

A GENRE FOR OUR TIMES:
THE MENIPPEAN SATIRES OF RUSSELL HOBAN AND MURAKAMI HARUKI

by

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B.A. The University of British Columbia, 1970
M.A. The University of British Columbia, 1993

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(The Programme in Comparative Literature)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 1997

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0-612-25047-4

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Abstract

The thesis examines the novels of Anglo-American author Russell Hoban (1923-) and Japanese author Murakami Haruki 村上春樹 (1949-) as Menippean satires.

The Introduction defines the Menippean satire and considers possible sources for this genre as found in the works of Hoban and Murakami. Parts I and II examine several novels by Hoban and by Murakami respectively, demonstrating how their works conform to the conventions of the Menippean satire. In examining Murakami's fiction, Part II also considers possible antecedents in Japanese literature for tropes and topoi that appear Menippean in the light of Western genre theory; there is a special emphasis on Murakami's most recent work, *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* ねじまき鳥クロニクル (1994-6, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*).

The Conclusion examines why these two authors write Menippean satires. No claim is made that either author has chosen this genre in deliberate imitation of classical or Renaissance models. Rather, from the standpoint of cultural history, the thesis argues that the Menippean satire—or at least a form of postmodernist novel with notable affinities to the Menippean satire—has re-emerged as a genre for our times. Drawing on examples from the fiction of Murakami and Hoban, the conclusion demonstrates that central features of this genre—fantasy, crudity, philosophical dialogues, inserted genres, invented languages, and the descent into hell—are particularly appropriate for the fictional treatment of life in a postmodern world. Moreover, these features are serviceable not only in a Western context. Murakami Haruki, despite his Japanese cultural background and his avowed intention to write about Japan, relies on many of the same generic strategies as does Russell Hoban.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Kinya Tsuruta, Dr. Graham Good, and Dr. Patricia Merivale for their kind support during the preparation of this thesis. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Merivale, for her kindness and encouragement.

I would also like to thank my husband, Gordon Fisher, and my son, Nicholas, for their patience over the past four years.

Introduction

When we see a resemblance between the faces of a parent and child, the recognition of similarity comes all at once, as a kind of gestalt. So too, I think, with the perception of literary resemblance: first we have an all-at-once perception of familiarity, a non-specific sense that in reading Writer A we are somehow looking at the face of Writer B. But what exactly gives us this feeling?

In the case of Russell Hoban and Murakami Haruki, a salient point of similarity is the literary use of animals, in the form both of animal imagery and of talking animals. But this point of contact, while striking, is not in itself sufficient to account for the perception that the works of these two authors are similar. They also share several other features — notably a mingling of the modes of popular fiction (such as science fiction and the detective novel) with the tropes of classical mythology (especially the myth of Orpheus and his descent to the Underworld). But accumulating a list of similarities (which could be matched by an equally long list of differences) does not help us to explain why these resemblances exist or how they came to be.

There is certainly no argument to be made for influence. Murakami Haruki is fond of pointing out his indebtedness to and admiration of Western authors. He names Scott Fitzgerald, Raymond Chandler, and Truman Capote as his three favourite writers (*Haiho!* 123); he has translated into Japanese works by Raymond Carver, Ursula Le Guin, John Irving, and Tim O'Brien. But nowhere does he give any indication of having read the novels of Russell Hoban. For his part, Hoban was writing in his characteristic mode long before any fiction by Murakami was available in English translation.

What accounts for the resemblances between the works of Hoban and those of Murakami is, I believe, not influence, but the fact that both write in the same genre—namely, the Menippean satire. It is the Menippean satire, with its particular qualities, topoi, and narrative strategies that colours their novels and gives them a similar texture.

Menippean Satire

The Menippean satire was an obscure generic term until the work first of Northrop Frye (in his *Anatomy of Criticism* in 1957) and then Mikhail Bakhtin (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, published in the West in 1973) brought it once more to scholarly attention.¹ Certainly works in this genre were well-known: Frye, for example, mentions *Gulliver's Travels*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the *Alice* books as examples of Menippean satire. But they were not recognized as Menippean satires until Frye and Bakhtin suggested it as the appropriate genre. This discovery of their true generic identity was not, like M. Jourdain's discovery that he had been speaking prose, a fatuous shift in terminology. Rather, Frye and Bakhtin's resurrection of this generic term, along with their elucidation of its characteristics, helped readers to understand in a more systematic fashion the internal dynamics and peculiar force of these works.

Subsequent studies on the Menippean satire—ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and modern—have helped to clarify its origins, distinguishing features, and evolution. Using these studies, I hope to demonstrate that the works both of Russell Hoban and Murakami Haruki can best be understood as Menippean satires. When viewed in this way, the curious amalgam in their works of the comic and the philosophical, the human and the animal, the sordid and the sublime, the popular and the classical begins to come clear as a particular narrative strategy, one which, moreover, has “an excellent and antique pedigree” (Relihan 8). This is not an exercise in taxonomy; rather, I hope that it can accomplish what Frye spells out as the purpose of genre criticism, which is to “bring[] out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them” (247-8).

I will begin by defining the Menippean satire, drawing on a range of critical studies. The Menippean satire is, as Bakhtin pointed out, “extraordinarily flexible and as changeable as Proteus [and] capable of penetrating other genres” (113). It is, therefore, not surprising that the works of Hoban and Murakami have been described by a variety of other terms, such as postmodern novel, fable, and fantasy. In defining the contemporary Menippean satire, I will also examine its relationship to these other genres and modes.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Bakhtin are from this work.

Defining the Menippean Satire

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, an attempt at “a synoptic view” of literary criticism (3), Northrop Frye identifies the Menippean satire (which he prefers to call “anatomy,” after Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*), as one of the four types of prose fiction. In this category, he places such works as *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the *Alice* books, *Brave New World* and *Gulliver’s Travels*. What distinguishes these works is a “loose-jointed narrative form” (309); a focus on “mental attitudes” rather than on “people as such” (309); fantasy or, in a more serious utopian vein, the creation of ideal worlds; the use of dialogues (as in the “dialogue of the dead”) or colloquies or symposia; “a tendency to expand into an encyclopaedic farrago” (311) and the consequent “ridicule of philosophers and pedantic critics” (312). These characteristics serve to set apart the Menippean satire (or anatomy) as a distinct genre of prose fiction.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s definition of the Menippean satire, which appears in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, did not reach Western readers until the 1970s. (The translation commonly used now did not appear until 1984.) In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin enumerates fourteen characteristics of the Menippean satire, based on such classical examples as Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* and Petronius’ *Satyricon*:

1. prominent comic element, distinguishing it from other members of the serio-comic class of fictions (e.g., the Socratic dialogue) which are comparatively less comic;
2. “extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophic invention” (114);
3. “its bold and unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure is internally motivated, justified by ... a purely ideational and philosophical end: the creation of extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea” (114);
4. “organic combination ... of the free fantastic ... with a crude *slum naturalism*”² — i.e., the depiction of brothels, taverns, thieves’ dens, etc. and of “worldly evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity in their most extreme expression”;

² Bakhtin uses “slum naturalism” to describe a range of qualities: “life’s filth worldly evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity.” “Naturalism,” however, suggests a quasi-scientific depiction of the lower orders of society, an aim that is quite foreign to the Menippean satire. Because of this misleading association with French Naturalism, I will use more specific nouns (such as depravity or vulgarity or squalor) to refer to this “low-life” element in the Menippean satire.

5. "extraordinary philosophic universalism and a capacity to contemplate the world on the broadest possible scale" (115);
6. "a three-planed construction" representing earth, Olympus, and the netherworld (116);
7. "a special type of experimental fantasticality ... : observation from some unusual point of view ... which results in a radical change in the scale of the observed phenomena of life" (116);
8. "representation of the unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states of man" with an emphasis on phenomena such as dreams;
9. "scenes of scandal, eccentric and unusual behavior" and the "inappropriate word" (118);
10. "sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations: the virtuous hetaera, the true freedom of the wise man and his servile position, the emperor who becomes a slave ..." (118);
11. "elements of social utopia which are incorporated in the form of dreams or journeys to unknown lands" (118);
12. "wide use of inserted genres: novellas, letters, oratorical speeches, symposia, and so on; also characteristic is a mixing of prose and poetic speech" (118);
13. "multi-styled and multi-toned" prose;
14. "concern with current and topical issues" (118).

In addition to this list, Bakhtin discusses parody as "an integral element in Menippean satire"; related to parody is the double, which provides a distorting or parodying mirror of the central character (127). He also mentions the diatribe, soliloquy, and symposium as classical genres that "developed within the orbit of the menippea" (120); the focus in these genres on dialogue—*with oneself (soliloquy), with others at a banquet (symposium), or with an unidentified opponent (diatribe)*—was absorbed into the Menippean satire, making it also a genre which emphasizes "external and *internal dialogicality* [in its] approach to human life and human thought" (120; italics in original). Anyone familiar with the novels of Murakami and Hoban will immediately see the pertinence of many of these characteristics to their works.

Since the appearance of Frye's and Bakhtin's definitions, critics have re-examined works of various periods to extend our understanding of Menippean satire. Joel Relihan's *Ancient Menippean Satire* (1993) begins with the fragments attributed to the Cynic

Menippus (first half of the third century BC) and proceeds through authors such as Varro (first century BC), Seneca (d. AD 65), Petronius (d. circa AD 64), and Lucian (b. circa AD 120), up to the fifth-century Boethius and his *Consolation of Philosophy*. Relihan claims that there was no ancient use of Menippean satire as a generic term; it is an invention of the Renaissance. In elaborating his own definition of the Menippean satires of antiquity, Relihan acknowledges the usefulness of Frye's and Bakhtin's definitions, but notes that both Bakhtin and Frye create new terms (menippea and anatomy, respectively), as if to distinguish the modern genre they describe from its classical antecedents.

Relihan emphasizes one fundamental formal characteristic of the ancient Menippean satire: it is a mixture of prose and verse. (It is on this basis that he excludes Apuleius' *Golden Ass* from his study, although others—Frye, Bakhtin, Payne — do not.) This characteristic is presumably the source of Bakhtin's point that the menippea makes "wide use of inserted genres." Relihan also notes the fantastic setting of the Menippean satire, and dismisses as "naive" the view that fantasy is "merely one of the comic components of the *spoudogeloion* (serio-comic writing)"; rather, he asserts, fantasy is "part of the meaning" of the Menippean satire:

A Menippean satire travesties important things (epic, myth, religion, etc.); humor at the expense of such literary and cultural authority is much more the message than the medium.

But it is important to see that fantasy serves not only to undermine other forms of cultural and literary authority, but also to undermine the importance of the particular Menippean satire itself. It is a genre that desires that nothing be taken too seriously. (22).

Parody of literary forms and language is another characteristic of the ancient Menippean satire, as are "jokes at the expense of learning" and the learned (28).

F. Anne Payne's 1980 study, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire*, although written before Relihan's book, carries on in an historical sense from it, beginning with Boethius (where Relihan ends), and showing the links between *Consolation of Philosophy* and Chaucer's poetry. Payne adds to Bakhtin's list of fourteen characteristics several of her own:

15. "a dialogue between a pair of stereotyped characters speaking from two differing clear-cut levels of perception," one a "know-it-all who is free of the restrictions and responsibilities faced by ordinary human beings" and the other, "a puzzled human sufferer."
16. "One character of the satire is frequently involved in an endless quest; the other character of the central dialogue comments on his activities, in a sense 'helps' him."
17. "The satire embodies the knowledge that man's unsuspendable freedom to think is his most elating gift and his most terrifying burden.... The main purpose, as I take it, of the fantastic element is to metaphorize this freedom."
18. "The characters exhibit a courteous intention to continue conversing no matter what happens"
19. "The satire radiates an unquenchable hope and a titanic energy for what the problem is...."
20. "No 'God' or unquestionable authority is presented."
21. "Obscenity appears without pornography." (9-11)

Payne also makes explicit the original meaning of satire itself — from *satura*, a medley or stew of various ingredients— and notes the significance of this for the structure of the Menippean satire:

Menippean satire is frequently called a medley and so it is, a medley of prose and verse, of tones, attitudes, points of view, philosophies, places high and low, fantastic and realistic, of characters divine and human, living and dead. Often dismissed because of its disregard for the decorum of consistency or the demands of any kind of hierarchical order, it is in fact a profoundly thoughtful genre. (4)

W. Scott Blanchard, in his 1995 study *Scholars' Bedlam: Menippean Satire in the Renaissance*, attempts to define Menippean satire as it emerged during the Renaissance, its great period of popularity. Texts of classical Menippean satires—notably Lucian's

dialogues, but also the *Satyricon* and *The Golden Ass*— became available in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. But Blanchard views the Menippean satire's sudden rise in popularity during the Renaissance as occasioned by something greater than the age's enthusiasm for imitating classical forms. Because the "sheer bulk of textual information that needed to be mastered ... had increased at a dizzying rate during the fifteenth century," humanist scholars turned to the Menippean satire "for both respite and reflection upon the immense program that humanism represents." According to Blanchard, "Menippean satire is a genre both for and about scholars; it is an immensely learned form that is at the same time paradoxically anti-intellectual" (14). Like Payne and Frye, Blanchard emphasizes that for all its derision of philosophers, the Menippean satire is a learned genre that "use[es] erudition to mock erudition" (26); he describes the Menippean satirist as "nearly always an immensely learned author" (12). The Roman author Varro, whose *Menippeans* are considered to have strongly influenced Petronius, was regarded by Quintilian as the most erudite of the Romans.

Much of Blanchard's argument rests on the affinities he finds between the grotesque and the Menippean satire:

The Menippean satire can be considered as a form of grotesquerie by virtue both of its generic anomalousness and also its reliance on satirical techniques that imagine human beings with abnormal, asocial or bestial characteristics. (26)

Related to the grotesque is the importance of metamorphosis in Menippean satire. Blanchard notes that the humanist commentator Filippo Beroaldo, who prepared a sixteenth-century edition of *The Golden Ass*, interpreted Lucius' metamorphosis into an ass in Platonic terms: "For Beroaldo, fables of men transformed into beasts illustrate the more profound Platonic theory that the rational mind is enthralled to the bestial elements of the body" (23). According to Blanchard, ancient works incorporated this trope as one way of "mirror[ing] a world in which social categorization and even biological taxonomy lose their normative validity" (30).

One function of the Menippean satire during the Renaissance, according to Blanchard, was to depict the new social configurations emerging in early modern Europe. By incorporating a variety of social types, the Menippean satire presents a "kind of urban crowding" where various elements of society—aristocrats, artisans, merchants,

pickpockets, and courtesans— mingle (39). Here perhaps are the origins of the “slum naturalism” or vulgarity Bakhtin identifies in the *menippea* of Dostoevsky.

Blanchard proposes that the Menippean satire, which portrays as laughably doomed all human efforts to find knowledge, nonetheless offers an antidote to pessimism and bitterness: charity. His major example of this is Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. According to Blanchard, “Menippean satire confronts a deluded and insane world with the only virtue that recognizes all human beings, past and present, as bedfellows in their shared absurdity: charity” (43).

Eugene P. Kirk, in *Menippean Satire: An Annotated Catalogue of Texts and Criticism* (1980) surveys “all Menippean satires written before 1660 in the languages of Western Europe” (ix). Kirk’s method in defining this genre rests on Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblances”:

We are led out of the definition problem ... by *prima facie* evidence that there have been Menippean satires. Varro said he was composing them; later authors said they were writing them; and historians of literature from different ages have said such satires were written. Surely whatever Menippus wrote was “Menippean.” The loss of nearly all of his work deprives us of a *locus classicus*, and his surviving fragments give us indefinite outlines of his genre, but Menippus’ literary remnants, together with the writings of those who claim to be “Menippeans,” can be examined for “family resemblances.” (xi)

He then enumerates the “family resemblances” that emerge from this process. The “chief mark” of the Menippean satire is “unconventional diction” such as “neologisms, portmanteau words, macaronics, preciosity, coarse vulgarity, catalogues, bombast, mixed languages, and protracted sentences.” Structurally, too, the Menippean satire is characterized by diversity: “usually a medley of alternating prose and verse, sometimes a jumble of flagrantly digressive narrative, or again a potpourri of tales, songs, dialogues, orations, letters, lists and other brief forms.” Kirk also identifies recurring “Menippean topical elements” such as “outlandish fictions (i.e., fantastic voyages, dreams, visions, talking beasts) and extreme distortions of argument.” Thematically, the Menippean satire deals with “right learning or right belief,” a theme which often requires “ridicule or caricature of some sham-intellectual or theological fraud” (xi). Kirk’s list of

"family resemblances" accords well with the generic features noted by the other critics I have discussed.

Postmodernism and Menippean Satire

The Menippean satire in our time is closely related to the modes of postmodernism. Brian McHale, in his study *Postmodernist Fiction*, suggests that what characterizes the elusive, much-debated postmodern in fiction is a preoccupation with ontological questions:

... postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like ... "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (10)³

There are obvious affinities here with what Bakhtin calls the Menippean satire's "capacity to contemplate the world on the broadest possible scale." Specific postmodernist tropes and narrative strategies described by McHale also have Menippean counterparts. For example, the postmodernist use of lists, catalogues, and invented languages resembles the Menippean satire's tendency towards exhaustive erudition, and the parody of literary languages. Like the Menippean satire, postmodernist fiction engages in fantasy, not just for comic purposes, but in order to

³ In his second book, *Constructing Postmodernism*, McHale acknowledges that *Postmodernist Fiction* "perhaps seemed to propose a single, all-inclusive inventory of features ... of postmodernist writing" (2); he regrets this apparent attempt to find the "essence" of postmodernism in his first book and announces that *Constructing Postmodernism* will take a more pluralistic approach. Nonetheless, he does not retreat from the basic position of his earlier book.

“test[] a philosophical idea” (to use Bakhtin’s phrase). McHale’s examples of this postmodern use of fantasy include such works as Julio Cortázar’s *Bestiario* or Richard Brautigan’s *In Watermelon Sugar*, in which talking animals present themselves in the everyday world; these works use fantasy — the creation of a “next-door world of the paranormal or supernatural” (McHale 71)— in order to raise ontological questions. The crudity and depravity that Bakhtin noted in the menippea are also present in postmodernist fictions, which “often draw on the repertoires of peripheral or sub-literary genres—thrillers, gothic horror, pornographic, cinematic or televised melodrama and farce, and so on” (McHale 102). This use of the tropes of popular fiction in postmodernism also suggests the quality of topicality which Bakhtin identifies in Menippean satires which, he noted, has “[a] journalistic quality, the spirit of publicistic writing or of the feuilleton” (119).

The Menippean satire of our times is an obvious candidate for the label “postmodernist,” and clearly there is a significant overlap between these two categories. M. Keith Booker, in his study of the novels of Flann O’Brien, analyzes them in terms of Bakhtin’s definition of the menippea, but he also approvingly acknowledges McHale’s inclusion of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman* “as central examples of postmodernist fiction” (122).

McHale goes so far as to assert that “[p]ostmodernist fiction is the heir of Menippean satire and its most recent historical avatar” (172). Perhaps, indeed, all postmodernist novels could be analyzed as Menippean satires, although not all Menippean satires (perhaps not even all contemporary ones) could be considered postmodernist novels. One reason is that postmodernist novels typically express their ontological instability in frame-breaking or metafictional strategies: characters rebel against the author; real people mingle indiscriminately with fictional characters; the author criticizes his own fictional techniques, and so on. Such frame-breaking is not a typical feature of Menippean satire, nor is it a strategy much used by Russell Hoban or Murakami Haruki. Occasionally Murakami does engage in metafiction: in the short story “1963/1982-Nen no Ipanema-Musume” 1963/1982年のイパニマ娘 (The Girl from Ipanema 1963/1982; 1982), the narrator, in 1982, meets the girl from Antonio Carlos Jobim’s hit tune of 1963. In the short story “The Man with the Dagger,” Hoban does something similar: the first-person narrator goes to a South American town to track down the protagonist of a story by Jorge Luis Borges called “The South.” But neither author makes prominent use of metafiction in his major novels.

Moreover, one can find distinctly *un*postmodernist characteristics in their work, such as the assertion of meaningful pattern in human experience, and even the occasional happy ending. Hoban has described himself as “something of a religious writer” (Myers 10), and Murakami has recently announced that he feels a responsibility to reconstruct political idealism in Japan (“Aratamete”). Neither idealism nor faith fits in the postmodernist ethos. But the Menippean satire can accommodate them; for example, *The Golden Ass* ends with a vision of unity and order in the world, as Lucius is initiated into the cult of Isis.

The Menippean Satire and Other Genres

Fantasy and magic realism have also been used as categories for the work of Murakami and Hoban; like postmodernism, these terms obviously cover some of the same territory as Menippean satire. In an article dealing with both Hoban and Angela Carter, David Punter describes Hoban as a magic realist. Punter notes that Hoban and Carter resemble magic realists like García Márquez in that they “depict ‘magical’, boundary-breaking events as part of the texture of everyday experience” (142). He explicitly distinguishes them from postmodernist writers on the basis of their portrayal of the real and the everyday:

Carter and Hoban, I think, are important writers because they are able to use the techniques which are frequently described as postmodernist without losing sight of the real world. Both writers are fascinated by story as such, but this fascination does not in the end deflect them into the kind of all-embracing relativity which pervades so much postmodernist writing, and it is because of this return to the real world transformed that I take the label of “magic realism” to be a useful one. (156-7)

Japanese critic Noya Fumiaki likens Murakami to Latin American magic realists such as Maria Vargas Llosa, Manuel Puig, and Julio Cortázar. (50-51). In *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, Susan Napier suggests that Japanese fantasists (among whom she includes Murakami) “share some significant commonalities” with Latin American magic realists (10). Like the other fantasists she discusses, Murakami uses “ghosts, metamorphoses and mirror images” in his work and incorporates images from

“indigenous folk traditions” (11)—just as the Latin American magic realists do. But Napier links such non-realist tendencies to an anti-Western political and cultural agenda:

For twentieth-century writers of both Japanese and Latin American literature, then, the decision to write in the fantastic mode was, almost inherently, a subversive one. It was a decision to choose an alternative, consciously non-Western way of representing the world. (11)

In the case of Murakami, an admirer and deft parodist of a wide range of Western writers, from Dostoevsky to Raymond Chandler, this particular political intention seems unlikely. However, one feature of his writing is the mingling of modes: for example, fantasy co-exists with the hard-boiled detective style (modelled on Raymond Chandler’s novels). As we examine the sources of the various elements in his fiction, perhaps indeed the scenes of fantasy will emerge as “alternative, consciously non-Western” elements in his work.

Fantasy (sometimes, as in Napier, used interchangeably with magic realism) is another possible label, though not necessarily a generic one. Rosemary Jackson defines fantasy as a mode, not a genre: “the term ‘mode’ is being employed here to identify structural features underlying various works in different periods of time” (7). Many different genres—fairy tales, children’s stories, myths and legends—have been considered fantasy. What they have in common, despite obvious generic differences, is the “obdurate refusal of prevailing definitions of the ‘real’ or ‘possible’” (14). This definition accords with Bakhtin’s inclusion of fantasy within the Menippean satire; he asserts that “in all of world literature we could not find a genre more free than the menippea in its invention and use of the fantastic” (114).

While Jackson acknowledges that the Menippean satire and fantasy have much in common, she distinguishes between them on the basis of focus: the menippea celebrates “a temporary collapse of the social order” whereas modern fantasy describes a “distintegration of personal unity” (Jackson 16). By this distinction, it would seem right to consider Hoban and Murakami’s novels fantasy rather than menippea, for they focus on personal rather than social crises. But the personal crisis often mirrors a fault in the social order, an unwillingness in society at large to acknowledge some hidden dimension of reality.

Other, lesser genres such as the beast fable and fairy tale also present themselves as possible categories for the works of Murakami and Hoban. Bakhtin notes that “[w]hile possessing an inner integrity, the genre of the menippea simultaneously possesses great external plasticity and a remarkable capacity to absorb into itself kindred small genres, and to penetrate as a component element into other large genres” (119). Certainly, both Hoban and Murakami persistently employ these “small genres” in their fiction. For example, some of Hoban’s works for children incorporate fairy-tale elements; so too does his novel for adults, *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz*.

Elements of the beast fable can also be found in the fiction of Murakami and Hoban. Works by both men contain a striking number of animal images, and even, on occasion, talking animals. In his study of modernist animal stories, D.B.D. Asker uses the term “bestiary” to refer in a larger sense to “any example of literature in which animals ... play a strategic role in clarifying the human themes an author is interested in” (1). This definition is inclusive enough to accommodate the works of Murakami and Hoban. But focusing on the literary uses of animals, as the genre “bestiary” requires us to do, detaches the animals from the overall fabric of the novels. Kirk mentions talking animals among the “outlandish fictions” typical of the Menippean satire. Bakhtin devotes considerable attention to that classical animal story, *The Golden Ass*, both as “a full-blown Menippean satire” (113) and as the prototype of what he calls the “adventure novel of everyday life.” In the essay “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” he explores in various ways Lucian’s metamorphosis into an ass: as a degraded form of those ancient tropes of metamorphosis, the seasons and the ages; as a device for bringing private life into the public sphere of the novel, for Lucian’s ears and the fact that he is a dumb animal enable him to observe and overhear all manner of private occurrences and conversations; as a means of placing him in a kind of netherworld, a world of trial and tribulation from which he will eventually exit, transformed by the agency of the goddess Isis (Bakhtin 19881, 111-124). Thus while Bakhtin does not dwell on animal imagery in itself, he does suggest its importance both as a narrative device and as a symbolic representation of human experience or development.

Bakhtin does not discuss the beast epic (although he alludes briefly to it in *Rabelais and His World*), yet it seems extraordinarily important for the continuation of the Menippean satire in medieval times. In the commentary on her translation of the *Ysengrimus*, Jill Mann describes the world of this beast epic as one “in which everyday power structures

are inverted and exorcised”(29). She notes its affinity with Bakhtin’s description of carnivalized literature, pointing out the prevalence in this poem of such carnivalesque motifs as games, feasting, and mutilation (29). The beast epic also includes extended dialogues or debates, noted by Frye, Relihan, Payne, and Blanshard as significant elements in Menippean satire.

As far as the animal story elements in the novels of Hoban and Murakami are concerned, I think it is safe to say that these exist as an aspect of the Menippean satire. The “animal” in general represents many things which offend official thought: unrestrained appetites, lack of a soul or conscience, wildness, dumbness, and so on. In this sense, animals (like Lucius the ass disrupting a dinner party) fit well in the general atmosphere of scandal and eccentricity associated with Menippean satire. Specific animals have their own associations, of course, some of which are neither scandalous nor threatening to official order: the lion’s association with St. Jerome, for example. So while the elevation of animals to the level of fictional characters generally suggests a carnivalistic inversion (thus linking it to the spirit of Menippean satire), each instance needs to be considered individually.

If at times it seems that the terms “carnivalized literature” and “Menippean satire” are being used interchangeably, the reason lies in Bakhtin’s view of the interrelationship between these two: “the clamping principle that bound all these heterogeneous elements into the organic whole of [the menippea], a principle of extraordinary strength and tenacity, was carnival and a carnival sense of the world” (134). Thus, “a carnival sense of the world” is an essential, pervading quality of the menippea.

A third genre which is often employed to classify Russell Hoban’s books is the fable. What is meant by this term seems to vary. In describing *Riddley Walker* as a fable, critics (e.g., Myers 15; McKillop 69; Haffenden 121) seem to be suggesting that it is a book with a message—a warning of what lies ahead if we do not disarm. Sometimes, the reference to fables in connection with Hoban seems inspired by the importance of animals in his books; for example, both *Turtle Diary* and *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz*, which in quite different ways employ animals, have been characterized as fables. Certainly some of Hoban’s works for children belong to the category of fables: *Harvey’s Hideout*, for example, embodies a moral lesson about co-operation and sharing; *Nothing to Do* shows that pleasure lies in simple things. This tendency to sum up the meaning of a book in a phrase or two persists in Hoban — *The Medusa Frequency* ends, for example, with

the resolve of “No more *klage*” [lament] (143); in *Kleinzeit*, Death leaves the hero a final message, “You can do it” (190).

The presence of strong elements of other genres in Hoban’s fiction is evidence of the Menippean satire’s protean nature. However, not all the works of Murakami and Hoban can legitimately be described as Menippean satires, even allowing for this genre’s ability to absorb and subsume other genres. In some cases, it is the Menippean elements that are subsumed in other generic patterns. An apocalyptic fantasy such as Hoban’s *Riddley Walker* is quite different from a realistic novel such as *Turtle Diary*; one, I think, can be understood as a Menippean satire and the other cannot. Similarly, Murakami’s *Noruewei no mori ノルウェイの森* (Norwegian Wood, 1987; trans. 1989) and his *Sekai no owari to hadoboirudo wandarando 世界の終りとハードボイルド・ワンダーランド* (Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, 1985; trans. 1991) may have the same central character, but in many other respects they differ: *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is a Menippean satire, *Norwegian Wood* is not. While I will discuss the major novels of each writer, I will focus on those that are Menippean satires.

Sources of Menippean Satire in the Works of Hoban and Murakami

In the case of Russell Hoban, the possible sources for Menippean satire are numerous. First, he is a confirmed reader of classical literature: his novels contain many references to Ovid and to the *Odyssey*; in *Kleinzeit*, there are numerous quotations from Thucydides’ *The Peloponnesian War*. It seems likely that he would know such works as *The Golden Ass* and the *Satyricon*. However, just as Bakhtin insists that Dostoevsky was not a “stylizer of ancient genres” (121; italics in original), Hoban, one must assume, has no explicit ambition to imitate the Menippean satires of the classical period. But his exposure to such works as *The Golden Ass* might certainly have suggested the possibilities of fiction that is at once lyrical and grotesque, both concerned with ultimate questions and attuned to the quotidian.

Hoban’s career as a writer of children’s books suggests an even more important source for the Menippean qualities in his work. One of the pleasures of children’s literature is its creation of a world in opposition to, or separate from, the adult version of things—a spirit not far removed from the mood of carnival which suspends “hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety and etiquette connected with it—that is,

everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people (including age)" (Bakhtin 123). It is true that some characteristics of the Menippean satire such as crudity or topicality are generally not found in children's literature (at least not in the domestic fables Hoban has written). Others, however, are very common in children's literature: e.g., freedom of invention; prominent comic elements; an emphasis on fantasy, adventure, and dreams; oxymoronic combinations (such as the powerful child and the dethroned parent); journeys to unknown lands; parodies of the language of officialdom or other literary genres.

Children's literature also remains close to folktales, this folk element being constantly renewed by modern re-tellings of traditional tales. Folk culture is the source of carnival and is thus related to the Menippean satire, a point which Bakhtin elaborates in discussing *The Golden Ass*. Metamorphosis is the central trope of this prototypical Menippean satire: Lucius is transformed into an ass, and thereby undergoes a series of crises, but is ultimately redeemed by another metamorphosis into a human being. Bakhtin asserts that the importance of metamorphosis in *The Golden Ass* derives from its central role in folktales. It becomes integrated in "literature proper" (112) as "a mythological sheath for the idea of development" (113). Nowhere is this use of metamorphosis more evident than in children's literature. In such classic stories as "The Ugly Duckling" or even modern books such as E. B. White's *The Trumpet of the Swan* the central figure is a "child" (actually a young swan in both cases) who must leave, change into something else, and then return in order to enter into adult society. In Hoban's own *The Sea-Thing Child*, the central character changes from a helpless seabird chick, stranded on the shore, into a powerful bird capable of flying into the wind.

A third source of the Menippean qualities in Hoban's novels is the popular fiction he read as a young person: "one of the biggest elements in my literary makeup is the mishmash of supernatural and fantasy and science fiction stories that I cut my teeth on" (Myers 15). Science fiction, detective novels, and popular fantasy can all be considered varieties of the adventure novel. By returning to Bakhtin's discussion of Dostoevsky, the modern writer whose work inspired Bakhtin's re-definition of the Menippean satire, we can see the connection between the adventure novel and Menippean satire. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky uses the plot of the adventure novel because "[i]t places a person in extraordinary positions that expose and provoke him, it connects him and makes him collide with other people under unusual and unexpected conditions precisely for the purpose of testing the idea and the man of the idea, that is for testing the 'man in man'"

(105). It is the combination of adventure plot with moral and philosophical elements from other genres such as the saint's life and the confession that makes Dostoevsky's work "something quite out of the ordinary" (105). Bakhtin explains the contradictions in Dostoevsky's fiction by invoking the Menippean satire, a genre based on just such a mix of the sublime and the grotesque, the noble and the squalid. When combined with Hoban's comic tendencies and his concern with certain spiritual and moral issues, this "adventure-novel" quality in his fiction produces a seriocomic tone that closely resembles Bakhtin's description of the Menippean satire. Thus, these three strains—classical literature, children's literature, and popular fantasy fiction—suggest possible sources for the Menippean tendencies in Hoban's work.

Murakami Haruki comes to the Menippean satire through various routes. The most significant is Western popular fiction, particularly the detective novel. The first American paperback he read was Ross McDonald's *My Name Is Archer* (Murakami Ryu 244); Raymond Chandler is one of his most important influences (McInerney 29). The detective novel, like the fantasy and science fiction novels Hoban read as a young man, is a kind of adventure novel, and, according to Bakhtin, can be traced to the classical "adventure novel of everyday life." *The Golden Ass* is his prime example of this kind of fiction; it is also of course a Menippean satire. A more recent antecedent of the detective novel is the work of Edgar Allan Poe; Bakhtin cites Poe's tales as an important source for Dostoevsky's fiction, particularly in the matter of creating "an extraordinary plot situation" in which to test a person (144). Bakhtin also notes the importance of crime as a narrative strategy to bring private life into the public sphere. This too has implications for the genre of the Menippean satire, for crime is a central motif in *The Golden Ass*, in which Lucius is accused, tried, and acquitted of murder, and then, as an ass, twice falls among thieves. Bakhtin also notes the "enormous organizational significance" of crime and the criminal trial not just in the detective novel but also in the novels of Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1981, 124). Thus hard-boiled detective fiction, although not in itself Menippean satire, nonetheless contains many Menippean attributes— notably the extraordinary plot situation, the crudity and depravity, the importance of the netherworld (here figured as the underworld of gangsters), "oxymoronic combinations" (the whore with a heart of gold, for example), representation of "abnormal moral and psychic states," scenes of scandal and vulgar language. Murakami's knowledge of the American hard-boiled detective novel is certainly one source of these Menippean qualities in his own fiction.

A second source of the Menippean aspects of Murakami's work is his reading of Dostoevsky. In his teens, at the same time that he began to discover American popular fiction, Murakami was also reading Russian literature (Rubin 491; Murakami Ryu 244). Explicit references to Dostoevsky appear in his fiction. For example, in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the protagonist asks his girlfriend if she has ever read *The Brothers Karamazov*; they then discuss a remark that Alyosha makes in the novel (389). Later, the protagonist tries to remember the names of the Karamazov brothers; when he succeeds, he wonders, "How many people in Tokyo knew the names of all these guys?" (390). (In his study, *Murakami Haruki to Dosutoefusukii* 村上春樹とドストエフスキイ [Murakami Haruki and Dostoevsky], Yokoo Kazuhiro provides an exhaustive list of Dostoevsky references in Murakami's fiction [26-32].) If indeed Bakhtin is correct in characterizing the novels of Dostoevsky as Menippean satires, then Murakami's knowledge of Dostoevsky may be another way to explain the origin of the Menippean qualities in his novels.

Moreover, there are numerous allusions in Murakami's fiction to the *Alice* books, which Frye classes as "perfect Menippean satires" (312). There is, for example, the title of his fourth novel: *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. In *1973-Nen no Pinboru* 1973年のピンボール (Pinball 1973, 1980; trans. 1985), he describes his girlfriend's smile as lingering in his memory "like the grin of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*" (10).

Murakami, however, is a Japanese writer, and no matter how strong the Western influences on his work may be, it is surely impossible for him to write in Japanese without adopting at least some of the topoi and generic norms of his own literary tradition. Some elements from that tradition coincide with the traits of the Menippean satire. The descent to the Underworld of Western classical literature has its counterpart in the journeys to hell recorded in Buddhist stories such as those collected in *Konjaku monogatari* and the *Nihon ryoiki* (Blacker 187-194). The use of inserted genres can be seen in such forms as *haibun* and *kikobun* that combine prose narrative and poetry; the *utanikki* combines poetry, letters, and diaries. Fantasy, another Menippean characteristic, appears in some of the most important works of premodern Japanese literature. One thinks, for example, of the jealous ghost of the Rokujo lady in the *Genji monogatari*, and the long-dead warriors and poets who reappear in the stories of Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809). These examples of fantasy and the use of inserted

genres are taken from premodern Japanese literature, but one can also find them in twentieth-century fiction. *Kuroi ame* 黒い雨 (Black Rain, tr. 1969) by Ibuse Masuji 井伏鱒二 and *Chinmoku* 沈黙 (Silence; tr. 1969) by Endo Shusaku 遠藤周作 (to cite only two of many possible examples) make extensive use of inserted genres such as letters and diaries. Fantasy is also a common feature in modern Japanese literature. Indeed, as Susan Napier points out, “a surprising number of Japan’s greatest writers, including those famous for their powerful mimetic portrayals of modernizing Japan, also used the genre of the fantastic to create visions of a chaotic, fascinating, occasionally marvelous, but more frequently uncanny, fictional world” (Napier 1995, 454). Furthermore, the novels of Abe Kobo 安部公房, arguably the most important Japanese influence on Murakami’s fiction, possess many Menippean qualities: inserted genres (the diary, the confession, the letter); fantasy tropes such as metamorphosis and invisibility; the double; depravity and crudity; the adventure plot or extraordinary situation, usually focussed on a crime. Thus the sources of Menippean elements in Murakami’s work are probably multiple—European fiction, American popular novels, and Japanese literature, both modern and premodern.

Moreover, Murakami himself suggests—both in published interviews and in his fiction—that the Japanese elements in his work are significant. He acknowledges the “Western” influences and qualities in his fiction, but asserts that his purpose is to write about Japan:

... it's not as though I am after a sense of non-nationality. If that were really what I was after, I think maybe I would have set my novels in America. It would be easy if I were really to have them take place in New York or San Francisco. But, you see, what I wanted was first to depict Japanese society through that aspect of it that could just as well take place in New York or San Francisco. You might call it the Japanese nature that remains only after you have thrown out, one after another, all those parts that are altogether too "Japanese." That is what I really want to express. (McInerney 28)

Certainly Murakami does not bother with “too ‘Japanese’” details, if by this he means cherry blossoms, shoji screens, geta, and autumn moons. Nonetheless, a close examination of his novels does produce the impression that, as Ted Goossen has suggested, even Murakami still has echoes of that “old legacy no one wants to do away

with" (17). Perhaps Murakami admits as much through his protagonist in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*:

I read *The Greening of America*, and I saw *Easy Rider* three times. But like a boat with a twisted rudder, I kept coming back to the same place. I wasn't going anywhere. I was myself, waiting on the shore for me to return. (341)

It seems important, therefore, that in addition to "Western" sources for the generic possibilities of the Menippean satire, one look, in the case of Murakami, at Japanese ones. Is the fictional effect the same, no matter what the source? If Murakami has borrowed a certain atmosphere of scandal and doom, and "the extraordinary plot situation" (Bakhtin 144) from Dostoevsky, a hard-boiled narrative style and lonely heroes from Raymond Chandler's novels, science fiction motifs from American cyberpunk authors such as William Gibson, "slum naturalism" from Mickey Spillane, the philosophical dialogue from Voltaire and Swift via Lewis Carroll, and combined all these with ghostly visitors and supernaturalized history from the tales of Ueda Akinari, the sordid atmosphere and the confessional style of the *shishosetsu* of the Japanese Naturalists, parodic detective story elements from Abe Kobo, a clinical violence from Oe Kenzaburo 大江健三郎, and lyrical interludes from traditional Japanese poetry, is the end result still Menippean satire?

Bakhtin claims that from its very beginnings, the Menippean satire was heterogeneous: it included not only verse and prose, but also folktales, legends, dialogues, diatribes, symposia, and so on. Throughout its history, the Menippean satire appeared in constantly varying guises. In the Middle Ages, Menippean satire continued to "live and be renewed in several genres of Latin ecclesiastical literature" as well as in such "carnivalized medieval genres [as] morality and miracle plays, and ... mystery plays and soties" (136). In the Renaissance, "the menippea infiltrate[d] all the genres of the epoch" at the same time that "diverse Renaissance forms of the menippea" developed. And in the modern era, "while infiltrating deep into other carnivalized genres, the menippea continues its own independent development in diverse variants and under diverse names" (137). In sum, Bakhtin's account stresses the adaptability of this genre.

It seems possible, then, that a Menippean satire could contain elements from a non-European cultural context, provided they were compatible with the essence of the genre. If it is true, as Bakhtin asserts, that "in all world literature we could not find a genre

more free than the menippea in its invention and use of the fantastic," then presumably it could absorb "Japanese" fantasy motifs without being altered by them. Confession is another major element of Murakami's narrative style; as I discuss later, one can identify this mode as "Japanese" by linking it to the *shishosetsu*, a genre suffused with the tone and style of confession. But confession is not alien to the Menippean satire. *The Golden Ass*, to cite one example, is a Menippean satire written in the form of a confessional novel.

Thus many elements present in Murakami's fiction can be traced to both "Western" and Japanese precedents: they have a dual heritage, or at least permit two avenues of explanation. If, as Thomas Rimer claims, "persistent similarities with older traditions" of Japanese literature are to be found in the work of such contemporary Japanese writers as Abe Kobo, Endo Shusaku and Ibuse Masuji (247), such similarities may exist in the works of Murakami as well. It seems, then, both appropriate and necessary to consider Murakami's indebtedness to Japanese literary precedents at the same time that one investigates his use of Euro-American styles, tropes, and genres.

Conclusion

In the following chapters, I examine the works of Murakami Haruki and Russell Hoban in the context of the Menippean satire, a genre which, I believe, possesses the necessary inner logic to unite the diverse features of their work. As I stated earlier, not all works by these two authors can be legitimately described as Menippean satires. Even those works which can, borrow widely from other genres such as the confession, the detective novel, the diary, and so on. In part, this lack of clear distinctions is merely characteristic of the Menippean satire's ability "to penetrate as a component element into other large genres" (Bakhtin 119). One might say that inasmuch as the novels of both Murakami and Hoban tend to be hybrid and fragmentary in their composition, they simply exemplify the Menippean spirit rather than transgress any generic boundaries.

In Parts I and II of this thesis, I hope to demonstrate that certain of their novels are full-blown Menippean satires, exhibiting in modern dress the characteristics of this ancient genre. In the conclusion, I examine why two contemporary authors, one in Britain and one in Japan, should simultaneously find the Menippean satire an appropriate and useful genre. As Eugene Kirk points out, "[r]ecognizing a work's generic status is not, by

itself, an ultimate goal of literary study." The important goal is to "discover[] why some form was appropriate for the persuasive or expository task at hand" (xiii).

Part I

Persistence of Vision: The Novels of Russell Hoban

Introduction

Russell Hoban (1925-) was born in Pennsylvania and educated at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art. After serving in the American Army during World War II, Hoban began his career as an illustrator, producing magazine covers and other art work; he then worked in advertising agencies. In the late 1950s Hoban left his job and began to work on children's books with his wife Lillian: he wrote the text while his wife did the illustrations. Together, the Hobans produced many books that remain popular today, such as *A Bargain for Frances*, *Bread and Jam for Frances*, *Bedtime for Frances*, and *Tom and the Two-Handled Jug*.

In 1967, Hoban's first novel, *The Mouse and His Child*, was published. A work for children (at least nominally), its publication nonetheless marked a significant shift away from the picture books he had produced with his wife, to longer, more ambitious fiction. In 1973, he published his first adult novel: *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz*. Since then six more novels and a collection of essays and stories have appeared.

