The Locus of the Logos: Marginalia on Narrativity in Postmodern Theoretical Discourse
Nikita Nankov

INTERVIEW

Kicking the Muse's Ass: An Interview with Jim Daniels
Todd F. Davis

Contributors
4. The average for the beginning and the middle of the text is twelve words per sentence, but the final six sentences contain only thirty-six words, an average of six words per sentence.

5. The same conclusion can be drawn from another of Bartlett's stories, "Air-Raid on the East Coast." The serial summarizations of this made-up story provide a different type of data, but the majority of the subjects did not fail to mention "hands" as a striking image that occurs in a sentence near the end of the story.

6. For a discussion of the canon within the field of memory studies, see Assman 2008.

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NIKITA NANKOV

What can be thought of must certainly be a fiction.
—NIETZSCHE

NARRATIVES, ANTINARRATIVES, AND NARRATIVE ANTINARRATIVES

What is the function of narrativity in the production of theoretical postmodern texts and discourses in the humanities? Can these texts and discourses be viewed as verbal artifacts? The formulation of these questions is influenced by those theorists who are interested in narratives as formed solely on the plane of the relationship sign-sign and who lock in parenthesis the ontological link between signs and referents (an approach that, potentially at least, could always swerve to theoretical idealism and social conformism). What I mean by discourse here is the term's narratological content: the "how" of a narrative as opposed to its "what" (Prince 21). The "how" and the "what" are tools of theoretical abstraction that should not be absolutely separated, because the "how" is the "what" and vice versa. My main point is that despite the attempts of many recent theoretical texts to scrutinize narrativity critically and in the case of the most self-conscious and ingenious among them to emancipate themselves from it by trying to create a new, nonnarrative type of theoretical and critical discourse, many
of these texts, in one way or another, construct narratives themselves. More often than not the good old narratives are still indispensable epistemological tools in contemporary postmodern humanitarian discourse. Narratives still seem to be ineluctable mind frames, and it is from within them that these very frames are analyzed, attacked, and deconstructed. If postmodern theory and fiction (with its literariness) tend to intermingle and fuse, as the postmodern saying goes, then the road lies open to vivisection postmodern criticism and theory by using narratological techniques. It seems that after the first two or three decades of euphoria when adolescent postmodernism challenged the past under the banner of the new struggle for self-identification, now the time has come for mature postmodernism to challenge its own challenge. (Am I not telling a new old tale now?)

To warm up and bring to the fore my primary concern in this article by an illustration, let us consider David Perkins's interesting book Is Literary History Possible? which analyzes literary history as a narrative artifact. Three intermingled peculiarities should be pointed out as exemplary in the book: first, the partial discrepancy between what Perkins preaches as a theorist and how he practices his own theory; second, the use of a narrative in a metatext that deconstructs narratives of the same kind in texts of literary history and partially in itself; and third, the tendency, especially palpable toward the end of the book, to suppress the logic of the chosen methods in the name of aesthetic and rhetorical suggestions and to round off an impressive scholarly narrative.

In spite of Perkins's claim that his "procedure is empirical" (ix), it, as a matter of fact, rests on three theoretical trends of thought: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. In Perkins's analysis, the last two consecutively sacrifice themselves to each other in the name of a plausible but, after all, artificial metadisciplinary narrative. In order to deconstruct the discourse of literary history Perkins too often alludes to or discovers hermeneutic circles (73, 85–86, 91, 113, 118, 138, 146–47, 150–51). Perhaps if Gadamer's historical and dialectical approach that surmounts hermeneutic circularity had been applied more often than twice in the book (111–15, the changing of classifications in time; 82–86, Perkins's ideas of the impossibility of an ideal literary history), the deconstruction operations would have been much more difficult. On the other hand, one may ask what would have happened if Perkins, who self-ironically deconstructs his own narrative of English romanticism (106–9), had done the same with his book as a whole. Practically, his metaliterary historical research is a teleological Cinderella narrative (following the trajectory of decline and rise) with three successive stages: (1) the present "crisis in literary historiography" (60, also 123), (2) "the type of literary history envisioned by [Iurii] Tynyanov [that] will be created gradually by many persons over a period of time" (173), and (3) "reliable literary history if it could be written" (182). (A fourth stage could be added: the prestigious status of literary history during the nineteenth century as described in the first chapter of the book; then the narrative of the research would be rise-fall-rise.) It is my feeling that had Perkins proceeded along the alternative paths that I sketched above, the high humanistic paths at the end of his scholarly narrative would have been destroyed and one could, most likely, conclude that the theory of literary history as presented in the book tends to be impossible but necessary (just like literary history, in Perkins's opinion) at least as an intellectual pleasure, institutional demand, and interratable dialogue in the self-identification of a scholarly discipline.

The road is open now, I think, to unfold each one of the preceding three points in a more detailed way, namely, the discrepancy between theoretical preaching and theoretical practicing, the use of narratives in metatexts that allegedly deconstruct narratives, and the tendency to muffle the logic of the method in the name of aesthetic and rhetorical suggestions.

**PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH**

Stepping on the slippery ground of the self-consciousness of postmodern theoretical discourse, I would like to distinguish between two notions: to preach and to practice. They are abstractions or polar cases that designate the problem of to what extent a postmodern text follows its own theoretical prescriptions. The problem is whether a theoretical text can preach in an abstract and pure form or whether the preaching is always materialized and embodied in a language. Put differently, this is the problem of the locus of the narrative logos in postmodern criticism that pleads against narrativity. For an example of a text that tends not to practice what it preaches I use Linda Hutcheon's monograph *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Ihab Hassan's collection of articles *The Postmodern Turn* provides a good illustration of a text that tends to perform practically what it states theoretically. My further examples are intended not to be exhaustive but only to serve as a theoretical discussion.

Let us begin with something easier to deal with, namely, the postmodern proverbial suspicion of binary oppositions. Writes Hutcheon: "[T]he
contradictions that characterize postmodernism reject any neat binary opposition that might conceal a secret hierarchy of values" (42-43; see also 49). So far so good. In A Poetics of Postmodernism, however, postmodernism is defined and explained mainly by virtue of binary oppositions primarily but not solely with modernism and its facets. In this respect, the use of architecture as a model for a poetics of postmodernism (chapter 2) by Hutcheon is hardly the best choice because Charles Jencks's and Paolo Portoghesi's postmodern architectural debates, as I show in the third and fourth section of this article, are permeated by zealous polemic against modernism; they thrive on the opposition between postmodernism and modernism. Generally speaking, binary oppositions appear inevitable in disputes of self-identification (the self defines himself or herself through the other) and, as I see it, postmodern architecture and its theorists are hardly an exception. The mixture of synchrony (A Poetics of Postmodernism is spatial because, as Hutcheon presents things, postmodernism spreads into different fields) and diachrony (the postmodern architectural polemic is the earliest fully fledged debut of postmodern theory) subverts many of the good intentions of Hutcheon as well. Below we will have an occasion to return to the binary oppositions in Hutcheon's work.

