and are cited parenthetically with EE.
4 In Why are We in Vietnam? Mailer says that "there is no history without nuance." qtd. in Nigel Leigh: 129.
5 Harold Bloom succinctly articulates Mailer's self-fictionalization by describing Mailer as "his own supreme
fiction" and "the author of 'Norman Mailer,' a lengthy, discontinuous, and perhaps canonical fiction" (2). But Mailer's writing about himself is not merely a self-exhibitionistic extravaganza. Instead, Mailer is close to the tradition of Ralph W. Emerson and Walt Whitman in believing that he is a Representative American or "a microcosm of the nation" (Bufithis 1978, 88-89). For Mailer, writing about himself reveals about his nation and time. Quoting from Emerson, Stacey Olster connects Mailer to the transcendentalists: "Presuming that each individual is 'one more incarnation' of the 'universal mind,' [Emerson] found that 'Each new fact in his private experience flashes a light on what great bodies of men have done, and the crises of his life refer to national crises'" (63).

Mailer remarks: "To write about myself is to send my style through a circus of variations and postures, a fireworks of virtuosity designed to achieve ... I do not even know what. Leave it that I become an actor, a quick-changing artist, as if I believe I can trap the Prince of Truth in the act of switching a style."

In stressing the 'visible' authorial self that explicitly presents himself in his literary work, Mailer rejects the modernistic invisible or impersonal author championed by James Joyce and Henry James. Mailer insists that a writer must fully expose his authorial position to enable the reader to understand and be educated by his work.
and, furthermore, to comprehend the contradictions and nuances of American culture that he believes to be represented by his microcosmic self.

While categorizing the genre of Book One and Book Two, Robert Merrill argues in his revised edition of *Norman Mailer* that the whole of *The Armies of the Night* must be read as history (111). Ronald Weber, in contrast, considers it to be novelistic (82). Both Jennifer Bailey and Stanley Gutman, who suggest that each genre separately appears in each Book, similarly define Book Two as a journalistic account or a work of history (Bailey 94; Gutman 190). Some other critics point out, like Bufithis, that both novel and history simultaneously exist in Mailer’s text. They further suggest that Mailer foregrounds a mixture of the two forms as a reminder that they are "'something made'" (Hellman 15) that conceals "the mediation of the human element" (Radford 120) and "the personal basis of any later documentation of an event" (Sauerberg 70).

Chapter VI

1 Robert Coover, *The Public Burning* (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 163. All quotations follow this edition and are cited parenthetically with PB.

2 According to William Spanos, the postmodern literary imagination challenges the belief in "a monolithic certainty that immediate psychic or historical experience is part of a
comforting ... well-made cosmic drama or novel -- more particularly, a detective story." And the forms of both the detective story and the well-made positivistic universe similarly have their sources in the comforting certainty that an acute 'eye' can solve a crime or an immediate problem by inferring causal relationships between discontinuous clues or facts which point to it (150).

Larry McCaffery implicitly mystifies history by explaining that The Public Burning is fascinated by "the power of history to subjugate events to pattern -- to create connections, causal relationships, and stories when most observers can find no meaning at all" (87). But history does not so much retain its own order, as Linda Hutcheon argues and Coover's Nixon realizes, as it "enters the text as ideology" (194) by means of a totalizing use of it.


Fredric Jameson correctly points out that Doctorow is "the epic poet of the disappearance of the American radical past, of the suppression of older traditions and moments of the American radical tradition" (1991, 24).

As Christopher Morris suggests, Doctorow both inscribes and subverts logocentrism. On the one hand, Doctorow's novels "accept the imperative of representation-as-deciphering," but on the other hand they "attest to the
impossibility of fulfilling this imperative," challenging "the logocentric tradition in Western philosophy in which truth is defined in terms of representation" (4).

As Daniel observes, the vital dimension of history and literature has been eliminated in Disneyland: "The life and life-style of slave-trading America on the Mississippi River in the 19th century is compressed into a technologically faithful steamboat ride of five or ten minutes on an HO-scale river. The intermediary between us and this actual historical experience, the writer Mark Twain, author of *Life on the Mississippi*, is now no more than the name of the boat" (BD 304). Daniel is aware of "political implications" in all this: "What Disneyland proposes is a technique of abbreviated shortened culture for the masses, a mindless thrill, like an electric shock, that insists at the same time on the recipient’s rich psychic relation to his country’s history and language and literature. In a forthcoming time of highly governed masses in an overpopulated world, this technique may be extremely useful both as a substitute for education and, eventually, as a substitute for experience" (BD 305).
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