In 1969, Hoban, his wife, and their four children moved to Britain. His wife and children soon returned to the US, but Hoban chose to remain in London. He subsequently divorced and married again; he has three children by his second marriage.

Despite the end of his marriage to Lillian Hoban, and his own shift into longer fiction, Hoban continued to write for children. By the 1980s, he had "enough of a backlist" of children's books that he could "do just what [he] like[d] in novel-writing" (Haffenden 123). To date, over fifty of his books for children have been published. (The Vancouver Public Library catalogue lists fifty-seven titles by Hoban, not including his adult fiction. The 1996 edition of Whitaker's *Books in Print* lists fifteen children's works by Hoban in a total of thirty-two editions.) He is unusual, then, in that he has established himself as a novelist at the same time that he has retained an important place as a writer of children's literature.

Hoban continues to live in London. His most recent novel, *Fremder*, appeared in 1996.

The following discussion of Hoban's works examines his novels from *The Mouse and His Child* (1967) to *Fremder* (1996), with occasional reference to his non-fiction work *The Moment under the Moment* (1992) and to his books for children.

Chapter 1

The Mouse and His Child: A Quest for Autonomy

The Mouse and His Child is perhaps the most successful of all Hoban's works for children. Generally regarded as a children's "classic" (Haffenden 121), it regularly shows up on lists of "best books for children"; it was made into an animated film in 1976. Few of its young readers may care (or even notice) that this book is a Menippean satire—indeed, one of Hoban's most sustained and consistent efforts in this genre.

The Mouse and His Child recounts the adventure of a father mouse and his son, a pair of wind-up toys joined together: the two dance in a circle, the father raising and lowering the son as he turns. The novel begins at Christmas in a toyshop where the father and son are waiting to be bought; other toys in the store include a toy seal, a stuffed elephant, and a very grand dollhouse. The mouse and his child are sold, and go to live in a house far away; as inevitably happens to toys in the possession of real children, they are broken and neglected. Finally, five years later, after a misadventure with a cat and a vase, the mouse and his child are thrown out. A tramp passing by (the same tramp who in the opening of the novel observes the father and son in the toyshop window) retrieves the broken toy from the garbage and mends it. The movement now is different: the spring propels the mice forward, not in circles. Winding them up, the tramp sends the mouse and his child into the world with the injunction, "Be tramps" (12).

From this point, the father and son encounter many adventures out in the great world beyond the toyshop and the nursery. They are first impressed into the wind-up toy forage squad of the evil Manny Rat, lord of the garbage dump. They are assigned to be the booty-carriers for a bank robber. But when Manny's lieutenant fumbles the robbery, the mice get away. Their escape angers Manny Rat; he determines to destroy the father and son in order to maintain his reputation. Alone in the night, their spring wound down, fearful of what may lie ahead, the two mice conceive of salvation in different ways. The father desires to become self-winding and to acquire a territory, like other creatures. The child wants a home: he wants to find the stuffed elephant and the toy seal and to live with them in the dollhouse as a cozy family. All these aims—attaining self-winding, acquiring a territory, having a family—are ultimately realized, but not

before the mice endure war, servitude, capture, rust, and many attempts by Manny Rat to smash them.

Nearly all of the characteristics enumerated by Bakhtin and other critics of the Menippean satire can be found in this novel. First, its comic qualities are undeniable. Hoban's capacity for wordplay enlivens nearly every scene. For example, fellow inhabitants of the toyshop include a lady doll who, with a "papier-maché head made of paste and newsprint, always [speaks] in scraps of news and advertising, in whatever order they c[o]me to mind" (6): "HIGH-SOCIETY SCANDAL, changing to cloud, with a possibility of BARGAINS GALORE!" says the lady. Her gentleman partner, similarly made, replies: "Bucket seats... Power steering optional. GOVERNMENT FALLS." As in Hoban's later novels, dark ideas are packaged in snappy phrases. When the mouse and his child meet up with the Caws of Art Experimental Theatre Group (led by two crows), the little mouse explains that they used to dance. The father adds, "But now we walk. And an enemy behind us walks faster." The parrot Euterpe replies, "That's life" (56). When the mice and their friend the Frog are captured by a patrol of the shrew army, the shrew corporal asks, "Who turned you in anyhow?" The Frog answers, "Destiny"; the corporal's response is, "You can't trust anybody" (44). Despite the many dark and violent episodes of this story (in which, for example, woodmice are eaten by voles who are slain by weasels who are carried off by an owl), its mood is comic. It is even a comedy in the classical sense, in that it ends with a marriage: the stuffed elephant weds the father mouse.

"Freedom of plot," to use Bakhtin's phrasing, or "loose-jointed narrative form," to use Frye's, could well describe the improbable plot devices that propel the mice (sometimes literally) from one adventure to the next. For example, they are temporarily enslaved by the Muskrat, a savant to whom they are delivered by the well-intentioned parrot Euterpe who believes the Muskrat can make them self-winding. The Muskrat, however, harnesses them to a saw in order to cut down a tree. They are inadvertently released by Manny Rat: he viciously speeds up their movement hoping to see the tree come down. The logging gets out of control and when several large trees come down, the mouse and his child are catapulted into a pond. They spend spring and summer in the mud of the pond. They escape this situation when a helpful dragonfly nymph rigs up a bit of fishing line with bait and a hook; the line is draped over a branch on shore and attached to the mice. A bass strikes at the bait, and this action propels the mice out of the pond onto shore, where a marsh hawk carries them away. And so on ... This use of fantastic

invention is motivated by a “philosophical end” (as Bakhtin says of fantasy in the *Menippea*): their improbable adventures test the child’s ability to believe that with hope and courage, he can realize his dreams. As philosophy, this may not be on a par with the great themes of Dostoevsky which Bakhtin had in mind, but it is entirely appropriate in a book for young readers.

The succession of adventures which the mice experience constitutes the marvellous journey that both Payne and Bakhtin identify as the narrative thread of the Menippean satire. If we take Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* as a prototypical Menippean satire, it is clear that moving from one tight spot to the next— Lucius as an ass falls among two sets of thieves, cruel farmers, a vicious boy, and so on— ensures that the protagonist of a Menippean satire encounters the various tests and interlocutors the genre requires.

Even the “slum naturalism” that Bakhtin mentions is present in *The Mouse and His Child*, albeit in somewhat sanitized form. When Manny Rat first captures the wind-up mice, he leads them through the dump:

Manny Rat ... pushed the mouse and his child along through an evil-smelling huddle of gambling dens, gaming booths, dancehalls and taverns, all crudely built of scraps of wood and cardboard boxes. The bonfires in the alleyways threw moving shadows of the revellers large on walls of open stalls; the dancehalls thumped and whistled savagely with tin-can drums, reed pipes, and matchbox banjos, while the dim light of candles through the doors and windows sent bobbing rat shapes dancing blackly on the snow. Farther off above the general din there rose the cracked voice of a windup carousel that played a waltz with many missing notes. (16-7)

F. Anne Payne, writing on “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” as Menippean satire, suggests how the “three-planed structure” which Bakhtin describes (Olympus, earth, the underworld) is adapted in a beast fable:

According to the rules of hierarchy in a fable, animals move up into the role of men, and men move up into the role of gods. (164)

Like “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” *The Mouse and His Child* incorporates beast fable in Menippean satire. In Hoban’s novel, the god is the tramp who sets the mice to wander in the world (to “be tramps” as he is a tramp) (12); at the end of the novel, he blesses their household with the words, “Be happy” (181). The occupations normally taken up by men in the earthly realm become those of animals: commerce, war, crime, show business, science, journalism, and so on. In *The Mouse and His Child*, the underworld is represented by Manny Rat’s domain, the dump. The underworld associations are reinforced not just by the criminal activities Manny and his minions pursue; the dump is also described in hellish terms, as lit by “the red glare of the trash fires” (24). Ralphie, Manny’s “rat-of-all-work” (19), is a debased Hermes, the conductor of souls. It is Ralphie’s job to salvage toys from the dump and set them to work as Manny’s foragers. Like the naked dispossessed dead whom Hermes delivers to Charon (as described in, for example, Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Dead*), the salvaged wind-up toys are a pitiable lot:

Once they had been kicking donkeys, dancing bears, tumbling clowns, roaring lions, baaing goats—all manner of specialities were represented in the group— but few of them by now had all their faculties, and most of them had lost a limb or two along with fur and clothing, eyes and ears. All their trades and tricks were gone; the best that they could do was plod ahead when wound, and that not very well. (19)

The feature of the Menippean satire that Bakhtin describes as “observation from an unusual point of view” and which Joel Relihan describes by its Greek name, *catascopia* (7), features twice in *The Mouse and His Child*. The *locus classicus* of this motif is Lucian’s “Charon, or Those Who Look Down from a Great Height.” In this dialogue, Hermes takes Charon up to an earthly high point—Oeta stacked on Parnassus, piled on Ossa and Pelion—in order to give him an overview of human life on earth. In *The Mouse and His Child*, the mice are taken to the Muskrat’s den by the parrot Euterpe (named after one of the Muses); they fly over houses, farms and “wooded hills” (72). This motif occurs in a second, more striking form when the marsh hawk plucks them from the side of the pond. The hawk carries them “high above the earth, the ground below them tilting in slow sweeps as the hawk soared up in an updraft. The mouse child saw the dump in the distance, the railroad tracks and the swamp beyond them, the highway, the junkyard, and the roofs of the town” (118). From the air, they survey all that they have known of the world.

The “sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations” Bakhtin mentions also occur in *The Mouse and His Child*. The haughty stuffed elephant becomes a shabby, rusty slave of Manny Rat. Manny, a greasy rat, is lord of the dump. Even the fact that the wind-up toys have feelings and aspirations represents a kind of inversion, for toys are supposed to be the passive implements of higher beings.

Inserted genres and parody are intertwined elements in *The Mouse and His Child*. For example, the text includes dialogue from “The Last Visible Dog,” a Beckettian parody, presented by the Caws of Art Experimental Theatre Group (Haffenden 127). Ditties sung by Manny’s workers appear in the dump scenes. There are also parodies of various types of learned discourse. According to Blanchard, “us[ing] erudition to mock erudition” is a key ingredient in Menippean satire; Relihan notes the importance of “jokes at the expense of learning” (28). The Muskrat, “who figures out all kinds of things” (71), speaks in meaningless formulae: “Key times Winding equals Go”; Why into Here often equals There”; Tooth^K times Gnaw times Time times Tree equals Treefall” (74-5; 83). Despite his knowledge, he refuses to make the mice self-winding:

“I’m afraid that’s a little out of my line,” said Muskrat. “Oh, I’ve tinkered with clockwork now and then, but I have long since gone beyond the limits of mere mechanical invention. That’s applied thought, you see, and my real work is in the realm of pure thought. There is nothing quite like the purity of pure thought. It’s the cleanest work there is, you might say.” (76)

Muskrat, while engaged in “pure thought,” supports himself by teaching children the Them Tables, but takes pride in the development of his “much-in-little”:

“Why times How equals What,” he repeated. “Strikes you all of a heap the first time you hear it, doesn’t it? Pretty well covers everything! I’m a little surprised that you haven’t heard of it before, I must say. It caused a good deal of comment both over and under the pond, and almost everyone agreed that the ripples from it were ever-widening.” (75).

As a scientist, Muskrat is keen to show the efficacy of his theories: he ultimately fixes the two mice in order to cut down a tree, so he can make the Beavers (who mock him) “sit up and take notice” (79).

Not only science, but philosophy too is parodied. C. Serpentina, a snapping turtle and author of "The Last Visible Dog" dwells in the mud at the bottom of the pond. Serpentina is given to gnomic pronouncements— "The relation of self to mud is basic to any discussion of TO BE. Basic. At the bottom." (100)— and scholarly interjections: "Define your terms"; "which see"; "note well"; "in the work cited." He spends his days contemplating a can of Bonzo dog food, the label of which depicts a dog carrying a can of dog food on which there is a dog carrying a can of dog food on which and so on. The *mise-en-abyme* picture on the dog food can is the focus of his philosophic thought:

"Each of us, sunk in the mud however deep, must rise on the propulsion of his own thought. Each of us must journey through the dogs, beyond the dots, and to the truth, alone." (104)

The metaphysical associations of the dogfood can are foreshadowed in its first appearance. Much earlier in the novel, when the mouse and his child enter the dump, a wind-up toy donkey who talks too much is summarily smashed by Manny Rat:

"You're not well," said Manny Rat. "I can see that easily. What you need is a long rest." He picked up a heavy rock, lifted it high, and brought it down on the donkey's back, splitting him open like a walnut. "Put his works in the spare-parts can," said Manny Rat to Ralphie. (20).

The "spare-parts can" happens to be another Bonzo dog food can. Not only is this scene a specific echo of *The Golden Ass* (in which Lucius the ass narrowly escapes being split open by a band of thieves), but it also introduces the can as a motif of the imponderable. The wind-up toys, whose claim on "life" is precarious at best, could end up in the spare-parts can on a whim of Manny Rat. The image of the infinitely receding dogs suggests the unattainability of certain knowledge about the true nature of death, and thus of life. Ian MacKillop objects to Hoban's "reptile and mammalian philosophers" in *The Mouse and His Child* as "phonies" (58), but surely their phoniness is the point.

Incidental parodies of other "languages" or forms of discourse also appear. The leader of the Caws of Art troupe talks show business: "That was back when we did the Caws of Art follies—our best season, as I remember. We had a line of red-hot chickadees in

that show that everyone was crazy about.” (58) A bluejay journalist appears in each episode, crying out the headlines:

“LATE BULLETIN!” he squawked. “NIGHT BATTLE ON MEADOW BORDER RESULTS IN ...” He paused and flew lower, in some confusion as to who had won and who had lost. “VICTORY!” he concluded, and pleased with the sound, extended his headline. ‘VICTORY! VICTORY! VICTORY!’ he screamed, and was gone into the business of the day. (53).

A weasel and his mate appear as a young suburban couple:

“This is a nice territory, “ said the female. “It’s the nicest we’ve had yet. I’d kind of like to settle down here for a while.” (50).

A frog fortune-teller appears at critical junctures in the progress of the two mice. His pronouncements are usually parodic, in a lofty evangelical vein:

“TO HOW MANY OF US IS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY OF SEIZING THAT PRICELESS MOMENT IN WHICH THE TANGLED THREADS OF MINGLED FACTS CAN BE UNSNARLED AND WOVEN, WARP AND WOOF, INTO THEIR PREORDAINED DESIGN!” (122).

The frog knows himself to be a charlatan, and yet is occasionally possessed by some genuine oracular power. The fortune he tells for the mouse child is sombre, delphic, pure Hoban: “Low in the dark of summer, high in the winter light; a painful spring, a shattering fall, a scattering regathered. The enemy you flee at the beginning awaits you at the end” (28). At such moments, Hoban uses the frog not for parody but for expressing a more lyrical mode, closer to the novel’s central message of hope and persistence.

Payne suggests that the Menippean satire “radiates an unquenchable hope” (10). This tendency is evident in, for example, *The Golden Ass*, where Lucian, despite his many hardships and setbacks, persists in believing he will one day return to human form. Similarly, the mouse child always finds reason to hope. When the marshhawk takes the toy mice in his talons, the father despairs:

“Why not give up the struggle?” he sighed. “I can hold on no longer.”
 “Don’t say that, Papa!” cried the child. “I’ve got you! You won’t fall!”
 “We had our hopes, and they are gone,” said the father listlessly. “Let me
 drop into some peaceful meadow where the grass will grow among my
 scattered clockwork! Why wait to be smashed upon some lonely rock
 when the hawk finds out we aren’t edible!”
 “If we’d been edible, we’d never have lasted this long,” said the child.
 (118)

The child’s hopes— “I want the elephant to be my mama and I want the seal to be my sister and I want to live in the beautiful house” (35)— are of course ultimately realized.

The interaction between father and child embodies another Menippean tendency—the use of doubles. Bakhtin suggests that doubles arise out of the Menippean satire’s emphasis on parody: the double serves as a parodying mirror of the hero. In *The Mouse and His Child*, the father’s pessimism is countered by the child’s hopefulness. They begin as fused—two parts of the same toy—but ultimately are severed into two individuals. On a psychological level, their separation represents a necessary stage in the child’s development. In terms of the Menippean satire, the severing of the two mice is a necessary step in the journey of father and son: like Lucius shedding his ass’s body, the mouse father and son have to separate in order to progress towards the goal of autonomy.

The importance of metamorphosis in this novel is obvious: the mice are transformed from wind-up toys (that speak only between midnight and seven) into sentient, self-winding beings. As a Menippean device, metamorphosis enables the protagonists to move from one stage to the next in their fantastic journey. It is not only the mice who experience transformations. Miss Mudd, the helpful nymph, becomes a dragonfly with “iridescent wings” (113). Manny Rat, once a gangster, becomes a handyman and servant to the wind-up toys. These other instances of metamorphosis echo the theme of hope and growth that underlies the novel. Over time, through a series of metamorphoses, the mouse and his child will become what they are meant to be. The opening scene in the toyshop, when, after midnight, the mouse and his child begin to speak, establishes the importance of this theme:

"Where are we?" the mouse child asked his father. His voice was tiny in the stillness of the night.

"I don't know," the father answered.

"*What* are we, Papa?"

"I don't know. We must wait and see." (4; italics in original)

Time will enable the mouse and his child to discover (and become) themselves.

Conclusion

In praising *The Mouse and His Child*, Margaret Blount describes it as "such a strange, haunting and distinguished book that it is very difficult to classify" (186). The reason, I think, that *The Mouse and His Child* eludes classification is the presence of the conventions of Menippean satire, not a genre one would expect to find in a novel written for children (although the *Alice* books and *Gulliver's Travels*, which have often been considered works for children, most definitely are Menippean satires.) Hoban in fact did not conceive of *The Mouse and His Child* as a children's book, even though its protagonists are wind-up toys:

To be honest, I thought I was writing an adult book at the time. I didn't make any concessions. Since then I've thought that it's not an adult book, because no adult would take seriously the idea that victory in the battle for the doll's house would make everything OK. (Hoban in Haffenden 125)

It is true that the novel has a happy ending, but it is also true that Hoban has not made "any concessions" in the language and themes of *The Mouse and His Child*. Ian MacKillop's comment strikes me as the best assessment of *The Mouse and His Child*:

Having read the later books it seems to me that what I thought amusing but arch could more accurately be described as a shy way of broaching things that come out more truly later. (58)

Chapter 2

The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz “A Lion Hallucinates Me”

Like *The Mouse and His Child*, Hoban’s 1973 novel *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz* (henceforth *Lion*) tells the story of a father and son. And, like the two wind-up toys, this father and son are joined—chiasmatically through their names, Jachin-Boaz (the father) and Boaz-Jachin (the son). The novel is structured with alternate chapters devoted to father and son; the only exceptions to this are a chapter on Jachin-Boaz’ wife and another on his mistress, Gretel. Jachin-Boaz and his son are Jews. No place is ever named in the novel, but they seem to live in Israel — in any case, a hot, desert-like agricultural country.

The father, Jachin-Boaz, like his father before him, is a map-seller and cartographer. He has drawn a map for his son, “a master map that would show him where to find whatever he might wish to look for” (12). But one day, Jachin-Boaz disappears, taking with him the master map and half the family’s savings. His farewell note announces that he has “gone to look for a lion,” an animal that is extinct in the world of this novel (16). The son goes in search of his father at the only lion-place he can think of: a nearby archaeological site where stone carvings depict a royal lion hunt. (Hoban has said that the novel was inspired by a photograph of the Assyrian lion-hunt relief in the British Museum [Hoban in Haffenden 128].) In the hall where the murals are displayed, the son looks in vain for his father. But he sees the image of the wounded lion, biting the wheel of the king’s chariot it pursues. The son measures the friezes and then at home draws them in successive versions, culminating in a drawing in which the lion is not wounded and is about to bite the king himself. He returns to the lion hall and burns the drawings. The son too decides to set off into the world in pursuit of his father.

Meanwhile Jachin-Boaz has gone to a large city. (It is suggestive of London in that there is a river, an embankment, an Underground, several bridges, and a madman who quotes Wordsworth.) He begins a new life: he works in a bookshop, and soon acquires a girlfriend, a much younger German woman. All seems well until early one morning, he

encounters a lion, newly emerged from a manhole. The lion, invisible to nearly everyone else, attacks Jachin-Boaz, leaving real wounds.

The son, in the alternate chapters devoted to him, has been travelling towards the father. His journey (a parodic Telemachy) is eventful: he hitchhikes with a lonely, weepy truck driver, with a divorcée whom he lusts after, and with a farmer who asks him to sing for his dying father. Boaz-Jachin travels across the sea on a small one-man freight vessel; he nearly drowns when it is shipwrecked. He then works on a cruise ship, where he romances a young passenger. He travels northward by car with the young passenger's family until their car crashes. He then continues his journey with another truck driver, a philosophic one. When he crosses a second body of water, he again meets the divorcée, who takes him to her country home. Finally, he arrives in the great city where he believes his father lives. As Boaz-Jachin waits to make contact with his father (he places an ad in the book trade weekly), he plays his guitar and sings in the Underground.

As the son travels towards him, Jachin-Boaz' quiet life is being destroyed by the lion. To most other people, the lion is invisible; but everyone can see the lacerations it leaves on Jachin-Boaz' arm. Jachin-Boaz and Gretel end up in a psychiatric ward because the police and the doctors do not believe the lion exists. Other patients on the psychiatric ward, however, see the lion and know it is somehow real. Jachin-Boaz is released from hospital by claiming that the lion is a hallucination produced by stress, and the lacerations the result of imaginative domestic violence.

Once more the lion summons Jachin-Boaz. He faces it on the embankment. At the same time, the lion has summoned Boaz-Jachin. In the final scene of the novel, the two men encounter each other, with the lion between them. The lion seems to attack, but when the struggle is over, the father and son are embracing, and there is no sign of the lion.

This strange novel is not easily characterized. It contains elements of the fairy tale; one critic has labelled it a "symbolic novel" (Granofsky); it also resembles certain works labelled "metaphysical thrillers." What it is not, on the whole, is a Menippean satire; nonetheless, in examining the interplay of these other genres, I hope to demonstrate the presence in this novel of certain Menippean topoi and themes.

Lion as a Fairy Tale

A fairy tale atmosphere is created at the very outset of the novel—not in the sense of princesses and castles, but in terms of a nostalgia for a magical past. (David Punter describes the novel's setting as "archaic"[149].) The first five paragraphs of the novel describe an archaeological site in the desert which contains a ruined palace, with stone relief carvings of a royal lion hunt. What gives this opening scene its magical feeling is the suggestion in the first two paragraphs that the ruins and the creatures depicted in the carvings are only sleeping:

There were no lions any more. There had been lions once. Sometimes in the shimmer of the heat on the plains the motion of their running still flickered on the dry wind—tawny, great, and quickly gone. Sometimes the honey-coloured moon shivered to the silence of a ghost-roar on the rising air.

There were no chariots any more. The chariots, wind-bereft and roadless in the night, slept with their tall wheels hushed in the tomb of the last king. (9)

After the description of the site, complete with such unmagical details as air conditioning and a chain link fence, the narrative abruptly begins: "Jachin-Boaz had a wife and son and he lived in a town far from the sea" (9). The plainness of this statement, and its lack of specific detail bring to mind such fairy-tale beginnings as "There once was a fisherman and his wife who lived together in a hovel by the sea ..." (Grimm 100). Certain plot events also resemble the fairy-tale plot as analyzed by Vladimir Propp. For example, the departure of Jachin-Boaz corresponds to Propp's first "function" in a fairy tale, the "absentation" of a family member (26). The father's note—"I have gone to look for a lion"—suggest that there is an implicit injunction: i.e., look for a lion. This kind of order or suggestion is a variant of Propp's second plot function. Reconnaissance, either by victim or villain, is the next step: Boaz-Jachin travels to the desert museum to look for lions, and to measure the lion-hunt frieze. Propp's eighth function—The villain causes harm to the victim or family of victim—describes the lion's attack on Jachin-Boaz. The master-map Jachin-Boaz prepares for his son—"Everything you could wish to look for is on this map" (13)—resembles the "magical agent" (Propp 45) that a fairy-tale hero receives. Boaz-Jachin's journey to find his father parallels the

fairy-tale hero's travels to "the whereabouts of an object or search" (50). Propp's sixteenth function—"the hero and villain engage in direct combat"—fits the battle at the end of *Lion* in which father and son clash with the lion.

The elements described by Propp are so general that it is hard to imagine any kind of narrative that did not contain at least some of them, but there are enough correspondences between the plot of *Lion* and Propp's analyses to suggest a strong fairy-tale element in this novel. Moreover, explicit references in the text to fairy tales reinforce the importance of this element:

[Jachin-Boaz] thought of stories, fairy tales from his childhood, in which a young man went out to seek his fortune in the wide world. Always the father was dead at the beginning of the story, and the young man went out with his few coins, his crust of bread, his fiddle or his sword. Sometimes he found or won some magic thing along the way. A map, perhaps....
Now he, Jachin-Boaz, was the old man out in the wide world seeking his fortune, the old man who wanted a new story and would not agree to be dead. (26)

Another link between Jachin-Boaz and the fairy-tale or folktale tradition occurs in a dream:

One night [Jachin-Boaz] dreamed of the scissorman his mother had told him about when he was a child. The scissorman punished boys who wet their beds by cutting off their noses. Had she said noses? (15)

This dream is clearly linked to Jachin-Boaz's sexual insecurities. The scissorman is perhaps a variant of the Sand-Man, also associated with sleep and mutilation. It will be remembered that Freud, in "The 'Uncanny,'" his famous analysis of Hoffman's tale *The Sand-Man*, interprets Nathanael's fear that the Sand-Man will put his eyes out as a fear of castration.

Because *Lion* was written at a point in Hoban's career when he was moving from being exclusively a writer for children to writing fiction for adults as well, it is not surprising that some structural principles useful in writing children's books were also pressed into

service in writing fiction for adults. This is not to say that Hoban's children's stories are fairy tales, for they are not. But there are recognizable fairy-tale elements in their construction, which Hoban has kept on using, even in his books for adults. Hoban has referred to the importance of fairy tales in his own childhood reading:

In my house of childhood of the mind lives Vol. XVII of the Harvard Classics. ... Vol. XVII was *Folklore and Fable*, Andersen and Aesop and the brothers Grimm, and it was in heavy use. (*Moment* 159)

The Influence of Charles Williams's *The Place of the Lion*

Fantasy, as distinct from the fairy tale, is another important ingredient in *Lion*. The fairy tale takes place in a land far far away and long long ago. It does not intrude on the "real." Fantasy, however, does, and always involves some disturbing mixture of the natural and the supernatural. *Lion* seems to belong to that category which Todorov identified as the fantastic: namely, a text which obliges the reader "à hésiter entre une explication naturelle et une explication surnaturelle des événements évoqués" (37).

It is possible to subsume fantasy in the definition of Menippean satire, for fantasy is certainly an aspect of this genre. But in the case of *Lion*, the fantastic elements need to be examined separately, for they have a specific antecedent: Charles Williams's 1933 novel, *The Place of the Lion*. According to Hoban, "my lion in *The Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz* is very much related to that lion" (Myers 15).

The philosophical basis of Williams's novel is summed up well by his biographer, Alice Hadfield:

The Place of the Lion is based on Plato's theory that corresponding to this world's realities there are in another world ideas or archetypes of these realities. (97)

In Williams's novel, a lion (among other creatures) suddenly appears in the English countryside. The central character, Anthony Durrant, cannot at first believe the strange things he is seeing in Hertfordshire: a lion attacking a man without drawing any blood, a host of butterflies disappearing into one huge butterfly, a woman turning into a serpent.

Yet he is forced to admit not only that these apparitions are real, but also that they do not violate his own idealistic thought system: "I can't go back on the notion that all these abstractions do mean something important to us. And mayn't they have a way of existing that I didn't know?" (63). Another character, Foster, who later takes on the attributes of the lion, explains that the creatures that are menacing the countryside are simply the physical manifestation of abstract principles:

... this world is created, and all men and women are created, by the entrance of certain great principles into aboriginal matter. We call them by cold names; wisdom and courage and beauty and strength and so on, but actually they are very great and mighty Powers.... And when That which is behind them intends to put a new soul into matter it disposes them as it will and by a peculiar mingling of them a child is born In the animals they are less mingled, for there each is shown to us in his own becoming shape; those Powers are the archetypes of the beasts... (53)

Normally, animals maintain their material existence. As Foster puts it, "Generally, matter is the separation between all these animals which we know and the powers beyond" (54). But one villager, a spiritualist named Berringer, has succeeded in summoning up the powers through his intense concentration on particular ideas. Now the world of principles is invading the material world. The lion and the other mysterious apparitions are "the dwellers on that supernatural threshold" (72) between the world of principles and the material world. Once Anthony realizes what is happening, he imagines with horror that nowhere will be safe:

Sooner or later London too would slip in and be subject to great animals—the fierceness of the wolf would threaten it from Hampstead, the patience of the tortoise would wait beyond Streatham and Richmond; a week might see that golden mane shaken over London from Kensal Rise. (74)

The connection to Hoban's lion on the streets of Chelsea is obvious.

Anthony finally saves his world from the beasts. A new Adam, he subdues the beasts by naming them:

By the names that were the Ideas he called them, and the Ideas who are the Principles of everlasting creation heard him.... In their animal manifestations, duly obedient to the single animal who was lord of the animals, they came. ...They were returning, summoned by the authority of man from their incursion into the world of man. (203)

According to Thomas Howard, Williams had not only a literary but a theological view of images:

There was no detail of everyday life, no bodily function, no chance word, no bird or bush, no kiss or shaken fist, that did not signal Everything to [Williams]. Like all poets he saw a correspondence between commonplace things and ultimate things. Everything supplied him with parables and images.(5)

Although Williams's books "usually entail a clutter of situations, characters, and images," all the anomalies are ultimately resolved "because they all hint at the final pattern of all blissful ordered harmony, namely the city of God" (Howard 7). For Williams, imagery in literature is not merely a device, but a kind of prism through which one sees an underlying spiritual (specifically Christian) pattern. The lion has its Platonic role as the physical manifestation of the ideal of strength; it also has its Christian dimension as a revelation of the divine force inhabiting all things.

Hoban is not a Christian; when one interviewer described him as a "freelance mystic," he replied "Freelance mystic, yes. That's a good way of putting it" (Myers 12). But something of the theological quality of Williams's lion is present in Hoban's as well. What Hoban's lion might symbolize is not easy to determine. Critic Ian MacKillop acknowledges that "the figure of the lion itself ... remains ... an enigma," but argues that "since that figure erupts mysteriously into the consciousness of the novel's protagonists its full meaning cannot be expected to be quickly explicable to the reader" (59). Indeed, Hoban does not attach any single meaning to it:

... one wouldn't want the lion to be reducible to some simple definition. It is whatever it is. (Hoban in Haffenden 129)

In fantasy, according to Rosemary Jackson, there is a “dissolution of any predictable or reliable relation between signifier and signified” (40). Symbolism is founded on a relation between a concrete signifier (e.g., the lion) and an abstract signified (e.g., father-son rivalry), so it does not work in fantasy:

When it is naturalized as allegory or symbolism, fantasy loses its proper non-signifying nature. Part of its subversive power lies in this resistance to allegory and metaphor. For it *takes metaphorical constructions literally*. (Jackson 41; emphasis mine)

So here, the lion — evoked, according to Hoban, “by the rage of my son and my own guilt” (Hoban in Haffenden 128) — literally becomes a ravening beast, a “carnivorous hallucination” (62).

If one were to strip away the metaphysical discussions from *The Place of the Lion*, it would end up with a plot rather similar to that of Hoban’s novel: man meets lion, can’t believe in it, realizes lion is savaging him and destroying his relationships, finally makes peace with lion by recognizing what it is and calling it by name. In Williams’s novel, the lion is an idea or principle that “suddenly push[es] through the scrim that separates appearance from reality” (Howard 97). The implication is that the world in which we live is only a world of appearances; behind these appearances lies the true essence of things. This kind of Platonism is not alien to Hoban.

Like Williams, Hoban uses the motif of the lion to assert the existence of another “world” beyond the realm of the everyday. That is where the lion, emerging through a manhole, has come from. Like William’s protagonist, Jachin-Boaz too believes that he lives in a world of appearances:

So his life seemed now: he could poke himself through the flat paper of the map-city he walked on and he would come out on the other side, having only made a hole in non-reality. (92)

Williams seems to believe that beyond appearances lies a Platonic realm of essential Ideals or principles; this realm is also the City of God, a place of perfection that this poor world only distortedly mirrors. For Hoban, the “other world” is associated with death, not perfection. Jachin-Boaz sees the other world in a dream:

There is a sob I don't let out, there is a curse I don't speak, there is a turning away from whom, there is a black shoulder of what?

Well, said the answer, this is the place you tried to avoid, but it is not to be avoided.

I can cover it with a map, said Jachin-Boaz. Then there will be world.

He spread out the map, so thin! Like tissue paper. The black shoulder heaved up through it, tore it. As from a heaving mountain Jachin-Boaz fell away.

I can cover it with a map, he said again, spreading vast miles-wide tissue paper over the black abyss.... See! he cried as he fell through the tearing tissue paper, I'm not falling! (118)

The dream suggests that the world represented in maps— consensual reality— has all the substance of tissue paper when challenged by the "black shoulder." The black shoulder is never explained, but the word "turning" ("a turning away from whom, a black shoulder of what") connects it to the image of the chariot wheel. In a dream Jachin-Boaz has of the wheel rolling over him, he calls it a "great dark shoulder-world-wheel" (91). In the lion-hunt relief, the lion is biting the wheel of the chariot. The son, Boaz-Jachin, notices it:

He felt in him the dying lion biting the wheel. By letting go of everything else he could let himself be with the lion. (22)

As he studies his photograph of the lion-hunt relief, Boaz-Jachin begins to focus on the wheel:

"The wheel," said Boaz-Jachin aloud. Because it was the wheel, and the wheel was the wheel. The sculptor had known it and now it made itself known to Boaz-Jachin as its turning took away his father and his map ... (36)

The father notices the wheel too. In the bookshop, a customer selects a book on ancient Near Eastern art. In the book is a photo of the lion-hunt relief.

"But it's the wheel," said Jachin-Boaz, his eyes fixed on the implacable eight-spoked studded chariot wheel in the photograph, part of it lost in erosion and the weathering of the stone. "It's the wheel. He should understand that. It isn't the king. Maybe the king doesn't even want the lion to die. He knows that the lion too is a king, perhaps one greater than himself. It's the wheel, the wheel. That's the whole thing. The sculptor knew it was the wheel and not the king. Biting it doesn't help, but one has to. That's all there is."

"That's one way of looking at it, of course," said the customer. (73)

When the Buddha preached his first sermon after his Enlightenment, "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law (*Dharma*)," he began by drawing a wheel on the ground with rice grains, thereby imbuing an ancient Indian symbol with new meaning:

Originally probably a sun sign, and later one of the identifying marks of the great Indian god Vishnu, it denotes in yoga a centre of physical and psychic energy. When the Buddha drew this wheel on the ground he was employing an old, already familiar, Indian symbol to exemplify the eternal karmic round of existence ... kept forever in motion by man's unceasing appetite, his thirst for ego satisfactions of every kind. (Ross 22-3)

The dharma wheel (dharma-chakra in Sanskrit) is also "a symbol of the teaching expounded by the Buddha, i.e., the four noble truths, the eightfold path, and the Middle Way ... The dharma-chakra is usually depicted with eight spokes representing the eightfold path" (Fischer-Schreiber et al 54). Hoban has acknowledged his interest in both Hinduism and Buddhism (Hoban in Haffenden 142). It seems likely that the "implacable eight-spoked studded chariot wheel" of the lion-hunt relief represents the turning of the eight-spoked dharma wheel, the cycle of birth and re-birth to which all beings are condemned; only those who attain nirvana are released from it. Thus through the wheel image, the "black shoulder" which the maps cannot conceal is connected to the necessity to live out one's life and to face one's death.

Another manifestation of this "other world" occurs when Jachin-Boaz tries to understand the lion's presence:

I don't have a lion—a lion has me. A lion hallucinates me. (132)

Like Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass*, who is “only a sort of thing” in the Red King’s dream (Carroll 238), Jachin-Boaz wonders whether the lion’s world is of a greater order of reality than his own.

In adopting Williams’s lion, Hoban has also adopted a means of expressing a fundamentally spiritual outlook. Perhaps one can assume that he was attracted to the Williams book *because of its spirituality*: the lion offers a literalized metaphor for spiritual ideas. In the case of Williams, these ideas derive from a Platonic Christianity; in Hoban’s case, they derive from a personal amalgam of various beliefs. The importance of spirituality in *Lion* is supported by the novel’s epigraph, a remark Job addresses to God: “Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me” (Job x: 16).

The Menippean Elements in *Lion*

What Hoban has also acquired from Williams’s novel are certain Menippean elements; or, more precisely, in adopting so extraordinary a motif as an appearing and disappearing lion, Hoban also had to adopt some of the mechanisms that make it work, and those mechanisms happen to be Menippean. Perhaps Williams’s novel featured in that “mishmash of supernatural and fantasy and science fiction stories” that Hoban says he “cut [his] teeth on” (Myers 15); if so, then its Menippean qualities may be another source of this tendency in Hoban’s fiction.

Williams’s novels have been called “metaphysical thrillers” (Howard 4); T.S. Eliot felt that Williams had “invented his own forms” (qtd. in Howard 3). Howard’s view is that “we may only very loosely give the name novel to Williams’s prose fiction” (9). It may indeed be true that Williams’s novels are *sui generis*, but it is equally true that they exhibit many of the characteristics of the Menippean satire, as outlined by Bakhtin and others. For example, *The Place of the Lion* presents “extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea”; it also possesses the “extraordinary

philosophic universalism" Bakhtin associates with the menippea. While it contains relatively few comic scenes, *The Place of the Lion* does parody and ridicule pedantry. Unusual mental states—occasioned by the appearance of the creatures—feature prominently in Williams's novel.

These same characteristics are present in Hoban's *Lion*. The extraordinary situation is identical: a lion appears where it should not be. This lion is visible only to some persons; no natural explanation can be given for its appearance, nor for the wounds it inflicts. As in Williams's novel, this situation tests a philosophical idea: in Hoban's case, I think this idea (although it is hard to state precisely) is the necessity to go into the world and greet our fate, whatever it may be. Philosophic universalism is certainly present, for one of this novel's abiding preoccupations is the nearness of death—an undubitably universal concern.

Hoban's comic tendencies remain subdued for much of the novel, but surface in his treatment of madness (another Menippean theme). Much of the comedy derives from Hoban's parody of psychiatry, which as a form of esoteric learning represents precisely the type of pedantry Menippean satire is designed to mock. The emergency ward doctor who thinks Jachin-Boaz is a demented foreigner is soon admitted to the psychiatric ward himself. The psychiatrist who accepts Jachin-Boaz's explanation that sexual deviance caused his wounds talks bedside nonsense most of the time: e.g., "My tockness, ticks get to be too tock for all of us some ticks" [My goodness, things get to be too much for all of us sometimes](177).

Inserted genres, another characteristic of the Menippean satire, do not occur in *The Place of the Lion*, nor are they a prominent feature of *Lion*. However, one of Jachin-Boaz's fellow patients on the psychiatric ward, the "tightly furled man," speaks in a lunatic collage of poetry, puns, slogans, commonplaces, and quirky aphorisms:

"Transistor, transbrothers, transfathers, transmothers," said the tightly furled man. "Real rock. Groovy. 'No motion has she now, no force; She neither hears nor sees; Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course, With rocks, and stones, and trees.' Sometimes there's nothing but Sundays for weeks on end. Why can't they move Sunday to the middle of the week so you could put it in the OUT tray on your desk? No. Bloody bastards. Let the shadow cabinet work on that for a while, and the substance cabinet too.

Man is a product of his Sundays. Don't talk to me about heredity. Darwin went to the Galapagos to get away from the Sunday drive with his parents. Mendel pea'd. Everybody tells a boy about sex but nobody tells him the facts of Sunday. Home is where the heart is, that's why pubs stay in business. Forgive us our Sundays as we forgive those who Sunday against us...." (176)

This energetic pastiche of poetry and mad ravings reflects, I think, a Menippean tendency (implicit in the notion of satire as a medley or stew) to throw in all manner of styles and voices, perhaps in order to show that no one point of view is in control.

Bakhtin, in his discussion of Dostoevsky's short story "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," a work he describes as a "fantastic menippea" (149), notes that certain themes in this story "are very characteristic of the carnivalized genre of the menippea" (150). Among these themes is that of the "wise fool," an eccentric man who is "alone in his knowledge of the truth and who is therefore ridiculed by everyone else as a madman" (151; italics in original). This description closely fits Jachin-Boaz, who is labelled a madman because of his encounters with a lion that no one else (except other madmen) can see. In the psychiatric ward, Jachin-Boaz muses aloud, "'Why can they see it, the others [i.e., other patients]?"' (158). A patient known as the letter-writer explains:

The straight people agree that some things are not allowed to be possible, and they govern their perceptions accordingly. Very strong, the straight people. We're not so strong as they. Things not allowed to be possible jump on us, beasts and demons, because we don't know how to keep them out. (158)

Conclusion

The mixture in *Lion* of Menippean elements and other generic conventions exemplifies what Bakhtin calls the menippea's "extraordinary 'protean' capacity for changing its external form (while preserving its inner generic essence), a capacity to grow into whole novels, to combine with kindred genres, to infiltrate other large genres" (136).

As I noted earlier in my discussion of *The Mouse and His Child*, Ian MacKillop suggests that it is a “tentative” and “shy” attempt at “broaching things that come out more truly later” (58). This continuity between Hoban’s works for children and his adult fiction is evident also in *Lion*, which reworks certain themes that appear in Hoban’s early animal stories. In one of his first story books, *Bedtime for Frances*, the little badger Frances goes to her father because she cannot sleep:

“There is a tiger in my room,” said Frances.

“Did he bite you?” said Father.

“No,” said Frances.

“Did he scratch you?” said Father

“No,” said Frances.

“Then he is a friendly tiger,” said Father. “He will not hurt you. Go back to sleep.”

Frances seems to have the same problem as Jachin-Boaz and the letter writer: “Things not allowed to be possible” such as “beasts and demons” appear to her because she doesn’t “know how to keep them out.” In *Bedtime for Frances*, a reassuring adult can make the world safe from ravaging beasts; but in *Lion*, it is the adult Jachin-Boaz who sees the beast, and there is no one to reassure him.

Hoban describes *Lion* as “the most autobiographical” of his works, “the most inward-turned, the most concerned with self” (Myers 8). Like Jachin-Boaz, Hoban was alone in London, estranged from his wife and family. And like Jachin-Boaz, he worked in a bookshop, lived near the Embankment, and fell in love with a young German woman. At that time, Hoban also had a troubled relationship with his son, a son named Jachin-Boaz. While autobiographical elements remain strong in subsequent novels, Hoban never again deals so plainly with the circumstances of his own life.

Chapter 3

Kleinzeit: Finding a Voice

Introduction

Hoban's 1973 novel, *Kleinzeit*, recounts a man's brush with serious illness. Like *Lion*, it is at least somewhat autobiographical: Hoban wrote *Kleinzeit* after being hospitalized for diabetes (Haffenden 128). And like the previous novel, *Kleinzeit* is set in London, with the familiar terrain of the Underground, the bridges over the Thames, and Chelsea.

Kleinzeit, the protagonist, works in an advertising agency. He is fired when his ad copy for Bonzo toothpaste, featuring a tramp pushing a barrow full of rocks, displeases the creative director. The image of a barrow full of rocks came to *Kleinzeit* as he was typing the copy on a sheet of A4 yellow paper he happened to find in the Underground; this phrase — "barrow full of rocks" — and the yellow paper in the Underground turn out, through the course of the novel, to have great significance.