Hassan, like Hutcheon, more than once preaches that modernism and postmodernism cannot and should not be separated or opposed: "Modernism and postmodernism are not separated by an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall; for history is a palimpsest, and culture is permeable to time past, time present, and time future. We are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern, at once" (86; see also 40, 167). Unlike Hutcheon, however, he is not afraid to bring forward striking tables that overtly juxtapose modernism and postmodernism. But one should not miss what immediately precedes and follows such tables, for it dilutes the contrasts and turns them into tendencies that are distinguished tentatively without the militant/military metaphors so characteristic of other authors (see Hassan 90-92; Jencks provides another table of probative oppositons between modernism and postmodernism in his essay "Postmodern vs. Late-Modern" 19-20). In fact, Hassan's binary oppositions of modernism and postmodernism are quasi-oppositions and all his "either/or's" are dissolved in numerous self-conscious, (self-)ironic, (self-)parodic, and quite often amusingly artistic "buts." Hutcheon, rigorously true to her theoretical statements, does not go so far as to produce tables but the oppositions, nevertheless, are exuded tacitly from her pages.

My discussion of the oppositions in Hutcheon and Hassan as theorists and practitioners of their theories has a further goal, though. It aims at suggesting two types of postmodern theoretical discourse: the first is more static, orthodox, disciplined, and traditionally academic (Hutcheon), whereas the second is more dynamic, innovative, playful, and cheerfully artistic (Hassan). The first type is, so to speak, pure preaching in which theory is separated from its concrete language incarnation; the second is theory embodied in practice. The most used words in Hutcheon's A Poetics of Postmodernism are paradox, repeated on every second page but sometimes even four times a page (see 201), and contradiction, which is repeated nearly as often. For Hutcheon, the paradoxes of postmodernism are unresolved contradictions that she tends to think of as static—hence the banishment of dialectic from the realm of postmodernism in her book. A typical quotation from Hutcheon in this respect might be "There is contradiction, but no dialectic in postmodernism. And it is essential that the doubleness be maintained, not resolved" (209). Conversely, Hassan's way of thinking and writing needs overt oppositions in order to subvert them; the more provocative the oppositions, the more captivating his (self-)ironic and (self-) parodic game with them. For Hassan, contrasts seem to be a prerequisite, not a goal as for Hutcheon. In his texts, they are shifting, oscillating, and elusive; they are contrasts and oppositions on their way to dissipation and dispersion. Dialectic, according to Hassan, is not a synthesis but synthesizing, not being but becoming, not a result but a process, not Aufhebung but aufheben. Although in The Postmodern Turn he does not theorize on dialectic, it seems that what he practices in his discourse comes closer to Gadamer's ideas of the hermeneutic dialogue as a dialectical process than to Lyotard's and Hutcheon's understanding of dialectic as a synthesis, result, and totality (and also as Hegel's Encyclopedia, totalitarianism, terror, and modernism). An example of Hassan's playing with contrasts and oppositions—and I would even say, in a way a mise en abyme of his writing—is the following: "Oliver Gogarty, who was so often and so interestingly wrong about Joyce—because he was in some perversive way right [...]" (100). Another example of Hassan's discourse that is based on dynamic opposition is to be found in his article "Finnegans Wake and the Postmodern Imagination" (99-117), which is built on "Perspective", "Counterpoint" juxtapositions, oppositions. One sees much the same thing in the article "The Critic as Innovator: A Practical Strip in X Frames" with its "Frame", "Montage", "Slippage" sequences (118-46). A discourse like Hutcheon's is too serious academically in what it preaches to be taken very seriously in what it
practices. A discourse like Hassan’s, on the contrary, seems not very serious academically in what it preaches and that is why what it practices should be considered very seriously. Hassan’s attempts “to suggest alternative critical discourses” (xiii) that are “carnival” (xiv) deserve special attention (in part 3 of this article, I point out that Jencks tries much the same thing in his own way). I feel tempted to elaborate on Hassan’s puns, neologisms, parodies of academic textual and paratextual conventions, use of rare words, experiments with the graphics of the page, the tendency to create blurred prophetic fragments rather than unequivocal wholes, and so on and so forth. Let me, however, stick to my subject and be content with his description of postmodern culture, which, I think, applies to his own writing, too: “intellectual bricolage, bright shards of a disestablished imagination, all jangling their peculiar themes and variations” (65; see also 200). What Hassan says about Joyce’s Finnegans Wake is valid for much of his own writing as well: “Is not the Wake both augur [practicing] and theory [preaching] of a certain kind of literature?” (xiv). The author in Hassan’s theoretical-fictional texts is “dead” in the sense of Barthes and Foucault (and, before them, God in Sartre’s brand of existentialism) because the texts acquire meaning in the mind of the reader.

In Stephen Greenblatt’s article “Towards a Poetics of Culture,” one can see another example of harmony between preaching and practicing. His (a)theoretical creed (what he preaches) is a simple one: no theoretical manifestoes or, what amounts to the same, “an openness to the theoretical ferment” (1) of the time, for theory is a form of “eschatological vision” (5) which leads to “effacement of contradictions” (5) in the scholarly objects and turns history into “a convenient anecdotal ornament upon a theoretical structure” (5). For him, instead of theorizing upon one’s work one should just do it; that is, preaching should be converted without any residue into practicing. And Greenblatt, true to his disbelief in theory, tells four stories, extracting from them hints and suggestions of how one is to do his or her work in scholarship. Much like Hassan and James Clifford (of whom below), Greenblatt proceeds inductively and lays the stress on practicing rather than on preaching that cannot be turned into practice. To all appearances, it is not a mere coincidence that Greenblatt also shares Hassan’s and Clifford’s leading trend of constructing a theoretical (hardly an appropriate adjective in this case) discourse, namely, the preoccupation with change, process, and dynamics that crystallizes in terms such as exchange, circulation, and negotiation (see also his book Shakespearean Negotiations). On the contrary, predominantly deductive theorists like Hutcheon or Lyotard seem less capable of practicing discourses in which the preaching and the practicing tend to be isomorphous; they also seem to describe their objects more in terms of statics. Perhaps we might say that when Rorty describes a fortiori the post-Philosophical culture, by “the Philosopher” who will not have a place in it, he means also discourses like those of Lyotard and Hutcheon, whereas discourses such as Hassan’s, Clifford’s, or Greenblatt’s fall into the category of the “all-purpose intellectuals” who would be “ready to offer a view on pretty much anything, in the hope of making it hang with everything else” (58).

I would like to finish this part of my marginalia by sharing Greenblatt’s wonder at the beginning of his article “Towards a Poetics of Culture,” of how a practical, dynamic, and inductive procedure turns into a theoretical, static, and deductive school, that is, at how a Stephen Greenblatt turns into the “father” of the school of New Historicism. And why, I would ask, echoing the venerable “father,” does Hassan not become a “founder” or a “father” of a school?