At the same time that *Kleinzeit*'s work life is in crisis and his personal life in disarray (he has recently separated from his wife and children), *Kleinzeit*'s inner parts begin to attack him. A series of painful episodes lands him in hospital for observation.

Meanwhile in the Underground a rebearded tramp and busker spreads yellow paper. On a sheet of A4 yellow paper he writes, "Man with harrow full of crocks" (20).

The novel unfolds as a kind of shuttling between two realms — the Underground and the Hospital, with brief sojourns in the ordinary world of London. The purpose of *Kleinzeit*'s wanderings is to find an appropriate form of creative expression. He buys a glockenspiel and tries busking in the Underground. He confronts Redbeard the tramp, a denizen of the Underground, to interrogate him about the meaning of the sheets of yellow paper and the rhyming phrases. He writes poems and sells them in the Underground; he tries telling fortunes. He also writes the first few pages of a novel.

Kleinzeit's hospital bed is in Ward A4. He discovers two distressing facts about the ward: all the other patients in this ward have literary connections and all have terminal conditions. *Kleinzeit*, however, does finally discharge himself from the hospital; he is not

well, but at least he is no sicker. He takes up residence in the apartment of the beautiful nursing sister with whom he has fallen in love. And he has embarked on his career as a writer: at the novel's end, Kleinzeit is "awake at the plain deal table in the bare sitting-room [y]ellow paper pages piling up" (190).

***Kleinzeit* as Menippean Satire**

The Menippean qualities of this novel derive from its central narrative device: dialogues with a variety of personified inanimate or abstract things—the hospital, the London Underground, yellow A4 paper, Death, Word, Memory, and so on.

The prototypical Menippean dialogue is Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*. In Lucian, various Underworld inhabitants—new arrivals, long-time residents, and permanent employees—converse: Charon, for example, discusses the fate of heroes with the Cynic Menippus. In *Kleinzeit*, the dialogues occur chiefly between the protagonist and the personified entities, although Kleinzeit's lover, the nursing sister, also speaks with Hospital and Underground. These dialogues often resemble the conversations between a "know-it-all" and a "passive human sufferer" described by Payne. Certainly Kleinzeit, beset by a host of bizarre medical conditions, is a "human sufferer," while Hospital, in particular, is frequently in the role of imparting information. One of his conversations with Kleinzeit begins, "Shall I tell you something, my boy?" (39).

Hoban's personified abstractions appear at times as literalized metaphors (similar to the lion in *Lion*, and to children's book monsters). Hospital, for example, is on occasion a giant cat, waiting for the unwary mouse—Kleinzeit—to leave the mousehole (39). Yellow paper also manifests itself as a caged animal remarkably similar to Jachin-Boaz's invisible lion:

He opened the door of the yellow paper's cage and it sprang upon him. Over and over they rolled together, bloody and roaring. Doesn't matter what the title is to start with, he said, anything will do. HERO, I'll call it. Chapter 1. He wrote the first line while the yellow paper clawed his guts, the pain was blinding. It'll kill me, said Kleinzeit, there's no surviving this. (108)

Later, yellow paper bites Kleinzeit's hand when he tries to start writing again (122). Death is imagined as "chimpanzee-like" (134), a "black hairy" creature who follows Kleinzeit's trail (50). But by and large, the personified forces in *Kleinzeit* remain abstractions, with ironic links to the Platonic forces in Williams's *The Place of the Lion*. Here, for example, are Death, Action and Spring, all wishing they were something else:

Under the bed Death sat humming to itself while it cleaned its fingernails. I never do get them really clean, it said. It's a filthy job I've got but what's the use of complaining. All the same I think I'd rather have been Youth or Spring or any number of things rather than what I am

Elsewhere Action lay in his cell smoking and looking up at the ceiling. What a career, he said. I've spent more time in the nick than anywhere else. Why couldn't I have been Death or something like that. Steady work, security.

Spring, wrapped up in a quilt in a freezing bedsitter, found her fingers too stiff for sewing, left off trying to mend her gauzy working clothes. (169)

Narrative action in *Kleinzeit* is streamlined to a series of encounters between the central character and these personified abstractions. The encounters have a somewhat theatrical quality, a Beckettian sparseness that dispenses with props, costumes, and action, and presents ultimate questions in absurdist dialogues.

This device—a line-up of talking buildings, ideas, and objects—creates the "extraordinary situation" (to use Bakhtin's phrase) that the Menippean satire requires. From it emerge several other Menippean traits. First, this "extraordinary situation" of conversing with Hospital, Death and so on, serves to test a philosophical idea—namely the problem of living with the knowledge of our imminent death. Linked to this idea is the philosophic universalism which Bakhtin associated with the Menippean satire: "Characteristic for the genre... is a naked posing of ultimate questions on life and death, a universalism of the most extreme sort" (134). Kleinzeit's dialogues with Death, for example, certainly deal with "ultimate questions." Here, for example, is Kleinzeit fending off Death:

Death began to hammer on the door. HOO HOO HOO! it yelled. LET ME IN!

Go away, said Kleinzeit. Not your time yet.

HOO HOO! yelled Death. I'LL BLOODY TEAR YOU APART. ANY TIME'S MY TIME, I WANT YOU NOW AND I'M GOING TO HAVE YOU NOW. NOW NOW NOW.

Kleinzeit went to the door, double-locked it, fastened the chain. Go away, he said. You're not real, you're just in my mind.

IS YOUR MIND REAL? said Death.

Of course my mind's real, said Kleinzeit.

THEN SO AM I, said Death. THERE I HAVE YOU, EH? It stuck its fingers through the letter box. Bristling black and hairy, with disgusting-looking long grey fingernails.

Kleinzeit grabbed the frying pan from the kitchen, slammed the hairy black fingers with all his strength.

I'LL GET YOU LATER, said Death, SEE IF I DON'T. (122)

The dialogues in *Kleinzeit* deal with illness and death, but they do so in a joking spirit. In discussing the ancient Menippean satire, Joel Relihan describes it as "a genre that desires that nothing be taken seriously" (22). While this description seems not entirely true of *Kleinzeit*—I think, for example, that Hoban takes the creative process very seriously—it is surely true that the dialogues in *Kleinzeit* are never entirely straight. They contain that "ambivalent combination [of] death [and] laughter" which Bakhtin finds in the Menippean satires of Dostoevsky (139). The dialogues also exhibit "striking overtones of familiarization and profanation ... [and] bringings-down-to-earth," (to use the phrases Bakhtin employs to describe the Menippean tone of Dostoevsky's "Bobok"). For example, when Sister prays to God, God himself profanes the act of prayer:

Talk to me said God.

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, said Sister, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible: And in one Lord Jesus Christ ...

For Christ's sake, *talk* to me, said God.

Last night, said Sister, when that boy died, the hendiadys case, I wanted to run to Kleinzeit afterwards and hug him, I wanted him to hug me.

How come? said God.

You know, said Sister. You know everything.

No, I don't said God. I don't know anything the way people know it. I am what I am and all that, but I don't know anything really. (29)

It is not just the Christian God who is brought down to earth and talked to in familiar terms. After consulting a book about Hindu sculpture, Kleinzeit studies a statue of Shiva in Sister's apartment; its lower right hand is in a position that means "Fear not." He addresses the statue:

Fear not. What about it? he said to Shiva.

There's nothing to be afraid of, said Shiva.

Right, said Kleinzeit. Nothing's what I am afraid of, and there's more nothing every day.

Whatever is form, that is emptiness, said Shiva. Whatever is emptiness, that is form.

Don't come the heavy Indian mystic with me, said Kleinzeit. 'Creation arises from the drum,' he read. Or glockenspiel, I would have thought, he said. 'From the fire proceeds destruction.' Well, there you are: smoking.

'From the planted foot illusion; the upraised foot bestows salvation.' Ah, said Kleinzeit, how to get both feet off the ground, eh?

Try it with one for a starter, said Shiva. The whole thing is to feel the dance going through you, let it get moving, you know. Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an awakening, all-hail!

Quite, said Kleinzeit...

Look here, said God, are you mucking about with strange gods. For the first time Kleinzeit heard him.

Make me a better offer, said Kleinzeit.

Kleinzeit certainly is "mucking about with strange gods." Much of what Shiva says comes not from Hindu writings but from Buddhist sutras.¹ The colloquial tone of the dialogue here resembles the "light and airy" tone of the gods in Lucian's *Dialogues* (Casson xvi).

The focus on dialogues in *Kleinzeit* results in a large number of very short chapters: the book is only a hundred and ninety pages but consists of fifty-six chapters. By and large,

¹ "Whatever is form, that is emptiness... Whatever is emptiness, that is form" appears in the Heart Sutra; "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an awakening, all-hail!" is the final phrase in the Prajna Paramita Sutra.

each dialogue in *Kleinzeit* constitutes its own chapter. There is a forward plot motion generated by Kleinzeit's repeated attempts to escape Hospital, but this is largely overshadowed by the intensity of the dialogues. As a consequence, the plot of *Kleinzeit* resembles the "loose-jointed narrative structure" noted by Frye.

Many of the dialogues, particularly those with Hospital and Death, are "threshold dialogues." The "threshold dialogue" is a dialogue conducted at the entry to the underworld, and "determined directly by the situation of impending death" (111); Bakhtin mentions it as a specific feature of the Menippean satire. It occurs in prototypical form in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, where, for example, Lampichus the dictator, arriving at the Styx, pleads with Hermes to be allowed to keep his robe and crown in Hades (199). Sister's final interview with God is exactly this sort of negotiation:

You're moving into his flat? said God.

I expect so, said Sister.

What's he got there, gas or electricity?

It's all electric.

I'll see if I can put off the electrical strike for a week or so, said God. Give you a chance to start off with cooker, fridge and heating all in working order. Sort of a wedding present.

That's really very kind of you, said Sister. I appreciate that.

Well, said God, I'm off then. We'll stay in touch.... (187-8).

In his discussion of Menippean satire, Bakhtin mentions the "threshold dialogue" as an aspect of the three-planed construction of the world of the menippea: the three levels are Olympus, earth, and the Underworld. In *Kleinzeit*, Olympus is not specifically invoked in the sense of a visit to the realm of the gods, but the gods are present. In conversation with Kleinzeit, Hospital describes himself as one of the "big chaps," like "Ocean, Sky, Hospital, and so forth" (147). God himself, who makes several appearances in *Kleinzeit*, is just another big chap, with a disconcerting tendency to forget Kleinzeit's name (95).

Orpheus on the Underground

The Underworld of *Kleinzeit* is the London Underground.² On one of Kleinzeit's journeys on the Underground, it looks to him like "the country of the dead" (98). It is a world of its own, the cold dark mirror of the above ground world: when Kleinzeit sits playing his glockenspiel in the underground, he "[makes] up a tune for whatever walked upside down in the concrete and placed its cold paws against his bottom" (83). The tune he improvises contains "a Dies Irae motif," the mass for the dead sung on All Souls' Day (82).

But the Underworld is not only a place of the dead; it is "the place under the places," a phrase that seems an early antecedent of "the moment under the moment," the title of Hoban's book of essays and his term for the "real reality, the flickering of seen and unseen actualities" (*Moment*, "Foreword"). The Underground is the source of Kleinzeit's creativity: it is where he finds the piece of paper with the phrase "barrow full of rocks." This cryptic phrase and its various rhyming analogues are found on the yellow paper which the tramp Redbeard scatters in Underground stations. It is discovering the sheet of A4 yellow paper with "barrow full of rocks" on it that gets Kleinzeit fired, and thus starts him on the road to being a writer. The meaning of these phrases is finally revealed when yellow paper interrogates Word:

My mind [said Word] is full of every kind of nonsense. Something like the way odd tunes and scraps of things get into human minds and sing themselves over and over again, but vastly faster.
Barrow full of rocks, said the yellow paper.
That's just my name for it, said Word. A pneumatic.
Mnemonic, said the yellow paper.
Whatever you like, said Word. The line itself is by Pilkins.
Milton? said the yellow paper.

² This motif may be borrowed from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: Part III of "Burnt Norton" uses the London Underground with "its metallated ways" as the Underworld, "the world of perpetual solitude" (6). Hoban uses quotations from *Four Quartets* in *Turtle Diary*, *The Moment under the Moment*, and *Fremder*.

Something like that, said Word, 'Hidden soul of harmony' is what he said. I like that. It sings. 'Untwisting all the chains that ty/The hidden soul of harmony.' ...

Do you mean to tell me, said the yellow paper, that 'Barrow full of rocks' is nothing more than a mnemonic for 'Hidden soul of harmony'?

Precisely, said Word.

That's outrageous, said the yellow paper. (161)

The line from "Pilkins" which Word quotes turns out to have a signal importance in Kleinzeit's recovery. In the hospital, one of his fellow patients, Arthur Tede ("Comedian—Compere—M.C." reads his business card), describes himself as "very keen on poetry" (178). Tede has Kleinzeit follow along in *The Oxford Book of English Verse* as he practises his recitation of "L' Allegro." Kleinzeit drifts off, and then suddenly wakes at the phrase "Orpheus self."

Kleinzeit tried to shut out the voice so that he could hear the words he was reading. Tede came to the end, his voice stopped. Kleinzeit read the lines again, heard in his mind the voice of the words alone going from the lapping of the soft Lydian Aires to:

Untwisting all the chains that ty

The hidden soul of harmony.

Inside him he felt a pause, as of an uplifted hand. Then it was as if a fat brush drew with black ink in one perfect sweep a circle, fat and black on yellow paper. Sweet, fresh, clear and simple.

The phrases he has been encountering have led Kleinzeit toward this moment of illumination, a moment which impels him to discover some kind of harmony. The image of the painted circle suggests achieving harmony through a pure, unselfconscious, creative act. This use of the Underworld/Underground as a source of creativity looks ahead to the fecund "good darkness," the image of Underworld which Hoban develops more extensively in *The Medusa Frequency*.

In *Kleinzeit*, the Underworld is inextricably linked to the prominent motif of Orpheus. The Kleinzeit/Orpheus parallels are numerous and explicit. Kleinzeit writes lyric poems to sell in the Underground, and he tells fortunes for 50p; the severed head of Orpheus became an oracle on the beach at Lesbos. Kleinzeit is also, like Orpheus, connected with

music: he takes his glockenspiel and goes busking with Sister in the Underground. Afterwards, making love with Sister, he hears Underground ask, "Are you Orpheus?" Kleinzeit's reply is "No question about it.... Who else could be this harmonious, this profound?" (86).

Another element reinforcing Kleinzeit's identity as Orpheus is his relationship to the tramp Redbeard, Kleinzeit's double. Redbeard, failed writer, lonely old man, and yellow paper freak, represents all the worst things Kleinzeit might imagine about himself. He ends up occupying Kleinzeit's bed in Ward A4, and passes on to Kleinzeit the imperative of struggling with yellow paper. Redbeard, like Kleinzeit, has certain Orphic qualities: Redbeard's eyes make Kleinzeit think of "a doll's head lying on a beach, elemental like the sea, like the sky" (56)—an image reminiscent of Orpheus's head on the shore at Lesbos. But when Underground "from its black chill" asks yellow paper, "Is he Orpheus?" the yellow paper replies, "No.... He's not" (42). That role, it seems, is reserved for Kleinzeit. But when Kleinzeit asks Hospital directly, "Am I Orpheus?" it replies, "I, I, I. What a lot of rubbish. How could any one *I* be Orpheus." (146)

But if Kleinzeit is (at least sometimes) Orpheus, then the nursing sister is Eurydice. Hospital, in a dialogue warning Sister that Kleinzeit will not get to keep her, alludes to his own connections with the Underground:

You've met Underground?

I've been in the Underground, said Sister.

But not met, said Hospital. There is a difference. One day perhaps you'll meet Underground. Let us say at the moment, just for the frivolity of it, that I have some connection with Underground. ... If I said think of Eurydice that would be interestingly allusive but far-fetched would it not.

Yes, said Sister.

Hospital became high, remote, great. Its Victorian knee-braced ceiling soared like a cathedral ceiling, its grey light rose unattainable.

Think of Eurydice, said Hospital. Call to mind, said Hospital, Eurydice.

(48-9)

Hospital is also Kleinzeit's tutor in things Orphic. According to Hospital, Eurydice dwelt in the Underworld:

If Underworld was where she lived why did he try to get her out of it?
said Kleinzeit.

Ah, said Hospital. There you have the essence of the Orphic conflict....
Orpheus cannot be content at the inside of things, at the place under the
places. ... His harmony has brought him to the stillness and the calm at
the centre and he cannot abide it. Nirvana is not his cup of tea. He wants
to get back outside, wants that action with the rocks and trees again,
wants to be seen with Eurydice at posh restaurants and all that.
Naturally he loses her. (148)

Hoban's devotion to the legend of Orpheus clearly indicates that for him, it holds great,
if indefinable, power; indeed, he classes the head of Orpheus as one of the "obsessions
... that have taken hold of me" (*Moment 238*). In *Kleinzeit*, Hoban adds his own ending to
the Orpheus myth:

... Think of the head of Orpheus as snuffling in the reeds by the river at
night, sniffing out his parts. It's dark, the moon has set.... you feel with
your face the passage of something between you and the river. There is a
sighing perhaps, you can't be sure. Someone unseen walks away slowly.
He's found his members, said Kleinzeit. He's remembered himself.
What is harmony, said Hospital, but a fitting together? (143-4)

This is a fable for Kleinzeit, an instruction to him to remember himself, to fit things
together and discover harmony. Where and when he must do this is made clear when
Kleinzeit questions Hospital about his detailed knowledge of Orpheus' fate:

You were there? said Kleinzeit.
I was there, said Hospital. I was there because the beach at Lesbos was
hospital for Orpheus. (143)

When Kleinzeit is brought back to the hospital after his second escape, Hospital
admonishes him again for his self-pity:

What are you? said Hospital
I don't know, said Kleinzeit.
Be that, said Hospital. Be I-Don't-Know.

HOW! yelled Kleinzeit.

BY REMEMBERING YOURSELF, roared Hospital.

WHICH WAY IS THRACE? screamed Kleinzeit.WHY ME?

Find it, said Hospital. Because you can. (173)

Kleinzeit is a modern would-be Orpheus—an adman who wants to be a writer. All of his encounters with the forces that beset him—Hospital, Death, Action, Word—can be interpreted as the struggle to fend off death and become a writer. These are not two separate struggles, but joint aspects of a single effort, the effort to “remember” himself.

Hoban uses “remember” as the opposite of “dismember”—which is what happened to Orpheus at the hands of the Thracian women. If all Kleinzeit’s various ailments are stages on the way to dismemberment, then to heal himself, Kleinzeit must remember. After he has had the vision of the circle inspired by the line from “L’Allegro,” Kleinzeit is visited by Memory and its assistant, Hall of Records. They reveal to him similar moments of harmony in his past:

Moment, said Hall of Records: Spring, age something. Evening, the sky still light, the street lamps coming on. Harmony took place.

I remember, said Kleinzeit.

Moment, said Hall of Records: Summer, age something. Before a thunderstorm. Black sky. A piece of paper whirling in the air high over the street. Harmony took place.

I remember, said Kleinzeit. But so long ago!

Moment, said Hall of Records: Autumn, age something. Rain. The sound of the gas fire, Sister naked. Atlantis. Harmony took place.

Ah! said Kleinzeit.

Moment, said Hall of Records: Winter, age something. In hospital. Feeling of circle inside self, sweet rhythm. Harmony took place.

Kleinzeit waited.

Will there be anything else? said Hall of Records.

Place of dismemberment? said Kleinzeit.

Everywhere, all the time, said Hall of Records. (181-2)

Remembering moments of harmony is, it seems, the antidote to the fate of Orpheus, dismemberment.

The Orphic motif in *Kleinzeit* is underscored by numerous classical references. Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* is Kleinzeit's "carrying book" (7); throughout his various stays in hospital, his return to his denuded flat, and his move to Sister's apartment, it remains his companion. *The Peloponnesian War* becomes in fact an oracle like the *I Ching* or Crusoe's Bible. Kleinzeit's first attempt at divination uncovers an uninspiring expository passage, but the second produces the following: "For when we are forced into a position like this one, calculations are beside the point: what we have to do is stake everything on a quick decision..." (103). Other phrases from Thucydides describing the valour and determination of the Athenians embolden Kleinzeit (106-8). He particularly cherishes Demosthenes' injunction to the Athenians: "do not give way through fear of the surf or the frightening appearance of the ships as they sail in" (121). (Only later does Kleinzeit find out the Athenians lost [155].)

Parody

The numerous excerpts from Thucydides indicate another Menippean characteristic: the use of inserted genres, a trait which derives from the mixture of prose and poetry in the ancient Menippean satire. In the works of Lucian, the poetry is often Homeric parody. Interestingly, Homeric parody is something Hoban, in passing, uses as well: "Sister woke up, got out of bed, rose like the dawn. Rosy-fingered, rosy-toed, rosy-nippled" (10).

Kleinzeit includes numerous poems or fragments of poems. There are the poems Kleinzeit writes to sell in the Underground (including a haiku), and the excerpts from "L' Allegro" read by Arthur Tede. One remarkable paragraph, exemplifying Word's baneful influence on Kleinzeit's mind, incorporates, among others, Keats, Byron, and the Book of Job:

An intolerably calm placid smiling cheap vulgar insensitive neo-classical blue sky. Sappho, boomed the sky. Homer! Stout Cortes! Nelson! Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll! Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! David! Napoleon! Francis Drake! Industry! Science! Isaac Newton! Man's days are few and full of sorrow. Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? Rubbish, said Kleinzeit. Rubbish rubbish rubbish. (67)

This mocking of the language of literature belongs to that aspect of the Menippean satire which revels in parody and jokes about learning.

In this novel that is ultimately so reverential about writing— it is, after all, literature that saves Kleinzeit— literary men are not treated with respect. The inmates of Ward A4 are all literary men of one sort or another, and they are all ridiculous. The patient, Nox, for example, found “Narrow, cool, the flock,” on a piece of paper in the Underground; he became a writer (instead of a china salesman) and has in his hospital locker an unfinished story written on foolscap, a story about A to B. Most of the time, Nox occupies himself reading *All Star Wank*: “NEW MODELS, NEW POSES! WANKIE-OF-THE-MONTH LUVTA DEWITT, UNRETOUCHED COLOUR SPREAD” (141; caps in original). The patient named Drogue found a packet of cigarette papers and was moved to write on one, “Sparrows rule the clocks” (132); now he writes tiny poems on cigarette papers. The patient Piggie, suffering from “imbricated noumena” asks his wife to bring Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* to the hospital. And then, of course, there is Arthur Tede (“Tede but I hope not tedious” [177]), poetaster and pedant.

Word’s erratic use of words offers another instance of parody. Not only does he call a “mnemonic” a “pneumatic”; he has great trouble keeping track of who’s who in the literary world. He thinks Doré wrote Don Quixote; he discusses “Auntie’s Inferno”; he attributes the Bible to Pilkins/Milton (71). When Kleinzeit tries to correct him in these matters, Word retorts, “Don’t come the heavy pedant with me” (71).

Kleinzeit also mocks the language of medicine. All of Kleinzeit’s ailments are fantastic ones: his blocked stretto, his troubled hypotenuse and ailing diapason. His fellow patients suffer from equally fantastic conditions. The young man in the bed next to him succumbs to a figure of speech:

‘Bowls and gold!’ cried Flashpoint, twisting in the dark. ‘Velvet and hangings, youth and folly.’

It’s happened, thought Kleinzeit. Hendiadys. (22)

In hendiadys, two words, one of which would normally modify the other, are connected with “and”: e.g., “velvet and hangings” instead of “velvet hangings.” It is rare, but not usually fatal.

Hoban's doctors substitute musical terms for medical ones: for example, here is Dr. Pink explaining to Kleinzeit how his stretto got blocked:

As we get on, you see, the fugal system has a little more trouble spacing out subject and answer, and if entries come too fast it's rather like Sunday traffic on the M4. And there you jolly well are with a blocked stretto. (78)

Hoban says that in writing *Kleinzeit*, he did not bother with proper medical terms: "I decided that I wasn't going to do medical research and find out symptoms and proper names for things; I'd just wing it. I thought, Here, I'll just rely on my ear." (Myers 14). Linguistic inventiveness is another trait of the Menippean satire: Varro's *Menippeans* employed "a mad mixture of Latin and Greek, archaism and neologism, everyday speech and rhetorical prose, homely proverbs and technical terms of art" (Relihan 53); Rabelais is said to have added several hundred new words to French (Hornstein et al 212).

Religion is also parodied. Hoban not only exploits the traditional resources of classical myth; he also introduces Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism. In his conversation with Kleinzeit about Orpheus, Hospital mentions Nirvana, Krishna, yin/yang and even Christianity. We have also seen how Hoban wilfully confuses Hinduism and Buddhism. Like Hoban's linguistic inventiveness, this muddling of sources and citations points ahead to *Riddley Walker*, in which a new syncretic mythology is cobbled together from fragments of the old.

The language of advertising (Hoban's former profession) proves another source of linguistic invention and parody. In the hospital ward, Nox passes on to Kleinzeit a coffin catalogue. It turns out that Kleinzeit himself wrote the copy when he worked at the ad agency, and splendid copy it is:

Whether you chose an economy model such as the 'Tom-all-Alone's' or a de luxe container like 'The Belgravia,' you are assured of materials, fitting, and workmanship of the first quality. With Box-U-Well you can indeed 'Rest in Peace.' (140)

Another type of ad copy is parodied in the chapter "No One in the Underground." There are no characters in this chapter (except Underground); most of the chapter consists of graffiti on the Underground walls (e.g., KILL WOG SHIT), and a description of the contents of a poster advertising the film 'KILL COMES AGAIN':

On the poster a man in tight-fitting clothes aimed a double-barrelled shotgun from between his legs. Behind him naked girls lay stacked like cordwood. Around him ships at sea exploded, trains strafed by helicopters ran off rails, castles blew up ... Starring PRONG STUDMAN, MAXIMUS JOCK, IMMENSA PUDENDA, MONICA BEDWARD. Also starring GLORIA FRONTAL as 'Jiggles.' Directed by DMITRI ITHYPHALLIC. Screenplay by Ariadne Bullish based on the novel *Kill for a Living* by Harry Solvent. Additional dialogue by Gertrude Anal. Music compsed and conducted by Lubricata Silkbottom... (23-4; caps in original).

The mixture of crudity and classical reference (e.g., "Ariadne" and "Ithyphallic," an adjective usually used in connection with Hermes) strikes an unmistakably Menippean note. The graffiti and the film poster reflect what Bakhtin describes as "slum naturalism," and it is the combination of this quality with "philosophical dialogue, lofty symbol-systems, the adventure fantastic ... [that] is the outstanding characteristic of the menippea" (115). Certainly *Kleinzeit* has philosophical dialogue; the repeated motif of Orpheus constitutes a "lofty symbol system"; and the adventure-fantastic element is supplied by *Kleinzeit's* repeated struggles to escape Hospital.

Conclusion

On first reading, *Kleinzeit* seems an eccentric and unusual novel, especially when judged by ordinary mimetic standards. But when matched with the description of the Menippean satire offered by critics such as Bakhtin, *Kleinzeit* conforms in remarkable degree to the requirements of the genre.

Moreover, in spite of its focus on death, disease, and loss, it is a cheerful book. In the end, *Kleinzeit* discovers that the Athenians lose; he knows the truth of Death's taunt "Y'LL GET YOU LATER ..., SEE IF I DON'T" (122; caps in original). But the novel closes

with a sense of positive coziness, as *Kleinzeit* settles into Sister's apartment with the yellow paper. It is perhaps a children's book ending—the monsters have been chased away—but it is nonetheless a profoundly satisfying one. As Hoban asserts in his own defence, "I don't necessarily believe that an unhappy ending is to be taken more seriously than a happy ending" (Haffenden 125).

Hoban has described *Kleinzeit* as his favourite among his novels:

Kleinzeit, I think, may not be my best book as literature goes, but it's the closest one to my heart because that's where I found my characteristic narrative voice. (Myers 8)

The fact that *Kleinzeit* exhibits so many traits of the Menippean satire suggests that it is a genre particularly suited to Hoban's "characteristic narrative voice."

Chapter 4

Riddley Walker: Remembering the Future

Introduction

Riddley Walker is undoubtedly Russell Hoban's best-known and most successful work. It was on the *New York Times Book Review* list of "Best Books" of 1980. Harold Bloom includes it in his list of works in the "Western canon" (534). Nearly all the scholarly papers published on Hoban's adult fiction focus on *Riddley Walker*.

A novel about England after a nuclear war, *Riddley Walker* was published on the eve of an international resurgence of anti-nuclear activism, and this timing accounts in some measure for its success. But topicality alone does not explain its continuing importance. *Riddley Walker* remains of interest to scholars and other readers because of its considerable merits: its astonishing use of language, its compelling evocation of the future, and its re-creation of myth and history.

Hoban is always eager to do battle with ultimate questions; abstractions like death, art, mortality, and human purpose play a very large part in his novels. But at times the framework in which these abstractions are deployed is slight. Take, for example, *Kleinzeit*, which includes Death, Action, Word, and even God. Their struggle for Kleinzeit's body and soul is resolved when he begins writing again; this resolution is fine, as far as it goes, but one might wonder whether one man's struggle to write warrants all the metaphysical fuss. In *Riddley Walker*, however, Hoban has found a subject on a truly ultimate, even cosmic, scale: the end of human civilization. And to this ultimate question, Hoban's creative resources prove more than adequate. *Riddley Walker* is, as John Haffenden claims, Hoban's "masterpiece" (121).

Riddley Walker: A Summary

Riddley Walker is set in southern England some 2400 years after 1997, the year in which a nuclear war destroyed our civilization. Those who survived the nuclear winter lived on by foraging and scavenging in the ruins. After 2400 years, they are "still slogging in the

mud" (120). The novel follows a twelve-year-old boy, Riddley Walker, as he unravels a conspiracy to obtain once again a weapon of mass destruction: gunpowder.

The novel opens with Riddley's coming of age: he kills his first boar and "comes a man." Three days later, Riddley's father is killed at the digging — a wasteland of muck where the workers dig out remnants of machinery, a post-holocaust equivalent of the coal mines of Lawrentian England. Riddley inherits his father's role as "connexion man"—part oracle, part scribe, part mediator with the powers that be. (Like the drug-dealing "connection" of the Beat era, Riddley offers hashish and cigarette papers to visiting dignitaries.)

His home is a foragers' encampment, How Fents, an outpost in what remains of "Inland." The country is ruled by the Pry Mincer, Abel Goodparley, and the Wes Mincer, Erny Orfing. Soon after Riddley accedes to the role of connexion man, the Pry Mincer and the Wes Mincer arrive at his village bearing the Eusa show— a travelling puppet show that serves as the vehicle for communicating official history and policies to the people. Eusa is the putative proto-survivor of the nuclear disaster: the story of how Eusa created the bomb and then was made to suffer for what he had made has become holy scripture for the people of Riddley's time. As connexion man, Riddley is expected to know the *Eusa Story* by heart.

Through the medium of the puppet show, Orfing and Goodparley expose two major problems facing Inland. The first is the conflict between the farmers, who want to fence in their fields, and the foragers and herders, who want the land open. The second is the struggle between those like Goodparley, who want to get progress happening again, and those like Orfing, who fear the consequences of renewing the search for technology. These two conflicts, particularly the second, drive the plot of the novel.

Riddley becomes involved in the struggle between progressives and conservatives through a series of apparently chance events. One day, working in the diggings, he uncovers an old Punch figure. He pockets it, though taking things from the diggings is strictly forbidden. When challenged by the overseer, Belnot Phist, Riddley tosses Phist into the muck and bolts over the fence. There he encounters a pack of feral dogs, waiting for him as if they knew he would appear. The dogs guide him to the burnt out town of Bernt Arse; they lead him to a pit where a pale, misshapen boy of Riddley's own age has been imprisoned. Riddley releases the boy, who identifies himself as the Ardship of

Cambry. The Ardship is a member of the tiny remnant of the Puter Leat (the computer elite) or Power Leat; they are the Eusa folk, the descendants of the man who made the bomb. Collectively, the Eusa folk preserve the knowledge of the "Master Chaynjis" and how to make the "1 Big 1." Every twelve years the existing Ardship is interrogated by the Pry Mincer, in the hopes of extracting the secrets from him; after the interrogation, he is executed, and his son becomes the Ardship. The present Ardship, who calls himself Lissener, has decided to rebel. His plan is to head to the Senter, Cambry (Canterbury) and pull together the knowledge of the Eusa folk to use for their own benefit. Riddley, now that he has made himself a renegade, decides to throw his lot in with the Ardship. But instead of heading directly to Cambry, Riddley has a sudden intuition that they should travel first to Fork Stoan (Folkstone). Still travelling with the pack of dogs, the two boys "road" through the night to Fork Stoan.

In the darkness of the ruins, they see a faint light; approaching it, they pass through the remains of a factory, where the great machines still shine. For the first time, Riddley understands why Goodparley wants to get the secret of technology: "oh what we ben! And what we come to!" he whispers to Lissener as they pick their way through the broken machines. The light comes from a candle burning in the empty shelter of the sentries. The black dog, leader of the pack, picks up the scent and guides Lissener and Riddley to the shore; there they see the six sentries round a fire. Lissener knows the sentries have come to the shore for some reason: "theres some thing else here les get to it befor some 1 else does" (99). Heading along the shore towards Do It Over (Dover), Lissener and Riddley find a dead man in a boat. In his pocket is a bag of yellow stones. Lissener takes the stones: "This is what I ben lissening ... I know theres Power in it" (100-1). Carrying the stones, they turn towards Cambry.

From fragments of the sentries' conversation overheard on the shore at Fork Stoan, Lissener thinks Belnot Phist may be aiming to overthrow Goodparley and become Pry Mincer himself. He makes Riddley head back to Widders Dump (the diggings) to see if he can form an alliance with Phist. Reluctantly, Riddley turns west. Half the dogs go with him; the rest, including the black leader, travel north with Lissener to Cambry. It is the night of the same day that Riddley first jumped over the fence at Widders Dump.

Coming back to Widders Dump in darkness, he climbs over the fence, and right into Goodparley's trap. Goodparley has been tracking Riddley's movements and knows he has found the yellow stones. He takes them from Riddley's pocket. Goodparley, it turns

out, knows the stones have some importance in the manufacture of gunpowder— what he calls the 1 Littl 1. Goodparley also discovers in Riddley's pocket the old Punch figure he found in the diggings. Goodparley recognizes the figure: as a boy, he was enslaved by a man named Granser (perhaps a corruption of "grandsire"), who still knew the Punch plays. Using the figure Riddley found, Goodparley demonstrates a Punch play.

Goodparley aims to find the secret of making gunpowder because he believes it will "move Inland frontways" (138). He has captured Belnot Phist as well as Riddley; he suspects Phist is the one who was importing the yellow stones. While he interrogates Riddley, his "hevvies" are hanging Phist up by his hands to make him talk. When Riddley hears Phist cry out, he rushes to save him: he cuts Phist down, but it is too late. Before he dies Phist whispers to Riddley this mysterious formula: "When the yellor boy /Fynds the pig shit/In the hart of the wood" (142). Goodparley lets Riddley go, with the yellow stones and the Punch figure. Riddley knows he will be followed: "Goodparley wer terning me luce to let me happen" (143).

Riddley heads back toward Cambry to find Lissener. On the way, he meets an old man singing a song that begins, "When the yellor boy comes hoam/ Wewl make such a noys..." (134). The old man is Granser, Goodparley's former master; Goodparley believed he had killed Granser, but the old man is still alive. Riddley talks briefly to him, but the dogs, snarling and baring their teeth, will not let him stay. They urge him on toward Cambry.

As he approaches Cambry and sees the impressive Power Ring (the remnants of an accelerator), Riddley realizes his sympathies are shifting. Now he is closer to understanding Goodparley's desire to harness the power again. Perhaps if he can reunite Goodparley with Granser (who, to judge from his song about the yellor boy, knows something about the yellow stones) he can save Lissener: Goodparley will not need to torture and kill the Ardship if he can get his knowledge of the 1 Littl 1 from Granser. But when the dogs lead him into an ancient cathedral crypt, Riddley's schemes melt away. He is overcome by the numinousness of the place: "I cud feal some thing growing in me it wer like a grean sea surging in me it wer saying, LOSE IT. Saying, LET GO. Saying THE ONLYES POWER IS NO POWER" (162; caps in original). The dogs, too, are touched by the feeling of the place: they rise up on their hind legs and dance.

The black leader who had been with Lissener reappears with the rest of the pack. Riddley asks the dog "Wheres the Ardship gone?" The black dog puts him back on the road to Fork Stoa.

Lissener is indeed there with the Eusa folk; he and Orfing have captured Goodparley, and Goodparley is now strung up. Riddley releases him, and covertly slips the yellow stones into Goodparley's "Eusa fit up" — the puppet theatre. Lissener and Orfing demand to have the yellow stones but Riddley says he threw them into a river. Orfing decides that Goodparley and Riddley are harmless now and might as well be turned loose. But the Eusa folk want to inflict on Goodparley the end that he had planned for the Ardship: "Sharna pax and get the poal" (Sharpen the axe [for chopping off his head], and get the pole [to stick his head on]). They do not, however, behead Goodparley; they only put out his eyes. The blinded Goodparley and Riddley are released; Goodparley is given permission by Orfing to make his living by presenting Punch shows.

Together, Riddley and the wounded Goodparley head toward the alder coppices where Granser lives with the other charcoal burners. Granser takes them in. Just as Riddley guessed from the rhyme Granser sang, the old man has the knowledge of how to make gunpowder. He also has two of the ingredients: pig manure, from which he can make "Saul & Peter" (saltpetre), and charcoal. (Now the meaning of Phist's dying words becomes clear: "When the yeller boy [sulphur] / Fynds the pig shit / In the hart of the wood [charcoal].") What Granser needs is "the "yellerboy stoa" (sulphur) which Riddley and Goodparley found at Do It Over. Granser's knowledge, however, is incomplete: when he combines the three ingredients, the resulting explosion kills both him and Goodparley.

Taking the puppet show fit up, Riddley leaves: "My feet begun to walk me down river tords Cambry." (190). In the darkness of Cambry, he encounters Orfing. Orfing and Lissener also obtained the ingredients to make gunpowder. But when their mixture exploded, Lissener and several of the Eusa folk were killed. So Orfing now is on the run from the remaining Eusa folk. Orfing and Riddley decide to combine forces as Walker & Orfing, showmen. With the Punch fitup, they set out as itinerant puppeteers, still escorted by the dogs. The novel ends as Riddley embarks on this new life:

Riddley Walkers ben to show

Riddley Walkers on the go
 Dont go Riddley Walkers track
 Drop Johns ryding on his back

Drop John is another name for Mr. Clever (Hoban spells it "Mr Clevver"), the Devil who is one of the three standard characters (along with Punch and Judy) in the Punch plays. Hoban makes Drop John work as a symbol of guilt:

Given a debased population, I think they would instinctively reach out for the thing that destroyed the technologically advanced people who came before ... they'd want the thing that went bang. Riddley lends himself to the production of the '1 little 1'; he can't withhold himself from it. That's why, at the end of the book, when the kid says 'Drop Johns ryding on his back', Riddley is aware that he carries some guilt. (Haffenden 141; ellipsis in original)

Defining *Riddley Walker*

The usual label attached to *Riddley Walker* is "fable" (Myers 5; Punter 152; Porter 451). By this, critics seem to mean that *Riddley Walker* is (among other things) a cautionary tale, a story with a moral message. Certainly *Riddley Walker* does prophesy grim things if we ever use our nuclear weapons (though Russell Hoban's vision of the future might be considered wildly optimistic in the light of scientific predictions of the "nuclear winter").

The fable is not alien to the Menippean satire. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg define the Menippean satire as "fable combined with anti-romance" (14). Certainly classical examples of this genre have a "message" or didactic element. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius is punished for his curiosity: he is turned into an ass because he wants to experiment with a sorceress's potions.

Scholes and Kellogg note "anti-romance" as another element in the Menippean satire. The example they offer of this element is Lucian's *True History*, which "begin[s] as a parody of Odysseus' adventures" (14). In discussing works such as the *Satyricon* and *The Golden Ass*, Scholes and Kellogg use the term picaresque:

Petronius in the *Satiricon* [sic], so far as can be determined from the brilliant fragments that remain, wrote the first picaresque narrative. ... In picaresque narrative a rogue tells the story of his own experiences in the contemporary world, usually involving his travels from place to place and through a wide spectrum of society. The main interests of picaresque fiction are social and satirical. Petronius himself may have derived his form in part from the lost Menippean satires of Varro. (73-4).

... Another major Roman progenitor of the European picaresque was the *Metamorphoses*, better known as the *Golden Ass*, of Apuleius. (75)

Although (unlike Bakhtin and Frye [309]), Kellogg and Scholes do not unreservedly classify Petronius' *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Golden Ass* as Menippean satires, it is clear that they perceive some affinity between the picaresque and the Menippean satire. Evidently what Kellogg and Scholes call the "anti-romance" in the Menippean satire can take the form of a picaresque narrative, defined as the story of a rogue's travels. Lucius of *The Golden Ass* and Encolpius of the *Satyricon* are certainly rogues; so, too, in his way is Riddley Walker, for he sets out on his journey after breaking a law and flouting authority. The narrative strategy associated with the picaresque, an autobiographical eyewitness account, is frequently employed in Menippean satire: think, for example, of *Gulliver's Travels*, Lucian's *True History*—and *Riddley Walker*. A journey forms the narrative spine of the picaresque, and frequently of the Menippean satire as well (usually in the form of a journey to some fantastic or imaginary place). *Riddley Walker* is a kind of apocalyptic picaresque, an eyewitness account of a journey through the ruins.

Frye, too, it is worth noting, sees the resemblance between the romance and the Menippean satire. It is the "loose-jointed narrative form" of the latter that makes readers confuse it with the romance. But unlike the romance, the Menippean satire is "not primarily concerned with the exploits of heroes." Frye goes on to suggest that the Menippean satire differs "from the picaresque form, which has the novel's interest in the actual structure of society"; Menippean satire presumably is not concerned with class relations (309-10).

As a novel that is both fable and picaresque, *Riddley Walker* seems to exhibit certain Menippean qualities. The case for calling it a Menippean satire is further strengthened when one examines it in the light of the Menippean traits listed by Bakhtin. The

fundamental trait is an extraordinary situation that exists for the testing of a philosophical idea. In *Riddley Walker*, the extraordinary situation is the post-holocaust future. The idea being tested or probed in *Riddley Walker* is expressed most plainly in Riddley's final musings— "Why is Punch crookit? Why wil he all ways kil the babby if he can?" (214). Here is an idea with that universalism Bakhtin cites as typically Menippean, for the human tendency to do evil is everyone's problem, whether one considers only the moral failures of everyday life or the global slide towards Armageddon.

Low Life, High Thought

It is important to note that Hoban does not treat this unarguably serious concern as a lofty abstraction, but as an aspect of Punch, that foul-mouthed murderer, wife-beater, and baby-eater. However grand the scale of the ideas in *Riddley Walker*, the novel deals with them on a very concrete, earthy plane—an approach that reflects the "slum naturalism" which, according to Bakhtin, characterizes the Menippean satire. There is nothing fine or dignified about the life of Riddley and his fellows: they have a "pong," their speech is crude, they smoke hashish, Riddley eats raw meat. Riddley, aged twelve, has a sexual relationship with Lorna, the oldest person in his village. The nursery rhymes chanted at intervals in the novel are cheerfully lewd:

Gennl men wil do it front to back
 When they do it with the ladys of the Ful Moon pack
 All the ladys do it back to front
 When they drop ther nickers and they show ther
 Moony in the holler moony on the hil
 If you wont do it then your sister wil (16)

The novel also describes homosexual rape and group sex. Even Death is presented in obscene terms: she is Aunty— "stoan boans and iron tits and teef be twean her legs plus she has a iron willy for the ladys it gets red hot" (87).

Such elements are not incidental, according to Bakhtin: "The organic combination of philosophical dialogue, lofty symbol-systems, the adventure-fantastic, and slum

naturalism is the outstanding characteristic of the menippea ... " (115). By examining closely two scenes that combine these elements, we can see more clearly how *Riddley Walker* conforms to this characteristic of the Menippean satire.

The first scene occurs close to the beginning of the novel, when Riddley Walker brings back to the village a boar he has slain:

We put the boars head on the poal up on top of the gate house. His tusks glimmer and you cud see a dryd up trickl from the corners of his eyes like 1 las tear from each. Old Lorna Elswint our tel woman up there getting the tel of the head.

...

I gone up to the platform I took Lorna a nice tender line of the boar. She wer sitting up there in her doss bag she ben smoaking she wer hy. I give her the meat and I said, 'Lorna wil you tel for me?'

She said, 'Riddley Riddley theres mor to life nor asking and telling. Whynt you be the Big Boar and Iwl be the Moon Sow.'

When the Moon Sow

When the Moon Sow comes to season

Ay! She wants a big 1

Wants the Big Boar hevvy on her

Ay yee! Big Boar what makes the groun shake

Wyld of the Woodling with the wite tusk

Ay yee! That wyld big 1 for the Moon Sow

She sung that in my ear then we freshent the Luck up there on top of the gate house. ... It wer a cold nite but we wer warm in that doss bag. Lissening to the dogs howling aftrwds and the wind wuthering and wearying and nattering in the oak leaves. Looking at the moon all col and wite and oansome. Lorna said to me, 'You know Riddley theres some thing in us it dont have no name.'

I said, 'What thing is that?'

She said, 'Its some kynd of thing it aint us but yet its in us. Its looking out thru our eye hoals. May be you dont take no noatis of it only some times.... Its in us lorn and loan and sheltering how it can.'

I said, 'If its in every 1 of us theres moren 1 of it theres got to be a manying theres got to be a millying and mor.'

Lorna said, 'Wel there is a millying and mor.'

I said, 'Wel if theres such a manying of it whys it lorn then whys it loan?'

She said, 'Becaws the manying and millying its all 1 thing it dont have nothing to gether with. You look at lykens on a stoan its all them tiny manyings of it and may be each part of it myt think its sepert only we can see its all 1 thing. Thats how it is with what we are its all 1 girt big thing and divvyt up amongst the many....' (5-6)

This passage is pervaded by naturalist detail. First, there is the head of the slain boar, with the "dryd up trickl" from its eyes. Then there is the person of Lorna, smoking hashish and wrapped up in her "doss bag." Riddley gives her a piece of raw meat as a kind of love token. To seduce him, Lorna sings a song in which she represents herself as a sow in heat. Then, they have sex, an event expressed by the phrase "freshent the Luck," which the reader probably interprets by means of rhyming slang.

Yet their conversation as they lie together afterwards is, in its brute way, a philosophical dialogue. Lorna suggests that humans have a spiritual nature that transcends their physical being: "theres some thing in us it dont have no name." Furthermore, this spiritual nature is not just an individual soul, but "1 girt big thing and divvyt up amongst the many." She does not posit an omnipotent creative force in the universe; instead, Lorna's version of the Supreme Power, (as befits one who has allowed such a disaster to take place?) is "lorn and loan and oansome. Tremmering it is and feart" (6).

In *The Moment Under the Moment*, Hoban sets this same idea in a more intellectual context:

'The overall number of minds is just one,' said Schrödinger. There's no way of proving this; one can only test it against one's own experience. Does consciousness feel like that, as if there's only one mind? To me it does. I feel inhabited by a consciousness that looks out through the eyeholes in my face and this consciousness doesn't seem to have originated with me. I feel like a receiver made for a transmission that was going on long before I arrived.

(166)

As this dialogue continues, Lorna's part takes on a certain Platonic note, as if physical reality were only a temporary manifestation of something greater and more enduring:

It puts us on like we put on our clothes. Some times we dont fit. Now Im old I noatis it mor. It dont realy like to put me on no mor. Every morning I can feel how its tired of me and readying to throw me a way. ...'

I said, 'Lorna I dont know what you mean.'

She said, 'We aint a naturel part of it. We dint begin when it begun we dint begin *where* it begun. It ben here befor us nor I dont know what we are to it. May be weare jus only sickness and a feaver to it or boyls on the arse of it I dont know. Now lissen what Im going to tel you Riddley. It thinks us but it dont think like us. (6-7)

Lorna's view of the spirit world—the "it" she refers to—resembles the Gaia hypothesis proposed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulies, a bio-philosophy that suggests that all of the biosphere is in fact one giant meta-organism (Durrell 23). For humans to play the role of "boyls on the arse of it" is an appropriate carnivalesque touch in Lorna's version.

When Riddley asks Lorna if her obscure talk is an oracle or "tel" for him, her answer contains a classical echo:

She larft then she said, 'Riddley there aint nothing what *aint* a tel for you. The wind in the nite the dus on the road even the leases stoan you kick a long in front of you. Even the shadder of that leases stoan roaling on or stanning stil its all telling.'(7)

That stone on the road is connected to Hoban's favourite god, Hermes:

Hermes is the god of merchants and thieves, journeys and exchanges, the stones of the wayside and the rolling stone that the traveller kicks as he goes his way. Hermes is the conductor of souls to the other side of things, the realm of Persephone. He is the messenger between this and that, between here and there. Unrecognised god of the arts, he manifests the darkness in the light, the seeing in the dark. (*Moment* 244)

Even in that “leases [least] stoan you kick a long” Riddley must look for meaning; it will be his job as a connexion man to do the “seeing in the dark,” to be a “messenger between this and that, between here and there.” Riddley cannot be equated with Hermes; he is a man, not a god. But in his role as a connexion man, he will need to be inspired by, or open to, the powers that Hermes represents. This fragmentary reference to Hermes—a fragment that only makes sense in the context of Hoban’s other writings on Hermes—represents a ghostly outline of the “lofty symbol-system” of classicism; here again, this passage can be seen to conform to Bakhtin’s view of the essence of Menippean satire.

Another example of this Menippean interweaving of crudity with fantasy, philosophy, and lofty symbol-system occurs in a passage in which the Pry Mincer, Abel Goodparley, explicates the political meaning of a children’s rhyme, “Fools Circel 9wys”. Like “Oranges and Lemons” or “London Bridge Is Falling Down,” “Fools Circle 9wys” is sung to accompany a circle game, as Riddley describes:

Littl kids down be low playing Fools Circel 9wys. Singing:

Horny Boy rung Widders Bel

Stoal his Fathers Ham as wel

Bernt his Arst and Forkt a Stoan

Done It Over broak a boan

Out of Good Shoar vackt his wayt

Scratcht Sams Itch for No. 8

Gone to senter next to see

Cambry coming 3 times 3

Sharna pax and get the poal

When the Ardship of Cambry comes out of the hoal (5)

Little 2way Digman being the Ardship going roun the circel til it come chopping time. He bustit out after the 3rd chop. I use to be good at that I all ways rathert be the Ardship nor 1 of the circel I liket the busting out part. (5)

Goodparley claims he has followed Riddley’s moves by applying and interpreting the rhyme:

Horny Boy which is what you are the same as any yung man. *Rung Widders Bel* Ive heard about you and Lorna Elswint shes out livet moren 1 husbin and manys the time youve rung her bel. *Stoal his Fathers Ham as wel.* Which you

took over your dads connexion when he got took off. Thats 3 blipful roun the circel nex you done your 1st acturel. *Bernt his Arse*. Bernt your arse here in the digging then over the fents you gone and running with them dogs to Bernt Arse where you bernt *my* arse killing 1 of my hevvy's with your dogs. I sust youwd parbly hoal up til dark and I sust you myt do a nother acturel so on I gone to Fork Stoan a head of you. ... *Fork a Stoan* which is that same and very bag of yeller stoans you brung here roading blipful agen bringing them stoans to Belnot Phist like I knowit you wud you *Done it Over*. You gone over this here fents in the morning and back you come doing it over agen at nite. Only this 2nd time you like *broak a boan* dint you in a way of saying. You got cawt by your old Nunkel Abel.'

My head begun to feal like it wer widening like circels on water I said, 'How can you work all that out of a kid rime? *Fools Circel 9wys* is a kid rime for a kid game.'

He said, 'O Riddley you known bettern that you know the same as I do. What ben makes tracks for what wil be. .. May be a nother 100 years and kids wil sing a rime of Riddley Walker and Abel Goodparley with ther circel game. (115-6)

The rhyme, according to Goodparley, originates in the story of Eusa. He was captured by the people of Canterbury and stoned for having caused the Bad Time. Then they took Eusa around the nine towns of Inland; in every town, the "soar vivers of the barming" tortured him. Finally, blinded, bloodied, and castrated, he was brought back to Canterbury and beheaded:

'They took his head off then they put it on a poal for telling. Eusas head tol them, "Onlyes part of Inland kep ther hans clean of this ben the Ram which is the head of Inland. You cut my head off my body now the body of Inland wil be cut off from the head." With that there come a jynt wave it wer a wall of water hyer nor a mountin.... It cut the Ram off separt from the res of Inland that wer the day the Ram be come a nylan.

That head of Eusa said to them what put it on the poal, "Now throw me in the sea." Which they done that and the head wer swimming then agenst the tide it swum acrost that water from Inland to the Ram. Them on the Ram took in the head and this is what it tol them: "Make a show of me for memberment and for the ansers to your askings. Make a show with han

figgers put a littl woodin head of me on your finger in memberment of my real head on a poal. Keap the Eusa folk a live in memberment of the hardship they brung on. Out of the hardship let them bring a Ardship 12 years on and 12 years come agen. Let the head of Inland ask the Ardship then. Let the head of Inland road the circel ful and to the senter asking what he wants to know for all of Inland. When the right head of Inland fynds the right head of Eusa the anser wil come and Inland wil rise up out of what she ben brung down to." Then the head roalt back in to the water it swum out to sea.' (116-7)

The background of this scene retains the atmosphere of "slum naturalism." Riddley is being held in a kind of den of thieves, a familiar Menippean setting; Belnot Phist is being tortured by the "hevvys" while Goodparley interrogates Riddley. Against this setting, Hoban introduces Goodparley's exegesis of the nursery rhyme which Goodparley has used to track Riddley's movements. The parallel between Riddley's journey and the route the Ardship will be forced to trace before his execution secures Riddley's identification with Lissener: Riddley goes "roun the circel" so that Lissener will not have to. The rhyme is also a folk history of the founding events of Inland— of the death of Eusa, his prophecies, and the separation of the Ram (the London area) from the rest of Inland.¹ The third level of interpretation Goodparley provides is to show how Fools Circel 9wys describes the ritual sacrifice of the Ardship.

At first, it seems that these interpretations are nothing but clever manipulation of a bit of doggerel. But this passage also contains "philosophical dialogue" and a "lofty symbol system." The philosophy appears in Goodparley's explanation of why Riddley is repeating the expiatory journey of Eusa: "What ben makes tracks for what wil be. Words in the air pirnt foot steps on the groun for us to put our feet in to" (116). Goodparley seems to be arguing for an almost Vician notion of *recurso* in history.

¹ Goodparley's exegesis has its parallel in the historical explanations offered for many common English nursery rhymes: it has been suggested, for example, that "Ring around the rosy" is a folk memory of the Black Death. In their studies of present-day folklore among children, Iona and Peter Opie have recorded many instances of children's rhymes which incorporate historical personages and events (*The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959).

The symbol systems underpinning this scene become apparent when the severed head of Eusa speaks. Eusa's talking head resembles the head of Orpheus. Like the head of Orpheus, it is tossed into the sea and swims against the tide. Certain parallels are also made between Eusa and Christ. Eusa's journey around the nine towns of Inland is his *via crucis*, his Stations of the Cross. When his severed head addresses the people, it instructs them "to make a show of me for memberment [and] ... put a littl woodin head of me on your finger in memberment of my real head on a poal" (117). Eusa's words seem an echo of Christ's instruction at the Last Supper which serves as the scriptural basis for the sacrament of communion: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11: 24). The Christ-Eusa connection is also evident in the *Eusa Story* itself, which is made up of numbered verses, like a chapter from the Bible. Hoban simultaneously elevates Eusa, through the parallels with Orpheus and Christ, and mocks him, through his order that his memory be preserved in a puppet show. But is a man on a crucifix inherently more meaningful than a wooden puppet head? Is communion any less of a "show" than Punch and Judy? These analogies, implicit in Eusa's words, exhibit the Menippean tendency to parody the sacred.

These two scenes demonstrate that the quality Bakhtin thought "the outstanding characteristic" of the Menippean satire — its combination of "slum naturalism," adventure-fantastic, philosophical dialogue and lofty symbol-systems— is indisputably central to *Riddley Walker*.

Inserted Genres

Another feature of the Menippean satire is the extensive use of inserted genres. It is not difficult to find inserted genres in modern and (especially) postmodern texts. Indeed, Bakhtin notes the importance of such other genres as "the confession, the diary, travel notes, biography, the personal letter" in the make-up of the novel:

So great is the role played by these genres that are incorporated into novels that it might seem as if the novel is denied any primary means for verbally appropriating reality, that it has no approach of its own, and therefore requires the help of other genres to re-process reality; the novel itself has the

appearance of being merely a secondary syncretic unification of other seemingly primary verbal genres. (Bakhtin 1981, 321)

Here he seems to be asserting that the use of inserted genres is typical of all novels, not just the Menippean satire.

Whether the presence of inserted genres in a novel can be considered “Menippean” depends, I think, on the extent and manner of their use. *Riddley Walker* incorporates some twenty-eight poems or songs (this number includes several couplets). There are two pictures in the novel— one a drawing of the initiatory three-line scar all Eusa men receive, and the other a keyhole-shaped sketch of the outline of a ruined structure; in addition, there is a map of Inland. There are also seven stories, two puppet shows, and two fragments of puppet shows. These inserted genres form a significant part of *Riddley Walker*.

Their functions are varied. Several of the stories resemble legends or folktales: “Hart of the Wood,” for example, describes how men and women ate their own children in order to survive the Bad Time; “Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes” explains how humans and dogs became enemies. These fables reinforce our sense of the primitiveness of Riddley’s world. With the collapse of technology and social order, people have returned to the ancient modes of thought that first gave rise to myth and to animal fables. There are no abstract concepts of history, politics, or ethics in Riddley’s time; there are only stories to account for human behaviour.

The fables and stories also provide interpretive keys to the novel. The *Eusa Story* recounts how Eusa, inspired by Mr. Clevver (the Devil), made the bomb and then suffered for his crime. It is not so much legend as scripture, the holy book of Riddley’s people. It is provided in full, all thirty-three verses, and quoted subsequently on numerous occasions. Even before it appears, the *Eusa Story* is referred to. The fact that Hoban has to resort to a footnote in Riddley’s account — “I wil write down the *Eusa story* when I come to it” (2)— indicates how central the *Eusa Story* is to the reader’s understanding of the world in which Riddley lives. In addition to this narrative function of providing mythic background which the reader needs in order to understand other stories within the novel, the *Eusa Story* serves to strengthen the Christ-Eusa parallels. In Menippean terms, the *Eusa Story* can be considered a parody of scripture; in this sense,

it has a function analogous to the pastiches of Homer found in the classical Menippean satire.

Another inserted story is the "Legend of St. Eustace," the only portion of the novel written in Standard English. The description of a wall-painting of the life of St. Eustace, it is the sort of passage one might find in a tourist pamphlet. But to Abel Goodparley, this fragment from the world before the Bad Time is a cryptic guide to the gaining of power; specifically, it contains the recipe for gunpowder. By examining how Goodparley extracts this from the "Legend of St. Eustace," we can see more clearly the Menippean function that inserted genres serve in *Riddley Walker*.

The document summarizes the legend of St Eustace, an English saint martyred by the Romans. His story resembles that of Eusa, for he too lost his wife; his two sons were stolen away, one by a lion, the other by a wolf. He regains favour as a general of Hadrian but when he and his family refuse to honour Roman gods, they are roasted to death in a brazen bull. The scene of his martyrdom is described in the following manner: "At the bottom of the painting St Eustace is seen on his knees before his quarry, a stag, between whose antlers appears, on a cross of radiant light, the figure of the crucified Saviour" (118-9). Goodparley interprets the document as covert instructions for the making of explosives:

Which a quarry is a kynd of digging. Whys he on his knees? What brung him down what knockt him off his feet? What come out of that digging? A stag. Wel thats our Hart of the Wud innit we know him wel a nuff. Whats he got be twean his antlers its a "cross of radiant light". Which is the same as radiating lite or radiation which may be youve heard of. Radiant lite. Shyning. Wel we know from our oan *Eusa Story* where you fynd the Hart of the Wud youwl fynd a shyning in be twean his horns. Which that shyning is the Littl Shyning Man the Addom. Only in this Legend its callit "the figure of the crucified Saviour." (122-3)

Goodparley interprets "Saviour" as "savery. Not sweet. Salty." "Crucified" is connected to "some thing you done in a cruciboal... Thats a hard fire boal they use it doing a chemistery try out which you cud call that crucifrying" (124). Everything in the story is an allegory of this chemical process: "Them 2 littl boys [Eustace's sons] theyre

what they call “catwl twis” [catalysts] which is what you put in to qwicken on your episodes.” The martyrdom of Eustace and his family is the explosion itself:

Finely after the brazing boal you get your four souls which is your 4 salts gethert. Man and wife and littl childer coming back to gether for the las time thats your new clear family it aint the 1 you startit with its the finement of it in to shyning gethert to the 1 Big 1. (124)

Goodparley believes that the bag of yellow stones Riddley found in the boat could be the key to recreating the bomb: “... this here bag of yellerboy myt be the break and thru the barren year with a bang. I know itwl take tryl narrer and spare them ending but may be this time wewl do it” (124). Goodparley’s allegorical interpretation takes account of all of the text and yet is utterly wrongheaded.²

Significantly, Riddley writes “interpret” as “terpit” (205)—a word that makes one think of turpitude as well as interpretation. Goodparley goes wrong because he can only interpret the description in terms of what he needs to know, in terms of his own time and his own world. Perhaps one function of the inserted genres is to create an opportunity to parody hermeneutics, for this, indeed, is what Goodparley’s interpretations do. This function fits with the Menippean tendency to make jokes at the expense of learning.

It is worth noting that, bizarrely energetic as Goodparley’s interpretive efforts may seem, they are not so distant from what must once have been required to find the secret of gunpowder. The earliest Western description of the making of gunpowder, Roger Bacon’s *De mirabili potestate artis et naturae* (1242), was written in a cryptic code: key sections of the book “appeared without meaning until the anagrammatic nature of the sentences was realized.” The anagrams concealed a recipe for gunpowder using saltpetre, sulphur and young hazel-wood (“Gunpowder”).

²Critics such as Jeffrey Porter (452) and Peter Schwenger (254) have pointed out the similarity between *Riddley Walker* and another novel about the post-holocaust world, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959), in which two documents from the pre-bomb culture—a grocery list and the blueprint of a bomb shelter—become sacred texts for the survivors.

Another prominent inserted genre in *Riddley Walker* is the puppet show. Two are Eusa shows, presented by the Pry Mincer and the Wes Mincer (Goodparley and Orfing) in order to influence public opinion. The parodic quality of this use of the puppet shows is obvious: what else, after all, are the “official spokespersons” and carefully rehearsed politicians of our own day but puppets, appearing on prime-time news in order to influence public opinion?

In the Eusa show they present in Riddley’s village, Erny Orfing and Abel Goodparley make public their disagreement about the value of progress. When the Eusa figure appears, it is wearing an iron hat from which wires protrude. He connects the wires to another box — his “No. 2 head” — so he can “input a few littl things.” Eusa does his calculations with the No. 2 head so that it can “do the hevvy head work for my new projeck” (45). His project is to create Good Time “which I mean every thing good and every body happy and teckernogical progers moving every thing frontways farther and farther all the time” (46). But Mr Clevver comes along and cranks up the iron hat on Eusa’s head; he empties out Eusa’s head and takes away his knowledge.

As connexion man, Riddley Walker must interpret the Eusa show for his people. His “reveal” of the Eusa show mystifies the others in How Fents: “its Eusa’s head is dreaming us,” he tells the assembled villagers (59). Later in the novel, the Lissener explains what Eusa’s head is:

What Goodparley calls Eusas head which it ben a girt box of knowing and you hook up peopl to it thats what a puter ben. (91)

The puppet figure of Eusa’s head with its iron hat and dangling wires is a degraded memory of computers. Once, people could put their knowledge in a machine and make it calculate for them, and it was the machine that enabled them to find “Master Chaynjis” (the secret of how to create an atom bomb). Riddley’s cryptic reveal — “Eusa’s head is dreaming us” — warns the people that the machines could end up controlling human society. Hoban thus uses the puppet show to explore the moral issue of the responsible use of technology.

But the idea of Eusa’s head dreaming the people is not only a caution, Riddley’s sally in a propaganda war with the advocates of progress. It is also a variation on one of the metaphysical questions that most interests Hoban: the problem of whether we are, as

Bishop Berkeley asserted, only ideas in the mind of God. This problem appears elsewhere in *Riddley Walker*. For example, as Riddley runs to Cambry through the night, past villages whose sentries do not see him, he feels as if he were a puppeteer behind the backcloth or perhaps a puppet himself: "If I wer a figger in a show what hand wer moving me then?" (168). Early in the novel, he explains that his motive for writing down his adventures is to try to understand this problem:

Seams like I ben all ways thinking on that thing in us what thinks us but it dont think like us. Our woal life is a idear we dint think of nor we dont know what it is. What a way to live.

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

(7)

Martin Gardner observed about Lewis Carroll and *Through the Looking Glass* that "[t]he Berkeleyan theme troubled Carroll as it troubles all Platonists" (Note 7, 238). Certainly Hoban has Platonist tendencies (as evidenced, for example by his indebtedness to that Platonic fable, Williams's *The Place of the Lion*), so it is not surprising that "the Berkeleyan theme" should also trouble him. It makes many appearances in his other works of fiction as well: one thinks, for example, of Jachin-Boaz saying, "[a] lion hallucinates me" (132). Through the puppet show, Hoban explores not only the moral problem of the control of technology, but also the philosophical question of whether we are just "ideas in the mind of God." Here *Riddley Walker* seems again to demonstrate the Menippean tendency to present philosophy in humble surroundings.

Two of the puppet shows in *Riddley Walker* are traditional Punch shows. One is presented by Orfing when he demonstrates to Riddley the use of the old figure found in the diggings. The second and more important show is presented by Riddley and Orfing at the end of the novel.

In the final chapter, when Riddley and Orfing arrive at the village of Weaping Form, they are regarded as avatars of Eusa. The villagers know of the gunpowder that killed Goodparley and Granser, for the smoke-darkened heads of the two dead men are impaled on poles at the village gate. Orfing and, by association, Riddley, are responsible for this reappearance of "cleverness," and thus, like Eusa tortured for his role in the 1 Big 1, must pay for what they have done. It is Punch that saves them: Riddley brings out

the Punch figure and his “Ah, putcha, putcha, putcha” so surprises the villagers that they want to see the show. The show presented by Orfing and Riddley contains many authentic (and nasty) Punch and Judy scenes; when Punch eats the baby, the villagers break up the performance. Some want to punish Punch (and thus Riddley and Orfing) for his evil deeds; their desire for revenge is presented as a primitive eye-for-an-eye form of justice. Others are not so eager to find a scapegoat. As soon as the show is ended, Orfing and Riddley road out of the village. Accompanying them are several defectors, families from Weaping Form who no longer want to belong to the brutal life of the village. Thus, as the novel ends, Riddley seems to be gathering around himself the nucleus of a new society.

In this closing chapter, Hoban telescopes into the compass of a puppet stage the essential question: “Why is Punch crookit? Why wil he all ways kil the babby if he can?” Punch is a humble thing, a low-life, foul-mouthed, repulsive figure; he is not even a man, just a wooden head. But what he represents is something irreducibly human: unrestrained appetite, and unrepentant greed. Even in Riddley’s time, Punch has survived, because human nature remains unchanged. As one modern puppeteer puts it, Punch “is a living thing.... He changes with the time, and moves forward in the vernacular of the day. He’s literally a medium you can put anything into, because he’s us” (qtd. in Everett-Green).

Nursery rhymes and folk songs also play a large role in *Riddley Walker*. Hoban has succeeded in inventing “folklore” that sounds like the real thing. “Fools Circel 9wys,” for example, is composed of trochees, just like many authentic children’s rhymes; it is a good metre for skipping and bouncing balls. It also has an envoi with a slightly speeded-up rhythm, very similar to the closing of “Oranges and Lemons,” the traditional song which William, the protagonist of Hoban’s 1975 novel, *Turtle Diary*, notices a group of children singing:

I found myself waiting, waiting for ‘Here comes a chopper to chop off your head, chop, chop, chop!’ which arrived in due course and very loudly. (37)

“Fools Circle 9wys” ends with a remarkably similar threat:

Sharna pax and get the poal
When the Ardship of Cambry comes out of the hoal (5)

The rhyme about the dog people is another example of Hoban's ability to adapt the structure of authentic children's lore to his own purposes. Here are its closing lines:

When they drop ther nickers and they show ther
 Moony in the holler moony on the hil
 If you wont do it then your sister wil (16)

The Opies point out that references to underclothes are "frequent" in children's rhymes (116). Several of the improper rhymes they reproduce contain lines in which the "naughty" word is absent or hidden in a pun: "The higher up the monkey climbs/ The more he shows his/ Ask no questions..." (117). Hoban's rhyme makes a similar shift on the word "moony." Although the the children of Riddley's village sing rhymes that are unquestionably cruder and crueler than those recorded by folklorists, they are effective because their metre and diction resemble that of real children's songs.

Hoban's work songs also resemble authentic folk models. Here, for example, is what the men sing at the diggings as they haul fragments of old machinery out of the muck:

Gone ter morrer here to day
 Pick it up and walk a way
 Dont you know greaf and woe
 Pick it up its time to go
 Greaf and woe dont you know
 Pick it up its time to go (9)

It could be sung to the same tune as the famous railway work song "Drill Ye Tarriers Drill" (Thomas 88).

Like the figure of Punch, these rhymes and songs derive from the folkloric, popular side of European culture, from the element Bakhtin calls carnival. Punch shows were traditionally performed during the days of a fair (Leach 33), when, in Bakhtin's words, a "carnival atmosphere reigned" (129). Bakhtin argues that the "clamping principle" uniting the disparate elements in the menippea is "carnival and a carnival sense of the world" (134). Making a Punch and Judy show the vehicle for the novel's most important message seems a quintessentially Menippean strategy: where else to find the truth except

among the lowliest? The prevalence of “folk” rhymes and songs in *Riddley Walker* seems further evidence of the importance in the novel of a “carnival sense of the world.” In the following section, I will examine more closely the significance of carnival elements in *Riddley Walker*.

Carnival Dogs

Bakhtin describes the “*mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*” as “the primary carnivalistic act” (124; italics in original). This crowning-decrowning motif is present in several forms in *Riddley Walker*. Eusa, for example, is a king-like figure who, due to the evil influence of Mr. Clevver, brings about his own downfall. His iron hat in the Eusa Show is his mock crown; the terrible journey he makes from town to town, tortured, blinded and castrated, represents a prolonged and hideous decrowning. Goodparley and Orfing are also elevated persons brought down by their own ambition. Even the fact that the novel is narrated by a twelve-year-old boy, a child who participates in and eventually controls to some extent the affairs of men, represents an inversion to our modern sensibilities.

Related to the motif of decrowning are such carnival elements as “free and familiar contact” among people of all classes; “carnivalistic *mésalliances* (slave-king), profanation (playing with the symbols of higher authority)” (125). Bakhtin also mentions such elements as “oxymoronic combinations,” and “bringings-down-to earth” (139). These carnivalistic features are all aspects of the Menippean satire’s “liberty to crudely degrade, to turn inside out the lofty aspects of the world and world views” (Bakhtin 1981, 26). In *Riddley Walker*, the relationship between humans and dogs demonstrates most clearly this tendency.

In Riddley’s time, human beings are a species on the way down. The Pry Mincer of Inland, Abel Goodparley, knows it:

Riddley we aint as good as them befor us. Weve come way way down from wat they ben time back wayback. May be it wer the barms what done it poysening the lan or when they made a hoal in what they callit the O Zoan. (120-1; italics in original)

With the people on the way down from “wat they ben,” the dogs are on the way up (16).

At the very beginning of the novel, Hoban establishes that the dogs are watchful, rational beings, not dumb beasts. When Riddley kills a “wyld boar” on the day he turns twelve and “come a man,” a pack of feral dogs is watching:

The Bernt Arse pack ben follering just out of bow shot. When the shout gone up ther ears all prickt up. Ther leader he wer a big black and red spottit dog he come forit a littl like he ben going to make a speach or some thing til 1 or 2 bloaks uppit bow then he slumpt back agen and kep his farness follering us back. I took noatis of that leader tho. He wernt close a nuff for me to see his eyes but I thot his eye ben on me. (1)

Three days later, after Riddley’s father’s death, Riddley and his co-workers are returning to their encampment with the body when they meet the dogs again. This time, the leader comes forward alone and seems to allow himself to be impaled on Riddley’s spear. Everyone believes the dog has “offert his self” to Riddley’s dad.

There is now a link between Riddley and the Bernt Arse pack, a link that sets Riddley to thinking about stories he has heard of the “dog peopl” in the abandoned cities: “people with dogs heads and dogs with peopls’ heads. Some said come Ful of the Moon they all run to gether in the Black Pack. Dogs and dog people to gether.” (14)

In Riddley’s village, children play “Black Pack”: they pretend to be dog people, and one sings the rhyme about “the ladys of the Ful Moon pack” (16). Lorna, the “tel woman” of the village, tells Riddley “Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes”—a tale about the evolution of human society from hunting and gathering to agriculture, mercantilism, industrialism, and then nuclear winter. In this fable, it is through alliance with the dog that humans initially survive:

Time back way way back 1 time it wer Ful of the Moon and a man and woman squatting by ther littl fire.... and afeart of the nite. The dog wer in the nite and looking tords the fire. It wernt howling it wer jus looking at the fire The man and woman seen the fire shyning in the dogs eyes. The man throwit meat to the dog and the dog come in to them by the fire. Brung its eyes in out

of the nite then they all lookit at the nite to gether. The man and the woman seen the nite in the dogs eyes and thats when they got the 1st knowing of it. (17-8)

The placement of Lorna's tale, so early in the novel, establishes the centrality of the dog/human relationship. According to this myth, the dogs know something—have always known something—that the humans forgot on their way to civilization. The "1st knowing" is perhaps an understanding of interdependence, an acceptance that humans need the other creatures of the earth in order to survive.

After killing the old leader dog, Riddley skins and eats it. He also plans to turn the head and body into a hood he can wear, with the dog's teeth set into the opening of the hood. This kind of ritual animal disguise is practised by many peoples—e.g., Northwest Coast native people—as a way of obtaining or borrowing the animal's powers. In one of his occasional pieces, Hoban mentions an animal disguise worn by Robin Hood when he triumphs over an enemy:

I've always liked the sound of the words *capul hide*: the skin of a horse, with the eyes of a man looking out through the eyeholes in the head—the skin of a dead beast hiding a live man, magical and murderous. ("Thoughts" 441)

There is magic in men aligning themselves with animals, a murderous magic in men finding the bestial energy in themselves.

Indeed, as the novel unfolds, it becomes apparent that Riddley is operating with some kind of magical knowledge that transcends ordinary thought. He not only becomes "dog frendy" (i.e., able to move among the feral dogs without getting "dog kilt"); he also becomes capable of communicating with the dogs. When he leaps over the fence at Widders Dump, there is "that black leader waiting for me with his yellor eyes":

Dint see no other dogs jus only him. Looking at me and wagging his tail slow. Then he ternt and gone off easy looking back over his sholder like he wantit me to foller so I follert. I ben waiting for it so long when the time come I jus done it. (70)

At first, Riddley runs with the dogs, not because he wants to go where they are headed, but because he fears that if he does not, he will be “just so much running meat” to the dogs. When they reach Bernt Arse, the leader takes them through the ruins in “mazy ways.” But the dog seems to know where he is heading: “he cernly had some program he wernt jus randeming” (71). The program is to lead Riddley to where the Ardship, Lissener, is imprisoned.

Later, when Lissener and Riddley flee Bernt Arse, the dogs cover their tracks:

The black leader and his 2 nexters stoppit with us the other dogs kep going. What they wer doing wer shaking foller for us. When I came to know them better I seen they dint do nothing randem they had tack ticks. (73)

The dogs of the Bernt Arse pack have many of the mental attributes that humans like to claim as their own: for example, they can plan ahead, develop and implement strategies, communicate with human beings. They also have spiritual feelings. When Riddley enters “Zero Groun” at the centre of Cambry, it is not just Riddley who responds to the strange aura of the place. The dogs rise up on their hindlegs and dance about (154).

Moreover, in the mythology of Riddley’s world, dogs play a central role. In the *Eusa Story*, Eusa found the “Littl Shynin Man the Addom” with the help of two dogs, Folleree and Folleroo. The dogs warned Eusa against pursuing his research:

Thay dogs stud up on their hyn legs & taukin lyk men. Folleree sed, Lukin for the 1 yu wil aul ways fyn thay 2. Folleroo sed, Thay 2 is 2ce as bad as the 1. Eusa sed I woan be tol by amminals. He beat thay dogs & on thay gon. (29)

Eusa persevered and in “the hart of the wud” found a stag, and in its antlers the Littl Shynin Man the Addom. He pulled the little man apart and found the knowledge he needed, the numbers of the “Master Chaynjis uv the 1 Big 1” (31). Again the dogs enter the story:

Thay grayt dogs stud on thear hyn legs & talkin lyk men agen. Thay sed, Eusa aul thay menne leavs as rattelt thats how menne peapl you wil kil. Then thay dogs begun tu tel uv tym tu cum. Thay sed, The lan wil dy & thay peapl wil eat 1 a nuther. The water wil be poysen & the peapl wil drink blud.

Eusa kilt boath dogs he shot them ded. (31)

The significant role of dogs in the *Eusa Story* has certain parodic overtones: if the *Eusa Story* is the “holy scripture” of Riddley’s time, then dogs appear as angels, warning men of what is to come.

The preternatural abilities of the Bernt Arse pack can be seen as part of the fantasy aspect of *Riddley Walker*. But Bakhtin asserts that fantasy elements exist in a Menippean satire in order to test the philosophical idea that is at the heart of the work. In *Riddley Walker*, this idea concerns the inherent evil in humans, our seemingly ineluctable tendency to do evil, to “kil the babby.” Bringing humans and dogs to the same level seems to reinforce this view of the savagery inherent in human beings. Stripped of our technology, what are we but beasts? The dogs’ good sense and intuition throw into doubt the special status of human beings as the rational creatures, the creatures with a soul, a mind, and so on. This is a Menippean inversion, just like Lucius’ metamorphosis into an ass, designed to show how little we deserve the epithet *sapiens*. It is also one of those oxymoronic combinations favoured in the menippea: the beasts have mind and soul, the men are brutes.

Doubles

Of the numerous pairs or doubles in this novel—Lissener and Riddley, Riddley and Goodparley, Eusa and Punch, the dogs Folleree and Folleroo, Goodparley and Orfing—Lissener and Riddley form the most prominent. Riddley and Lissener (the Ardschip of Cambry) are the same age, born in the same month. Riddley describes Lissener as “his blyn moon brother” (93). Like the doubles in Hoban’s other novels—the mouse father and his attached son, Jachin-Boaz and Boaz-Jachin, Redbeard and Kleinzeit, William and Neaera (of *Turtle Diary*)—Riddley and Lissener fit together. Lissener is strategy, plotting, technological knowledge. Riddley is instinct, physical strength, reflection. Lissener is blind and Riddley can see. Riddley is confused, uncertain; Lissener has a plan and can tune into things. Lissener is pale; Riddley is dark, one imagines — dark with dirt and smoke and sweat. Both are orphans. Both are rebels. Both are “dog-frendy.” Lissener and Riddley fall into the type of double identified by Galya Diment as the “divided-they-stand” or “co-consciousness” approach. In this use of the double, the double and the hero do not engage in a battle to the death (as happens in such classic

doppelgänger tales as *Frankenstein* and Maupassant's "Le Horla"), but rather become interdependent. Lissener needs Riddley: that is why he pulled the dogs and the dogs pulled Riddley. Riddley needs Lissener; without him, Riddley would not know which road to travel, what way to run. Lissener tells him, "I'm trying to get you to be your oan black dog and your oan Ardship" (95). Soon Riddley discovers that "I wer some kynd of lissener as wel" (97).

Orfing and Goodparley are complementary aspects of authority: Goodparley wants progress, Orfing wants stability. Both also serve as complements to Riddley. Goodparley, like Lissener, has the same birthday as Riddley, the 2nd Ful (136). Both Goodparley and Riddley are haunted by the thought of "what we ben." At the end of the novel, Riddley fulfills Goodparley's desire for change and progress by gathering about him a group of people who want to live in a different way. Orfing becomes Riddley's complement at the end of the novel by succeeding to Lissener's role. Lissener dies, and Orfing becomes blind, just as Lissener was. Walker & Orfing take over from Goodparley and Orfing as the showmen.

Bakhtin argues that doubles are a particular feature of the Menippean satire, the double representing a parodic image of the protagonist. His comments on the doubles in Dostoevsky's novels help us to understand more clearly what he means by "parodying doubles":

In each of them (that is, in each of the doubles) the hero dies (that is, is negated) in order to be renewed (that is, in order to be purified and to rise above himself). (128)

The deaths of two of Riddley's doubles (Goodparley and Lissener) enable Riddley to "be renewed" and "rise above himself." He becomes his "oan Ardship," that is, his own guide. And the death of Goodparley enables Riddley to become the showman.

Words and Names

Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
 Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
 Will not stay still.

T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

As even the briefest quotations from *Riddley Walker* demonstrate, this is a novel written in its own form of English. According to Hoban, the language of *Riddley Walker* evolved as he was writing:

I started writing it in straight English, and it just began to drift. The characters began to say words that didn't exist in English, and their English began to fit into a vernacular. Then I saw that what was really happening was the real linguistic process that does happen. Speech always encapsulates a place and time and a world-view. And their speech would naturally do the same. They wouldn't be talking BBC English. (Myers 15)

Hoban did not at first see that the language also had a narrative function:

I didn't plan it as a technical device. The language drifted into that vernacular and once I had it going I saw that as a narrative device it was just the thing that was wanted because it keeps the reader from getting ahead of Riddley. The reader is slowed down to Riddley's rate of perception and ... is kept busy with the language action, with finding the bits of history that are floating in this language like meat in a stew. (Brooks 73)

What is remarkable about the language of *Riddley Walker* is that, despite its apparent bruteness and poverty, Hoban manages to wrest from it passages of great force and subtlety. Words are not merely misspelled or worn down; they are transformed, often by a process that seems akin to false etymologies. For example, at the end of the novel, Riddley, an outlaw and allied with the deposed "Pry Mincer" Orfing, acknowledges the uncertainty of his situation: "Orfing and me we know weare living on burrow time but then who aint" (197). "Burrow time" could be just an eroded, lazy "borrowed time"; but

it also suggests the animal-like, underground existence which Riddley is fated to live. Perhaps those people of the future misunderstood the expression "borrowed time" and thought "burrow time" made more sense as a descriptor of a person in fear of his life. (There may also be a reference here to Kafka's tale of unallayable anxiety, "The Burrow.") When Riddley describes his fears for the future, he says, "you dont even know where the arrer myt come from with your name on it" (197). That "arrer" is an arrow, but it might also be an "error," a cosmic mistake that would cut Riddley's life short. When Orfing and Riddley debate with a sentry to gain permission to a village, they offer such clever arguments that they set the sentry to thinking hard: "he wer pulling his beard you cud hear his thots grynding in his head like mil stoans" (204). Those thoughts are making the sound of millstones, but perhaps they also sound like a thousand (mille) little stones rattling in the sentry's mind. Hoban makes new words and expressions that hover, pun-like, between possible meanings.

Hoban also writes of abstract ideas with great vividness and even lyricism. Here, for example, is Riddley describing his vision of atomic theory:

You myt think a stoan is slow thats becaws you wont see it moving. Wont see it walking a roun. That dont mean its slow tho. There are the many cools of Addom which they are the party cools of stoan. Moving in ther milliyngs which is the girt dants of the every thing its the fastes thing there is it keaps the stilness going. Reason you wont see it move its so far a way into the stoan. If you cud fly way up like a saddelite bird over the sea and you lookit down you wunt see the waves moving youwd see them change 1 way to a nother only you wunt see them moving youwd be too far a way. You wunt see nothing only a changing stilness. (158)

Not surprisingly, many critics writing about *Riddley Walker* have focussed on Hoban's ingenious use of language. Jeffrey Porter claims that *Riddley Walker* "brings to a head what had only been implicit in [Hoban's] earlier novels, namely that language knows things people do not" (451). Maynor and Patterson describe the language of *Riddley Walker* as "its most arresting feature" and quote Hoban himself as saying that language is "one of the protagonists of the story" (19).

One way to understand the central role of language in *Riddley Walker* is to consider it as an example of what W. Scott Blanchard calls the "creative lexical potential" of the

Menippean satire (34). Blanchard sees puns, neologisms, and borrowings as typically Menippean:

In Rabelais not only do we meet many words appropriated into the vernacular from other languages for the first time, but we even meet macaronic and invented languages, a testament to the lack of even linguistic stability in the Menippean satire. Just as Menippean satire thumbs its nose at generic norms, so it must grow indignant at lexical restraint or purity, choosing instead a polyglottal approach to style. The lexical explosiveness peculiar to the Menippean form has some antique precedents, especially in Varro's fragments, which contain in some instances singular attestations of Latin words, but in Renaissance works we often discover lengthy lists of obscure words, manic digressions into verbal copiousness that can assume gargantuan dimensions. (34)

Blanchard goes on to suggest that in some Renaissance examples of the Menippean satire, this "irrational celebration of the diversity and plenitude of words themselves" overwhelms "any didactic purpose or narrative coherence" (34-5). Clearly, Hoban does not go this far; language in *Riddle Walker* remains at the service of plot and theme, even if at times one cannot help but linger over Hoban's marvellous coinages.

Blanchard, however, apart from citing classical precedents such as Varro, does not really explain why the Menippean satire should favour experiments with language. He suggests the genre violates "lexical restraint or purity" as a consequence of its indifference to "generic norms." This explanation implies that the creative use of language in the Menippean satire evolved from the mixture of prose and poetry in the classical Menippean satire, or from Varro's mixing of Greek and Latin. Perhaps Blanchard is right, but his explanation does not clarify how linguistic inventiveness fits with the other elements of the Menippean satire. Bakhtin's definition of the Menippean satire may be too sweeping and ambitious, but in its favour are his persistent efforts to understand why certain characteristics of the Menippean satire belong together. Bakhtin never loses sight of the need to posit some kind of unity in the genre, to account for how each characteristic relates to the whole. In this spirit, how can we understand the language of *Riddle Walker*? Does it have some organic connection with the other Menippean qualities in the novel?

Bakhtin asserts repeatedly the centrality of carnival to the Menippean satire. In the language of *Riddley Walker* we can certainly notice a carnival quality —i.e., a familiar (familiar in the sense of the mixing of classes), populist, earthy tone. Perhaps the attack on decorum represented by the carnival has its linguistic equivalent as well, in the form of disregard for conventional or elevated diction. The speech of Riddley and his fellows resembles the speech of working class-Londoners. They use “v” for “th” (e.g., “riving” for “writhing”); they make errors in subject-verb agreement; they infix swear words: e.g., “40 bleeding 5” (93). Even the lords of Riddley’s world—men like Abel Goodparley and Erny Orfing—speak like low-life characters.