THE LITTLE SECRETS OF EMPLOTMENT

Now, coming nearer to the problems of emplotment in theoretical discourse, I feel the need to introduce two more concepts: deep and flat. Like preaching and practicing, they are theoretical tools, metaphorically strained polar cases that should be understood only as tendencies. In theoretical texts, the historical fact, in Greenblatt’s terms, is turned into an “anecdotal ornament upon a theoretical structure.” The question is how a fact becomes an ornament. My tentative answer would be, by reduction, by (over)simplification and, finally, by turning the complex phenomena of cultural or literary history into labels such as modernism, dialectic, formalism, or postmodernism. Greenblatt’s image, however, could be as misleading as my metaphorical opposition of deep versus flat. They both suggest that there is a true and “deep” fact that an incorrect presentation may reduce and “flatten.” Actually, there are no such facts and our representation is not a simple subtraction and addition of truth or depth but rather, as it were, an ad hoc verbalization of an event without a beginning or end, and this verbalization can go in all directions. Let us consider one example. Lyotard often writes about the aesthetics of modernism and postmodernism, drawing on Kant’s and Burke’s ideas of the sublime (see “Answering the Question,” especially 81; and The Inhuman 78–107, 135–43). In some cases, he is laconic
and enigmatic; in others, he goes into historical details that stretch from Longinus, through Boileau, to Kant and Burke; sometimes he is a popular critic of Barnett Newman’s paintings; at other times he is a philosopher of the so-called highly developed societies. In other words, the aesthetic category of the sublime in Lyotard’s writings is protean; sometimes it is sophisticatedly presented or “deeper” and sometimes it is barely sketched and popular or “flatter.” It is not difficult to predict what could happen with such complex ideas when they fall into the hands of tyros. What is “deep” in the hands of the master becomes “flat” in the hands of the apprentice. The “flat,” as it were, stands for the “deep” according to the principle pars pro toto. Concepts that are “flat” in this sense, as we will see, are easy to use in theoretical discourse for narrative purposes.

Perkins writes that narrative literary history is constructed in three phases: (1) making “a chronicle”; (2) shaping “a story within the chronicle,” that is, “choosing a hero or a logical subject, of which the changing fortunes will be followed”; and (3) “employment” of the story, that is to say, identifying it “with some archetype familiar to the reader,” which is done mainly through metaphors (42). It is the second and third stages that interest us in the case of postmodern theory. In postmodern discourse, the protagonist as a rule is postmodernism itself, and more often than not its archival and antagonist is modernism. In longer texts, the two heroes are usually presented both directly under their own names and indirectly—by their attributes that come in antagonistic pairs. In the case of modernism, for example, these attributes and aspects could be colonialism, liberal humanism, formalism, universalism, individualism, male or Western domination, and so on. In Hutchon’s Poetics of Postmodernism, one faces paired facets like “historical fiction” versus “historiographic metafiction” or “totality” versus “contradiction.” It is usually such pairs that inhabit the debated tables, mentioned above; with or without the tables, however, the oppositions permeate the theoretical postmodern discourse.

The story itself may be a family saga in which postmodernism comes as the most recent offspring in the clan of modernity, as in Matei Calinescu’s book Five Faces of Modernity. From Calinescu’s preface to the second edition we learn that postmodernity is concerned only a new face but also a new generation in the saga of modernity (xi-xii). Jencks’s article “Postmodern vs. Late-Modern” has a similar story of engendering and heredity. Lyotard’s work The Postmodern Condition follows a scheme of the same sort: the two “grand narratives” legitimizing science until recently become extinct and give way to “small narratives.” Hassan’s The Postmodern Turn tells a story which is reminiscent of a bildungsroman telling of the childhood of postmodernity, its youth, the crisis of maturity, and the overcoming of the crisis in the future thanks to the healing effect of William James’s scriptures. Hutchon’s Poetics of Postmodernism, because of its mixed synchronic-diachronic character, develops like a history of a conquest: postmodernism originates in a restricted area in the past (postmodern architecture) and from there spreads to literature (in the form of “historiographic metafiction”) and culture.

Let us see an example where the protagonist and the antagonist of the postmodern narrative are presented in a historically codified cultural mode. In The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, Jencks presents modernist architecture as a sort of carnival. What I am getting at is not that the book is an exercise in Bakhtinian theory but that the author, thanks to his sense of narrative, has written a critical book based on the carnivalesque archetype familiar to the reader. The first chapter is titled “The Death of Modern Architecture.” The death is carnivalesque and Jencks is quite aware of this. At the very beginning he points out that his intention is to write “a carni- cature, a polemic” (10), a genre that he characterizes by “its license to cut through the large generalities with a certain abandon and enjoyment” (10). The “death” is presented in a highly theatrical and comic fashion: “Modern Architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final coup de grâce by dynamite. […] Boom, boom, boom” (9). The first chapter is permeated by carnivalesque language and imagery. Most of Jencks’s comments on the architecture of modernism and on the pictures of such buildings are witty hyperboles and parodies—for instance, the analysis of the “problem of the corner” in pictures 15, 16, and 19 or grotesque phrases such as “the doctor-modern-architect” (31). Here is an example of a key image in the carnivalesque show that Bakhtin describes as death giving birth to life (see Problemy poetiki Dostojevskogo 335–36): Jencks reads the message of a modernist building for retired people as “white crosses containing black coffins” (21). Before that he has described a modernist urban area like this: “[T]his centre is laid out like a giant phal- lus which culminates, appropriately, in a fountain” (19). Death and birth, crosses and phallic fountains coexist in an ambivalent carnivalesque unity. Some passages are artful (carnivalesque) travesties: “So we see the factory is a classroom, the cathedral is a boiler house, the boiler house is a chapel, and the President’s temple is the School of Architecture” (17; see also the whole comment upon the Illinois Institute of Technology at 35–39).
Jencks's language, imagery, and genre of caricature and polemic are not an accidental garment. His theory of modernist and postmodern architecture as a whole bears some deeper resemblances to Bakhtin's theory of carnival. Modernist architecture, according to Jencks, is elitist because it has only one complex professional code. Postmodern architecture is both elitist and popular; it speaks at the same time to the specialists and the general public. It is double coded (or schizophrenic) and thanks to this is more communicative than the architecture of modernism. In a broader cultural and narrative frame, it is tempting to view Jencks’s theory as being akin to Bakhtin’s carnivalesque and parodic relation between Christian or official culture, on the one hand, and the folk culture of humor or carnival culture or the unofficial aspect of the world or popular culture, on the other (see Bakhtin, Problemy poetics Dostoevskogo; and Tvorcestvo). The elitist code of modernism and the attitude of modernism toward postmodernism could be related to official culture. Postmodern architecture as a whole in its relation to modernism or only the popular code of postmodernism (especially what Jencks terms “neo vernacular” and “urbanist ad hoc”) could be compared to popular carnivalesque culture.