Another way to explain the language of *Riddley Walker* in the context of Menippean satire is to return to Hoban’s comments about the narrative function of this language: “The reader is slowed down to Riddley’s rate of perception and ... is kept busy with the language action, with finding the bits of history that are floating in this language like meat in a stew” (Brooks 73). Perhaps it is only happy accident that Hoban uses the simile of “stew” but it does remind one of *satura*, ‘stew’, from which “satire” is derived. The phrase “language action” also attracts our attention. Hoban uses the word “action” in a particular way: it is the turning of the world, the unrolling of history, the movement of time. (One of the personified beings of *Kleinzeit* is Action, depicted as a James Dean-like punk, always wanting something to happen.) Hoban uses “action” in this way, for example, when he explains his attitude toward history and the future:

Horror at the actuality of history and joy in being alive and conscious go together quite naturally.... I find the world continuously exciting and interesting. As I said before, my fascination with the action outweighs any optimism or pessimism. (Myers 16)

The phrase “language action,” then, suggests the connections, derivations, and implications — in short, all the effects of history on language— that germinate inside Hoban’s invented words, ready to spring into life as soon as one begins to explore them. Every non-standard word in the novel reminds us that this novel is about a world which is no longer like our own. Yet this invented language also contains those “bits of history” that evoke our present and the past. This interchange between past, present, and future becomes apparent when one examines closely Hoban’s invented words. Take, for example, the word “some poasyum”; here is how Lissener defines it for Riddley:

'... It aint just poasyum you all ways say *some* poasyum. You ever seen a nes of snakes?'

I said, 'Yes.'

He said, 'I never but 1 of the hevvys tol me they do the same theywl get all in a tangl slyding and sqwirring and rying to gether. Which is how we do it all the many rubbing up to 1 a nother skin to skin and talking vansit theory.

Which is a kynd of hy telling and trantsing. Thats when the singing and shouting come the many cools of Addom and the party cools of stoan. The strong and weak inner acting and what happent in the cloudit chaymber.'

(103)

"Some poasyum" in Riddley's time has become a ritual performed by the Eusa people in order to pool their fragmentary memory of atomic theory. Each one knows something; none of the forty-five living Eusa people knows it all. Only by "slyding and sqwirring and rying to gether" can they combine their knowledge of "vansit theory." The obvious derivation is from "symposium," in its twentieth-century meaning of a scholarly gathering to discuss a particular topic. Symposium is a Latinization of a Greek word meaning drinking together (Gr. *syn*, together; *posis*, drink); it referred to a drinking-party with conversation, following a banquet. In this sense, some poasyum, with all the "hy telling and trantsing" seems connected to the unrestrained atmosphere of a drinking party. *The Symposium* is also that dialogue of Plato in which Socrates defines love as our aspiration for immortality, a state which we try to achieve by uniting with or possessing the beautiful; his speech is interrupted by the drunken Alcibiades. The atmosphere of that symposium is parodied in the "singing and shouting" of the Eusa people's some poasyum; they too are trying to achieve immortality by discovering the secret of the "Master Chaynjis," the secret of the 1 Big 1. Thus, through a coinage like "some poasyum," Hoban brings values from the past and present into collision with his picture of the future. Bakhtin refers to the freedom within Menippean satire to move in time:

In the comic afterlife visions of Menippean satire, the heroes of the absolute past, real-life figures from various eras of the historic past (for example, Alexander of Macedonia) and living contemporaries jostle one another in a most familiar way, to talk, even to brawl; this confrontation of times from the point of view of the present is extremely characteristic. In Menippean satire the unfettered and fantastic plots and situations all serve one goal—to put to the test and to expose ideas and ideologues. (26)

Rather than bringing personages from the past into a world of the future, as Bakhtin describes in classical Menippean satire, Hoban embeds words from the past in his invented language of the future. Hoban describes language as “an archaeological vehicle, full of the remnants of dead and living pasts, lost and buried civilizations and technologies ... [and therefore] the language of the debased and degraded future that Riddley lives in is bound to be full of uncomprehended remnants of what we have today” (Haffenden 138).

Bakhtin asserts that “Menippean satire is dialogic, full of parodies and travesties, multi-styled, and does not fear elements of bilingualism...” (Bakhtin 1981, 26). We can see this quality in the many types of speech used in *Riddley Walker* (ranging from the nursery rhymes to the *Eusa Story* to the “Legend of St Eustace”). Perhaps one could argue that, at its most difficult, the language of *Riddley Walker* constitutes a kind of bilingualism: in order to understand the novel, the reader has to commit herself to learning the “corrupted English” (Haffenden 138) Hoban has created.

A further dimension of the linguistic richness of *Riddley Walker* is Hoban’s choice of names. First, there is Riddley’s own name. “Riddley” describes his role as “connexion man,” in which he must give the “reveal” of the Eusa show. His delphic comment—“its Eusas head is dreaming us”(59) —presents a riddle to the people of How Fents. Riddley’s job is not only to set riddles but to solve them. The mystery of the yellow stones, the meaning of Phist’s dying words, the real intentions of Abel Goodparley and so on all fall on Riddley to be deciphered. His identity as a “Walker” is plain enough, since he is on the road almost constantly throughout the novel; indeed, as Goodparley points out, “We bes change your name from Walker to Runner you ben moving so fas 1 place to a nother and back agen” (112). “Ridley” (with one “d”) is also a species of sea turtle (*Turtle Diary* 54); perhaps, like the sea turtles, Riddley has a “secret navigational art” that leads him around Inland (*Turtle Diary* 27).

Secondary characters have equally suggestive names. The tel woman Lorna Elswint likens herself to the “Moon Sow” (5); does Elswint equal “swine”? The Pry Mincer, Abel Goodparley, is certainly a smooth talker. The old man Granser has the answer about how to use the yellow stones. Granser—a contraction of “grandsire”—is not just a proper name; in the vernacular of *Riddley Walker*, it also means “grandfather.” Fister Crunchman is the “hardes hevvy” in Hows Fent (9). Riser Partman (part man?) is the

oafish brute who breaks up the Punch show because Punch ate the baby. Rightway Flinter, Big Man in the village of Weeping Form, permits Orfing and Walker to present their show, and he defends them against Partman's attack; at the end, Rightway chooses the right way — i.e., to road out with Riddley rather than stay in the village.

The practice of devising punning names is well established in Menippean satire. In his dialogue "Timon," Lucian introduces a host of sycophants who want a share in Timon's regained wealth. They have such names as Gnathonides, "cheeky"; Blepsias, "shark"; Thrasycles, "nervy" (Casson, note 27, 265). Micromégas ("little enormous"), the extraterrestrial giant in Voltaire's satire, has a name described as "un pastiche de la manière de Lucien"; it reflects Voltaire's concern with the relativity of our judgements about others (Picot 19). Many of Rabelais' characters have punning names, too: for example, Gargantua, Grangousier, Panurge. One thinks of the names of nations in *Gulliver's Travels*: Lilliput ("little"), Houyhnhnm (imitative of a horse's whinny).

The purpose of such names in Menippean satire is to underline that the characters represent ideas or positions in the world. As Frye points out, this kind of "stylized characterization" is one of the features that distinguishes the Menippean satire from other kinds of prose fiction. Frye notes that "[t]he Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes"; people are represented "in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behavior" (309). Hoban's choice of names in *Riddley Walker* seems indeed to highlight characters' "occupational approach to life." Naming the Fry Mincer Abel Goodparley draws attention to his glibness. Calling a labourer Leaster Digman or Jobber Eastman (9) limits him to that particular function in the novel; it relegates him to the crowd of spear-carriers, as it were.

The language of *Riddley Walker* has a number of antecedents. Hoban himself points to a science fiction story by Gerald Kirsch as the source of one particular feature—the distorted nursery rhymes (Brooks 74). Another obvious ancestor is Stephen Vincent Benét's 1937 story, "By the Waters of Babylon." Written before the advent of nuclear weapons, Benét's story nonetheless imagines a post-apocalypse world, in which small remnant tribes live on outside the burnt-out cities, known to them only as "the Dead Places" (471). Like *Riddley Walker*, the narrator/protagonist of Benét's story is an adolescent, the son of a holy man (*Riddley Walker*'s father is a "connexion man"). Like Hoban's hero, he ventures into the ruined city, in this case New York, a journey that

turns him into “a man and a priest” (482), just as Riddley’s travels enable him to become a “show man” – a puppeteer and leader. Benét’s protagonist, like Riddley, encounters feral dogs on his journey (478). Benét’s imagined apocalypse—“the Great Burning and the Destruction,” with “fire falling out of the sky and a mist that poisoned” (481)—somehow did not incinerate everything in the city: his survivor-hero finds books, as well as canned food and liquor (478-9). Like Hoban’s Goodparley, he wants to recover the lost glory of the dead cities: he declares in the final sentence, “We must build again.” (483) There are also some specific precedents in Benét’s story for the worn-down language of *Riddley Walker*: Benét’s protagonist must cross the Ou-dis-sun River (Hudson River) to reach the city; there he discovers a “shattered image of a man” whose name was “ASHING, as I read on the cracked half of a stone” (477). His amazement at what the “gods” who dwelt in the city could do — “they burrowed tunnels under rivers—they flew in the air” (481)— seems a precursor of Riddley’s awe at “boats in the air and picters on the wind” (97).

Despite Hoban’s evident indebtedness to other writers of futuristic fantasy, the language of *Riddley Walker* remains a highly original achievement, sustained with remarkable energy throughout the novel. Furthermore, Hoban’s inventions have the satisfying depth of poetic diction: when examined, they always yield something more. Take, for example, a little verse sung by Granser:

Mort your clof with Saul & Peter
 (Keap the way)
 Mort your clof with Saul and Peter
 (Wait the day) (182)

Granser lives in the alder groves where the charcoal burners dwell. The charcoal burners keep to themselves, only venturing into the settlements when they want to get “ther new red clof” (4). Granser, since he lives among them, also wears red clothing. He sings the song quoted above when he notices one day that his clothing is blackened and burnt: “Im about due for the new red” (182). “Mort your clof” could be “mordant your cloth” (i.e., dye your cloth; mordant is an agent required for the process of dying with certain dyestuffs). Maybe Granser is just talking about getting some new red cloth from the dyers in How Fents. “Mort cloth,” however, is another word for funeral pall, the cloth stretched over a coffin. Granser, it will be remembered, knows how to make the deadly gunpowder for which Saul & Peter (saltpetre) is an essential ingredient. And when

questioned by Goodparley about this song, Granser admits that the secret of how to make the 1 Littl 1 (gunpowder) is a “burners and dyers seakert” (183): “from time back way back which it ben the chard coal burners and the dyers done that safe keeping nor no 1 else” (184). The charcoal burners furnish the charcoal for the gunpowder. According to Granser, “pig shit it is which thats what they make the seed of the red from thats how they make the Saul & Peter” (184); so the dyers are the source of the saltpetre. When examined closely, Granser’s little song is not only about dyeing, but also about dying, about mort cloths as well as mordants for cloth.

Conclusion

Any analytical approach to a work such as *Riddley Walker*, whether it focuses on the novel’s use of language, on its meaning as a nuclear fiction, or on its generic identity as a Menippean satire, will obscure certain qualities even as it illuminates others. I am not proposing that treating *Riddley Walker* as a Menippean satire exhausts what is of interest or noteworthy in it. But this approach does help us to answer an important question.

Many other novels deal with life after the bomb, and as fictional material, this theme, despite its obvious importance, has become a commonplace. Yet there is nothing commonplace about *Riddley Walker*. It transcends the familiarity of its theme, and I think it safe to predict that people will go on reading *Riddley Walker* long after most other books of this sort have been forgotten. Why?

I think one way to explain the power of *Riddley Walker* is by considering it as a Menippean satire—to see that this genre has afforded Hoban a tremendous freedom to be at once ironic and serious, lofty and vulgar. He is free to make puns while describing the end of human civilization; he is free to expose human evil in a puppet theatre of the soul; he is free to present philosophy in the form of the musings of an aging “tel” woman, or a twelve-year-old boy. It is this serio-comic tension, this clash between humble circumstances and profound thought, between the sordid and the lyrical that gives to *Riddley Walker* its distinctive—and Menippean—vitality.

Chapter 5

Pilgermann: The Pattern That Connects

Introduction

In the "Acknowledgments" to *Pilgermann* (1983), Hoban describes this novel as an outgrowth of its predecessor:

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

It is hard to understand the sense in which the "further action pending" after *Riddley Walker* could find expression in the very different world of *Pilgermann*, a novel which takes place in Europe and the Middle East at the time of the First Crusade.

"Action," it will be recalled, is a word with particular import in Hoban's lexicon. It means not plot events or specific human acts, but the unfolding of events. Its nearest synonym is perhaps the Buddhist term dharma (Pali: *dhamma*).¹ Dharma has many meanings but the one which seems closest to Hoban's action is this: "the cosmic law, the 'great norm' underlying our world; above all, the law of karmically determined rebirth" (Fischer-Schreiber et al 54). Central to the concept of dharma is the realization that "all life is in a constant condition of flux [and] there is no lasting permanence to be found in the material universe" (Ross 103).

In what way could the "action" of *Riddley Walker* find its resolution in *Pilgermann*? Clearly *Pilgermann* is no sequel. But if *Riddley Walker* is a novel about (among other things) understanding the human capacity to do evil, to "kil the babby," then *Pilgermann* continues to explore this problem in a different time and place. A related theme in *Riddley Walker* — the human need to find religious explanations for human problems (as evidenced by the Eusa Story)— also finds its counterpart in *Pilgermann*, a novel in which excerpts from the Quran and the Old and New Testaments play a major part.

¹ Hoban has long been interested in Buddhism and acknowledges its influence on his work (Myers 10).

Fundamental to both works is the opposition between faith, and the fear that God has abandoned his creatures to their own horrible devices. To Hoban, both *Pilgermann* and *Riddley Walker* are religious novels:

... the further action was further thinking along religious lines. Further thinking about the human condition. The concerns that were developed in *Riddley Walker* expanded in *Pilgermann*.... (Myers 10).

Pilgermann is the story of a Jew's attempt to reach Jerusalem at the time of the First Crusade (1096-8). It is told in the first person but not by the man Pilgermann himself. The narrator is the "waves and particles" that remain after Pilgermann's death; when this narrator assumes physical form, he "turn[s] up as an owl" (11). At the time of the events in the novel, he is a Jewish tailor or surgeon, and he is in love with Sophia, the wife of the town's tax-collector. Pilgermann spends one night with Sophia. The next morning, he encounters a mob of peasants on an anti-Jewish rampage: they are Crusaders, common folk who have responded to Urban II's call to the Holy Land. The mob castrates Pilgermann; his severed parts are thrown to a sow to eat. Pilgermann's life is spared by the intervention of the very tax-collector whom he has just cuckolded, but many Jews in his village do not survive the *Judenhetze* of the Crusaders.

In his agony, Pilgermann calls on God, but "God says nothing" (19). Instead of the God of the Jews, it is Christ who appears to him. Pilgermann protests:

'You're not the one I was calling. I want to talk to your father'....
 He said, 'Humankind is a baby, it always wants a face bending over the cradle.'
 I said, 'God's our father, isn't he?'
 He said, 'God isn't a he, it's an it.' (22)

This Jesus is not the Saviour of the Christians. He is "god as It, a force that has no comforting personification of any kind" (Hoban quoted in Haffenden 141). Pilgermann's dialogue with this god convinces him that he, like the Christians, must make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem:

There came to me the thought that the world is full of mysterious, unseen, fragile temples; it was in these many temples that God used to dwell

among us; they are easily destroyed, these temples, as I had destroyed the temple of the tax-collector's privacy in his wife. How many of them still remained? How many temples between us and Christ's last day, between us and the eternal faceless action of God as It? Quickly, quickly must something be done before all the temples were gone. Now I understood why everyone was rushing to Jerusalem, now I knew why this was a time unique in history..... all of us were now hurrying to Jerusalem to make with the gathered power of our hearts' desire a church of all souls craving Jesus, a place of rebirth in the place of holy sepulchre and resurrection. (32-3)

The tax-collector, too, is heading to Jerusalem. Dressed in the humble tunic of the pilgrim, the tax-collector announces to the town's remaining Jews that in penance for his crimes against them he is leaving "on a penitential pilgrimage" (34).

Pilgermann sets out for Jerusalem, and soon catches up with the tax-collector— now a headless, maggoty corpse, dangling by its leg from an oak tree. The tax-collector has been slain by a thief. Next Pilgermann meets Death, riding on his pale horse. Then he encounters and kills the thief who murdered the tax-collector. Then he is assailed by the thief's widow, another Sophia. Over the cooking fire in her hut she is smoking the head of the tax-collector in order to sell it as a holy relic, the head of Pontius Pilate.

As he travels on, Pilgermann meets a bear, and a man intent on killing it. Death reappears, now dressed as a monk and carrying a pilgrim's staff, calling himself Bruder Pförtner—Brother Gatekeeper. Pilgermann also meets a group of child pilgrims walking to Jerusalem. At an inn, he encounters the same band of peasants who attacked him; Pilgermann kills the sow and her master.

Now, as Pilgermann walks on the pilgrim way, the dead walk with him: the sow Bodwild "mincing on her trotters like a heavy woman in tiny shoes" (76); her peasant master Konrad; the bear; Udo the thief; and the headless tax-collector. Accompanying them is Bruder Pförtner and another pale figure, Pilgermann's own death:

And now I became aware of perhaps someone else, it was only the faintest light and shadow as it were sketched on the air, a ghostly chiaroscuro walking familiarly with the rest of us as if by right. This sketchy figure was ... immediately recognizable to me as an early state of my own death. (88)

At Genoa, Pilgermann boards a ship bound for Jaffa. But three days out, it is waylaid by a pirate vessel, and Pilgermann ends up in the slave market at Tripoli. He is purchased by a silk merchant from Antioch named Bembel Rudzuk. Bembel Rudzuk buys Pilgermann for a special purpose: to build a tiled pattern in an open space of land the merchant owns inside the walls of Antioch. This Pilgermann does, designing and placing the tiles according to a pattern he calls "Hidden Lion." Meanwhile, outside the city walls, the Franks are massing; Antioch is under siege. As he awaits the end of the siege, Pilgermann knows that he will die, for in the winter of 1097, Bruder Pförtner and his own young death visit him. But he also knows that some part of him will survive. In a dream he flies over Jerusalem a year in the future when it is conquered by the Crusaders, "Yerushalayim in the Christian summer of 1099" (215). There among the bodies, he sees the tax-collector's wife (his own beloved Sophia), and nearby, a small child—his child—crawling over the corpses. Pilgermann wants to go to Jerusalem to prevent this terrible future he has foreseen, but he cannot. After several months of siege, Antioch falls in 1098. Bohemond himself, leader of the Frankish Crusaders, kills both Bembel Rudzuk and Pilgermann. At this moment, Pilgermann's pilgrimage to Jerusalem is achieved, for "Jerusalem is wherever I am when the end comes" (66; cf 163).

***Pilgermann* as a Menippean Satire**

Pilgermann is not a predominantly comic work. Neither its setting — the bloody times of the Crusades— nor its themes (including anti-Semitism) lend themselves to comic treatment. Nonetheless, *Pilgermann* is, I believe, a Menippean satire, possessing nearly all of the traits discussed by Bakhtin.

The extraordinary or fantastic situation required by the Menippean satire has two aspects in *Pilgermann*. The first fantastic dimension of the book is that it is narrated not by a person, but by a bundle of waves and particles. The second is Pilgermann's journey itself. His route is one taken by historical pilgrims to Jerusalem, but his adventures en route are fantastic. *Pilgermann*, in its dialogues with Jesus, God and Death, in its arrangement of coincidences, in its melding of history and fiction, in its syncretism of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam displays that "extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention" that characterizes the Menippean satire. As Bakhtin asserts is essential to the genre, the invention of extraordinary situations in *Pilgermann* is

motivated by the desire to test “a philosophical idea, a discourse, a *truth*, embodied in the image of a wise man, the seeker of this truth” (116; italics in original). Pilgermann is this seeker after truth, and what he seeks is the nature of God. If *Riddley Walker* is a novel concerned with understanding what is essential in human nature, *Pilgermann* is concerned with understanding the mind of God:

This unseen that sometimes we call God, has it a purpose or a destiny? What is its present work? Elephants, whales, mice, cockroaches, humans — from a single cell of any of them can be made the whole creature complete; there is in the cell that reservoir of potentiality. With what we call time the potentiality is unlimited: each moment has in it the matrix of all moments, the possibility of all action. Is it God’s destiny to turn the wheel until every potentiality has become an actuality? For this has God come to hate the world? Will there ever be an end to it all, is the end one of the possibilities? God doesn’t know. God created all the possibilities of variation and permutation but he cannot calculate them. (97-8).

Inasmuch as the existence and intentions of God are the central concerns of *Pilgermann*, it seems indeed to possess the philosophic universalism typical of the Menippean satire, this “genre of ‘ultimate questions’” (115).

Having established that *Pilgermann* possesses the fundamental situation and orientation of a Menippean satire — i.e., fantasy mixed with philosophical seriousness— I will now examine some specific ways in which the topoi and motifs it uses correspond to those characteristic of Menippean satire.

The Pilgrimage as Marvellous Journey

Lucian’s “True History” (a parody of the *Odyssey*) and Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* serve as the *loci classici* for the topos of the marvellous journey in Menippean satire. Lucian travels to many strange places— for example, to an island where the rivers run with wine, and the women grow out of vines, with stalks for legs and clusters of grapes depending from their fingers. He visits the sun and the moon; on the moon, there are no women, and child-bearing is the role of men under twenty-five, who carry their embryos

in their calves. The travels of Lucius in *The Golden Ass* follow familiar earthly routes, but Lucius must walk those roads in the form of a donkey: he is taken through various towns in Thessaly, finally arriving at the coast in Corinth where the goddess Isis effects his metamorphosis back into a man. Lucius then travels to Rome to devote himself to her cult. Later examples of Menippean satires in which the marvellous journey figures include *Gulliver's Travels*, *Candide*, and *Micromégas*. Bakhtin asserts that one of the places where "the adventures of truth on earth take place" is "on the high road" (115).

Pilgermann's journey has a historical precedent in that it follows a route taken by some of those who fought in the First Crusade. (The *pauperes* — the people, as opposed to knights and soldiers— who took part in the first wave of the Crusade travelled overland to Constantinople, but later contingents of knights and soldiers travelled, like Pilgermann, by sea from Italy.) The significance of setting Pilgermann's journey at the time of the First Crusade derives from the meaning of the Crusades.

Even before Urban II preached his sermon at Clermont in 1095 initiating the Crusades, there had been pilgrimages to Jerusalem. The purpose of these pilgrimages had been twofold: to atone or make penance for particular sins, and to gain the merit of standing on holy ground. Two events in the East prompted Urban's call for an armed pilgrimage. In 1071, Jerusalem fell to the Seldjuk Turks; they did not ban Christians outright but made travel in the Holy Land increasingly difficult. In the same year, the Eastern Emperor was defeated at Manzikert by the Turks, and appealed to the Western Empire for aid in pushing back the infidels. Thus Urban's call for a Crusade was motivated not only by the age-old aims of doing penance and acquiring virtue but also by the political objectives of the Western Church: namely, to regain control of Jerusalem and extend its dominion to the Near East. In addition, the Crusade served as a convenient channel for the martial energies and territorial ambitions of the troublesome Frankish knights. Mercantile interests also played a part, for traders in Italy were anxious to secure their access to trade routes in the East. Common people took part in the Crusade: coming after a year of plague and of famine, Urban's call to free Jerusalem set off a flood of emigrants to the East. As the various armies of this people's Crusade marched towards Constantinople in 1096, the first victims of their zeal were 10,000 Jews living in the Rhine Valley.

The setting for *Pilgermann*, then, is this ambiguous moment in Western Christianity when military force, mercantile and territorial ambitions, and hatred of others (both Jews and

Muslims) mingle with the desire for salvation and a new spiritual life. Those Pilgermann encounters on his journey— Konrad the peasant, a group of pious child pilgrims, the greedy ship's captain, the pirates, Bembel Rudzuk the merchant, the Crusader Bohemond—reflect the various interests and motives underlying this great movement of people.

Bakhtin links the topos of the marvellous journey to utopian elements: "The menippea often includes elements of *social utopia* which are incorporated in the form of dreams or journeys to unknown lands..." (118; italics in original). The aim of the Crusaders to establish a Christian state in the Holy Land bears some resemblance to utopian ambitions; so too does the desire of the common people to escape hunger and privation in Europe by joining the eastward-moving throng.

Another dimension of pilgrimage is the *hajj*, one of the five pillars of Islam. As Pilgermann begins to draw the tile pattern that will cover Bembel Rudzuk's land, the Muslim trader says something "quietly in Arabic":

'Labbaika, Allahumma, labbaika.'

Then he said to me in Greek, "What I said was: "At thy service, O Lord, at Thy Service." These words are to be spoken only on pilgrimage to Mecca but I could not refrain from saying them.' (120)

This invocation makes the latter part of the book—i.e., after Pilgermann's arrival in Antioch— also a form of pilgrimage. Even though he is no longer physically travelling, Pilgermann is still trying to get closer to God.

The notion of pilgrimage as a sacred journey towards a spiritual utopia provides a narrative shape for *Pilgermann*. Because of its sacred connotations, pilgrimage is also a motif which Hoban can turn to satirical, even blasphemous ends.

In a Dark Wood

Here is how Pilgermann's journey to Jerusalem begins:

I am a child of the night, a child of departures. The barking of dogs is my signpost, the voices of owls mark my road into the darkness.... I give myself to the old, old night that waits within me, the old old, night in the old, old wood. In this night the charcoal-burners crouch listening by their hearths while the trees pray, the wind speaks, the leaves rustle like souls departing with the upward-flying sparks. ...

I listen for my Bath Kol but I hear only the thumping of my heart and the sound of my footfalls. Why am I on this road through the dark wood? I am afraid. What have I to sustain me? (43-4)

The reference to the dark wood suggests the opening passage of the *Inferno*, as Dante enters into the netherworld. This connection is supported by the simile of the leaves rustling "like souls departing." Here there is no Virgil to guide the traveller in the underworld; it is the Bath Kol, a heavenly voice that supposedly announces God's will, who alerts Pilgermann to the perils of the dark wood. All Pilgermann's subsequent encounters with the dead and with Death reinforce the motif of descent to the underworld.

A second reference to the *Inferno* occurs when Pilgermann arrives in Genoa:

... there was the sea dividing with its horizon the picture in my eyes. Everything on this side of the horizon was in the world of HERE, everything beyond it was THERE (103).

That Genoa represents a portal from this world into the underworld is made clear by Pilgermann's encounter with the shipmaster:

In front of me stood a fat brown-faced shipmaster with a gold circlet in one ear, a look of contempt on his face, and his palm outstretched. He looked as if he might, after taking their money, chop one lot of pilgrims into pieces and salt them away in barrels for the feeding of the next lot.... I looked to see what the name of [the ship] was: *Balena, Whale*. 'If this ship is a whale,' I said to the master in Italian (I had studied medicine in Salerno), 'I hope that doesn't make me ...'

The master laid his finger across his lips. 'Don't say it,' he said. 'Bad luck.'

I paid him fifty ducats and abandoned all hope. That is, I thought I had abandoned all hope until I went below decks and smelled the smell there; then I found that there was yet more hope to abandon. I paid five more ducats to be allowed to sleep on deck (103-4).

Stepping aboard the *Balena* is like entering the Fore-Hell of the *Inferno*, through that portal inscribed "Abandon all hope, you who enter here" (Canto III: 7). The menacing shipmaster is perhaps an echo of Charon.

Hoban also uses the motif of Jonah, who tried to "flee the presence of the Lord" by setting sail for Tarshish, instead of going to Nineveh as God had ordered him to do. Only after his torment in the belly of the whale does Jonah finally bend to God's will and go to Nineveh. The pirate ship that waylays the *Balena* is called the *Nineveh*. Perhaps the significance of the Jonah/Pilgermann parallels is that Pilgermann must go to meet his fate in Antioch, just as Jonah must ultimately go to Nineveh.

Dialogues with the Dead

Having entered the dark wood, Pilgermann stumbles into the headless tax-collector, kills the thief Udo, meets and kills the sow Bodwild and her master Konrad, tries to save a bear that is about to be killed by its master, and encounters his own young death. These dead become his companions on the road. This motif of underworld travel is a familiar Menippean one, established in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*.

Pilgermann's experiences in the land of the dead demonstrate that mingling of obscenity, blasphemy, and the sacred so typical of the Menippean satire. Soon after he leaves the inn where he has killed the sow and her master, Pilgermann meets a group of children singing hymns as they trudge toward Jerusalem: "Peasant boys and girls they were, between twenty and thirty of them, the oldest of them twelve or thirteen but most of them younger, all of them thin and ragged, carrying their pitiful little bundles and singing thinly as they walked the dry and dusty road" (60). (The age of the children reminds us of Ridley Walker, and of Abel Goodparley, both orphaned wanderers by the age of twelve.) These children are soon to join the dead:

As I watched them I heard again that bony and brutish chuckle: not only Bruder Pförtner but a whole company of him, a bony mob of him came trotting past me throwing off their monks' robes and showing the tattered parchment of their skins stretched taut over their bones. All of them had great long bony members wagging erect before them so that it was difficult for them to run; all of them were giggling and chuckling as they stretched out their bony hands towards the children. When they reached the children they pushed them down on to their hands and knees in the dusty road, mounted them like dogs and coupled with them, grunting in their ardour, screaming in their orgasms. (61)

This image of Death as a rapist echoes the terrible embrace of "Aunty" in *Riddley Walker*. The obscene actions of Death and his fellows profane not only the spiritual aspirations of the hymn-singing children, but also what Bakhtin refers to as the "'sacrament of death' itself" (138). The children believe that their pilgrimage will deliver them to God's "golden city": "Thy cross we bear/ Thy death we share/ To rise again with thee," they sing. Instead, they are sodomized by Bruder Pförtner. After this scene of violation (reminiscent of the scene in *Riddley Walker* in which Granser allows the men to rape the boy Goodparley), Pilgermann approaches the children and gives them what food he has. He asks one whether they have been selling themselves in order to stay alive on the road to Jerusalem.

'We beg, we steal, we sell what we have to sell,' says the boy. 'God wills it.'

'How can God will such a thing as that?' I say.

'If God wills that we should be on the road to Jerusalem then He wills the rest of it as well,' says the boy. (64)

When Pilgermann next encounters Bruder Pförtner, he asks him whether the children will die now:

'My seed is in them,' he says. 'They'll give birth when the death in them comes full term.' He begins to sing and dance, stamping his bony feet and raising the dust on the dry road:

'Golden, golden, ring the bell,

Go to Heaven, go to Hell,
 Go on land and go to sea,
 Go with Jesus, come with me.' (65)

Death's crude ditty (reminiscent of the corrupted children's rhymes in *Riddley Walker*) displays what Bakhtin calls "graveyard eroticism" (140), a typically Menippean profanation of the sacred.

To this blend of spirituality and obscenity is added bestiality when Pilgermann meets the sow Bodwild in the courtyard of an inn; she too is being "mounted by the ever-potent Bruder Pförtner who is himself grunting ardently as he makes love to her" (66). Bodwild is the sow to which Pilgermann's testicles were fed. Her owner, Konrad, is one of the peasants who killed the Jews of Pilgermann's town. Pilgermann cuts her throat when he sees Death on her; Konrad attacks Pilgermann but Death intervenes. Both join Pilgermann's company of dead travellers.

Konrad and Bodwild are not merely beast and owner; they are also lovers—a *mésalliance* of the sort Bakhtin identifies as Menippean (118). Bodwild is a parodic "eternal feminine":

'You know of course that I'm descended from the Moon Goddess, from Diana herself; yes, everyone knows that. That's why, you see, I'm so eternally desirable—I have that quality of virginity. Every time a man takes me it feels to him as if it's my very first time; it makes him feel so outrageous, so naughty, so triumphantly and impeccably male. (77)

Lorna's song of the Moon Sow in *Riddley Walker*, and Riddley's description of Pooty, the sow that is Punch's paramour (200), similarly invoke the idea of the pig as a goddess:

Iwl give odds Pootys mixt up with that Moon Sow. You look at that sow face of hers and you know you aint looking at some naminal ben fattit for meating youre looking at some 1 ben offert to [i.e., someone to whom offerings have been made]. (200)

Bodwild and Konrad tell Pilgermann how she became a hunter and hater of Jews. During a time of famine, Konrad hid the sow so no one would steal her. Into her hiding place

one night crept a Jew, pursued by a mob. The Jew refused Bodwild's advances and in revenge she squealed and betrayed his hiding place. She took her pleasure in seeing the Jew burnt: "I've told you I wanted to make love with that first Jew; I've wanted to make love with all of them but I've had to content myself with their dying" (81). Anti-Semitism is not a topic to make light of; yet Hoban (himself a Jew) embodies it in a lascivious pig. This bringing-down-to-earth (to use a favourite term of Bakhtin's) is a characteristically Menippean way to deal with what Hannah Arendt called the "banality of evil."

It is important to note that Hoban states that Bodwild, like Pilgermann's other dead companions, is not reducible to a symbol:

People *assume*, that Bodwild and Bruder Pförtner and the bear that the man thought was God and the headless Tax Collector are symbols of something. They're not symbols; they're whatever they are; the headless Tax Collector is the headless Tax Collector of things, and Bodwild the Erotic Sow is the Erotic Sow of things. They don't represent something else, they are an aspect of things, and I'm amazed at the stupidity of reviewers who can't see that. (Brooks 77-8)

Blasphemy

Blasphemy enters the Menippean satire in the form of parody of sacred texts and of the word of God. Pilgermann's conversations with Jesus have a distinctly irreverent tone. When he first encounters Jesus, Pilgermann is disappointed: "Until now I've dealt with your father." This new manifestation of God is implacable and uncomfoting. Pilgermann plaintively asks, "Have I got to be my own father now?" and Jesus replies, "Be what you like but remember that after me it's the straight action and no more dressing up" (21). He offers not salvation, but action:

'Blessed are they that are tuned to me,' said Jesus.
'Why?' I said.
'Because they shall move,' said Jesus. 'They shall go, they shall have action.' (26)

This parody of the Beatitudes expresses Hoban's vision of God not as a kindly father figure, but simply as it, the force that drives the universe.

Another blasphemous image of God is presented in the conversation Pilgermann imagines between God and the Satan. The subject is Pilgermann's desire for the tax-collector's wife:

Well,' says Satan to God, 'there's one of your chosen down there. What do you think he'll do? Perhaps you'd like to make a little bet?'

'Of course he'll climb the ladder [to Sophia's room],' says God. 'That's nothing to bet on; any man with balls would climb that ladder, I make them that way to keep the race going. The thing is, will he climb the ladder if God tells him not to?'

'That's nothing to bet on either,' says Satan. 'Of course if he hears your voice he'll do as you say ...'

Satan sets the condition: God cannot intervene with any voices or visions, only a thought. The stakes are half the Jews of the town. Pilgermann accepts his guilt for what happened:

It sounds like a joke when I tell it that way but it could well be how all those Jews in my town ended up dead that morning. Some may ask how God in his omniscience could be such a fool as to bet on Pilgermann.... God does not learn from experience, he has never become cynical, he is innocent as only God can be. He approaches every mortal testing with a clean slate, always expecting from each of us the right action that is in us along with the evil impulse. So. God asked for right, I gave him wrong, and the guilt is back on me again. (36)

Here is another thematic link with *Riddley Walker*: at the end of that novel, Riddley must bear his share of guilt for trying to bring back the 1 Littl 1.

Pilgermann's violation of Sophia is a kind of blasphemy or sacrilege. In Pilgermann's mind, Sophia the tax-collector's wife and the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople are the same. Both the woman and the building are temples:

In the making of Sophia's beauty was the violation of it by separation, by departure, by shouts of impiety under the great dome of it, by the

castration of its consort and the beheading of its protector. The great dome echoes with the clatter and the clamour of the horsemen, with the smashing of the altar, the tearing of the silken hangings. Listen, listen to the trampling of impious feet on sacred books, listen to this trampling that is the most constant road in history, the trampling of murderous feet on sacred books. (90)

The woman whom Pilgermann has loved is identified with the great church of the Byzantine Empire, converted to a mosque by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Because the Quran forbade holy images, the Turks plastered over the frescoes and defaced the icons, yet they recognized that its vast dome created a uniquely sacred space. A contemporary Ottoman poet likened it to Paradise:

If you seek Paradise, oh you Sufi
The topmost heaven is Aya Sofya (qtd. in Ettinghausen 66)

Pilgermann had to climb a ladder to reach Sofia's room—a ladder, like Jacob's reaching up to heaven. Both Sofias — the woman and the church/mosque—represent Paradise, in the sense of the apprehension of the divine.

Hidden Lion

The story of the tile pattern begins in the slave market at Tripoli where Pilgermann, a healthy eunuch, is a prize commodity:

It occurred to me that I might be bought for harem duty and I felt a little stir of pleasure; orchards are pleasant even if one can't climb the trees. A succession of prospective buyers stood before me and tilted their heads to one side, trying, I suppose, to imagine me in their houses as one imagines a table or a chair or a wall hanging. (105)

The slave market has various antecedents in classical Menippean satire: in Lucian's dialogue *Vitarum Auctio* ("Philosophies for Sale"), Zeus auctions off philosophers such as Pythagoras and Socrates; in *The Golden Ass*, Lucius must endure the indignity of a livestock auction (131). To Bakhtin, the circumstance of the slave market represents "the

stripped down *pro et contra* of life's ultimate questions" (116). This is certainly true in *Pilgermann*, for what determines the sale of Pilgermann is his response to a question from Bembel Rudzuk:

'What if I say to you that the universe is a three-legged horse, eh? What then? What will you say to me?'

I said to him, 'It is because the universe is a three-legged horse that the journey to the red heifer is so slow.'

'Ah!' he said, 'You're a Jew then.'

'How does that follow?' I said.

'A Jew will consider anything,' he said. 'Are you or aren't you?' (106)

It is not only Pilgermann's Jewishness and his readiness to "consider anything" that convince Bembel Rudzuk; it is also the fact that he is a Jerusalem pilgrim. The pirate master selling Pilgermann claims that it will bring good luck to buy a pilgrim: "Obviously the Christ of these pilgrims has willed that they should become the slaves of the believers of the one true faith"(115).

Adding to the Menippean atmosphere of the slave market is the pirate master himself. His name is Prodigality; he was once a slave named Thrift, who saved enough money to buy his freedom, and then changed his name.

Bembel Rudzuk offers Prodigality fifty gold dinars for Pilgermann, twice the asking price. Bembel Rudzuk explains his generosity:

'I want Allah to notice that I am taking notice of my good fortune.'

'If Allah's taking notice, I don't want to look bad,' said Prodigality, and counting out twenty-five dinars he put them into my hand. (106).

Pilgermann gives the dinars to Bembel Rudzuk in order to buy his freedom; Prodigality then gives Pilgermann the remaining twenty-five dinars, which Pilgermann returns to Bembel Rudzuk:

'Let it be noticed by all who have eyes to see,' said my new friend as he received the gold, 'that Allah has taken notice.'

'It's a pleasure doing business with you,' said Prodigality. 'It's spiritually refreshing. It's only a pity I can't afford this sort of thing more often.' (107)

Pilgermann, now a free man, nonetheless agrees to travel with Bembel Rudzuk. As they journey together to Antioch, Bembel Rudzuk explains why he needs Pilgermann. Their conversation accords well with Payne's description of the dialogue that is centrally important in Menippean satire, one between a "know-it-all" and a "puzzled human sufferer" (9-10).

Throughout, Bembel Rudzuk is the "know-it-all," the explainer, the one who has a purpose and a metaphysical context to justify it. (His role as teacher is made explicit later in the novel, when he teaches Pilgermann how to ride a horse and use a sword and bow [160].) Pilgermann, on the other hand, fills the role of the "puzzled human sufferer." In the courtyard of Bembel Rudzuk's house in Antioch, Pilgermann weeps: "I am a eunuch, I am cut off from my generations, I am not a man, I am nothing" (112). Bembel Rudzuk's purpose, however, embraces Pilgermann. Pilgermann will make a tile pattern that will reflect the very nature of God, and this high achievement will be "better than sons and daughters" (113).

Bembel Rudzuk is an alchemist, but not one who trifles with "pots and furnaces": "My alchemy seeks no yellow metal; it is a continual offering to the Unity at the heart of the multiplicity" (109). He recalls for Pilgermann the story, told not in Genesis, but in the legends of the Parsees, of how Abraham was tossed into the fire by Nimrod; Abraham does not burn. For Bembel Rudzuk, the significance of this story lies in Abraham's ability to neutralize the "hot and dry" of the fire:

Abraham, you know, is claimed by Jews and Arabs both. I myself believe that in this story he personifies the elemental complementarity that moves the universe. It is in the Holy Scriptures of your people that Abraham is first written of, and for this reason I want to avail myself of the action of your mind. (109)

The tile pattern that Bembel Rudzuk wants Pilgermann to devise is to reflect this complementarity. He explains his building scheme as simply an "idea that came into my mind." But he defines "idea" as "an eye given by God for the seeing of God" (115).

The pattern which Pilgermann devises (reproduced in the novel both as an outline sketch and as an arrangement of tiles) employs a repeating geometric motif in the Islamic manner. Hoban refers in his notes (239) to a comment by art historian Richard Ettinghausen on the importance of such repeating patterns in Islamic art:

The creation of pattern lies at the heart of Islamic art. Religious orthodoxy spurned images, and this operated against the growth of a rich figural tradition; but even without it the natural instinct of the Islamic artist seems to have been towards abstraction rather than representation. Even elements which have naturalistic origins, such as leaves, are so stylized as to be barely recognizable. At its most typical, the geometry of the pattern is such that it can go on multiplying itself for ever; the border introduces an arbitrary break in a potentially infinite extension. (Ettinghausen 72)

Ettinghausen's remarks suggest that the energies that in Christian art were directed to representations of saints and of God himself found expression in Islamic art in repeating patterns. Thus pattern itself becomes an image of God, of the infiniteness of his existence and his power. In describing a tile pattern in his house, Bembel Rudzuk expresses the same idea:

This pattern is contiguous with infinity... Once the mode of repetition is established the thing goes on for ever. It is apparently stopped by its border but in actuality it never stops. (113) (*Hoban acknowledges this as a paraphrase of Ettinghausen.*)

The significance of a potentially infinitely repeating pattern is that it reproduces the infinite patterns of the world:

When we draw on paper or lay out in tiles a pattern that we have not seen before we are only recording something that has always been happening; the air all around us, the earth we stand on, the very particles of our being are continually active with an unimaginable multiplicity of patterns, all of them contiguous with infinity. (114)

This sounds mystical (it is), but Hoban makes Bembel Rudzuk's apprehension of pattern more understandable by providing a specific example. Pilgermann looks at his hand and

(somewhat anachronistically) muses on the pattern that gives him life: "I thought of the patterns within the bone and muscle, I thought of the patterns contained in the sperm and the egg and the pattern of their combination, the thought of God, the word of flesh" (114). This pattern is the double helix of the DNA molecule, a self-reproducing pattern that, from a single cell, can generate an entire organism. The DNA molecule is a "word of flesh," a combination of "letters" to spell out new life. The metaphors used to describe how the base pairs connect and reproduce —transcription, rescription, messenger— reflect this view of the mechanism of heredity as a kind of language.

In its infinite repetitions, the tile pattern seems to symbolize the self-reproducing capacity of natural things, the continuity of life. This generative power can be seen as an aspect of God; indeed "God" is another way to designate what the tile pattern symbolizes. Pilgermann calls his pattern, an arrangement of red and black and "tawny-coloured" triangles, "Hidden Lion" because, from a certain angle, the triangles seem to form the face of a lion. In the epigraph to Hoban's *Lion of Boaz-Jachin and Jachin-Boaz*, the lion is a symbol of God: "Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me" (Job x: 16). The brickmaster who makes the tiles looks at Pilgermann's design and recognizes it as the pattern called "The Willing Virgin," so-called because "the next time you look there's something different about it" (128).

The pattern is also linked to the God of the Muslims: as the first thirty-six tiles are laid in a central hexagon from which the pattern will radiate, on the underside of each Bembel Rudzuk writes "one of the various names of Allah" (141). It will be remembered that when Pilgermann draws out the design in chalk upon Bembel Rudzuk's plaza, the Arab trader utters the prayer that is "to be spoken only on pilgrimage to Mecca": "At Thy service, O Lord, at Thy service" (120). The creation of the tile pattern is itself a pilgrimage, a way to move closer to God.

There is even a Buddhist dimension to this pattern. When Firouz (the man who will betray Antioch to the Franks) sees the first hexagon laid out, he notices how dynamic the pattern seems:

'It turns,' he said, 'there is a turning in it: the turning of the sun and the moon and the stars; the turning of the wheels of fate and fortune. Thus do we see that at the centre of the universe there is a turning, there is a turning at the heart of the mystery.' (143)

The turning of the wheels perceived by Firouz seems an echo of the Wheel of the Dharma, the Buddhist symbol of “the eternal karmic round of existence ... kept forever in motion by man’s unceasing appetite” (Ross 23).

The holiness of the pattern is further underlined when the brickmaster, a man named Tower Gate, comes to see the first hexagon, called David’s Wheel, laid out on the plaza:

He came as if mystically summoned ... and he so focused his approaching presence on that hexagon that it seemed to be a winch that was winding him with an invisible rope.... Tower Gate looked down into David’s Wheel and in his face I tried without success to read whether he looked into crystalline depths or into an abyss of smoke and flame.

‘What do you see?’ I blurted out.

He looked at me as if I had farted during prayers (144)

Tower Gate builds in the centre of the plaza a small tower, a viewing platform for the pattern. From the tower, Bembel Rudzuk observes with satisfaction that Hidden Lion embodies the motion and power of God:

‘This motion that we see is the motion of the Unseen,’ said Bembel Rudzuk. ‘This power that we see is the power of the Unseen’ (146)

Pilgermann’s creation of the tile pattern — “under each tile a name of God” (143)— is an essential part of his journey towards Jerusalem, towards understanding the presence of God in the world, whether conceived as the Unseen, as Buddha, as Jesus, as Allah, or Jehovah.

As the tile pattern grows, children dance on it, hopping from red triangle to red triangle, or black to black: “Seeing them always out of the corner of my eye I found in my mind new and unwritten names of God: The Tiptoeing; The Sidewise-Jumping; The Hopping; The Leaping; The Dancing; The Whirling” (147). These last two names suggest a link with the Islamic mystic tradition of the Sufis, the “whirling dervishes.” Townspeople bring money to Bembel Rudzuk because they believe the pattern has healing powers: a child who walks across it is cured of an ear infection; a barren woman who steps on every tile for seven nights becomes pregnant. The gifts of money are mortared into the

tiles. When the tiles are all laid, the plaza turns into a bazaar: stalls, booths, tents and awnings appear on it, hiding Hidden Lion: "Hidden Lion became not only the liveliest of bazaars but also a good-luck place almost sacred to those who had experienced its power" (157).

But Hidden Lion cannot display only the benevolent face of God. Over the winter of 1097, there are skirmishes between the Turks who rule Antioch and the besieging Franks. In one of these skirmishes, the Turks, betrayed by one of the Armenian or Syrian Christians living in Antioch, ride into an ambush. Hundreds of Turks die; there are no Frankish casualties. The Franks, who have been starving outside the gates, decapitate the Turks and eat them, flinging the severed heads over the wall back into the city. In revenge, the Governor of Antioch, Yaghi-Siyan, orders three hundred Christian men, women, and children to be beheaded on Hidden Lion. Though both Bembel Rudzuk and Pilgermann offer to die in their stead, the execution goes ahead; the only mercy Yaghi-Siyan shows is to reduce the number to one hundred, a gesture Pilgermann finds appalling: "That a human being should in this fashion show mercy is to me an equal horror with the rest of what is happening" (174). In the midst of the horror, however, something comes clear to Pilgermann:

... every moment would be —indeed always had been— as the last moment. This wants to be perfectly clear, it may be the only thing I have to say that matters; this idea has for me both the brilliance of the heart of the diamond of the universe and the inverse brilliance of the heart of the blackness in which that diamond lives: this moment that is every moment is always the last moment and it came into being with the first moment; it is that moment of creation in which there comes into being the possibility of all things and the end of all things; it is the blossoming jewel at the heart of the explosion, the calm quiet dawn at the centre of the bursting. This moment that is every moment — to see it whole is to synchronize one's being with the whole of time, to be everywhere in it at the same time. It is to be with everything by letting go of everything. (173-4)

There are strong echoes here of *Riddley Walker*. The "heart of the diamond of the universe" is reminiscent of the "hart of the wud" — which stands both for the charcoal that is essential for the 1 Littl 1, and for the energy that moves the universe, the "wud" (would) driving things to become what they can become. The references to "explosion"

and "centre of the bursting" recall the 1 Big 1 and Zero Groun; the severed heads and the suggestion of cannibalism recall similar events in *Riddley Walker*. And, like the horrors recounted in *Riddley Walker*, the mass execution on the plaza in Antioch demonstrates God's failure or refusal to protect his creatures from their own weaknesses.

... I see the gathering of the Christians on Hidden Lion. The presentness of it, the nowness and for everness of it, is intolerable, and for this that is happening I curse God as Him, I curse God as It, that he made us, whether as He or as It. That he made us what we are, to sling heads over a wall from the outside to the inside and from the inside to the outside. This is what He has done with His omnipotence: this feeble masturbation in a dark and ill-smelling place.

And yet, so are we made and such is the action of the everything in this one moment that is every moment, that another thought flickers over and under my first thought: what style God has! What a truly godlike extravagance, to burst out all at once with a universe in which everything is going at once and humankind is let run with nothing to stop it from doing anything at all. (174)

The use of the word "masturbation" and the bitterly ironic "what style God has" both strike the Menippean note of familiarity and "bringing down to earth" (to use Bakhtin's phrase).

Bembel Rudzuk accepts responsibility for the beheadings on Hidden Lion. He and Pilgermann "have done that which ought not to be done," so the tiled pattern "has called down this terrible thing upon itself" (180). He calls the tiled plaza "a provocation and an insult":

We have used the names of God and the habitation of the Unseen and we have made a good-luck charm with our tiles. We have made an idolatry for ignorant people to whom prayer is only a kind of begging, we have put the rubbish of the seeable and the touchable between them and Allah... (181)

Pilgermann realizes that "what is sacred cannot be imaged" (170). This is a principle followed by Muslims, who are instructed not to make figural art because Allah is the only true "fashioner" (Ettinghausen 62), and by Jews, who do not write out the name of

God. In attempting to create a pattern to represent God, to show the motion and power of the Unseen, Bembel Rudzuk and Pilgermann have committed a "wrong action," and Bembel Rudzuk accepts that "the consequences of the action of making Hidden Lion cannot be without evil" (171). But the beheadings on the plaza are not only a punishment for the hubris of Bembel Rudzuk and Pilgermann; they are also a completion of the image of God, for they reveal him in another of his aspects. Pilgermann concludes that "the will of God was simply that everything possible would indeed be possible Only God could think of such a game, and only humans would bother to play it" (182).

Conclusion: Deus le volt

When Urban II issued his call to Jerusalem in 1095, the crowd listening to him spontaneously cried out "God wills it"—*Deus le volt* (187). This phrase became the war-cry of the First Crusade; it is what the Franks massed around Antioch shout when they attack the Turks. God wills it. This proposition, of course, is what Pilgermann cannot accept—the ineluctable argument that if God is omnipotent, he could stop the suffering of human beings; he could prevent their evil deeds if he wished. But he does not. Therefore, he wills it.

There is nothing esoteric about this philosophical problem of the will of God; it is fundamental, plain, a problem so simple a child can understand it. In tackling this problem (the resolution of which is that "further action pending" after *Riddley Walker*), Hoban seems to have fallen naturally into the modes of the Menippean satire, a genre which accommodates such baldly "ultimate questions" without recourse to sentimentality, piety, or pedantry. Bakhtin's comments on the nature of carnival perhaps can help us understand how the forms of the Menippean satire permit this:

Carnival itself (we repeat: in the sense of a sum total of all diverse festivities of the carnival type) is not, of course a literary phenomenon. It is *syncretic pageantry* of a ritualistic sort.... Carnival has worked out an entire language of symbolic concretely sensuous forms—from large and complex mass actions to individual carnivalistic gestures. ...This language cannot be translated in any full or adequate way into a verbal language, and much less into a language of abstract concepts, but it is amenable to a certain transposition into a language of artistic images that has something in

common with its concretely sensuous nature; that is, it can be transposed into the language of literature. We are calling this transposition of carnival into the language of literature the carnivalization of literature (*Problems* 122; italics in original)

Bakhtin, it will be recalled, speaks of carnival as the “clamping principle” that unites all the heterogeneous elements in Menippean satire; when he writes of carnivalization of literature, we can think of Menippean satire as the clearest embodiment of this process. What is useful in this definition of carnivalization is Bakhtin’s emphasis on the “concretely sensuous forms” in which the “carnival sense of the world” is expressed. Transposed to literature, these forms appear as “a language of artistic images”— for example, such Menippean topoi as the dialogue, the descent to the underworld, the marvellous journey, the scenes of slum naturalism. At the “very core of the carnival sense of the world,” claims Bakhtin, lies an essential idea: *the pathos of shifts and changes of death and renewal* (124; italics in original). Carnival is “the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time” (124). If Menippean satire is a deeply carnivalized form of literature, and the basic concept of carnival is this pathos of death and renewal, then it is apparent how fit a genre this is for Hoban’s themes. Hidden Lion, the infinitely repeating pattern, the plaza where barren women become fertile and innocents are slaughtered, symbolizes all-annihilating and all-renewing time. Pilgermann’s journey, on which Death and the headless tax-collector (both in very “concretely sensuous” form) are his companions, is a progress through the shifts and changes of death and renewal. Renewal is to be found in the image of Pilgermann’s child (observed via a classic Menippean *catascopia*), still alive among the corpses at the fall of Jerusalem.

Chapter 6

The Medusa Frequency: Classic Comics

Introduction

In his 1987 novel, *The Medusa Frequency*, Hoban returns to the terrain of *Kleinzeit*. Again the setting is London, and again, the protagonist is a writer obsessed by the myth of Orpheus. And, like the earlier book, *The Medusa Frequency* fits well into the generic framework of the Menippean satire.

The first-person narrator, Herman Orff, is a failed novelist who gets by writing copy for Classic Comics (current project: *Dracula*). He would like to write another novel—he scans software catalogues, hoping to find a program entitled “Third Novel”—but he is blocked. In his letterbox one day appears a flyer advertising a remedy:

ART TROUBLE?
COMPOSERS, WRITERS, FILM-MAKERS-
STUCK? NOTHING HAPPENING? NO IDEAS?
WHY NOT
HEAD FOR IT
write orph one
HERMES (16)

Herman contacts the number on the flyer and soon presents himself at Hermes Soundways, a studio operated by composer Istvan Fallok. Herman, it turns out, knows Fallok: he was once the lover of Luise von Himmelbett (“Louise of the Heavenly Bed”), Herman’s former girlfriend. Fallok also composed some music for a Hermes foot-powder ad Herman wrote when he was in advertising.

Fallok’s cure for “art trouble” is to wire Herman up to a computer and a sound synthesizer. Sound patterns are sent to Herman’s brain via headphones while electrodes send it a low-powered charge. Once he is wired up, Herman loses consciousness, dropping “down into the blackness at the bottom of the sea” (27). He sees the “vast pulpy head” of the Kraken, the rotting head of Orpheus, and the face of Eurydice. When Herman comes to, he is on a train in the Underground, with wires dangling from his

head. He staggers home, and falls asleep. The next morning, he goes for a walk along the Thames. There in the mud near Putney Bridge, he finds “an eyeless and bloated human head” whispering “Eurydice” (30-1).

This is the first of several encounters Herman has with the head of Orpheus. It later reappears as a head of cabbage (60; 68), a football (95), half a grapefruit (114) and a dented tin globe (141). Each time the head appears, it carries on telling its story of how Orpheus first made music, how he won Eurydice and lost her. Inasmuch as *The Medusa Frequency* has a plot, it is that Orff’s interviews with the head of Orpheus get him writing again.

The Medusa Frequency as Menippean Satire

Considering *The Medusa Frequency* as a Menippean satire brings its disparate elements and surprising juxtapositions into harmony. What, from a certain perspective, might seem a wild careening from the lyrical to the coarse, the profound to the silly, the classical to the crude, appears, in the framework of the Menippean satire, as a disciplined adherence to convention or, at least, an exercise well within generic bounds.

A cabbage and other spherical objects that metamorphose into the head of Orpheus constitute the Menippean “extraordinary situation” in *The Medusa Frequency*. The philosophical idea that this situation tests is one the head itself proposes: “all art [is] a celebration of loss” (68). The philosophic universalism characteristic of the Menippean satire is also evident in *The Medusa Frequency*, for Orff’s problem—how to live with loss and turn it into something positive—is hardly an eccentric or unusual one. While Orff’s situation is framed as the particular problem of the blocked writer—he has “art trouble”(18)—its pertinence is not limited to that relatively small number of persons trying to write novels. Hoban provides many details—domestic, physical, and biographical—to make Orff a realistic character, but he also universalizes this protagonist through his name—Herman Orff=Hermes/Orpheus—and his personal contacts with the figures of myth and legend. *The Medusa Frequency* is not just the story of Herman Orff, London-based writer who cures his writer’s block; it is a story that borrows from and aspires to the universal resonance of myth.

In terms of narrative structure, Hoban makes use of dialogues and other inserted genres, a narrative strategy typical of the Menippean satire. *The Medusa Frequency* includes poetry (Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes," Tennyson's "When the Kraken Wakes," and Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"); songs (a German hymn and boogie-woogie); a recipe for brown bread; excerpts from *Lemprière's Classical Dictionary* and a book on Japanese *netsuke* carvings; a list of *dramatis personae*; and notes from an exhibition catalogue. There are extended dialogues between Herman and the head of Orpheus. Herman also engages in dialogue with the dusk: THE LITTLE TRIBUNAL OF THE DUSK presents Orff with memories from his past. Orff writes a story about how Vermeer might have met and spoken with the girl in his famous *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. This combination of diverse elements reminds us of the derivation of satire from *satura*, a medley, hodgepodge, or stew.

Orpheus, Hermes, and the Underworld

One distinctive feature of the Menippean satire is what Bakhtin calls "a three-planed-construction...: action and dialogic syncretism are transferred from earth to Olympus and to the netherworld" (116). (Dialogic syncretism is "the juxtaposition of various points of view on a specific subject" [110].) A classical exemplar of this wide-ranging movement is Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (the "pumpkinification"): it follows the dead emperor Claudius as he journeys first to Olympus, in hopes of being deified like some of his imperial predecessors, and then to the Underworld.

A similar evocation of heaven, earth, and the underworld is evident in *The Medusa Frequency*. The London Underground represents the Underworld: after his HEAD FOR IT treatment, in which he glimpses Eurydice, Herman regains consciousness on an Underground train. It is at Fulham Broadway station that Herman Orff first sees "Persephone"—a young woman named Melanie Falsepercy. The Underworld is also specifically evoked by the olive tree — the Persephone tree— that Luise and Herman discover in Greece. Their conversation about the "good darkness," which takes place at the edge of the gaping hollow tree, constitutes one of those "threshold dialogues" frequent in Menippean satire:

Luise and I had often talked about this tree; we agreed that it was an entrance to the underworld, a Persephone door. Now on this particular

morning she went to the tree and stood before it with her hands on the two sides of the opening....

"Are you talking to Persephone?" I said.

"Yes. She's been telling me about the underworld; it isn't what people think it is, it isn't just a place for the dead. What we call world is only that little bit of each moment that we know about—underworld is everything else that we don't know but we need it. Underworld is like the good darkness where the olive tree has its roots." (26)

The underworld is the "Klage welt," the lament world, of Rilke's "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" (a poem cited frequently in *The Medusa Frequency*). But it is also "the good darkness where the olive tree has its roots" (26). Underworld, with all its connotations—the land of the dead, the unconscious, the past, the world of the forbidden—is somehow necessary. To be cut off from it is to be cut off from the sources of art. The head of Orpheus reminds Orff of this: "What am I if not the quintessential, the brute artist? Is not all art a celebration of loss? From the very first moment that beauty appears to us it is passing, passing, not to be held" (68).

Reinforcing the importance of the Underworld is the prominence of the legend of Orpheus' descent. In *The Medusa Frequency*, this legend serves as a parable about the origins of art. The head explains himself:

I am the first of your line. I am the first singer, the one who invented the lyre, the one to whom Hermes brought Eurydice and perpetual guilt. I am your progenitor, I am the endlessly voyaging sorrow that is always in you, I am that astonishment from which you write in those brief moments when you can write. (33)

Not everyone sees or talks with the head. Its chief interlocutor is Orff, but it has also appeared to Fallok, and to Gösta Kraken, enigmatic avant-garde Scandinavian film director (main successes: *Bogs* and *Codename: Orpheus*). Listening to Orpheus is not easy: Kraken dies of a heart attack after meeting with the tin globe Orpheus (141-2); Istvan Fallok suffers from a myocardial infarction after trying to record Orpheus' singing (43); Orff ends up in hospital with angina after eating the half-grapefruit Orpheus (122-3). As Herman Orff acknowledges, "art is a tough business" (7), and it goes straight for the heart.

As in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, it is Hermes who represents the plane of the Olympians in *The Medusa Frequency*. Hermes' role in the novel is a complex one, best understood by a kind of triangulation among *The Medusa Frequency*, the legends of Hermes and Orpheus, and Rilke's poem "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes."¹

"Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" figures largely in *The Medusa Frequency*: Melanie Falsepercy is translating it (64); Orff has a recording of Luise reading it in German and in English (65); Luise kept a recipe for bread in her copy of Rilke's *Neue Gedichte* (34); the final chapter quotes much of its seventh stanza. The distinctive interpretation Rilke makes of the Orpheus-Eurydice story is to perceive Eurydice as happy in her death: "Being dead/filled her beyond fulfillment." His Eurydice does not want to return to earth. The seventh stanza (the one that Hoban quotes) describes the origin of poetry in Orpheus' sorrow:

A woman so loved that from one lyre there came
more lament than from all lamenting women;
that a whole world of lament arose, in which
all nature reappeared ...

Rilke describes this "lament-world" as possessing a "lament-heaven, with its own, disfigured stars." The disfigurement of the stars in that heaven suggests something is wrong with the lament world; it is not an accurate or complete picture of "the other earth" in which we live. For Herman Orff, realizing that art cannot be only lament enables him to change—the final chapter of *The Medusa Frequency* is entitled "No More Klage"—and to derive his art from something other than sorrow.

Hermes plays an equal part with Orpheus and Eurydice in Rilke's poem. "The god of speed and distant messages," he leads Eurydice up "the path ascending steeply into life." When Orpheus turns around, it is Hermes who escorts the willing Eurydice back to the Underworld.

¹ Quotations from this poem are from Stephen Mitchell's translation, *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*, New York: Modern Library, 1995.

Hermes is many things: a god of fertility represented by ithyphallic images; a pastoral god associated with protection of cattle and sheep, and closely connected with deities of vegetation, especially Pan and the nymphs. He is also the god of roads and doorways and the protector of travellers, and the patron god of merchants and of thieves. But he is mainly known as the messenger of the gods. In this role, he is the conductor of souls to the underworld, and also a dream god, the conductor of dreams ("Hermes"). Hoban calls Hermes "the messenger between this and that, between here and there." He is the "[u]nrecognized god of the arts [who] manifests the darkness in the light, the seeing in the dark" (*Moment* 244). This description of Hermes allies him with the image of the Medusa in *The Medusa Frequency*, who is described as the "FACE OF DARKNESS MADE BRIGHT" (122).

In *The Medusa Frequency*, Hermes appears in a variety of guises. First, Fallok's studio, Hermes Soundways, provides the mechanism for Orff, Kraken, and Fallok himself to make contact with the head of Orpheus; in this sense, the HEAD FOR IT treatment is a kind of conductor (electrical) of souls. In the case of Gösta Kraken, the treatment kills him, thus leading him directly to the underworld.

In *The Medusa Frequency*, Hoban makes Orpheus the son of Hermes, and the inventor of the lyre:

The tortoise was in my left hand and my knife was in my right.... I cut the plastron loose and dug the body out of the shell, ugh! what a mess and my hand all slippery with blood and gore. The entrails were mysterious. I think about it now, how those entrails spilled out so easily when I made an emptiness for my music to sound in. Impossible to put those entrails back.
(37)

Although Hoban has Orpheus kill the tortoise (a job usually given to Hermes), Hermes still has a role to play. When the head of Orpheus tells Herman his story, Hermes figures not only as Orpheus' progenitor, but also as a presence: "Something was looking at me from behind the mist, the strangeness that is Hermes, the strangeness that makes everything here and gone at the same time" (39).

Carnival Comics

Bakhtin notes the importance of a “carnival sense of the world” in unifying the “absolutely heterogeneous and incompatible elements” of the Menippean satire (134). Bakhtin’s definition of “carnival” is so wide-ranging that the term is often used now as if it were a synonym for indecorous or irregular or anti-authoritarian; carnival is indeed all these things, but it also something more. By limiting discussion of carnivalization to particular attributes specifically mentioned by Bakhtin, it is possible to use the term with some justification to describe the atmosphere of *The Medusa Frequency*. (It is worth noting that the doctor whom Orff consults when he develops angina is named Carnevale.)

Bakhtin defines carnival as “syncretic pageantry of a ritualistic sort”; it is a time, or a mode of living, in which “the laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary ... life are suspended” (122-3). The barriers between groups of people in society are brought down. People are freed from the usual factors that define their status: “social estate, rank, age, property.” As a consequence, eccentricity emerges as “a special category of the carnival sense of the world,” one which “permits—in concretely sensuous form—the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves” (123). Another aspect of carnival life is what Bakhtin calls “carnivalistic *mésalliances*”: “Carnival brings together ... the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid” (123). Profanation is another category of carnival life: Bakhtin lists a number of “carnivalistic blasphemies” such as “carnivalistic debasings and bringings down to earth, carnivalistic obscenities linked with the reproductive power of the earth and the body, carnivalistic parodies on sacred texts and sayings” (123). As I noted earlier, Bakhtin singles out a particular ritual act—mock crowning and decrowning of the carnival king—as central to carnival. He interprets this ritual as a celebration or enactment of *the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal* (124; italics in original).

A further aspect Bakhtin mentions, and one with particular relevance to carnivalized literature, is “the carnivalistic nature of parody”:

Parody, as we have already noted, is an integral element in Menippean satire and in all carnivalized genres in general. To the pure genres (epic,

tragedy) parody is organically alien; to the carnivalized genres it is, on the contrary, organically inherent. In antiquity, parody was inseparably linked to a carnival sense of the world. Parodying is the creation of a decrowning double; it is that same "world turned inside out".... Everything has its parody, that is, its laughing aspect, for everything is reborn and renewed through death. (127)

If we turn to *The Medusa Frequency*, we can see many of these "carnival" characteristics.

First, eccentricity appears in a number of forms. Orff, for example, behaves with notable eccentricity. He rides the Underground with Istvan Fallok's wires dangling from his head. He talks to rotting cabbages. He flees a fancy restaurant with half a grapefruit wrapped in a napkin; the grapefruit talks to him and he responds.

Profanation is another carnival quality cited by Bakhtin that is evident in *The Medusa Frequency*. Orff remembers his lover Luise von Himmelbett playing hymns on her accordion:

Her favourite was 'Aus Tiefer Not', 'From Deep Distress':

...

From deep distress cry I to thee,
Lord God, hear thou my calling.

This is Psalm 130 'De profundis', and the *Book of Common Prayer* renders it:

Out of the deep have I called until thee, O Lord:
Lord, hear my voice. (34-5)

But as she sang, Luise "farted like a woman who carries a spear and drives a chariot":

What kind of piety is that? I said. 'With your upper part you're singing hymns and with your lower part you're making *Götterdämmerung*. You're making *tiefe not* for the rest of the world.' (35)

Another sort of profanation occurs in the treatment of the myth of Orpheus. This man who made his music for the gods appears as a rotting cabbage, a round of Edam cheese, a half-grapefruit, and so on. The Thracian women who, according to legend, tore

Orpheus apart, are “groupies” (99). Sol Mazzaroth, Orff’s boss at Classic Comics, wants to “get into real classics” (49) with a new glossy magazine called “Classique.” He commissions Herman to write him a six-part serial based on Orpheus:

‘Come on, Herman, this is an X-rated magazine. You can easily get one instalment out of the Thracian women and their amorous passion and another out of the unnatural gratifications. And of course there’s Eurydice and all that underworld action, maybe a big fight between Orpheus and Hades before he gets her out of there. Or maybe Persephone gets the hots for him and there’s a heavy scene with her, there’s no end to the underworld possibilities.... This isn’t going to be some little wimp Orpheus, what we want is a really hunky guy, we’ll use Pektoralis for the art, he’ll give it that heroic sci-fi look.’ (50)

Mazzaroth sees endless possibilities in the classics: “ ... it’s only the beginning. Theseus and the Minotaur—what really happened in the Labyrinth, eh? Talk about unnatural practices. Pasiphaë and the bull before that, naturally” (51).

Orff first got to know Mazzaroth when they both worked at Slithe and Tovey ad agency, handling clients such as “Orpheus Men’s Toiletries, Hermes Foot Powder, Pluto Drain Magic, and several non-classical accounts” (12).² Mingling classical myth with the banalities of advertising and mass-circulation magazines seems an excellent example of “carnivalistic debasings and bringings down to earth, ... [or] carnivalistic parodies on sacred texts and sayings.” The energy which Hoban devotes to recapitulating and revising the Orpheus myth (which he does not only in this novel, but also in *Kleinzeit* and in *The Moment under the Moment*) suggests that it has a quasi-sacred value in his thinking. But at the same time that Hoban places the myth of Orpheus at the centre of his fictional world, he also subjects it to this kind of profanation or “bringing down to earth.” Such ambivalence is a typically Menippean treatment of the figures of myth.

Parody, “an integral element in Menippean satire and in all carnivalized genres in general” (127), is a prominent aspect of *The Medusa Frequency*. Not only does Hoban parody the style of glossy magazines and advertising in the scenes with Sol Mazzaroth;

² Slithe and Tovey are evidently named for the “slithy toves” of Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky.” (See page 137.)

he also mocks pretentious art in his description of the lugubrious films of Gösta Kraken. Here is a scene from *Bogs*:

A man sat by a blackboard with his head in his hands. "There is only one quintessential image," he said.

ZVEM NULZI LODZA NURVURLI

A little boy appeared and opened a newspaper wrapped parcel to show a small severed hand. "Look what they gave me," he said to the camera.

NAL ZAL RIN DOMZI

A flight of white pigeons filled the dark sky as the camera tilted down to their reflection in the water which was no longer frozen.

"The blackness is the ultimate dialectic," said the bearded man who had been on the left in the hut. He was sitting in the water.

LEVSNOK FURMIL SNEV (108)

Kraken's films are so esoteric that even the subtitles are unfathomable: "In all of his films since 1975 the actors speak in English and the subtitles are in Krakenspeak" (107). Krakenspeak seems to be a parody of Cthulhu-speak, the language of the monster (and his worshippers) in H. P. Lovecraft's famous horror tale, "The Call of Cthulhu." In *The Medusa Frequency*, "Kraken" is not only the surname of the Scandinavian filmmaker; it is also the legendary sea monster which, as it appears in Orff's dreams and fantasies, bears a remarkable resemblance to Lovecraft's Cthulhu. The Kraken manifests itself first on the screen of Orff's Apple II computer:

NNVSNU TSRUNGH, said the green letters on the monitor screen of my Apple II computer that rainy night in November. This screen isn't a piece of paper; the words come out of a green dancing and the excitation of phosphors. I'm the one who makes the words appear but I don't always know who or what is speaking.

Who's there? I said letter by letter on the screen....

NNVSNU RRNDU TS'IRNH TS'IRNH TS'IRNH NNGRH.

An existence such as yours is too dreadful to be thought of. Is this the Kraken speaking?(8)

In an extended dialogue with Orff, the Kraken/computer identifies itself as a concentration of the terror that human beings feel when they contemplate the ultimate:

IN THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS WAS MY BEGINNING, IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE TERROR. ... TERROR OF WHAT MIGHT BE, OF UNIVERSES AND WORLDS THAT MIGHT BE, AND THE ILLUSION OF TIME (10).

This terror takes shape as the Kraken: "I AM THE KRAKEN, ANCIENT OF THE DEEPS, MONSTROUS CEPHALOPOD, GREAT HEAD AT THE CENTRE OF MY MILES OF WRITHING TENTACLES IN THE BLACKNESS OF THE ULTIMATE DEEP" (10-11).

Orff also encounters the Kraken when Fallok administers the HEAD FOR IT treatment:

The blackness thickened crushingly, became millstones of blackness grinding my brain. The eyes of the Vermeer girl, of Luise, of Melanie Falsepercy dilated enormously and disappeared into the vast pulpy head that shuddered for ever in the chill of the ultimate deep. (27).

Hoban's Kraken is a "monstrous cephalopod" with a "vast pulpy head" and "tentacles"; Orff associates it with a *netsuke* carving depicting a giant squid being embraced by a fishergirl. Lovecraft's Cthulhu possesses "a pulpy, tentacled head" (77), a "cephalopod head" (83), and an "awful squid-head" (98). Lovecraft's monster is supposedly the sleeping remnant of an ancient race of aliens that once ruled on earth. When it awakes, it rises out of the sea, just like the sleeping Kraken. Cthulhu embodies boundless, original terror, just like the Kraken: sensitive people around the world—"artists and poets" (80)—experience hideous dreams and unspeakable fears during the early spring of 1925, the time when Cthulhu stirs from its age-old sleep.

The affiliation between the Lovecraft story and *The Medusa Frequency* is underlined in Chapter 23, an odd aside of a chapter which contributes nothing to the plot of the novel but serves instead to explain Orff's (and Hoban's?) intentions:

I hope that this little volume may be a *vade mecum* ... for others like me—the general struggler and straggler, the person for whom the whole sweep of consciousness is often too much. Here I am reminded of the words of H.P. Lovecraft:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. (134)

This is the opening sentence of "The Call of Cthulhu."

I have called Hoban's use of Lovecraft's sea monster parody, but perhaps it is better described as homage. Hoban has acknowledged the importance of fantasy writers such as Lovecraft in his own formation as a novelist, and, as a writer who himself has earned a living from many successful children's books, Hoban is not the man to feel any snobbish scorn for "genre" writers like Lovecraft. His protagonist Hermann Orff wins back his creative powers and his self-respect by writing a science fiction/horror novel, *The Seeker from Nexo Vollma*.

While *The Medusa Frequency* has many comic aspects, at its centre is a serious concern with the need to come to terms with loss, with the "good darkness." From Lovecraft's horror tale, Hoban has taken the motif of the sea monster and used it as an emblem of our fear of the unknown and the unknowable. This, of course, is how Lovecraft used it as well, but Hoban, instead of the single-toned tale of horror, has written a much more complex fiction, one in which many tones and styles mingle. Hoban dignifies Lovecraft's creation by putting it alongside the figures of classical myth and legend: he has Eurydice give birth to the Kraken. Calling the monster the Kraken, which most readers will associate with Tennyson's "When the Kraken Wakes," gives it a gloss of high culture. The identity between the sea monster Kraken and Gösta Kraken, highbrow filmmaker and deconstructionist, suggests that art (even the pompous art of Kraken) has its sources in the terror that the Kraken represents. In sum, what Hoban has done is not to take the materials and manner of a serious work and treat them lightly, which is the essence of parody; he has taken the materials and manner of a "light" form—the tale of horror—and treated them seriously.

Hoban is much more clearly engaged in parody when he treats the world of literature (at least, commercially viable literature). In addition to *Classic Comics*, the energetic Sol Mazzaroth also publishes hardback books:

Classic Comics became for Sol Mazzaroth the earthen ramp by which he reached higher things, namely his own hardback imprint, the *Avernus*

Press, where he published such rising talents as Boumboume Letunga, Hermione Thrust, and Juan de Fulmé.

Lake Avernus is Aeneas' route to the Underworld, a strange place for "rising talents" to be found. When Orff notices Melanie at Fulham Broadway station, she is reading a proof copy of an Avernus title: "*The Mountains of Orgasma* by Juan de Fulmé... Juan de Fulmé had won last year's Booker prize with *The Valley of Pudenda*" (20). This combination of crudity, classical references, and "highbrow" literature is a typically Menippean mix.

One aspect of parody is the use of literary allusion, a device Hoban employs frequently in *The Medusa Frequency*. The name of the advertising firm, Slithe and Tovey, echoes Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" in *Through the Looking Glass* (that "perfect Menippean satire," as Frye describes it). When Orff remembers himself at thirty-eight, "in a heightened state of mating behaviour," he thinks of how "the world at that moment was so various, so beautiful, so new," echoing Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (18). With a phrase from George Herbert, Istvan Fallok describes his frustration at not being able to record Orpheus' music: "... when I tried to develop it the whole thing fell apart like ropes of sand and I'd have to start all over again" (43). When Orff agrees to write up the Orpheus story for Mazzaroth's magazine, he is suddenly reminded of lines from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." He feels has committed a crime: "Then of course my cruel picture-shuffling mind gave me Luise as an albatross soaring on a boundless marine sky" (52). Not all these allusions are, strictly speaking parodic. It seems to me, in fact, that their primary purpose is the pleasure of recognition; the literary allusions are, in a sense, a tribute to the world that literature creates, a world real enough that it comes constantly to Herman Orff as he struggles with his own life. Perhaps the allusions in *The Medusa Frequency* can be seen as a parallel to the Homeric references so frequent in ancient Menippean satires. Just as the Homeric references clash with the generally disrespectful and down-to-earth tone of such works as *The Golden Ass* and Lucian's *Dialogues*, so the literary references Hoban inserts contrast sharply with the cartoon quality of much of *The Medusa Frequency*.

Bakhtin links parody to "the creation of a decrowning double" (127). *The Medusa Frequency* abounds in doubles. First, Herman Orff is a parodic double of Orpheus, and of Hermes. Fallok and Kraken are also doubles of Orff: all three are artists, all three were in love with Luise von Himmelbett, and all three, suffering from "art trouble,"

encounter the head of Orpheus. Kraken is obsessed with the same themes that obsess Orff—the myth of Orpheus (retold in his film *Codename: Orpheus*) and the Vermeer portrait of the young girl. When Orff turns on his Apple II computer, the seamonster Kraken speaks to him “out of a green dancing and the excitation of phosphors” (8). This Kraken greets Orff with “NNSVNU TSRUNGH” and NNVSNU RRNDU (8); when Orff first meets Gösta Kraken in The Hague, the filmmaker uses the same expressions (although lower case; 86). Whatever Orff’s Apple II has to say to him comes from Orff himself; therefore the coincidence of the computer Kraken’s words with those of the filmmaker Kraken suggests yet another overlap of Orff’s and Gösta Kraken’s identities.

Moreover, if Orff is somewhat like Hoban — a writer living in London, with a German girlfriend, an obsession with Orpheus, and heart trouble— so too is Kraken. For example, Kraken intones, “From its otherness of place it speaks the encrustation, the palimpsest, the ultimate dialectic of what Redon called ‘the deep health of the black’” (86). In an interview, Hoban uses the same phrase to defend his own novels:

... one of my favourite artists is Odilon Redon, and he speaks about the deep health of the black. (Brooks 74)

Perhaps the figure of Kraken is Hoban’s parodic dig at his own occasional lapses into incantatory obscurity.

Another parodic dimension of *The Medusa Frequency* is the use of invented terms and invented languages, such as Krakenspeak. In *The Medusa Frequency*, Hoban appropriates words from esoteric zones of English. For example, when Orff delivers an outline of his science fiction novel to a new client, the response is positive: “I like the texture of it, Herman ... It’s got the right polypeptides if you know what I mean” (139). When, at the end of *The Medusa Frequency*, Orff begins to write again, what his computer screen delivers is a science fiction novel about NNVSNU THE TSRUNGH, much of which is written in a variety of Krakenspeak.

The prominence of parody in a novel about art and death is perhaps the most distinctively Menippean aspect of *The Medusa Frequency*. Bakhtin sees this combination as inherent in carnivalized literature: “Everything has its parody, that is, its laughing aspect, for everything is reborn and renewed through death” (127).

Certainly there is renewal in *The Medusa Frequency*, embodied in the person of Melanie Falsepercy, the writer/translator with whom Orff has a brief affair. She was Istvan Fallok's lover, and ultimately leaves Orff for Sol Mazzaroth, the proprietor of Classic Comics. Melanie is identified with Persephone: at the end of the novel, in her parting remarks to Orff (delivered on an audiocassette), Melanie explains, "I've always been a sort of a phoney Percy, you see—Persephone more than Eurydice, with my own little dark realm" (138). But there are earlier indications of her links to Persephone. Orff first sees her on the Underground and she makes him think of "wild woodland": "Her face had a sudden woodland look, as if she might just that moment have heard the baying of hounds." (20). He is attracted by her "swift dark heels" (21), perhaps an echo of the "fair-ankled daughter" of Demeter (*Homeric Hymn* line 73, Powell 225). The head of Orpheus also alludes to the myth of Persephone when he likens his own fate to a pomegranate:

Hold a pomegranate in your hand and tell me where is the beginning of it
and where is the end. The name of this pomegranate is Loss: the loss of
Eurydice was in me before I ever met her and the loss of me was in her the
same. (39)

Pluto made Persephone eat a pomegranate before she left the underworld, thereby ensuring that she would return, for whoever tastes the food or drink of the underworld can never escape it.

Persephone's periodic sojourns on earth bring fertility. So too do Melanie Falsepercy's conversations with Orff. She comes to visit him in the hospital after his attack of angina, brought on by eating the half-grapefruit head of Orpheus. She interprets eating the grapefruit as Orff's "way of recognizing that you don't need it [i.e., Orpheus' head] any more." Orff does not agree:

'It's the other way round: it doesn't need me any more now that we've
finished the story.'

'Well, there you are then; you took it on yourself to finish the story and
now you've done it and it's off you. That's more of a reason for not getting
angina.'

'Yes but it'll take some getting used to.'

'Do you remember in *The Tempest*,' she said, 'Prospero says, "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine"'?

'Yes, I do.'

'That's what I think you've been doing; and now that you've acknowledged it you can move on to something else.'

'This thing of darkness is where my writing comes from.'

'You mean your comics?'

'No, I don't mean my comics. *Slope of Hell* and *World of Shadows* weren't comics, were they.'

'No, but they were quite a few years back, weren't they. What's this thing of darkness done for you lately?' (127)

Melanie tells Orff "to stop mucking about and get on with it" (127). When she leaves him, she tells Orff (and she is right) that "now you'll be able to write again, better than before" (138).

Conclusion

The head of Orpheus features far more prominently in this novel than the Medusa, yet it is her name that figures in the title.

The Medusa first appears when Orff visits an art gallery in The Hague to see the Vermeer *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The Vermeer is gone, but Orff's attention is taken by another painting: Frans Post's *Gezicht op het Eiland Tamaraca*. As he looks at the "pinky dawn water" in the foreground of the painting, he can "feel in it the buzzing and the swarming of what was gathering itself. I could feel myself approaching the correct frequency..." (89). Then from the water emerges the "quivering, shimmering" image of Luise (his lost lover):

... her body becoming, becoming, becoming a face loosely grinning, with hissing snakes writhing round it in the shining dawn. Around me ceased the sounds of the day; the stone of me cracked and I came out of myself quite clean, like a snake out of an egg, nothing obscuring my sight or my hearing. The Gorgon's head, the face of Medusa, shimmered luminous in a silence that crackled with its brilliance. (89)

The Gorgon head tells Orff to "hold the idea of me in you by night and day, never lose it" (90). The head of Orpheus (as a football) explains what the idea of Medusa is: "Behind Medusa lie wisdom and the dark womb hidden like a secret cave behind a waterfall. Behind Medusa lies Eurydice unlost" (96). Orff cuts him off, saying, "Let it be, you're wording it to death" (96).

Orff later consults the Kraken about the meaning of the Medusa. The Kraken—the great monster head of the North Sea—lives in Orff's Apple II computer; or at least Orff can communicate with the Kraken via his computer. The sea monster replies unequivocally in its habitual capitals:

THIS MYSTERY, said the Kraken, SHOWS ITS MEDUSA FACE TO COMPEL RECOGNITION, TO WARN THAT UNDERSTANDING STOPS BEFORE IT AND GOES NO FURTHER. THIS IS THE FACE OF MEDUSA WHO CANNOT BE IGNORED, CANNOT BE INTRUDED UPON, CANNOT BE POSSESSED. YOU HAVE NEVER GIVEN YOURSELF TO THIS ONE WHO WILL NOT GIVE HERSELF TO YOU, YOU HAVE WANTED ONLY THE SWEETNESS OF EURYDICE TO LOVE AND BETRAY. THIS IS THE FACE OF WHAT CANNOT BE BETRAYED. LOVE CAN BE LOST AND BEAUTY, BUT NOT THIS FACE OF DARKNESS MADE BRIGHT. THIS IS THE ONE TO WHOM YOU CAN BE FAITHFUL. (121)

The Medusa becomes part of Orff's personal mythology, her snaky head fusing with the head of Vermeer's young girl, that painting which embodies for Orff "hereness and goneeness" (14). In an essay in *The Moment under the Moment*, Hoban explicitly links all these heads:

... all of the fearsome or speaking heads are one head. The head of Orpheus is the Kraken and the Gorgon's head is the face of the young girl who looks out of Vermeer's painting. And the look in the eyes of the Vermeer girl is the look in the eyes of the unseen Kraken in the blackness of the ultimate deep, the great head looking for ever into the blackness. (245).

If the Medusa is the “face of darkness made bright,” then perhaps tuning into “the Medusa frequency” means, in Hoban’s artistic ethos, to see and encompass as wide a vision as possible, not merely the sweet and the beautiful, like Eurydice or the Vermeer girl, but also what is bitter and fearsome, like the Kraken and the Medusa. The face of Medusa represents a hardier, less mournful approach to life; instead of clinging to his loss, he can accept it and carry on. Despite the negative associations of the Medusa, this novel does not end on a sombre or embittered note:

‘Right,’ I said, ‘no more *Klage*,’ and when I looked up at the Vermeer girl it was Medusa I saw, flickering and friendly, trusting me with the idea of her. (143).

Chapter 7

Turtle Diary and Fremder

In discussing the novels of Russell Hoban, I have focused on the works that belong most clearly to the genre of the Menippean satire. Two of his novels are written in other genres: *Turtle Diary* (1975) and *Fremder* (1966). Many of Hoban's familiar motifs, however, make their appearance in these two works, and their themes clearly echo those of his Menippean satires. In this chapter, I will discuss how *Turtle Diary* and *Fremder* are related to Hoban's Menippean satires.