Let us now elaborate the third phase of the construction of a scholarly narrative, namely, the emplotment. I deal with two of the most often used archetypes in the last section of this article, so here I discuss certain metaphors and images that suggest narratives or cultural archetypes. These metaphors and images are closely dependent on the “flattening” of the phenomena or the narrative heroes because they express the connotations that result from the reduction of a scholarly subject. (According to Perkins, the hero in the plots of narrative literary history is “a social individual or ideal subject” [50], “a logical subject—a genre, a style, the reputation of an author” [59].) Metaphors channel the elusive connotations, give palpable form to the missing knowledge about the subject, cast the unspoken allusions, attitudes, prejudices, and associations connected with the subject into a narrative shape, and turn the nebulae of meaning around the subject into semantic constellations that are unconsciously substituted for the “deep” subjects. In terms of semiotics, the images that suggest narratives could be viewed as the cornerstone words that establish the topic of a text and thus give the key to its interpretation. The choice of those words and the topic lead the reader in one or another direction. When, further, I choose to interpret Hutcheon’s A Poetics of Postmodernity through three clusters of images or key words (the paradoxical, the militant/military, and the didactic ones) I, in reality, stress topics that might have been unimportant or dormant for the author but that can be activated in the reader’s mind (for a semiotic analysis of the key words and the topic as interpretive keys, see Eco, Role 25–27). Metaphorization in theoretical discourse shares some features with other discourses such as commercials, rhetoric, and ideological propaganda that persuade not through logical arguments but mainly through incessant repetition, stirring of emotions, and presenting a partial case as the whole truth (consider, for instance, the important appearance of “paradox” and “contradiction” in Hutcheon’s A Poetics of Postmodernity).

Metaphors, but also other kinds of imagery and tropes, no matter how diverse they might be, tend to fall into two large semantic groups: those with either a positive or a negative overall meaning. The first kind cluster around the winner(s) in the story or the “good” hero; the second around the loser(s) or the “bad” antihero. (If an inventory of metaphors and images is made, it would show that they could be taken from all spheres of life.) An example in point is the metaphoric clusters describing modernist and postmodern architecture that we find in Portoghesi and Jencks. Here are Portoghesi’s clusters of modernism: “annihilation of tradition” (7), “the terrible homologation” (7), “toxic to the physiological regimen of urban growth” (8), “obsolete project of modernity” (12), “the dogmatic assertions of the functionalist statute” (12), “a set of constraining rules” (32), “the Moloch of technological internationalism” (40), and so on. Some of his clusters of postmodernism—l have chosen examples in which postmodernism is presented as a healer of the wounds inflicted on architecture by modernism—are “exit from orthodoxy” (10), “recovery of memory, after the forced amnesia” (7), “contact with nature that seemed antithetical to the civilization of machines” (7), and so on. In Jencks’s book, there are myriad similar clusters that are even more effective and are taken from more fields of life. I, however, would like to point out some curious examples in Jencks in which obvious incongruities of postmodern architecture (Jencks refers here to Robert Venturi) are presented in most sympathetic light: “calculated ugliness and awkwardness,” “messy vitality,” “ugly and beautiful” (87–88).

In passing let me mention that because I enjoy Jencks’s postmodern sense of humor, I would like to salute it by pointing out that in the most famous medieval Russian chronicle (whose enigmatic title is translated all too clearly as The Primary Chronicle) the anonymous author makes the following metanarrative observation, which is an appropriate comment on Jencks’s praise of the “messy vitality” and the “ugly and beautiful”: “You know, o Prince, that no man condemns his own possessions, but praises them instead” (Zenkovsky 66; Vési, kniazhe, iako svoego niktozhe ne
The inscrutability and readily shared knowledge of postmodernism are enriched by a third constellation—the military/militant one. The exemplary case is that postmodernism both "uses and abuses" the past, whatever its forms and manifestations might be (106, 118, 130, 131, 145; see also Jencks, "Postmodern" 213). The wide use of this phrase in the book as well as in other postmodern texts could be explained, narratively at least, by the fact that it is a telling wordplay. The phrase alludes both to the ontology of postmodernism (it is ironic and parodic, that is, depends on the forms and the values of the past) and to one of the greatest and oldest military stratagems in the Western tradition, namely, the capture of Troy by the Greeks with the help of the proverbial horse. In this phrase, so symmetrical in its sounds and so reciprocal in its meanings, postmodern ontology matches perfectly with an archetypal military myth. Most of the rest of the military/militant metaphors in A Poetics of Postmodernism are cast after the model of this one, although they seldom come even close to its meaningful elegance: "install and subvert" (131, 159); "install and contest" (180); "inscribe and undermine" (125); "provide and undermine" (127); "undermine and install" (175); "assert and undermine" (202); "instate and subvert" (125); "debunk and create" (132); "subvert" (64, 167, 190, 202); "confront" (156); "undercut" (172); "attack" (92, 196); "battleground" (179); "contest" (180—used three times; 187, 191); "combat" (196), and so on.

Should I mention how akin such a militant/military rhetoric is to the avant-garde manifestos (and practical actions), both left and right, both artistic and political (see the chapter on avant-garde in Calinescu 95–148)? It is this striking similarity between modernism and postmodernism that makes one suspicious of combatant appeals such as Lyotard's "Let us wage a war on totality," the more so because it comes as the final word of a widely known and influential postmodern treatise ("Answering the Question" 82). Does the bellicose spirit of postmodernism mean that it, just like modernism, has its own utopias that prescribe how to make the world and life better by forcing its recipes for happiness on them? Lyotard's "small narratives," which are so attractive on paper, in reality, as the experience of Eastern Europe after 1989 has shown, could be bathed in blood. The ex-Russian president Boris Yeltsin, who dissolved the Russian Parliament in September–October 1993, applied slogans such as Lyotard's in the field of politics, but the consequences of such actions, as has already been pointed out, are unpredictable. Should one also mention the wars of the Western Civilized default against the Eastern Evilie in the 1990s and the early 2000s led under the banners of the "small narratives" and against the
"grand narrative"? The practical metamorphoses of the militant/military postmodern discourse make one think that some of the postmodern ideas and narratives should be rethought in order to match more closely the new global realities (for the dialectical link between discourses and practical actions in the Balkans, see Wachtel; Goldsworthy; and Nankov, "Revisiting"). Otherwise one might be inclined to think—as some theorists have already pointed out (see Jameson, especially 64–65)—that a substantial part of academic theoretical postmodernism could easily serve, indirectly or directly, as the ideology of global capitalism and imperialism, something that has become more and more obvious, especially since 1989.

Postmodernism as presented in Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* is a potential narrative hero who has no less than three main features: it/he is complex (the Philosopher), possesses new knowledge (the Magister), and imposes its/his righteousness by force (the Master-Warrior). It is not my aim, however, to discuss all the metaphorical constellations and clusters of images in Hutcheon's book at length, but only to sketch some of the principles of their formation and function in constructing narratives that glorify postmodernism. That is why I provide three examples that hint that the Magister figure, suggested by the didactic metaphorical constellation, is part of American cultural memory (and not only American, of course) and is the pivotal figure in certain narratives.