Turtle Diary

Turtle Diary unfolds through the fictional journals of two people: William G., a lonely, fortyish, recently divorced man, former ad agency executive, now bookshop assistant, living alone in a bedsitter; and Neaera H., a lonely, fortyish, children's book author and illustrator living alone in an apartment. Both are obsessed with the sea turtles in the aquarium of the London Zoo, chiefly because of the mysterious navigational abilities of the turtles, which can swim across thousands of miles of open ocean in order to reach their breeding grounds. William and Neaera meet in the bookshop where William works. Neaera has come to find books on sea turtles. He knows her instantly for a kindred spirit: "I had the shocking feeling that here was another one of me locked up alone in a brain with the same thoughts" (45).

Between them, William and Neaera hatch a scheme to liberate the turtles. With the complicity of George Fairbairn, the keeper, William and Neaera remove the sea turtles and drive them down to Polperro, where they release them.

The two diarists discover that what they have done for the turtles, they now can do for themselves. Neaera acknowledges this:

I was in my ocean, this was the only ocean there was for me, the dry streets of London and my square without a fountain. No one could make me freer by putting me somewhere else. I had as much as the turtles: myself. At least I too could die on the way to where I wanted to be. (170)

William is more tentative about what the turtle snatch has accomplished. He tells George:

“Launching the turtles didn’t launch me. You can’t do it with turtles.”
(172)

Nonetheless, William is a changed man.

... I could imagine good times, why I don’t know. Nothing was different or better and I didn’t think I was either but I didn’t mind being alive at the moment. After all who knew what might happen. (190)

Fictional Journal and Menippean Satire

Turtle Diary is constructed as a composite of two fictional journals: entries from William’s diary alternate with entries from Neaera’s. In the fictional journal, there is always a dialogue between two aspects of the self: the self that writes and the self that is being written about. When Neaera writes, for example, that she “was waiting for the self inside me to come forward to the boundaries from which it had long ago withdrawn,” she is clearly dividing herself into a hidden, inner self and a public, external one (184).

The Menippean satire can also contain this kind of dialogue. Bakhtin notes the importance in the menippea of unusual states of mind — madness, dreams, obsessions, and so forth which “destroy the epic and tragic wholeness of a person and his fate” (116). One way to manifest this loss of wholeness is through a dialogue (often comic) with the self, the *locus classicus* of which, Bakhtin suggests, is the fragmentary *Bimarcus* of Varro. In this dialogue Marcus the poet argues with Marcus the moralist (Cèbe 211).¹

¹ The twenty-six fragments extant of the *Bimarcus* (many of which consist of only a line or two) seem slight evidence for Bakhtin’s confident assertion that it is an ironic “dialogue with self.” Nonetheless, contemporary scholars such as Jean-Pierre Cèbe interpret the fragments in the same way as Bakhtin: “*Bimarcus* ... nous offre deux visages, deux natures contrastées d’un même homme qui n’est autre que Varron” (210).

In *Turtle Diary*, the dialogue with self takes place not only within the respective journals of William and Neaera but also between the two diaries, for William and Neaera are, in a sense, two aspects of a single self, a self that closely resembles Hoban. One critic has described *Turtle Diary* as an “autobiographical allegory” (Haffenden 137). Like Neaera, Hoban has written children’s books about “furry-animal picnic[s]”; like her, he is both a writer and an illustrator. Hoban has also, like William, worked in an advertising agency, and been separated from his children by divorce. Hoban acknowledges the similarities:

William and Neaera are both me Putting together a book has to do with the use of what we think of as the male and female elements—the male element as active and entering, and the female element as passive and being entered— and it’s possible that the strongest elements in *Turtle Diary* have to do with what are thought of as the passive elements.... I thought of William and Neaera as two aspects of one entity. (Hoban in Haffenden 137)

William and Neaera write in such similar voices that unless the entry is dealing with something specific to each character (e.g., William’s job at the bookshop, Neaera’s animal stories), one has to check the name at the chapter head to be sure of who is writing. As Neaera observes, “the bookshop man [i.e., William] has many thoughts and feelings that I have, I sense that” (58).

Dividing the narration between two people serves an important narrative purpose. If one person hears voices, he is a madman or a visionary, but if two people hear the voices, they are tuning into something. When William and Neaera realize that they are both getting the same message about the turtles, they are emboldened to act.

Certain motifs associated with the Menippean satire also make appearances in *Turtle Diary*, heralding (in many cases) their central role in subsequent novels. The Underworld is an important setting in the Menippean satire; in such strongly Menippean novels as *Kleinzeit* and *The Medusa Frequency*, the London Underground stands in for Hades. This association of Underground and underworld is also made, albeit glancingly, in *Turtle Diary*. On his way to offer a bottle of champagne to the turtle keeper after the successful launch, William feels more optimistic about his life:

Camden Town is the windiest tube station I know. Coming up on the escalator with my hair flying I felt as if I was coming out of a dark place and into the light, then I laughed because that's what I was actually doing. (190)

Death and rebirth are Menippean themes: for example, Lucius' metamorphoses and his final initiation into the cult of Isis represent a succession of new lives. They are also central themes in *Turtle Diary*. When the journals begin, both William and Neaera have reached an impasse in their lives. The many references in *Turtle Diary* to death or burial at sea suggest that putting the turtles out to sea is a way of ending a life of captivity in order that a new life might begin. Neaera's name, for example, is that of a nymph in "Lycidas," an elegy for a friend dead at sea. Neaera's favourite rock is from the beach at Caister; she recounts a famous tale of how the Caister lifeboatmen were lost. When the turtles are launched, she throws the stone in after them. A lodger in William's house, Miss Neap, commits suicide; in her room, William finds the *Book of Common Prayer* open at the service for the burial of dead at sea. Polperro, where Neaera and William release the turtles, is also William's birthplace. This focus on the sea as a place for endings and beginnings is perhaps explained by William's observation: "Actually we're all swimmers, we've all come from the ocean. Some of us are trying to find it again." (72). The rebirth theme is even made explicit in *Turtle Diary*. In a scene that deftly evokes many of the silly aspects of the 1970s, William attends a demonstration of "Original Therapy": participants re-enact their own birth by wriggling out of the scissors grip of a lady wrestler.

While these Menippean structures and themes are evident in *Turtle Diary*, they do not form a strong enough component to justify calling it a Menippean satire. *Turtle Diary* is a realist novel written in the form of fictional journal, without Menippean fantastic elements and heterogeneity.

Fremder

The skeleton of *Fremder* is a science-fiction plot: an accident occurs in space travel and the lone survivor, a space navigator named Fremder ('stranger' in German), sets out to discover what went wrong. Although *Fremder's* sci-fi imagery (especially the focus on space travel) represents something new in Hoban's fiction, it is intertwined with elements from earlier novels.

Fremder has an oscillator implanted in his brain, a cybernetic image reminiscent of the HEAD FOR IT treatment Herman Orff undergoes in *The Medusa Frequency*, and the biofeedback session described in *Turtle Diary*. After the accident in space, Fremder has therapeutic dialogues with a psychologist and an investigator; these passages resemble the dialogues with doctors in *Kleinzeit*. The names of various drugs administered in *Fremder*, such as the tranquilizers Be-a-Good-Chap (48) and Lethenil (63), and the truth drug Epiphanol (58), display the same satirical inventiveness as the medical terminology of *Kleinzeit*. When Fremder is induced by the injection of a hallucinogen to remember what happened on the spaceship, he cries out NNVSNU TSRUNGH as he slips out of ordinary consciousness (84); these strange words are, of course, the first words of the Kraken encountered by Herman Orff in *The Medusa Frequency*. Fremder's mother, Helen Gorn, utters these same words when she teleports herself out of ordinary reality (182). They are "Krakenspeak," a language which, as I pointed out earlier, resembles Cthulhu-speak, the language of H.P. Lovecraft's monster and his followers. Fremder's doctor is named Lovecraft; she quotes fragments of Cthulhu-speak from Lovecraft's story (39). When a scientist explains how Helen Gorn developed a technology for converting humans from particles into waves, he uses formulae as nonsensical as those of the savant Muskrat in *The Mouse and his Child*: "... if being is B and Non-Phase is NP, then all we had to do was make B/NP jump WPR" (138).

Fremder's lover Katya Mazur with her long golden plait resembles Jachin-Boaz's lover Gretel and Herman Orff's lost Luise von Himmelbett. Like Herman Orff, Fremder is besotted with Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The poetry of Rilke, whose "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes" figures so largely in *The Medusa Frequency*, appears in *Fremder* as well: a robot fashioned like Vermeer's girl reads the first of the *Duino Elegies*; the voice implanted in her is that of Helen Gorn. Helen Gorn, when thinking of death, remembers, as does Neaera of *Turtle Diary*, the line from Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* about death's "ten thousand several doors" (61; cf *Turtle Diary* 76).

Gösta Kraken, the self-important filmmaker from *The Medusa Frequency*, is cited in *Fremder* as an early prophet of the concept of flicker drive (the technology that enables humans to be transported as waves over vast distances in space):

Being is not a steady state but an occulting one: we are all of us a succession of stillnesses blurring into motion on the wheel of action, and it is in those spaces of

black between the pictures that we find the heart of the mystery in which we are never allowed to rest. The flickering of a film interrupts the intolerable continuity of apparent world; subliminally it gives us those in-between spaces of black that we crave ...

Gösta Kraken, *Perception Perceived*
an Unfinished Memoir (Jonathan Cape, 1987)
 (Fremder 8-9; cf. *The Medusa Frequency* 87)

Kraken uses persistence of vision (the optical illusion that makes a series of still images look like continuous action) as a metaphor of our belief in the solidity, the reality of everyday life. In *Fremder*, this metaphor is literalized: flicker drive makes it possible to enter the "black between the pictures."

In *Pilgermann*, the narrator no longer exists as a man: "What I am now is waves and particles, I don't need to walk around, I just go" (11). Like Fremder, he can be translated from flesh into waves. When Pilgermann does materialize, he "turn[s] up as an owl" (11). Fremder calls the owl his "anchorbird" (131); owls appear on the two occasions in this novel when Fremder leaves the hellish London of the future and travels into what remains of the natural landscape.

The story of Elijah forms another link between *Pilgermann* and *Fremder*. As Pilgermann awaits the fall of Antioch, he begins to imagine that Bohemond, leader of the Franks, is "Elijah as enemy, enemy as messenger of God" (211). In *Fremder*, it is the narrator himself (full name: Fremder Elijah Gorn) who is identified with Elijah. Helen Gorn's final message to her son contains this injunction: "Learn the speech of the ravens and they will feed you" (11). In the state orphanage where he is raised, Fremder reads the story of Elijah in the Book of Kings:

Reading of Elijah at the top of Carmel, bowed down upon the earth with his face between his knees as he waited for rain, I had known long since that this was my condition: humbled and waiting. For what? What was Elijah waiting for on Carmel? Rain, yes, but more than that he was waiting for the big hook-up that would make him the full Elijah, that would let him be himself. And I, Fremder Elijah Gorn, was waiting for the same thing. (16)

For *Fremder*, the Elijah story is a myth of becoming and self-actualization; it serves the same role in this novel that the journey of the sea turtles, or the travels of the mouse and his child serve in Hoban's earlier works.

Given *Fremder's* strong affinities with Hoban's earlier novels, one is not surprised to discover it has many Menippean features. Hoban fleshes out the science fiction adventure plot with precisely those elements that Bakhtin distinguishes as Dostoevsky's additions to the adventure novel — "the posing of profound and acute problems," "the confession," "the problematic dialogue," and "the saint's Life."

The "profound and acute problems" include not just *Fremder's* ontological concerns about how many worlds there are and which one he happens to be in; there is also the question of why God, if He exists, has permitted Christians to kill so many Jews. (This, of course, is also a central problem in *Pilgermann*.) Helen Gorn, the grandchild of German Jews who died at Auschwitz, is raped by a group of anti-Semitic thugs: "They made an Auschwitz with their cocks and they made me live in it." (134).

Another "profound and acute problem" posed in *Fremder* is the responsible use of technology. Explicit parallels are made between the Elijah Project and the Manhattan Project. When a colleague tries to restrain Helen's desire to try the phase-jump technology, she responds by reminding him of the successes of Jewish scientists: "I can do it. It takes a Jew to do it, to find the magic door, the quantum exit. Einstein, Oppenheimer, Teller—all Jews" (135).

Bakhtin identifies the "problematic dialogue" as another foreign narrative element in Dostoevsky's adventure plot. While Bakhtin does not specifically define this term, I presume it means a dialogue that raises philosophical problems. A prominent example in *Fremder* is the session *Fremder* undergoes with a giant computer named Pythia, a dialogue which requires fifteen pages to record. It is, in a sense, a dialogue of the dead, in that Pythia turns out to be controlled by the brain of the dead Helen Gorn.

Bakhtin points out that Christian narratives such as the saint's life share many characteristics with the menippea: "... enormous organizing significance is allotted to the testing of an idea and its carrier, testing by means of temptations and martyrdom (especially, of course, in the hagiographic genre) ... [and] considerable importance is given to dream visions, insanity, obsessions of all sorts" (135: italics in original).

Although Elijah is an Old Testament figure, his story, with its alternation of empowerment and despair, does resemble a Saint's life. This story is, as we have seen, recounted in *Fremder*, and alluded to frequently.

The familiar three-planed world also makes its appearance in *Fremder*. Heaven is represented by the distant galaxies through which Fremder travels; this, however, is an ironic heaven, dotted with spaceports, fast-food outlets, and orbiting rubbish dumps. Another kind of heaven evoked in *Fremder* is that "other world" to which Helen yearns to be transported. She is not interested in any place run by God: "Don't talk to me about God, He and I aren't speaking these days" (146).

The Underworld (as one might expect from Hoban) is the most convincingly evoked plane. After the accident in space, Fremder is found drifting in the Fourth Galaxy, near the planet Badr al-Budur. This name would not have anything to do with the Underworld were it not for the epigraph to Chapter 1: Wallace Stevens's "The Worms at Heaven's Gate," which describes the worms bringing "out of the tomb... within our bellies" the eyes, eyelashes, cheeks, fingers, and so on of princess Badroulbador, celebrated in *A Thousand and One Nights* as the most beautiful woman on earth. ("Badroulbador" is also spelled Badoura or Badr al-Budur.) The planet Badr al-Budur is a place where "[n]obody lives ... except cockroaches" (2). Nearby in the Fourth Galaxy are other places with Underworld connections. From the observation bubble in Mikhail's Qwiksnak on Badr al-Budur can be glimpsed "the pale planet Ereshkigal with its seven circling Anunnaki, and beyond those the jewelled fling of Inanna's Girdle" (36). Ereshkigal is the Babylonian goddess of the Underworld; the seven Anunnaki were her acolytes. When Inanna, the goddess of the above-ground world, wanted more world to control, she went down to claim Ereshkigal's territory as well. In order to enter the Underworld, she had to shed all her clothing, including her jewelled girdle.

Planet Earth still serves as the middle level between Heaven and Hell, although the constant UV hazard, air pollution danger, and degraded landscape make it seem a hellish place. The elements of society have separated into an aboveground elite and the surface or belowground bestial masses, that division favoured of science fiction writers from H.G. Wells in *The Time Machine* to William Gibson in "Johnny Mnemonic." When Fremder returns to Earth after the accident, he flies by "hopper" from the spaceport into Central London. This journey (a classic Menippean catascopia) displays the urban nightmare of the future:

We lifted out of Nova Central and flew over the ruins of Themepark West where the rides had rusted into tottering skeletons and the scenic river was silted solid with sewage; over the huddle of London Outer Squats where the roads were choked with the gridlocked shells of cars and lorries that hadn't moved for forty years, many of them extended by canvas or packing crates into a better class of hovel than their neighbours. The rain intensified the stench of garbage, excrement, and decomposition as we flew over a pack of dogs dining on a human corpse. The next gathering we saw was a pack of Shorties [children] roasting what looked like a dog on a spit. (68-9)

The England Fremder lives in resembles the Inland of *Riddley Walker*, though not so far in the future, and not quite so far gone.

The crudity and vulgarity that Bakhtin calls "slum naturalism" are also evident in *Fremder*. When Fremder follows up on the business card given to him by a mysterious man ("Piccadilly Relief —All tastes catered for"), he finds himself in an area of London "where the smells of frying and vomit mingled with that other smell, feral and melancholy, of the small hours in places where whores and tattoo artists ply their trades" (161). "Piccadilly Relief" lives up to the promise of its neighbourhood:

The buzzer sounded and I opened the door and went up a carpeted stairway that seemed impregnated with vomit dating from the Roman occupation. As I neared the top I could smell disinfectant, incense, slammo, toadsy [street drugs], and the composite sickly-sweet odour of commercial consolation.

When I knocked on the door it was opened by a bearded man about seven feet tall and proportionately broad and thick. He was wearing a red-and-black striped bustier, black silk knickers, a black suspender belt, black fishnet stockings, and a pair of worn and dirty Hermès trainers. (162-3)

The apartment Fremder is assigned when off-duty from Deep Space Command is similarly squalid: to find it, he wanders down "dimly-lit urine-scented hallways with leprous walls and graffiti" (101). Fremder likes this kind of "classically existential short-stay dwelling" (101):

Deep-spacing had made me a bleakness freak and I hadn't had a flat of my own for years: as well as sleazy hotels and Q-BO SLEEPS and empty spaceports in the middle of the night I liked the dismalness of downtimes where the only permanent items were the locker that arrived ahead of me and the bottle I brought with me.

Fremder's detachment and his comfort in such quarters make him almost a "cyberpunk" hero, a loner like the "console cowboys" who populate William Gibson's fiction.

The use of inserted genres (Bakhtin's twelfth Menippean characteristic) is prominent in *Fremder*. There are many quotations from the Bible and from the poetry of Rilke; each chapter begins with an epigraph, usually drawn from popular music (real or invented); there are numerous extracts from scientific articles and Helen Gorn's diaries; several dialogues are presented in question-and-answer format.

While the Menippean tendencies in *Fremder* are evidently strong, the science fiction elements are more prominent. Such familiar science fiction tropes as teleporting, space travel, cyborgs, urban breakdown, and environmental collapse form the backdrop of *Fremder*. However, if one turns to this novel expecting the usual satisfactions of science fiction, disappointment will ensue, for *Fremder* does not deliver much in the way of fast-paced action, energetic sex, fascinating gadgets, or hi-tech horror. Nor does it assume the more serious function of science fiction, which is to examine "the interface of technology with the human subject" (Bukatman 8). Certainly Hoban deals with this "interface" but he does not take it as his theme. Fremder's confusion about the nature of his being derives not from the oscillator implanted in his brain, but from the fact that he is a Jew, an orphan, and a man who cherishes nature, art, and individualism in a bleak, blasted world. Hoban uses technology as a device (like the Crusades in *Pilgermann*, or life-threatening illness in *Kleinzeit*) to catapult Fremder into an extraordinary situation, a situation in which he must confront the ultimate questions which all of Hoban's heroes meet: the nearness of death, the indifference of God, the sources of art. This combination of fantasy and metaphysics is a familiar Menippean one, and I think it is fair to conclude that while the conventions of science fiction dominate *Fremder*, the strengths of this work lie in its Menippean parts.

A Single Story

David Punter has called Hoban's novels "allegories of creativity" (150)— that is, books about writing books. Punter is right, I think, if one makes some allowance for the various guises Hoban gives to writing. One could make the case, for example, that *Lion* is about writing, if one thinks of Jachin-Boaz's map-making and Boaz-Jachin's drawings as metaphors for writing. Kleinzeit, after battling with Hospital, Death, and Yellow Paper finally finds himself making the perfect black ink circle on the yellow paper— an emblem of his creative powers. He is also writing a book he calls "HERO" (167; caps in original). When one remembers that Kleinzeit, in a moment of ambition, has told the nursing sister that his name (which of course is "small time" in German) means "hero," it becomes apparent that this book Kleinzeit is writing is *Kleinzeit* itself.

In *Turtle Diary*, Neaera is a writer: at the end of the novel, after releasing the turtles, and moving in with George, she is beginning another book, different from the safe little furry animal stories she had written before.

Riddley Walker, too, is about writing: Riddley, one of the few literate persons in a post-holocaust world, writes an account of his part in the struggle to rediscover explosives. His profession is "connexion man," a combination of oracle, story teller, and historian, perhaps the closest one can get to being a writer in a society of hunters and gatherers. Riddley's final vocation as puppeteer is another form of literary work, inasmuch as his experience is transmuted into the stories of the puppet show:

If youre a show man then what ever happens is took in to your figgers and your fit up its took in to your show. If you dont know whats happent sooner youwl hear of it later youwl hear your figgers tel of it 1 way or a nother. That boar kicking on the end of my spear hewl be in my shows I dont know how but hewl be there. That crow what callit, 'Fall! Fall! Fall!' and my smasht father that greyling morning at Widders Dump and that old leader with his yellor eyes and woar down teef. (201)

In *Pilgermann*, the central creative work is an arrangement of tiles, but perhaps this too is a symbol of writing: many different patterns can be found in the tiles, and they give rise to many stories. Unlike Hoban's other protagonists, Pilgermann does not emerge from

his struggles with pen in hand. He is slain. Yet, as an owl or as a collection of waves and particles, he lives on—to tell his story.

The Medusa Frequency is an undisguised “artist parable,” a novel about writing novels. After his experiments with biofeedback, his encounters with the head of Orpheus, and his stay in hospital for angina (his heart/art trouble), Hermann Orff is able to start writing again. He throws off the burden of writing for Classic Comics, and turns down Saul Mazzaroth’s scheme for writing glossy magazine versions of classical myth. Instead, he finds himself writing *The Seeker from Nexo Vollma*, a science fiction novel about Nnvsnu the Tsrung.

The central character of *Fremder* is a flickerhead, an intergalactic navigator. Apart from the obvious suggestion that all writers are “flickerheads” (trying to sustain a vision between interludes of darkness?), Fremder is specifically identified with writing through the very structure of first-person narration: this is, after all, his own story in his own words. And a very “literary” narrative it is too, inasmuch as Fremder makes frequent allusions to such sources as Rilke, the Bible, and Shakespeare. But Fremder’s chosen art is not literature. His creative rebirth takes the form of a commitment to music:

I’ve taken a year’s leave from Deep Space Command and I’m learning how to read music. Soon I’ll be starting piano lessons and when I’m sufficiently advanced I’ll begin the organ. By the time I get to where I can play *The Art of Fugue* I’ll probably know what I want to do next ... (183-4)

Despite the obvious variety and novelty of their settings, all of Hoban’s works can nonetheless be considered aspects of a single story, pictures from the same fictional world. In Hoban’s case, the plot of this story could be summarized thus: man does battle with enemies (often supernatural), receives (or narrowly escapes receiving) fatal wounds, and is reborn in possession of renewed creative energies.

Such a plot sounds more like a “saint’s life” or fairy tale than a Menippean satire. But Hoban is writing neither for believers nor for children. He must disguise this essentially childish story with irony, parody, vulgarity, satire. Furthermore, he must find a way to write that takes into account the essential darkness that surrounds our life. By darkness, I mean two things. First, there is Hoban’s preoccupation (evident certainly from *Kleinzeit*

onwards) with human mortality, and his sense that the individual human life is only a momentary spark (or perhaps flicker) in some larger pattern of things unfolding. Second, there is the darkness of human evil and human stupidity, as manifested in such events as the Holocaust, the nuclear arms race, and the destruction of the natural world. All this Hoban observes, but not with despair:

Without the black you can't have any other colours. For example take *Oedipus Tyrannus* or Schubert's *Winterreise*. Oedipus's tragedy, the most famous tragedy there is: when you finish reading *Oedipus*, or when you come out of the theatre after a performance, you don't feel down, you feel up. Why do you feel up? You feel up because there is something in the human spirit that comes to grips with the thing and owns it, and you come out up because humans can handle this.... (Hoban in interview, Brooks 75)

In order to express this sense of exultation mixed with despair, the Menippean satire (while certainly not the only vehicle) is nonetheless an appropriate one. The genre permits comic moments and unbridled fantasy; a direct posing of the "big questions" of life, death and the human place in the universe; unconventional diction, vulgarity and lyricism, and loose, unregulated forms of composition. It seems to me that Hoban's fundamental "plot pattern" (as described above), his philosophic outlook, and his delight in both language and the world add up to a combination that would be hard to manage in any genre except the Menippean satire.

In the following chapters, I turn to the examination of Murakami Haruki, another writer who, like Hoban, wants to deal with the "big questions" but is repelled by preciousness or self-importance. I believe that in the case of Murakami as well, the attempt to combine a number of heterogeneous qualities—comedy, irony, satire, metaphysics, social commentary, and adventure—has resulted in a series of novels best described as Menippean satires.

In my conclusion, I will return to the discussion of Russell Hoban's fiction to consider his and Murakami's work in the context of postmodernist criticism.

Part II

Worlds of Darkness: The Fictions of Murakami Haruki

Introduction

Murakami Haruki was born in Kyoto in 1949; soon after, his family moved to Nishinomiya, near Kobe, where he grew up. An only child, Murakami describes himself as “strictly brought up.”¹ His parents were both teachers of Japanese, and Murakami recalls that “at the dinner table we talked about the *Manyōshū*” [a poetic compilation from the eighth century]. He was made to read classics such as the *Makura no soshi* (The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon, ca. 995) and *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike, ca. 1100) but did not enjoy them. What he did enjoy was Western classics: by the time he was in middle school, Murakami was reading Stendhal, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. He was also beginning to acquire his prodigious knowledge of jazz: he went without lunch in order to buy records (244).

Then, at age fifteen, he discovered American popular fiction, which, with the aid of a dictionary, he could read haltingly: “The first thing I read in paperback was Ross McDonald’s *My Name Is Archer*.” He also read Ed McBain, Raymond Chandler, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Kurt Vonnegut: “those sorts of popular novels were the only works I was reading” (244).

After one year as a *ronin* (unsuccessful candidate in university entrance exams), Murakami entered the drama department of Waseda University. At first, he thought he might become a screenwriter:

I hadn’t seen much theatre but I liked the movies, so in fact, I wanted to become a screenplay writer. I went a few times to the screenplay study group but I didn’t find it very interesting so I quit (245)

When the student unrest of the late sixties disrupted campus life, Murakami’s response was to go to the movies: “I was bored so all I did was watch movies; in one year I think I saw at least two hundred movies” (245). He did attempt to write a script but realized that in order for a movie to be made, “various people have to come together so I gave it up because I felt that, after all, maybe I wasn’t the right type of personality for that.” It

¹ For the biographical information and quotations in this section, I am indebted to *Shiku & faindo: Murakami Haruki* (Murakami Ryu, ed.); the translation is mine.

took Murakami seven years to graduate from Waseda. His graduating essay was entitled "The Idea of Travel in American Cinema"; it examined movies from *Wagon Train* to *2001: A Space Odyssey* (246).

He married his wife Yuko while they were both still students. They decided to go into business:

I couldn't go on being a parasite forever. Something I could do was run a jazz bar. Anyway, I loved jazz and I wanted to do some kind of work that had a connection, however small, with jazz. (246)

After working for two years at various jobs, he and his wife had saved enough money to open a jazz bar, which they called Peter Cat.

Murakami claims that what convinced him he could write was a baseball match:

Up to the age of twenty-nine I had hardly written any literature. The fact that somehow to a certain degree I was able to write — this I felt was like a blessing from the gods, although I might be overstating it. It happened at a Yakult game in Jingu Stadium. It was the opening match of the championship series, and Hilton was first up and hit a double into left centre fieldWhen I saw that, I thought, "Hmm. I don't really know, but I am going to try to write a novel." Around the time the championship series was over, I had finished writing, and I took my manuscript to the Jingumae post office and sent it off. (246)

He submitted his story to the Gunzo New Writers competition. In June 1979, it won first prize; it appeared in *Gunzo* magazine and in July was published by Kodansha as *Kaze no uta o kike* 風の歌を聴け (Hear the Wind Sing, tr. 1987). The next year, his second novel, *Pinball*, 1973, appeared both in *Gunzo* magazine, and as a book. In 1981, after two years as a writer, he gave up the jazz bar.

Once started, Murakami pursued his literary career with remarkable success and productivity. His 1982 novel, *Hitsuji o meguru boken* 羊をめぐる冒険 (The Wild Sheep Chase, tr. 1989) won the Noma New Writers Literary Prize; in 1985, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* received the Tanizaki Jun'ichiro Prize. The two

volumes of his 1987 novel, *Norwegian Wood*, sold more than 2.7 million copies in one year. In 1990-91, Kodansha published an eight-volume collection of his works. By 1996, Murakami had published eight novels, five collections of short stories, fifteen books of essays and short pieces, as well as translations of books by such writers as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ursula Le Guin, Raymond Carver, John Irving, Truman Capote, Paul Theroux and Tim O'Brien.

At age forty-eight, Murakami Haruki is now the best-known and perhaps most important writer of his generation. His fame is not limited to Japan: his books have appeared in English, Korean, Spanish, French, Italian, and other languages. Murakami is also a member of that most exclusive of American literary clubs — the *New Yorker's* roster of regular fiction contributors. Not since Mishima Yukio has a Japanese author been so prominent on the international scene.

There are at least eight books in Japanese on Murakami; none has been translated. There have been several articles written in English on his fiction, including a recent feature article in the *New Yorker*; but to date, there is no full-length study in English.

In this study of Murakami's fiction, I focus on the novels that seem to conform to the generic conventions of the Menippean satire. Instead of discussing each work individually, I will discuss particular Menippean themes, tropes, and narrative strategies which appear consistently in his fiction. While each of his novels has a distinct atmosphere and plot, there are so many similarities (deriving chiefly from the persistence of the first-person narrator) that his novels, in sum, seem not so much separate works as instalments in a continuing chronicle. In my discussion, I deal primarily with his novels, but also refer to the short stories and essays when these seem pertinent.

I focus on four narrative strategies:

- the first-person narrator
- inserted genres and heteroglossia
- parody of popular fiction: the hard-boiled detective novel and science fiction
- other worlds: ghosts, the underworld, parallel worlds

None of these is an exclusively Menippean strategy. Murakami, however, uses and joins them in ways that have strong affinities with the Menippean tradition.

The concluding chapter of this section examines Murakami's most recent novel, the three-volume *Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. This novel is certainly his most ambitious work; it is also the most clearly Menippean. Some references to *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* appear in earlier chapters, but the major discussion of this work is postponed until the final chapter.

A note on texts:

Where a translation exists of Murakami's work, I cite the translation, except in cases where I feel it is incomplete or inadequate. Other quotations in English, including those from Murakami's untranslated works and from critics writing in Japanese, are my own translations.

The following abbreviations are used for titles in citations:

Noruei no mori (Norwegian Wood), Volumes 1 and 2: NW1, NW2

Hitsuji o meguru boken (Wild Sheep Chase): WSC

Sekai no owari to hadoboirudo wandarando (Hard-boiled Wonderland and End of the world): referred to in text as *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, in notes as HBW

Dansu, dansu, dansu (Dance, Dance, Dance): Dance

Nejimakidori kuronikuru (The Wind-up Bird Chronicles), Volumes 1, 2, and 3: NK1, NK2, NK3

Murakami Haruki zensakuhin Volumes 1-8: MHZ 1, MHZ2, etc.

Chapter 8

Boku

“All things considered, I’m the most ordinary guy you could hope to find. So why do these weird things keep happening to me?” (Dance 273)

All of Murakami’s novels employ a first-person narrator, Boku (an informal male first-person pronoun). While from novel to novel certain details of his life change², this Boku remains essentially the same man throughout all of Murakami’s fiction. His tastes in books, music, food and clothing remain the same. His isolated and marginal condition remains the same. His muddled earnestness, his apparent desire to be moral remain the same. So too do his tendency to fail at love, his sexual appetites, and his preoccupation with the past. Even his birthday —December 24— remains constant (WSC 35 and *Hear the Wind Sing*; 111). Boku is, as critic Suzumura Kazunari puts it, “the alpha and omega of Murakami’s fiction.” According to Suzumura, “the key to deciphering his fiction is this strange character called Boku” (6).

So who is this man? He describes himself in disarming terms:

“I’m just an ordinary person. From an ordinary family, raised ordinary, with ordinary looks, ordinary grades, ordinary thoughts,” I said. (NW1: 209)

When we first meet Boku in *Hear the Wind Sing*, he is a university student, home for the summer. His girlfriend has committed suicide just a few months earlier. Next, in *Pinball, 1973*, he has graduated and is operating a translation business. His girlfriend has recently died under unspecified circumstances. He is preoccupied with the quest for a rare model of pinball machine, and is sharing his apartment with twin sisters known

² He has an older brother in *Hear the Wind Sing*, but is an only child in *Norwegian Wood* and *Nejimakidori kuronikuru*; his name is Watanabe in *Norwegian Wood* and Okuda Toru in *Nejimakidori kuronikuru*.

only as 208 and 209. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku, still operating a translation business, is summoned by a right-wing power broker to find a mysterious sheep in the wilds of Hokkaido. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, set in some indeterminate future, Boku has become a cybernetically altered state operative, caught up in a power struggle between the state and criminal elements; he is saved by being switched electronically into the afterlife. In *Norwegian Wood*, Boku returns to the memories of his student days and describes his involvement with two girls, the ill-fated suicide Naoko, and the irrepressible Midori. In *Dansu, dansu, dansu* タノス・タノス・タノス (*Dance, Dance, Dance*, 1988; tr. 1994), Boku gets involved with two prostitutes, a clairvoyant thirteen-year-old, a hotel clerk, a one-armed poet, the Sheep Man, and a film star; when one of the prostitutes is murdered, and the other disappears, Boku sets off to find out about the world of darkness that seems to be claiming all his friends. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Boku is an unemployed law clerk and househusband who, following the advice of two mystic sisters and an elderly fortuneteller, descends into an abandoned well in search of his missing wife and their missing cat. An ordinary man? Hardly. Yet through all his adventures, Boku insists he is “just an ordinary guy” (*Dance* 375), and that his is “the kind of ordinary story no one could possibly enjoy” (*WSC* 35).

As a narrative strategy, this stance of the “ordinary guy” provides a quiet background against which Murakami can introduce the improbable. Boku buys groceries, does the laundry, irons his shirts, drinks beer, and cooks spaghetti. Grounded in everyday life, he confronts intrusions from another world. Even in Murakami’s most realistic novels — *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *Norwegian Wood*— unusual circumstances form a piquant contrast to Boku’s “ordinary” self-image.

As a Menippean strategy, the persona of Boku functions in a number of ways. First, because he presents himself as a bland person without opinions or distinction, Boku is an ideal listener. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Boku hears the life story of (among others), Kano Malta and her sister Crete,³ his benefactress Nutmeg and her son Cinnamon; in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, he is lectured by the secretary in black; in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, he listens to the convoluted explanations of the Professor. His role fits well

³ The sisters have adopted these names after living on the islands of Malta and Crete. In volume 3, Boku dreams that Crete presents him with a child named Corsica (NK3:476).

with F. Anne Payne's description of the protagonist of the Menippean satire as one who must listen to the speeches of a "know-it-all" (9).

A second Menippean dimension is apparent in the contrast between Boku's ordinary life and his extraordinary adventures. While Boku has various personal problems—the suicide of a girlfriend, the disappearance of a wife or lover—these are subsumed in some larger philosophical or mystical quest. For example, in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Boku wants to find his wife Kumiko. But what leads him to descend into an abandoned well in search of her is not only the desire to resolve his personal crisis; it is the desire to glimpse that mystical something (*nanika*) that another character, Lieutenant Mamiya, saw while imprisoned in a well in Mongolia. In this sense, Boku is a seeker of truth (even if the "truth" is figured as something quasi-ridiculous, such as a missing pinball machine or a talking sheep). While he has pronounced tastes in some things, such as food, music, and clothing, Boku is in other respects free of social or economic markers such as fixed employment or relatives or community ties; he is a floating character who can be propelled with little difficulty into all manner of fantastic situations. Frye describes the Menippean satire as dealing "less with people as such than with mental attitudes" (309). Boku seems like an ideal vehicle for Menippean satire precisely because he is not fully drawn; he is merely a cipher for the "ordinary man."

Boku also exemplifies the Menippean satire's focus on "the unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states of man—insanity of all sorts ... split personality, unrestrained daydreaming, unusual dreams, passions bordering on madness, suicides and so forth" (116). This list of pathological states may seem far removed from Boku's ordinariness but in fact, Boku experiences nearly all these "abnormal moral and psychic states."

They are most evident in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. Boku has "unusual dreams": he dreams, for example, that he has an erotic rendezvous with one of the psychic sisters, Kano Malta. Malta is wearing nothing under her trenchcoat except the somewhat crooked tail that used to belong to Boku's cat (3: 365). "Unrestrained daydreaming" assumes particular vividness in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. When Boku sits in the darkness of the abandoned well, he enters in a special state of consciousness that enables him to "pass through the wall" into another world. In this world he encounters pieces of the mysteries he cannot solve in the ordinary world. "Passions bordering on madness" certainly plague Boku. His compulsion or need to descend into the abandoned well is so strong that he buys the property where it is located. Precisely because Boku is

an ordinary man — one who makes coffee in the morning, irons his own shirts, swims at the local community centre—his lapses into unusual states have more impact. One does not assume that he has been made “sick” by some psychological cause. Rather, these states come upon him as invasions from another world, and their strangeness is thrown into relief by Murakami’s persistent emphasis on Boku’s everyday life.

Confession as Narrative Style

In a Japanese novel with a first-person narrator, one thinks inevitably of the *shishosetsu* tradition. Certainly Murakami’s novels owe much to the narrative styles of American fiction (as I will discuss later), but they also possess certain features of the *shishosetsu*.

Edward Fowler, in his study of this form, defines the *shishosetsu* as “a first-person (or third-person) narration about the author’s own experience, with no fictional embellishment” (292). This definition would seem to exclude Murakami’s novels that include fantastic elements. Conversations with Venusians, talking sheep, and one’s own shadow could hardly be the stuff of Murakami’s own experience. Furthermore, we know that Boku is not Murakami. While in certain respects, Boku resembles Murakami—same age, same hometown, same interests in music and literature—it would be hard to make the case that Murakami is being sincere about his own life in his fiction. One main reason, for example, is that Boku (except in *Hear the Wind Sing*) is not a fiction writer. Perhaps many of the incidents of his novels have their analogues in Murakami’s personal experience, but to say this is only to acknowledge that Murakami, like every author, makes use of what is close at hand.

Suzumura Kazunari distinguishes between author Murakami and his narrator Boku in terms of past and present:

At the same time that Boku is a character in a work of fiction, he is also extremely close to the author Murakami Haruki. As a fictional character, Boku belongs to the past tense; however, Boku is also the author’s other self, bearing the burden of the present.... These two aspects of Boku wander about in the maze of time. (6)

Even though Murakami's novels do not conform to the traditional form of the *shishosetsu* as a "clearly autobiographical text" (Fowler 43), they do possess a narrative style that resembles that of the *shishosetsu*. The most important convention of the *shishosetsu* is what Fowler calls "the myth of 'sincerity,' in which the totally accessible author relates his experiences through the totally transparent text" (41). A totally accessible author is one who hides nothing, and who presents his experience directly to the reader, unmediated by fictional devices; a totally transparent text is one that uses no fictional tricks to distort or disguise the truth. Through the medium of a first-person narrator, Murakami exploits this myth of sincerity.

Murakami's Boku announces his intention to be sincere — to tell all— in *Hear the Wind Sing*.

Now I think I'm ready to talk.

Granted I haven't come up with one single solution to anything. For that matter, by the time I get through talking, things might be no different than when I started. You get right down to it, writing is no means to self-help. It's scarcely a passing attempt at self-help.

Still it's awfully hard to tell things honestly. The more honest I try to be, the more the right words recede into the distance. (6)

By admitting in advance that it is hard to be honest, Boku increases the impression of his sincerity. He also suggests that even though it is ineffective, his motive for writing is "self-help." The notion that writing is a form of therapy is another convention of the *shishosetsu*: Shiga Naoya, for example, announced the same intention:

I want to write about everyday life and by doing so to improve it. I shall develop into a better person and my creative writing shall be a by-product of that development. (qtd. in Fowler 192).

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, Boku expresses the same hope that his writing and his virtue will improve in tandem:

I don't mean to rationalize, but at least this writing is my present best. There's nothing more to say. And yet I find myself thinking that if everything goes well, sometime way ahead, years, maybe decades, from

now, I might discover at last that these efforts have been my salvation. Then lo, at that point, the elephants will return to the plains and I will set forth a vision in words more beautiful. (6)

The Boku of *Norwegian Wood* also hopes to make sense of things by writing about them:

Still, here in this Lufthansa plane at Hamburg Airport the ghosts have kept at me, kicking me in the head longer and harder than ever—Wake up! Make some sense of it all! So here I am, writing this. I'm the type who has to set things down on paper for myself before it all falls into place. (17)

In *Pinball, 1973*, Boku reinforces the impression of his "sincerity" by mocking the idea that an ordinary life could have anything novelistic or romanesque in it:

Not that I've gotten to the big climax, like King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. That was still far in the future. When the steeds were tired, the swords bent and armor all rusted by time I would lay myself down in a field of grass to peacefully listen to the wind....

The only thing I can claim as an epilogue to this interlude in my life is an incident hardly more momentous than a clothesline in the rain. (172-3)

Another way in which Murakami reinforces the impression of Boku's sincerity is by candid descriptions of sexual experiences. Boku's frankness about one-night stands and erotic dreams is offered as a proof of his honesty, for if he hides nothing in this domain, presumably he is coming clean in other areas too. In addition, Boku's humble "I'm just an ordinary guy" posture reinforces the impression that he is showing us his true self, warts and all. Murakami's obsession with domestic detail can be seen as a prop to the myth of sincerity: Boku tells us everything, even the most banal details of his daily life.

Fowler makes the point that the myth of sincerity is based on a "totally transparent text"—i.e., one without emplotment or other overt fictional devices. Fowler acknowledges that it is impossible to assemble a coherent text without fictional devices of some sort. Indeed, the classic *shishosetsu* of the Meiji and Taisho periods were certainly not "transparent" in this sense. For example, recent studies of *An'ya koro*

暗夜行路 (A Dark Night's Passing, 1937; tr. 1976) by Shiga Naoya

have emphasized that the central crisis of this novel —its protagonist's discovery that his grandfather is in fact his biological father —is total invention, with no equivalent in Shiga's own experience (Koyano 198). Nonetheless, an important element in *shishosetsu* style is to create the impression that the text is only a record of events, not a crafted fiction.

On this score — the “totally transparent text” —only some of Murakami's works could be seen to adhere to *shishosetsu* conventions. The first two novels — *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball, 1973*— have a jumpy, fragmentary quality that serves to hide the fact that they are emplotted fictions. *Norwegian Wood*, on the other hand, is a straightforward narrative, without fragments or major digressions; its very smoothness—the neat love triangle, the pat ending, the recurring motif of the Beatles' tune—makes it less “transparent”; one can see the author's hand shaping things. The fantastic quest novels like *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, *Dance, Dance, Dance* and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* possess very obvious fictional structures, and so could hardly be thought of as “transparent” in this sense.

Perhaps it is appropriate to think of Murakami's novels as ironic or parodic *shishosetsu*. They ironize the notion of sincerity; indeed, in the case of his first two novels, the narrative structure seems designed expressly to show that Boku, for all his frankness and earnestness, does not tell the truth.

The opening passage of *Hear the Wind Sing* contains Boku's earnest statement of his intention to be honest, even though “it's awfully hard to tell things honestly” (6). But as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that Boku is not telling the whole truth. The first indication is a brief passage describing a psychological problem in Boku's childhood:

I was a terribly quiet boy when I was little. My parents were so worried they dragged me off to see a psychologist friend of theirs. (23)

The therapy is ineffectual, but in “the spring of my fourteenth year—unbelievable as it must sound—I burst into speech as if a dam had broke” (26). There followed three months straight of talking “trying to fill in a thirteen-year void,” climaxing in a fever.