First example: among the conventions of British and American literary journalism in the 1810s–1830s, an important one was the creation of a literary personality (for this paragraph I use Allen). Byron was the model of the aristocratic, melancholy, and histrionic hero, whereas Coleridge presented the erudite philosopher in literature or, in the terms of my topic, the Magister. Edgar Allan Poe (like his British teachers in literary journalism Thomas De Quincey, John Wilson, and Edward Lear) followed the models of both these literary personae. As a Magister figure, for instance, Poe forged much of his literary criticism with an eye to a place among the southern literary elite in its struggle against the Boston and New York literati. Poe's magisterial elitism (often only rhetorical and archaic) can be a key to some of his works, such as the tales "Mesmeric Revelation" and "Mellonta Tauta" or the prose-poem *Eureka*, as well as to his own *Broadway Journal*, some of the psychological crises in his last years, or his ambivalent place in the American literature of his time.

European modernism—Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Konstantin Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov, to name only a few of the most outstanding figures—printed on its banners the name of Poe as, among other things, a powerful, mystical, and rational intellect. Strindberg's interest in Poe was dictated mainly by the fact that in his "battle of brains" in the 1890s he believed he emulated the American writer (Anderson 103–41).

In this first example the Magister participates in vague—yet well known to every student of modernist literature—cultural narratives. They tell the story of individual (or regional) intellectual self-identification or the self-identification of modernism as a trend in art. These narratives recall the early struggle of postmodernism for recognition. The example that follows points to another type of cultural narratives connected with the Magister: the stories of the self-identification of a national culture. After his death in 1916 Thomas Eakins was canonized as the paragon of nineteenth-century American painting in a series of articles and a book appearing during the following fifteen years or so (see Burroughs; Goodrich; Hamilton; McBride; Morris; Mumford; and Pach). Eakins was portrayed as a colossus of American national art by means of two intertwined narratives. The first is biographical narrative: here the painter is depicted as a prophet and patriarch (that is, a mediator and progenitor). Eakins mediates between the American "self" and the Americans. This mediation is simultaneously a prefiguration: the painter artistically creates, or "fathers," the Americaness that he reveals to the Americans. The dynamic circular nexus between the two sides in Eakins's biography makes him a prophet/patriarch. On this basic connection, different secondary features are overlaid, and he is described with features reminding one of some aspects of well-known biblical figures. The second is critical narrative: here, Eakins is portrayed as a scientifically minded artist who, through specific professional procedures, depicts not only the visual appearance of the material American world but its inmost essence as well. The critical narrative is a Magister narrative. The biographical and critical narratives are intertwined because they tell one story in two different ways. Generally, this is the story of some deeply hidden Americaness that is revealed and constituted in the first case in a prophetic-patriarchal fashion, but in a professional painterly fashion in the second case. The constellation of these two narratives defines Eakins's status of a national American artist (for the narrative canonization of Eakins, see Nankov, "Narratives").

The third example deals with the status of the Magister in a scholarly discipline. At the formative stages of ethnography the professional authority and intellectual prestige of an ethnographer come from his or her fieldwork and participant observation (Clifford 21–54).
These seemingly haphazard examples have a common point—they hint that the Magister narrative is ubiquitous. The didactic metaphoric constellations in Hutcheon’s *A Poetics of Postmodernism* could awaken and organize the (un)conscious cultural memory of the reader and suggest the authority of postmodernism. The Magister narrative is, after all, a narrative of power just as is the Master-Warrior narrative. The difference is that in the former, the power comes through real or through faked and pretended knowledge (for example, Poe’s pretenses to be an expert in ancient and modern languages, to have firsthand experience of Paris, to be a philosopher and scientist, etc.), whereas in the latter by sheer force. In Lyotard’s terms, the first narrative would be language games, the second terror.

**ARCHETYPES VERSUS ARCHETYPES**

Employment, as we remember, is the identification of the story with an archetype familiar to the reader. Before considering two of the archetypes that are widely used in the theoretical discourse of postmodernism, I elaborate on the relation between plot and archetype and discuss it in more abstract terms as a relation between variant and invariant. Postmodern theory (and practice) tends to prefer the first half of that opposition (let us remember Rorty, Hassan, Greenblatt, and Clifforde). As I see it, tends should be heavily stressed because epistemologically at least postmodern discourse could hardly do without invariants and archetypes, that is, without that shared cultural tradition that makes variants, plots, and narratives possible and enables postmodern theoretical discourse in the humanities. Without invariants and archetypes this discourse would be incomprehensible for both its authors and its readers. The dissolution of unities and totalities cannot be absolute and it should be redefined in each particular context. The relation invariant—variant in postmodern discourse is “a paradox” (Hoesterey xiii). In order to shed light on this paradox, let me begin with some allegedly obvious things. In *Five Faces of Modernity*, Calinescu sketches out an invariant—modernity—and then delineates its five variants: modernism, the avant-garde, decadence, kitsch, and postmodernism. In “The Literature of Silence,” an article in *The Postmodern Turn*, Hassan distinguishes between an invariant (silence) and its variants (the manifestations of that postmodern peculiarity in literature) (3–22). What are the juxtapositions between modernism, late modernism, and postmodernism in the tables of Jencks and Hassan if not invariants (modernism-postmodernism) existing through their variants (traits such as “simplicity” – “complexity” or “purist” – “eclectic”)? Does Hassan follow the postmodern trend of evading invariants when he capitalizes common nouns turning them into proper names (“the Last Things,” “Hope” [38–39]), that is, when he converts variants into invariants? Is not Rorty more “postmodern” in this respect when he does the opposite, arguing that today pragmatism prefers philosophy to philosophy? Or what is Hutcheon’s *A Poetics of Postmodernism* if not an attempt to construct an invariant of postmodernism? Or is the title of Hutcheon’s monograph—if we accept at face value the postmodern rejection of invariants—supposed to ironize the line of poetics stretching from Aristotle to Todorov? Or is this title self-ironic? But let us consider a more complicated case that reveals yet another discrepancy between preaching and practicing in respect to the opposition of invariants and variants. Discussing the invariant-variant relationship in postmodern thought and art, Hutcheon points out that there parle takes its revenge on langue, that is, variants on invariants (74–86). However, what happens with Hutcheon’s own text when he tirelessly quotes other postmodern texts (sometimes fifteen quotes per page) in order to legitimate hers? The result is ambiguous or twofold. On the one hand, the quoting constantly revives the relation langue (postmodern discourse in general to which she refers)—parole (Hutcheon’s own discourse, which is unthinkable without quoting; the very quoting is a personal text; appropriation is self-identification). On the other hand, Hutcheon’s poetics turns into a primer of postmodern texts, a mapping of the canon of postmodern discourse; that is, it tends to be engulfed by the postmodern langue.

Perhaps the most curious among all the examples in which postmodern theory speaks against the invariants is the one in which Jencks writes of plurality as an invariant: “I have tried to show the plurality [the invariant] as consisting of six basic traditions or ‘species’ [the variants]” (“Postmodern” 9).

In all examples above, the relation invariant-variant has an epistemological but hardly narratological meaning. In the examples that follow, epistemology and narrativity overlap. Two of the more widely exploited archetypes in postmodern theoretical discourse in the humanities seem to be, first, the hero who kills the dragon and rescues the beauty and, second, the Paradise-Fall-Redemption narrative.

The former archetype is easy to observe in two articles that stay on the opposite sides of the postmodern barricade—the already mentioned “Postmodern vs. Late-Modern” by Jencks and the essay “The Notion
of “Postmodern” by Clement Greenberg, the high priest of abstract expressionism in painting and high modernism in general. The hero in Jencks’s article is postmodernism, the dragon is modernism, and the beauty is the double communicativeness of architecture—on the one hand, with its users and, on the other, with the city and history. The fault of modernist architecture is that it suppresses communication. As one could expect, the semantic clusters of modernism and postmodernism are polar: modernism is “restrictive” (5) and a “social failure” (5), whereas postmodernism is “complex” (6) and provides “good life” (8). Scrutinizing the logic of the essay, one might wonder, for example, why Jencks takes the trouble to quote Eco’s book Postscript to “The Name of the Rose” (see Postscript 67–68) with its famous reference to the “very cultivated woman,” which, in fact, debunks the seemingly strong argument of the author. Let me explain. In this article, as in Jencks’s The Language of Post-modern Architecture, postmodern architecture is both elitist and popular, double coded, and thanks to that it is more communicative than modernist architecture with its single elitist code. One could object that if Eco’s woman had not been “very cultivated,” that is, had not been aware of both the code of popular statements and the elitist code of irony, but had been just a “woman,” that is to say, had used only the popular code when speaking of love, she would have understood only the popular—but not the elitist—code of postmodern architecture. For her, this architecture—just like modernist architecture—would have had only one code and for that reason would have had no communicative advantage over modernism. One could also ask why Jencks interviewed people about their feelings regarding postmodern architecture but not regarding modernist architecture. If Jencks’s article makes a convincing argument, it is not because of its logic but first and foremost because of its easily recognizable archetypal plot that conceals the logical shakiness. In the article, one could find a second and highly ironic subtext—modernism in architecture is presented under the guise of Protestant Reform. The subplot is less universal than the main plot, however; it is only one of the major plot’s historical incarnations.

In Greenberg’s essay “The Notion of ‘Postmodern,’” the hero is modernism, the dragon is postmodernism (also its parents: industrialism, the market, bad taste, the philistines, the relative democratization of culture), and the beauty is “aesthetic value, aesthetic quality” (46). This essay is more skillfully organized as a plot than is Jenck’s, in which there are many—too many from a narrative point of view—critical and theoretical digressions. The two heroes in Greenberg—modernism and postmodernism—follow a basic mythical archetype: cosmos is contrasted with chaos, center with margin, the human with the inhuman, name with namelessness, the past and civilization with the lack of self-consciousness, beauty with ugliness, and so on. Modernism is associated with the first members of these oppositions, whereas postmodernism is so with the second ones. These are, in fact, some of the most important metaphoric clusters of the two heroes. For Greenberg, modernism is “Modernism with a capital M” (43); it has a long and complex history in which the names Baudelaire, Manet, and T. S. Eliot shine. That is why modernism can be defined—which Greenberg does several times in the central part of his essay. Modernism, therefore, is a clearly perceivable human and cultural phenomenon. By contrast, postmodernism is “a rather new term” (42) with no history and no big names; it has no meaning in culture except in architecture. Even the sound of the term is strange, and Greenberg, so to speak, handles it tentatively and dilutes it in order to make out its monstrous. The otherness of the postmodern is caged, as it were, in quotes—“postmodern”—in order to be distinguished and kept under control. Postmodernism is not cultural but uncultivated; it is an incarnation of the domain of ugliness and the “defective taste” of the new-fangled philistines (48). Greenberg, as is appropriate for an enlightened human being, is in the center of the human universe that in this case is, predictably, modernism. It is through a friend and colleague who plays the role of an archetypal trickster (compare with mythical mediators such as the raven or the dragon) that he learns what happens in the kingdom of chaos, which, in this case, is a symposium about the “postmodern.” As one could already foresee, the discussion of that strange thing, the “postmodern,” is at the textual margins, that is to say, in the beginning and at the end of the essay; in this way the composition of Greenberg’s article supports its transparent mythical connotations: the central place is allotted to modernism, whereas the peripheral is given to postmodernism.

If the archetypal structure of the plots of both Jenck’s and Greenberg’s essays is similar, where does the controversy come from? The reciprocal positions that postmodernism and modernism occupy in that scheme is an obvious answer. There is, however, more than the purely formal difference that meets the eye here. These positions become theoretically and critically meaningful not solely by themselves but as representatives of the practical interests of their authors here and now; in other words, as far as the theoretical positions express a relation to history. The two texts understand history in a different way and face it with different expectations. The historical model in Greenberg’s article is mythical: time causes only deterioration;
the golden age (of modernism) is superseded by the silver, bronze, and iron ones (of postmodernism) (for the five—later four—races or ages see Hesiod 31–43; and Ovid 1:9–13). In Jencks’s essay, history is progressive and rational, that is to say, modern: time causes only melioration; the new is better than the old; the present is preferred to the past and the future to the present (compare with Hegel and Marx). Jencks’s notion of history is, ironically enough, pretty similar to that behind modernist architecture with its, as Jencks describes it, belief in industrial progress as a cure for social ills. Similar notions of history, although not overtly stated, also inform texts like Hutcheon’s *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* and “Answering to the Question: What Is Postmodernism?” and some essays in Clifford’s *The Predicament of Culture*. This, I think, is one of the reasons for palpable teleological trends in some of these texts: here postmodernism and the author’s position are presented as the final goal of history in its progressive march toward perfection.

The second archetype often used in postmodern theoretical discourse is the Paradise-Fall-Redemption story. In Clifford’s *The Predicament of Culture*, a book that propagates postmodern ideas in ethnography, literature, and culture, this plot underlies several of the articles. More than once when Clifford brings forward the history of ethnography as a discipline, especially its formative stages, the implication is that sometimes in the past the vistas open to this discipline were wider than later, but now and in the near future, thanks to postmodern ideas, things could be improved. The future of the discipline should emulate its origins and the deeds of the “fathers.” In “On Ethnographic Surrealism” (117–51), Clifford argues that ethnography and surrealism in France between the world wars had much in common. This common heritage points to “a crucial modern orientation toward cultural order” (117), the essence of which is “fragmentation and juxtaposition of cultural values” (117). He propagates “ethnographic surrealism[, which is a utopian construct, a statement at ease about past and future possibilities for cultural analysis” (119; emphasis added). And also: “To write ethnographies on the model of collage would be to avoid the portrayal of cultures as organic wholes or as unified, realistic worlds subject to a continuous explanatory discourse” (146; emphasis added). For Clifford, the future of the discipline should return to its past and thus ethnography would be redeemed from its present sins. Something more—future “[e]thnography combined with surrealism” (147) is to be a completely new discipline: from an empirical extension of anthropology it will become a “theory and practice of juxtaposition. It studies, and is part of, the invention and interruption of meaningful wholes in works of cultural import-export” (147). Could a scholarly discipline dream of a promotion (and redemption) bigger than this one?

In two of his articles—“The Human Experience of Time and Narrative” and “Narrative Time”—Ricoeur sketches his own narrative of Paradise Lost—Paradise Regained with respect to narrative time (see especially “The Human Experience” 111–15; and “Narrative Time” 180–83). First, Ricoeur maintains that in Propp’s description of the morphology of the folktales, chronology reigns. Then, however, comes structuralism (Greimas, Barthes) and succeeds “to reduce the chronological [in Propp’s theoretical model] to the logical” (“Narrative Time” 180) and achieves “the dissolution of the chronological into the logical” (“Narrative Time” 180). At the third stage of the story Ricoeur himself appears armed with Heideggerian ideas of time: “There is an alternative to such [structuralist] dechronologization. It is repetition. Dechronologization implies the logical abolition of time; repetition, its existential deepening” (“Narrative Time” 180; Ricoeur’s emphasis). This quote, in a way, is the narrative model of Ricoeur’s book *Time and Narrative* in miniature.

At the end of my marginalia I would like to recall that in “America’s Coming-of-Age” (1915), one of the important texts of American modernism and cultural self-identification, Van Wyck Brooks makes use of the archetypal plot of Paradise-Fall-Redemption to an effect similar to that of the postmodernists. The plot could be summarized as follows: America of the present is at once “highbrow” and “lowbrow.” The former means purely intellectual and practically inadequate; this trend was incarnated in Jonathan Edwards. The latter expresses America’s practical, businesslike disposition, which has nothing to do with the spiritual; the epitome of this was Benjamin Franklin. These two aspects of American culture stay far apart with no middle ground between them. But that has not always been the case. The first colonists in New England in the seventeenth century were equally men “of action” (19) and men “of God” (19); at that time American literature was “composed in equal parts [. . .] of piety and advertisement” (19). The springs of Harvard also contain the two polar qualities in unison. The reconciliation of these two sides of the American mind is to take place in the future, in “the man whose prime end is the fulfilling of his own creative instincts” (34), that is, creativity and art in their modernist omnipotence are going to make America’s future even brighter than its past. And if we play again the game of if A = B and B = C, then ______, we may conclude that, narratively speaking, modernism is postmodernism.
The conclusion of my ruminations should be clear by now. The causes, the banners, the battle cries, the battle horses, and the foes change. The narrative strategies to fight for the changing causes, however, remain the same. The cathedral St. Sophia in Byzantine Constantinople was initially the Christian temple; then, when Byzantium fell to the Ottomans in 1450, the cathedral was turned into a mosque. The same, it seems, holds true for our common narrative temples: they serve different gods equally well even when these same gods are at ceaseless war with one another.

NOTES

1. Hayden White, for instance, one of the heavyweight champions of this type of research, writes that “every history is first and foremost a verbal artifact, a product of a special kind of language use” (“Figuring” 22); see also Content.

2. Consider, for example, the chapter on self-consciousness in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.

3. For examples of the binary opposition modernism—postmodernism in Hutcheon, see 88, 97, 99, 141–42, 179; for the opposition historical fiction—historiographic metafiction, see 113–15 and especially Hutcheon’s negative reworking of Barbara Folley’s quotation at 120; for oppositions of humanism with postmodernism, see 192 and 208.

4. After Lyotard showed that in postindustrial society and postmodern culture legitimation of knowledge does not depend on the two “grand narratives” (see Lyotard, Postmodern Condition 31–37) there is hardly any place for overt dialectic, the pinnacle of German idealism, in postmodern theory (or so it seems). Lyotard prefers the sublime (the event, the meaningless occurrence) to any dialectic (see Lyotard, The Inhuman). Baudrillard also holds that there is “no more dialectical polarity” (32) in a hyperreal society in which the opposition between a sign and its referent has been abolished.

5. Rejection of dialectic, however, has another—historical—reason that seems to be neglected by some champions of postmodernism. After World War II, Anglo-American analytic philosophy was suspicious of philosophical systems born by classical speculation and the term metaphysics carried the pejorative overtones it had acquired from the logical positivists (early historians of philosophy hold that political hostility to Germany after the first world wars was easily spread to German philosophy as well). Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche all had low philosophical reputations (Ricoeur, Marx Trends 47–49). Although things have changed for the better now, it seems that some philosophically arcaic notions of dialectic are still prevalent among some contemporary champions of postmodernism, especially in its American version.

6. If one accepts without a grain of salt the slogan that “dialectical junk should be thrown out the window of the new postmodern edifice, one should exclude from postmodernism, conceived in its broad historical development, such scholars as Eco, for instance, for whom dialectic between what he terms “open” and “closed work”—in both its cultural and semiotic formulations—is a pivot idea in all his scholarly and creative writing and in his postmodern theorizing (for dialectic and postmodernism in Eco, see Nankov, Postmodernizam 53); the same holds true for the poststructuralist thought of a Ricoeur and, in general, for literary theory based on hermeneutic and dialectical traditions (for example, Hans Robert Jauss). With the “exclusion” or “inclusion” of authors and methods in or out of postmodernism, one encounters the predicament of the limits of the term postmodernism. And, as Ricoeur remarks, “a reflection on limits is always instructive. Without it, the critical investigation of any mode of discourse is incomplete” (“Narrative Time” 186). Often the problem with those who lightheartedly exclude dialectic from postmodern discourse is that they either forget or are unable to define the limits of this discourse.

7. What Eco says about kitsch could help in our case. For him, the stylistic elements of the artistic work are stylemes; “a styleme is enough to suggest the structure of the entire work” (Open Work 200–201); kitsch in structural terms is “a styleme that has been abstracted from its original context and inserted into a context whose general structure does not possess the same characters of homogeneity and necessity as the original’s, while the result is proposed as a freshly created work capable of stimulating new experiences” (Open Work 200–201). In the wake of Eco, the “flat” has connotations of scholarly kitsch. One example: my experience in American academia has shown that in many university courses on postmodernism the sophisticated argument in Lyotard’s The Postmodern Condition is reduced to the opposition of “grand narratives” versus “small narratives,” that is, the opposition of two terms stands for the whole book. The same could be said for Baudrillard’s work: he writes, some professors teach us about “simulacra” and “hyperreality.” That is how the principle pars pro toto operates in the academic classroom.

8. Judging from the fact that since 1978, when it was first published, the book has gone through several editions, one could conclude that this is perhaps one of Jenck’s most popular books. Obviously the carnivalesque narrative devices bear fruit in terms of readability and sales.

In passing, it is worth asking the question of the connection between the popularity of a scholarly text and its narrative qualities. Let us consider the following example. In Hegel’s mature philosophy, there are two kinds of dialectic: (1) ontological or strict or self-authenticating, which is based on a certain undeniable standard (e.g., Logic or the first chapter of Phenomenology of Spirit); (2) historical or interpretive or hermeneutic, which presupposes the imputation of a purpose to men in history or to Geist through men in history; this imputation is not undeniable on its own, and so it is convincing not by an argument but by the plausibility of the interpretation, that is, by an
examination of the whole (Taylor 214–21). The interpretive dialectic shares many of the characteristics of the narrative—for example, its beginning is interpreted through its end, a narratological problem formulated by Aristotle in his Poetics. It is such narrative parts of Hegel's philosophy that have become very popular—consider, for example, the part on lordship and bondage in Phenomenology of Spirit (111–19) and its interpretations by Marx, Alexandre Kojève, and Sartre. On the other hand, some of the nonnarrative parts are incomprehensible even for some Hegel students and their clarification requires juxtaposing them to the narrative parts (Lauer 101–19).

8. For a semiotic analysis of the ideological discourse as a partial discourse with holistic pretenses, see Eco, Theory of Semiotics 278, 289–98; for the partiality of the rhetoric discourse, see Theory of Semiotics 276–89; for rhetoric and ideology in popular literature and culture, see Eco, Role 122–24, 138–40, 161–63.

9. The "uses-and-abuses" case reminds one of Jakobson's analysis of the poetic overtones of the political slogan "I like Ike" (see Jakobson 357).

10. Just as the ostracism of dialectic, so the expulsion of language or cultural archetypes from the realms of postmodernism seems a difficult and in many respects a self-destructive endeavor. Here one faces again the problem of the limits of postmodernism. In the 1960s and the 1970s, for instance, Eco does not think of himself as a postmodernist, but the essence of his scholarly work, from today's point of view, could be described as postmodern par excellence. One of the hurdles for analyzing his work as postmodern comes from the fact that he tries to build his "subjective" (reader or addressee oriented) cultural and semiotic theory by reworking "objective" (formalist, structuralist, etc.) ideas (this problem is detailed in Nankov, Postmodernizam 15–53). If one looks at what Eco and his peers have done during the last fifty years, it is to give birth to what today without difficulty is seen as postmodern, it will become clear that invariants are indispensable for the genesis of postmodernism. Let us consider some examples. In Eco's A Theory of Semiotics, a book that is postmodern in some sense that it delineates a general semiotics as a discipline on the premise of the intellectual and imaginative freedom and activity of the addressee within a historically changing cultural universe, Eco writes, "[A] work of art has the same structural characteristics as does a language. So that it cannot be a mere 'presence'; there must be an underlying system of mutual correlations, and thus a semiotic design which cunningly gives the impression of non-semiosis" (271).

In The Open Work, Eco says, "In fact, one might say that rather than imposing a new system, contemporary art constantly oscillates between the rejection of the traditional linguistic system and its preservation—for if contemporary art imposed a totally new linguistic system, then its discourse would cease to be communicable" (60). For other examples of the relationship invariant-variant, see Eco, Role 7, and Aesthetics of Chaosmos 67–71.

11. What Ricoeur defines as mimesis is an invariant with narrative meaning: "Mimesis is this pre-understanding of what human action is, of its semantics, its symbolism, its temporality. From this pre-understanding which is common to poets and their readers arises fiction, and with fiction comes the second form of mimesis which is textual and literary" (Ricoeur, Ricoeur Reader 142; see also 140–43). Ricoeur points out that what is common pre-understanding for poets and their readers is "ethical qualities" and "myths" (Time 1:47; see also 1:46–48).

After Ricoeur redefines mimesis using theory of action and Heidegger's ideas of time (154–64), he concludes: "To imitate or represent action is first to preunderstand what human action is, in its semantics, its symbolic system, its temporality. Upon this preunderstanding, common to both poets and their readers, emplotment is constructed and, with it, textual and literary mimetics" (1:64).

12. It stands to reason that there are many other narratives as well. Here are two such mini-narratives: postmodernism as Sebastian, the early Christian martyr: "the Postmoderns have also been the target of the arrows of the new conservaties, of those guardians of modernity at any cost" (Portoghesi 8); postmodernism as a phoenix: "the new [postmodern] architecture rising from the ashes of modernism" (78).

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INTERVIEW

Kicking the Muse's Ass: An Interview with Jim Daniels

TODD F. DAVIS

Jim Daniels was born in Detroit in 1956 and grew up in Warren, Michigan. He is a graduate of Alma College (BA, English and Spanish) and Bowling Green State University (MFA, creative writing). He is the author of more than twenty-five books of poetry and prose, and his recent books include a collection of short stories, Trigger Man (Michigan State University Press, 2011), and two collections of poetry, Having a Little Talk with Capital P Poetry (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2011) and All of the Above (Adastra Press, 2011). In 2010, he wrote and produced the independent film Mr. Pleasant, his third produced screenplay. His second collaborative book with photographer Charlee Brodsky, From Milltown to Malltown, was published by Marick Press in 2010. His next book of poems, Birth Marks, will be published in 2013 by BOA Editions. His poems have been featured on Garrison Keillor's The Writer's Almanac, in Billy Collins's Poetry 480 anthologies, and in Ted Kooser's American Life in Poetry series. His poem "Factory Love" is displayed on the roof of a race car. He has received the Brittingham Prize for Poetry, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and two from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His poems have appeared in the Pushcart Prize and Best American Poetry anthologies. At Carnegie Mellon University, where he is the Thomas Stockham Baker Professor of English, he has received the Ryan Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Elliott Dunlap Smith Award for Teaching and Educational Service, and a Faculty Service Award from the Alumni Association. A native of Detroit, Daniels lives in
I probably do write and publish more than some poets, but, particularly at this point in my life, at age fifty-five, I'm not going to try to justify or apologize for writing or publishing so much. I guess part of me is this kid from Detroit who had this sense of hard work instilled in him—the worst thing you could do was be lazy. It's what I do. I write. I feel extremely fortunate that I've been able to get the work out there, get it published and have an audience, no matter how small, for my work. I need to connect with other people, and I don't do that quite so well in person. I write. It keeps me sane.

I know the strain you're referring to—that maybe publishing too much cheapens poetry—and it's fine if some people feel that way. But for me, it kind of rubs against this exclusivity about poetry that made me not like it or want to be a part of it early on—it's only for the educated/upper classes/whatever and can only be about certain lofty things and can only sound a certain way, and can only be written when the Muse strikes. I want to kick the Muse's ass for acting so stuck up.

**TD:** As you look to the next five years of your writing, what do you hope to explore, to accomplish? What might you hope for in terms of a legacy in your writing?

**JD:** I want to keep going with poetry and short stories, definitely. I'd like to do more movies too, but since they require more than words, the financial aspect makes that a bit uncertain. Other than that, I don't think too far ahead.

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