When the fever subsided, I was neither speechless nor talkative, just your ordinary boy. (27)

What this childhood recollection suggests is that Boku is by nature secretive, unforthcoming. Indeed, Boku later informs us that he made a deliberate choice to be reticent because it was “cool”:

Toward the end of high school, I resolved to speak only half of what was on my mind, no more. I forget why exactly, but I stood by that resolution for a number of years. Then, one day, I discovered I’d actually become unable to speak more than half of what I had to say. (91)

It is this inability to speak that motivates Boku to become a writer: “That’s why, seeing as how this cool head would otherwise doze right off into the sludge of time” (91). But this anecdote is not only an explanation of why Boku decided to become a writer; it is also a signal that only “half of what I had to say” actually appears on the page.

Boku explains this novel as the record of a particular time: “This story begins on August 8, 1970 and ends eighteen days later, on August 26 of the same year” (11). He also suggests— “Now I think I’m ready to talk” (6)—that he is going to reveal some truth about what happened during that time. But, as critic Kasai Kiyoshi points out, this is not what the novel contains:

... what bewilders the reader as he begins to read on is that the novel consists only of notes describing how Boku, who has come home for the summer holidays to a port town which resembles Kobe, talks to his friend the Rat now and then, and carries on a short-lived relationship with the girl with a missing finger; the reader cannot help but wonder where in the work are the “truths” that Boku was going to try to write about. (24)

According to Kasai, the “truths” are there, but hidden:

But recollections intrude into his existence during those two or three weeks in Kobe, buried in superficial urban life and talk; in the recollections appear another character, a young woman who was the third girl Boku ever met. As one reads on, little by little it becomes clear

that ... four months earlier, she apparently committed suicide. However, the fact of this event is only inserted into the story intermittently, in the form of short flashbacks. (24)

Kasai concludes that "it is an extremely strange novel" because Boku "tries to write about the things he should write about, he tries to write about the truth, but somehow he cannot" (26). Boku does admit to having lied to his girlfriend, but his confession is so obscure that we are not quite sure what it is he is admitting. When she asks him, "Do you love me?" and "Would you consider getting married?" he answers, "Of course." She asks about children and he replies confidently, "three." But something is wrong:

She washed down the mouthful of bread and gave me a look.

"Liar!"

She was wrong, though. I only lied about one thing. (108-9)

He never tells us which one of his responses was a lie. *Hear the Wind Sing* is a confessional novel in which nothing, except one apparently trivial lie, is ever confessed.

A similar situation exists in *Pinball, 1973*. Boku tells us flatly that "[t]his is a novel about pinball" (27). Certainly a large part of it does describe pinball— its history, the particulars of various machines, the attractions of playing it. But early in the novel, Boku describes his visit to the village where his girlfriend Naoko grew up. His description of the village is intercut with various other stories— about pinching his foot in a mousetrap, about the mysterious appearance of twin sisters in his apartment, about the history of the village well-digger. It culminates in this admission:

On the train ride back, I told myself over and over again, it's all over with now, you got it out of our system, forget it. You got what you came for, didn't you? Yet I couldn't get it out of mind [sic] that place. Nor the fact that I loved Naoko. Nor that she was dead. After all that, I still hadn't closed the book on anything. (23)

Naoko does not get another mention. Boku seems to move on to his life in 1973 and his obsession with a particular machine, the three-flipper Spaceship. He relates to it as if it were a woman:

Like a two-way mirror to my dreams, the glass top reflected my own mind as it flickered in unison with the bumper and bonus lights.

It's not your fault, she said. To which I only kept shaking my head. You're not to blame, you gave it your all, didn't you?

No way, said I. Left flipper, top transfer, ninth target. Not even close. I didn't get a single thing right. I hardly moved a finger. But I could have, if I'd been on the ball.

There's only so much a person can do, she said.

Maybe so, said I, but that doesn't change a thing. It'll always be that way.

Return lane, trap, kick out, out hole, rebound, hugging, sixth target ...

bonus light: 121, 150.

It's over, she said, it's all over. (119)

* * *

In February of the New Year, she vanished. The game center was stripped clean, and the following month it had become an all-night doughnut shop. (119-120; italics and section break in original)

With the aid of a university lecturer in Spanish who happens to be a pinball expert, Boku tracks the lost machine to the warehouse of a collector. When he finally sees the three-flipper Spaceship again, he talks to her:

Been thinking about you, I said, and I've been feeling just miserable.

Sleepless nights?

Sleepless nights, I concurred. She never stopped smiling at me the whole while. (161)

Their "conversation" continues in this vein. It is hard to resist the conclusion that the pinball machine (which is consistently referred to as "she") is a stand-in for Naoko. Boku's obsession with finding the machine is simply an expression of his desire to find his dead girlfriend. That there is something he wants to confess in association with her death is never very clear, but in his first dialogue with the machine (quoted above), there is the suggestion that somehow he let her down: "I didn't get a single thing right. I hardly moved a finger. But I could have, if I'd been on the ball." Thus, *Pinball*, 1973, like *Hear*

the Wind Sing, creates the expectation that Boku will confess something related to his girlfriend's death, and yet he does not.

Kasai suggests that this tension between surface events and some hidden truth is at the heart of Murakami's fiction:

The more extreme the contrast becomes between the truths he cannot write and the apparently haphazard things that are written, the more a kind of longing for the truth surfaces; this, I think, is Murakami's fictional method. (41)

Kasai remarks suggestively that this is "not merely a method" and alludes in passing to its similarities to "Derrida's deconstructionist strategy" (41). Perhaps what his allusion to deconstruction implies is that if we consider this displacement of attention "merely a method," then we are assuming that there *is* a real story, a hidden truth at the centre of things, and that Murakami is employing this method to create an understated drama around it. In this interpretation, Boku is withholding the "truth" because he is too traumatized to tell it; all he can do is indirectly suggest his guilt and sense of loss.

But if this way of writing is "not merely a method," then perhaps it is a philosophical or theoretical position. Kasai says that Murakami's emphasis on the unimportant things creates a "longing for the truth." This longing can be interpreted as an awareness of absence, an awareness that we (like Boku) can never grasp the "truth." Our sense of bafflement in trying to find the story behind the novel mimics Boku's confusion about the meaning of his girlfriend's death.

Norwegian Wood, like the first two novels, is also confessional and autobiographical in tone. It appears to be sincere in that it is presented as the unadorned record of personal experience. The novel begins with Boku in a plane to Germany, suddenly assailed by painful memories when he hears "[s]ome orchestra's muzak rendition of the Beatles' 'Norwegian Wood'" (7). It was Naoko's favourite song. He then recalls moments he spent with Naoko, and endeavours to "embrace these imperfect memories for all I'm worth and keep writing them with the same care I'd lay cremated bones to rest" (19). Through writing, he can keep his promise to Naoko to "never ever" forget her (19). Boku feels responsible for Naoko's suicide because he had a relationship with another woman, Midori:

"I'd told Naoko I'd wait for her. Yet I couldn't wait. When it came right down to the wire, I let go. It's not a question of who is or isn't to blame. It's a question I have to answer for myself. Very likely it would all have amounted to the same thing. Even if I hadn't let her go, Naoko probably would have chosen to die. But no matter, I still find it hard to forgive myself." (2:246)

We cannot know if there was a real Naoko in Murakami's life. But the appearance in three novels of a girlfriend who commits suicide in 1970 suggests that this is an event in Murakami's own experience. It should be noted that *Norwegian Wood* (unlike *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball*, 1973) deals directly with the girlfriend's death, clearly treats it as a central event, and describes in detail events preceding it.

In summary, three of Murakami's novels —*Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball*, 1973, and *Norwegian Wood*—adopt the *shishosetsu* form (sincerity) in order to present the *shishosetsu* content (confession). The first two novels ironize this form by pretending to sincerity and confession but offering neither. The third, *Norwegian Wood*, more nearly approaches the *shishosetsu* ideal of sincere confession because it discloses more information about the girlfriend's death. But the result is a sentimental novel, less believable and less affecting than its ironic predecessors. When he was about to begin writing *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami announced his objective for this novel:

I want to write a love story kind of thing. I want to write a pretty story....
Next time if I can, I want to bring tears to the eyes of girls all over Japan.
(Murakami Ryu 251)

Boku/Watakushi/Kare

In discussing recent (non-autobiographical) works by Oe Kenzaburo, Fowler suggests that the *shishosetsu* lives on in contemporary works in the form of a "specifically located narrating voice, which fairly exudes authenticity by its apparent denial of fictive imagination" (295). His description of Oe's narrator could well describe Murakami's *Boku*:

Oe presents a narrator who relates only what he can see or hear himself. Whether or not this nontranscendent narrator tells us the 'truth' about Oe's lived experience is not our concern; he presents his story *as if* to chronicle that experience and nothing else. (295-6; italics in original)

Similarly, Boku in Murakami's novels controls the flow of information and description. There is never an omniscient narrator outside or beyond Boku, never a voice that knows more than Boku.

There are, however, two novels in which Murakami divides the single-consciousness narration. The first is *Pinball, 1973*, in which the story is divided between Boku in Tokyo and his friend the Rat, back in their hometown (an unnamed port city that resembles Murakami's hometown, Kobe):

So far, I have been telling this story as my very own, but it is also the story of another guy, whom we'll call the Rat. That autumn, the two of us—he and I—were living nearly five hundred miles apart. (25)

The second is *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, in which chapters alternate between "Watakushi" describing his experiences in (and under) a futuristic Tokyo, and "Boku" describing his life in the End of the World.

In *Pinball, 1973*, most chapters deal with Boku's life in Tokyo, recording his experiences with the twins and the pinball machine. But interspersed are chapters describing the Rat's melancholy life in their hometown. He has a brief affair and then, for unexplained reasons, breaks it off; he decides to leave the town, so bids farewell to J, the owner of J's Bar. (Since the Rat also features in *Hear the Wind Sing*, readers of that earlier novel could see *Pinball, 1973* as an update on Boku, the Rat, and their favourite haunt, J's Bar.)

In discussing *Pinball, 1973*, Suzumura Kazunari describes the distinction between the Rat chapters and the Boku chapters as a contrast between the "romanesque" and the "unromanesque" (18). He points out that the Rat chapters are suffused with nostalgia and romance, offering the following passage as an example:

鼠が初めて彼女に会ったのは、空が僅か

に夏の光輝かしさをとどめている九月の
 始めからだ。

The Rat met her for the first time at the beginning of September, when the sky still held a hint of the summer's brilliance. (70)

The *Boku* chapters, however, are devoid of this "classical fictional nostalgia." Suzumura discusses what Murakami achieves by using both the informal first person *boku* and the third-person narration in *Pinball*, 1973:

Murakami with a few exceptions, writes about his fictional world using the first-person form *boku* but in the novel *Pinball*, 1973, the third-person pronoun used together with "Rat" produces a different effect. At the same time that the use of the third-person pronoun works to prevent the importation of emotion into the main character "Boku," it clarifies how the pronoun *boku* [informal I] differs both from *watakushi* [formal I], and from *kare* [he]. The pronoun *boku* surely leads into a different fictional world than *kare* of course, but also a different world than *watakushi*.

At the minimum, let's confirm the following point. *Boku* is a pronoun suited to the anticlimax. Between *boku* and the fictional quality of *kare*, and between *boku* and the solemnity of *watakushi*, there is a similar gap. Above all, *boku* is nonchalant. It will be remembered that Oe Kenzaburo, who, like Murakami Haruki, makes a specialty of the anticlimax, also uses *boku*. (19)

In comparing Oe and Murakami, Suzumura makes a point similar to that made by Fowler: by using *boku*, these two novelists retain (in Fowler's words) the "specifically located narrating voice" of the *shishosetsu* while dispelling the aura of self-importance and solemnity surrounding *watakushi*.

Hard-Boiled Wonderland presents a special case in that the narration alternates between *Boku* and *Watakushi*. (In Alfred Birnbaum's translation, this distinction is rendered by a shift in tense: the *Boku* chapters are in present tense, the *Watakushi* chapters in past.) Suzumura summarizes the two worlds represented in the alternating chapters:

On one side (End of the World), there is thought, on the other (Hard-Boiled Wonderland), action. On one side, there is death, on the other, life. On one side, there is a static order; on the other, dynamic movement. On one side, there is a situation; on the other, events. On one side, there is simultaneity, on the other, sequence. On one side, there is peace and rest; on the other, movement and chaos. On one side, there is purposelessness, on the other, purposeful logic. On one side there is a fictional world, on the other a world of fictional discourse.... On one side, there is perfection; on the other, imperfection. On one side there is gravity and solemnity; on the other, humour. (103)

Boku is associated with the End of the World; Watakushi, with the Hard-Boiled Wonderland. This use of the two pronouns works against the usual associations. If Boku is informal and “nonchalant” (as Suzumura puts it), then one would expect Murakami to use this pronoun when writing about the rough-and-tumble, cool, urban, slangy, adventure-filled Hard-Boiled Wonderland. But he does not. It is Watakushi who experiences the Hard-Boiled Wonderland, while Boku inhabits the End of the World, a walled town where everyone lives in unfeeling stasis, deprived of their hearts and minds (*kokoro*) and of their shadows.

Despite the apparent contradiction between the formal tone of Watakushi and the informal style of the Hard-Boiled Wonderland chapters, there is a rationale for Murakami’s use of this pronoun. The Hard-Boiled Wonderland is, as Suzumura puts it, the realm of “fictional discourse.” These chapters are highly fictional in that Murakami self-consciously follows the conventions of the hard-boiled detective story (a point I will discuss later in association with Murakami’s style). “Watakushi” is a literary pronoun (at least when used by male speakers) and its use in the Hard-Boiled Wonderland chapters signals their self-conscious literariness. Suzumura cites one telling example of Murakami’s tendency to assert the fictionality of the Hard-Boiled Wonderland chapters. In chapter 13, “Frankfurt, Door, Independent Operants,” Watakushi is visited by two thugs (the “independent operants”):

十一時に誰かがやってきた事になり
ゆきかういって、誰かがやってくる頃

た="と 思 っ て い た = の て" . . .

At eleven o'clock, I had visitors. Considering the sequence of events, it was about time. (131)

In Japanese, "visitors" is only *dareka* 'someone'. Suzumura argues that Murakami, by using "dareka," deliberately flaunts the fictionality of his story:

He doesn't write either "unknown men" or "a couple of thugs." To judge from the "sequence of events" in terms of the progress of the novel, it is sufficient if "someone" arrives at this point. This "someone" never fails to remind us of a "someone" in which is evident the kind of working note a writer makes in his notebook, like "at this point somebody comes unexpectedly to the protagonist's room." ... Murakami, who dislikes the finished romanesque quality of fiction, in this way intentionally inserts in the novel [the word]"someone" from his working notes. (104)

It is in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* chapters, which are self-consciously "fictional," that Murakami employs "watakushi."

Viewed in terms of the Menippean satire's conventions, Murakami's divided protagonist has obvious affinities with the parodic double. In Bakhtin's view, the preponderance of doubles in Dostoevsky's novels (which he of course regards as Menippean satires) derives from this genre's reliance on parody: the double provides a distorting or parodying mirror of the central character (127). The double also represents unusual states of mind — madness, dreams, obsessions, and so forth, which "destroy the epic and tragic wholeness of a person and his fate" (116). This loss of wholeness can be manifested through a dialogue (often comic) with the self.

The antiphonal structure of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* creates a similar dialogic relationship between Boku and Watakushi. The splitting of the protagonist into these two I's (effected by an electronic switch and program implanted in Watakushi's brain) literalizes our everyday metaphor of "inner" and "outer" self. Boku—the inner self—is literally trapped in his own mind, in a world of his own imagining. Boku's plight is merely the extreme case of solipsism, subjectivity gone over the edge. As Noya Fumiaki

puts it, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* “is a tale about the two worlds of the inside and the outside of the mind” (55).

Further complicating this division of the self is the presence of another “double,” the Shadow. When Boku enters the Town at the End of the World, his Shadow is torn from him and left to die in a prison cell. According to Noya Fumiaki, this tripartite self—Watakushi, Boku, and Boku’s Shadow—is a product of the way Murakami constructed the novel:

First, as a kind of practice project, he wrote “The Town and Its Indefinite Wall,” which became the static, fixed story called “The End of the World”; Murakami says that he then combined this story with another story, “The Hard-Boiled Wonderland,” that possessed a contrasting character. (55)

The result is a three-way tension between Watakushi (the formal self, the “outside” self) Boku (the informal, “inside” self), and the Shadow. (I will discuss the role of the Shadow in greater detail presently.)

Even in novels in which Boku is the sole narrator, Murakami uses secondary characters to express aspects of Boku. The Rat, Boku’s friend in *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *Wild Sheep Chase*, is the most important of these doubles. As Suzumura points out, the Rat is identified with emotionality and nostalgia, in contrast with Boku’s studied dispassion. Rat acts out Boku’s emotions: Boku’s girlfriend has just committed suicide, and yet it is the Rat who is “down in the dumps” (88). He also seems to live out Boku’s ambitions. Boku expresses the desire to write, and is self-consciously literary, whereas the Rat is “horribly unread” (18). Yet it is Rat who has a theory of fiction—no sex scenes and nobody dies (22)—and ends up writing novels:

The Rat keeps writing novels. Sends me photocopies every Christmas. Last year it was an exposé on a cook working at a psychiatric hospital cafeteria; the year before, a story about a comedy team loosely based on *The Brothers Karamazov*. No sex scenes in his novels, not one character dies, same as ever. (125).

We have seen how Boku, despite his assertions that he is “ready to tell the truth,” does not do so. So it falls to Rat to tell the truth:

In short, the Rat is a caricature of the person who aims directly at the truth; in contrast Boku is set up as a caricature of the person who hides the truth under various layers.... I think that the Rat is left to be the caricature who, throughout the work, lives up to the statement at the beginning: “Now I think I am ready to tell the truth.” (Kasai 42)

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, Rat is associated with what Suzumura calls “classical fictional nostalgia.” This quality is most apparent in the Rat’s explanation of why he writes: “It’s either write for myself ... or write for the cicadas” (95; ellipsis in original). When Boku asks about the cicadas, the Rat describes an afternoon in Nara when he came across the “lush somber green overgrowth of an ancient tumulus”:

“I looked at the tumulus in silent awe, training my ears to the breeze that blew across the moat. The feeling that moment was, well, indescribable. No, it wasn’t even a feeling. It was like being totally enveloped. What with the cicadas and frogs and spiders and breeze, they all fused into one and were drifting through space.”

At that, the Rat drank down the last of his cola, long since gone flat. “Whenever I write something, I’m always reminded of that summer afternoon and the thicket around the tumulus. And here’s what I’ll be thinking. How great it’d be if I could just write for the cicadas and frogs and spiders, and for the summer grass and the breeze.” (96-7)

The lyricism of this passage is at odds with Boku’s usual terse style; only the Rat could express these feelings. In this scene, the Rat is also identified with Japanese tradition, something that Boku, given his interests in the (imaginary) American writer Derek Heartfield, most definitely is not. The city of Nara, the tumulus, and the cicadas are all very “Japanese” elements. And the Rat’s feeling of “being totally enveloped” in the scene is reminiscent of the traditional Japanese literary value of losing the self in the contemplation of nature.

Kasai also sees the Rat as an implicit critique of the values and attitudes of the 1970s:

By projecting Boku onto the mirror of the Rat, Murakami from the outset critiques the urbane, negative aspect of his character. By assigning this worldweariness to Boku, he succeeds in creating a realistic sense of the period; at the same time, by setting up the Rat as a mirror, he critiques the period. I think this carefully thought-out construction can be found in all three works from *Hear the Wind Sing* to *A Wild Sheep Chase*. (64-5)

The Rat makes his final appearance in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. By this novel, he has disappeared from the hometown and become a nomad; he continues to send Boku long letters and drafts of his novels, but there is never a return address. It is the Rat who, by sending Boku a photo of sheep in an unknown valley in Hokkaido, initiates the "wild sheep chase." One of the animals in the picture has a star-shaped mark on its back. This is no ordinary sheep, but a creature which possesses the ability to enter humans and direct their actions. The Rat, it turns out, is deeply implicated in the sheep mystery. In its quest for world domination, the sheep had entered a right-wing power broker (known as the Boss); it has now chosen the Rat as its host. The Rat lures his old friend Boku into the mountains of Hokkaido in the hope that he can somehow save the Rat from being "sheeped."

The Rat still functions here as Boku's double, living out in a "romanesque" fashion the inner conflicts that Boku suffers. In previous novels, these inner conflicts were between romanticism and stoicism, between nostalgia and hope, between self-pity and perseverance. But in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the inner conflict that Rat dramatizes is one that Murakami sees within all modern Japanese: the conflict between traditional attitudes and imported ones. This, I think, is the meaning of the enigmatic sheep with the star-shaped patch: it is the alien ingredient that alters Japanese society.

When the Boss's secretary first orders Boku to hunt down the sheep with the star-shaped patch, his comments on sheep farming hint at the symbolic meaning of the sheep:

... sheep as an animal have no historical connection with the daily life of the Japanese. Sheep were imported at the state level from America, raised briefly, then promptly ignored. That's your sheep. After the war, when importation of wool and mutton from Australia and New Zealand was liberalized, the merits of sheep raising in Japan plummeted to zero. A

tragic animal, do you not think? Here, then, is the very image of modern Japan. (111)

But it is not just sheep as a species that make up this image of modern Japan. It is, in fact, a particular sheep with a star-shaped patch on its back, a creature of unusual intelligence and sinister ambitions who first enters Japan as a parasite in the body of the Sheep Professor. The Sheep Professor, it should be noted, is identified with Japan's imperial ambitions in Asia. A graduate of the Agriculture Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University, "[h]is senior thesis was ... a unified scheme of large-scale agriculturalization for Japan, Korea, and Taiwan" (180); he also was sent to Manchuria to investigate a "self-sufficiency program based on sheep" to sustain the Kwantung Army. It was while conducting these investigations that he encountered the sheep:

"It was the summer of 1935 when the sheep entered me. I had lost my way during a survey of open-pasture grazing near the Manchuria-Mongolia border, when I happened across a cave. I decided to spend the night there. That night I dreamed about a sheep that asked, could it go inside me? Why not? I said. At the time, I didn't think much of it. It was a dream after all." The old man chortled as he moved on to his salad.

"It was a breed of sheep I'd never set eyes on before. Because of my work I was acquainted with every breed of sheep in the world, but this one was unique. The horns were bent at a strange angle, the legs squat and stocky, eyes clear as spring water. The fleece was pure white, except for a brownish star on its back. There is no such sheep anywhere in the world. That's why I told the sheep it was all right to enter my body. As a sheep specialist, I was not about to let go of such a find." (187)

The Sheep Professor connects his unusual experience to Northern Chinese and Mongol folk tales of sheep entering humans. Even Genghis Khan was said to have been entered by a "star-bearing white sheep" (188)—a further indication that the sheep somehow infects its hosts with imperial appetites. The Sheep Professor's odd behaviour after this experience—he goes about interviewing locals about sheep/human interactions—results in his being sent home to Japan. Like the Boss's secretary, the Sheep Professor tries to make an analogy between sheep and modern Japan:

“The basic flaw of modern Japan is that we’ve learned absolutely nothing from our contact with other Asian peoples. The same goes for our dealings with sheep. Sheep raising in Japan has failed precisely because we’ve viewed sheep merely as a source of wool and meat. The daily-life level is missing from our thinking. We minimize the time factor to maximize the results. It’s like that with everything. In other words, we don’t have our feet on solid ground. It’s not without reason that we lost the war.” (188)

This critique of Japan’s imperial adventures is made at other points in the novel as well. For example, in the Rat’s house in Hokkaido, Boku discovers a book published during the war entitled *The Heritage of Pan-Asianism*. In it, he finds the Boss’s name in a list of “Pan-Asianists.” Since the Boss is consistently portrayed as a sinister figure manipulating life in postwar Japan, it can be deduced that the “heritage of Pan-Asianism” —i.e., of Japan’s imperial policies—has been the corruption of the postwar state. Boku notes that the book has “not a single line on the February 26th Incident” (265)—the army mutiny inspired by the writings of Kita Ikki.⁴

Another example of Murakami’s critique of Japanese imperialism occurs when Boku and his girlfriend review the history of the remote Hokkaido valley where the Rat seems to be hiding out. Boku makes a chart listing “dates and developments in the history of Junitaki-cho and on the right the major events in the history of Japan in the same period” (210). His girlfriend makes the following observation:

“Looking at things this way,” she said, comparing the left and right sides of the chronology, “we Japanese seem to live from war to war.” (210)

⁴ Kita Ikki advocated the overthrow of civilian government, and its replacement by a military dictatorship under the emperor. He was an anti-capitalist revolutionary, and during the difficult years of the twenties and thirties, many dissatisfied Japanese were drawn to his argument that the great corporations should be dismantled. Kita was also an imperialist, and proposed a “revolutionary Empire of Japan” based on territorial expansion overseas (Storry 173). Silence in this book on the February 26th Incident signals perhaps its sympathy with the militaristic, imperialist mutineers who were ultimately defeated and executed.

While Boku's "wild sheep chase" may seem like an idiosyncratic, personal adventure — a matter of friendship between Boku and the Rat—it also has this dimension of historical allegory, a dimension which Murakami works consistently to remind us of. This concern with historical context becomes even more apparent in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, as I will discuss later.

At the end of the novel, Boku finally meets up with the Rat (or at least with his ghost) who explains the sheep's intentions: it was planning to create "a realm of total conceptual anarchy. A scheme in which all opposites would be resolved into unity. With me and the sheep at the center." (284) The Rat is "earmarked to take over [the Boss's] power base" (284), but ultimately rejects it:

I guess I felt attached to my weakness. My pain and suffering too.
 Summer light, the smell of a breeze, the sound of cicadas—if I like these things, why should I apologize. The same with having a beer with..." The Rat swallowed his words. "I don't know why."
 What could I say.
 "Somehow or other, we have created two completely different entities out of the same ingredients," said the Rat. (284)

The Rat's comments can be interpreted in a variety of ways. First, as political allegory, they perhaps describe the composite nature of the modern Japanese state. On one hand, there is the highly organized, ambitious, imperialist, industrial nation— controlled by men like the Boss, still infected (via the sheep) with the spirit of conquest they discovered in North China. On the other hand is the "old Japan," identified here with "weakness" and with nature— "the smell of a breeze, the sound of cicadas." It should be pointed out that this "weakness" is not some character defect; it is rather an existential awareness of the fragility of life, of "the weakness of existence itself" (282). Thus the Rat is associated with traditional Japanese values, in contrast to the alien values represented by the sheep.

Another way to interpret the Rat's comments is as an implicit acknowledgement that he and Boku are two sides of the same person— "two completely different entities [created] out of the same ingredients." On one hand is Boku—nostalgic but persevering; lonely but still attached to a job, a girlfriend, a cat; a drinker and drifter, but lucratively and efficiently self-employed. On the other is the Rat, who takes all Boku's flaws to a

self-destructive extreme: he is unemployed, homeless, alone. Ultimately, the Rat dies fighting off the sheep, as if his very attachment to the nostalgic values of old Japan made him unable to resist the alien power of the sheep. He finally can extinguish the sheep only by extinguishing himself:

“I died with the sheep in me. I waited until the sheep was fast asleep, then I tied a rope over the beam in the kitchen and hanged myself. There wasn’t enough time for the sucker to escape” (281).

The death of the Rat means that many of his traits—in particular, a certain vein of self-pitying nostalgia—become incorporated into Boku himself. In Murakami’s next novel to deal with Boku’s youth, *Norwegian Wood*, the Rat does not appear. The wistful attachment to the past that cripples the Rat belongs only to Boku.

A Wild Sheep Chase also contains another “double” of Boku which he encounters in the Rat’s house:

As I headed up to the Rat’s room to borrow another book, I noticed the full-length mirror at the foot of the stairs....

The mirror reflected my image from head to toe, without warping, almost pristinely. I stood there and looked at myself. Nothing new. I was me, with my usual nothing-special expression. My image was unnecessarily sharp, however. I wasn’t seeing my mirror-flat mirror-image. It wasn’t myself I was seeing; on the contrary, it was as if I were the reflection of the mirror and this flat-me-of-an-image were seeing the real me. I brought my right hand up in front of my face and wiped my mouth. The me through the looking glass went through the same motions. But maybe it was only me copying what the me in the mirror had done. I couldn’t be certain I’d wiped my mouth out of my own free will. (269)

Later, when the Sheep Man comes to visit, Boku encounters this second self each time he walks past the mirror to fetch a beer: “The other me had apparently gone for beer too. We looked each other in the face and sighed. Living in two separate worlds, we still thought about the same things.” (272)

He also notices one terrifying feature of the mirror:

I checked the Sheep Man in the mirror. But there wasn't any Sheep Man in the mirror! There was nobody in the living room at all, only an empty sofa. In the mirror world, I was alone. (273).

The trope of multiple worlds is one which persistently appears in Murakami's fiction, and I will discuss it in greater detail below. But it is important here to point out the relationship between this trope and the use of doubles. The double is conventionally used as a supplementary method of character development—a way of showing the dark side of a protagonist, or of showing his various “selves.” But it can also serve to throw one's sense of the real into confusion. The self that Boku glimpses in the mirror seems to have a greater claim on reality than Boku himself. In the mirror world, there is no Sheep Man; since the Sheep Man is so clearly an “unreal” kind of being, then perhaps the world in which Boku can encounter him is an “unreal” world too. So what is Boku—a phantom? The first-person narration has led us to believe in Boku, to see him as the perceptual centre of a fictional world. But his encounter with the mirror self undoes our confidence in him. Perhaps he is only a reflection, a creature dreamed and not the dreamer at all.

Alice's adventures “through the looking-glass” should not be neglected as a possible interpretive context for this scene, especially since the title of Murakami's next novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, explicitly evokes the works of Lewis Carroll. (As well, in *Dance, Dance, Dance*, Boku is reminded of the “Mad Hatter's tea party” when he is invited to dinner with uncongenial hosts [337]; in *Pinball, 1973*, the memory of Naoko's smile lingers “like the grin of the Cheshire Cat” [10]; in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the Professor suggests that to understand the subconscious, “like *Alice in Wonderland*, you need a special drug t'shrink you in” [256]). Like the mirror which Boku observes, the mirror in Alice's house reflects a living room and books. Like Boku, Alice describes the figure in the mirror as someone other than herself: “I've held up one of our books to the glass and then they hold up one in the other room” (181). The improbability of the wild sheep chase could be interpreted as a series of events in a “looking-glass” world that Boku has slipped into; events are not systematically inverted as they are in Carroll's looking-glass world, but they do consistently violate ordinary reality.

Another way of viewing the doubles in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is also provided by an intertextual reference. The day after the mirror episode, Boku wakes up disoriented after a terrifying dream:

I pressed the palm of my hand against my cheek. The face my hand felt in the dark wasn't my own, I didn't think. It was the face of another that had taken the shape of my face. (275)

The allusion to Abe Kobo's *Tanin no kao* 他人の顔 (*Face of Another*, 1964; tr. 1966) is so conspicuous that it defuses the terror of this scene: it reminds us that Boku is just another fictional creation, and we do not take his fears too seriously. But it also draws into Murakami's novel, or rather intensifies in it, that eerie sensation of circularity and contradiction that Abe's novel so thoroughly creates. In Abe's novel, the double is a mask that the disfigured protagonist makes for himself in his own image. It is supposed to make him look and feel more like himself, more as he was before a disfiguring accident; yet the mask becomes an alien force, driving the protagonist to cruel, even murderous acts. It is his face, but it makes him into another person. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku sees himself in the mirror but no longer knows whether he is the reflection or the man; he touches his face, but does not know whether the face he wears is his own. I hasten to point out that in comparison with *Face of Another*, *A Wild Sheep Chase* is a lighthearted and frivolous novel; the protagonist's identity problems do not lead to murder (as in *Tanin no kao*), and Murakami achieves nothing like the horror that permeates Abe's great work. But by evoking Abe's novel, a famous instance of the "double" in Japanese fiction, Murakami suggests his own interest in creating a fictional world that does not "mirror" ordinary reality, but rather exists alongside it, challenging and destabilizing it.

If the Rat serves as Boku's double through the first few novels, his death in *A Wild Sheep Chase* does not mean the end of this technique. As Kasai Kiyoshi points out, in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the Shadow takes on this role:

The Rat vanishes from Murakami's world. Then, there appears the Shadow of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. We cannot doubt that in Murakami's cast of characters, the Shadow appears on stage as a stand-in for the Rat. However, it is subtle, but I think there is definitely a shift from the character of the Rat to the Shadow. (62)

The Rat is a separate character, with his own existence in space and time, whereas the Shadow is not. Thus using the Shadow as a double is a much more obvious way to dramatize Boku's inner conflicts. For the Shadow truly is a part of Boku; only when Boku enters into the world of his unconscious—the End of the World—does his Shadow emerge as a separate voice or character.

When Boku enters the town at the End of the World—an afterlife of his own imagining, “an image of longing from the depths of his unconscious” (Takeda 68)—he must give up his Shadow at the gate. This is required of everyone who enters the town. Each Shadow slowly dies, and as it dies, the mind of the person fades away. Any traces of mind that remain are absorbed by the unicorns, beasts that live in the End of the World; when winter comes the beasts die, thus extinguishing the remnants of mind or self.

Boku's Shadow wants to escape from the End of the World and expects Boku to come with him. But at the last minute, Boku elects to stay in the sterile perfection of the End of the World. Alone, the Shadow plunges into the whirlpool that connects to the outside world.

In his discussion of the relationship between the Shadow and Boku, Takeda Seiji suggests that the Shadow does not represent the social conscience of the novel, even though it is the Shadow who argues that Boku must leave his dream world:

The character of the Shadow does not represent the sort of ethical position that urges us to take a clear attitude toward society. Rather I think the character of the Shadow is the first character to appear who suggests the kind of aporia that can result if a human being throws away all his connections to society, and lives only by his own standards; that kind of life itself will wither and become meaningless. (69)

The Shadow's attempts to persuade Boku to leave the End of the World are fruitless. Boku decides to stay:

“I have my responsibilities,” I said. “I can't just dismiss the world and the people that I made. I know that this is bad for you. It truly is bad for

you, and I find it painful to part from you. But I must carry out my responsibilities to what I myself have made. Here is my world. The wall is a wall that encloses me; the river is a river that runs through me; the smoke is smoke from my self burning."

....

"I understand that it is useless to stop you," the Shadow said.

"However, life in the forest is much harder than you think. The forest is completely different from the town. Surviving is a terrible struggle; the winter is long and bitter. Once you enter the forest, you can never come out. You will have to stay in that forest forever." (HBW2: 345-6; translation mine)

Boku elects to stay in the End of the World; he has left its innermost zone, a walled town, and will be exiled to the forest, but he is nonetheless staying in this world he has made. The Shadow argues for the necessity of returning to the ordinary world. Boku argues for the primacy of his own imagination, for his own right to live with his memories. Their dialogue can be thought of as a "threshold dialogue," one of those conversations at the gates of hell (or of heaven) frequently found in the Menippean satire.

Norwegian Wood does not revert to the use of the Rat as the double of Boku, although the novel ostensibly covers the period in Boku's life when the Rat was his close friend. Instead, several minor male figures serve in *Norwegian Wood* as expressions of aspects of Boku that are not otherwise explicit. "Kamikaze," Boku's roommate in the college dormitory, is an obsessively tidy geography student. Boku frequently makes fun of Kamikaze in comic anecdotes he relates to Midori and Naoko. But in fact, Kamikaze's need for order—he insists on doing his morning exercises in exactly the same sequence each day—is part of Boku himself. For example, Boku in later novels frequently cleans house, washes dishes, iron shirts. He counts the steps to his apartment (*A Wild Sheep Chase*) and compulsively counts the change in his pockets (HBW); during one school term, he keeps track of the number of cigarettes he smokes and classes he attends (*Hear the Wind Sing* 77). This passion for order that Boku shows in other novels is displaced onto Kamikaze in *Norwegian Wood*.

Nagasawa, a law student two years older than Boku, becomes his friend because both admire *The Great Gatsby*. Nagasawa "ma[kes] it a rule never to read anything by writers

who'd been dead for less than thirty years" (NW1: 61). Similarly, Boku asserts in *Hear the Wind Sing* that there is "nothing of value in living authors" (19). Nagasawa's favourite writers (apart from Fitzgerald) are Balzac, Dante, Conrad, Dickens. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, Boku is re-reading Balzac's *Les Chouans*; as he awaits his own death, he visualizes the shipwreck scene in *Lord Jim* (390).

Boku describes Nagasawa in generally admiring tones: he is "famous for ... his brains" (61); he is a natural leader; his sexual prowess is legendary; and "his greatest virtue [is] his honesty" (62). But Boku has some reservations about Nagasawa: "From the time I saw Nagasawa mistreat a drunk girl, I made up my mind never to give myself over to him no matter what." (63) In *Hear the Wind Sing*, this is Boku's sin as well. The girl with the missing finger accuses him of taking advantage of her when she was drunk: "a guy who'd sleep with a girl when she's unconscious ... how low can you get?" (36).

It is Nagasawa who explicitly comments on the resemblances between himself and Boku:

"Watanabe and I have certain things in common," said Nagasawa.
 "Basically we're alike in that we're only interested in ourselves. The only difference is whether we're 'cocksure' about it or not. I'm only interested in what I think, what I myself feel, what I do. And for that very reason I can consider myself completely set apart from my fellow human beings. That's also what I like about Watanabe [Boku]. It's just that the guy doesn't recognize this side of himself—not yet." (NW2 113)

Nagasawa makes this point even more forcefully when his girlfriend Hatsumi decides to ask Boku to see her home:

"As you wish," repeated Nagasawa, "But Watanabe and I are practically carbon copies. Kind and considerate he may seem, but underneath it all he's just as incapable of love." (NW2: 117)

Another parallel between Nagasawa and Boku is that, like Boku's girlfriend Naoko, Nagasawa's girlfriend Hatsumi ends up committing suicide.

Through Nagasawa's words, Boku introduces his own self-critique. If Nagasawa's "greatest virtue [is] his honesty," then we should believe what he says. His judgement of

Boku—that he is selfish and incapable of love—represents Boku’s assessment of himself. Significantly, Boku never ventures to refute Nagasawa’s comments.

Dance, Dance, Dance also uses the trope of the double. In his search for his lost girlfriend Kiki, Boku looks up a friend from junior high school, Gotanda, now a successful actor. (Gotanda starred in a film in which Kiki appeared briefly as his lover.) Gotanda can supply no clues to Kiki’s whereabouts, but Boku and Gotanda renew their friendship, occasionally meeting for dinner or for evenings with call girls. Gotanda seems to be everything Boku is not: effortlessly charming, magically successful, conspicuously handsome. When Boku remembers how they both were in high school, he concludes that he was a bungler and “the exact opposite of Gotanda” (188). But Gotanda’s complaints about his life sound remarkably like Boku’s own identity problems:

“... it’s like which is me and which the role? Where’s the line *between me and my shadow?*” (144; italics mine)

“... when I think back on my life, it’s like I didn’t make one choice. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and it scares me. Where’s the first-person ‘I’? Where’s the beef? My whole life is playing one role after another. Who’s been playing the lead in my life?” (146).

Boku and Gotanda are both involved with Kiki and another call-girl named Mei. Both are, at various points, suspected of murdering Mei. Like Boku, Gotanda is just looking for “a simple life” (290). Boku acknowledges their similarities in temperament and situation: for example, he sees that “basically speaking, we’re both depressing people” (324). He also sees that that “[i]n some ways, Gotanda and I were of the same species. Different circumstances, different thinking, different sensibilities, the same species. We both kept losing.” (348)

Gotanda is the man of talent who has “sold out” to become a successful film star. He has luxury and fame but no contentment. *Dance, Dance, Dance* appeared after the staggering success of *Norwegian Wood*; perhaps in the figure of Gotanda can be glimpsed some of the cynicism and powerlessness felt by an artist who finds himself turned into a commodity.

Another “double” in *Dance, Dance, Dance* reinforces this image of the artist ruined by fame. The father of Yuki (the thirteen-year-old clairvoyant) is a famous writer, Makimura Hiraku 牧村拓 —an obvious anagram of Murakami Haruki. Boku’s scornful summary of Makimura’s career could be taken as a cruel parody of Murakami’s own rise to fame:

Years back I’d read a couple of his early novels and a collection of short stories. Pretty good stuff. Fresh prose, fresh viewpoint. Which is what made them best-sellers. He was the darling of the literary community. He appeared on TV, was in all the magazines, expressed an opinion on the full spectrum of social phenomena.... After that, it was downhill all the way. He never wrote anything decent. His next two or three books were panned....

So Makimura underwent a transformation. From naïf novelist he was suddenly avant-garde.... He managed to win over a few brain-dead critics with a weakness for such pretensions. But after two years of the same old stuff, even they got tired of him

Yet that wasn’t the end of Hiraku Makimura. Early in the seventies, he broke into the new field of travel writing as a self-styled adventurer.

Good-bye avant-garde, time for action and adventure. (118-9)

Significantly, near the conclusion of *Dance, Dance, Dance*, Boku considers giving up the free-lance writing that he frequently dismisses as just “shoveling snow”:

I wondered if, maybe, it was time to give up the shoveling habit. Do some writing for myself for a change. Without the deadlines. Something for myself. Not a novel or anything. But something for myself. (383)

In the interplay between Boku, Gotanda, and Makimura, Murakami comes as close as he ever does to representing himself and his own dilemmas as an author.

The structure of doubles also serves to heighten the atmosphere of mystery and ambiguity in *Dance, Dance, Dance*. Are Gotanda and Boku the same man? Who is the killer? Who are the victims? The ghost of Kiki tells Boku that all the dead people in the novel (there are six) are Boku himself (371). When Gotanda confesses to Kiki’s murder, his confession contains many eerie connections to Boku’s own story. They become

particularly apparent when one enlarges the context to include Murakami's other novels; Murakami seems to invite us to do this, since *Dance, Dance, Dance* is a sequel to *A Wild Sheep Chase*, with many of the same characters (e.g., Kiki, the Rat, the Sheep Man) and settings (e.g., the Dolphin Hotel in Sapporo). Gotanda describes how he killed Kiki:

I strangled her but I wasn't strangling *her*, I was strangling my *shadow*. I remember thinking, if only I could choke my shadow off, I'd get some health. Except it wasn't my shadow. It was Kiki.
It all took place in that dark world. You know what I'm talking about? Not here in this one. And it was Kiki who led me there. (356; italics in original)

Like Gotanda, Boku in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* tries to separate himself from his shadow; even though the shadow ultimately escapes, Boku does allow his shadow to be condemned to death. When later the ghost of Kiki tells Boku, "I'm your shadow," he remembers the words of Gotanda's confession— "*I was strangling my shadow*" — as if he himself had spoken them (371). And Boku knows "that dark world" Gotanda speaks of. It is a place he has visited too: it is the dark corridor in the Dolphin Hotel, a hotel that Kiki led him to; it is also the dream room in Honolulu where Kiki shows him six skeletons. Boku, more than Gotanda, is intimate with that darkness, with the netherworld of death.

Gotanda also confesses to other evil thoughts and actions. He fears he might kill his wife, and when he was young, he "killed four cats" (357). Boku also killed cats: when he was a student he "killed thirty-six cats and six kittens in two months" (*Hear the Wind Sing* 73). On the surface, Gotanda and Boku seem unquestionably separate characters. But Murakami provides many subtle indications that Gotanda and Boku have overlapping identities. Gotanda bears all the evil that Boku himself contains. "That dark world" where Gotanda commits his crimes (357) is inside Boku.

Chapter 9

Many Voices, Many Languages: Inserted Genres and Heteroglossia in Murakami's Fiction

The first-person narrative style employed in all Murakami's novels maintains a relentless focus on a single person's experience. Murakami provides relief from this focus by including a wide variety of inserted genres: letters, stories, newspaper articles, quotations, poems, and so on. In addition, these inserted materials serve important thematic purposes.

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, there are several stories unrelated to the main narrative—pistols that get introduced but never go off. For example, Boku recounts his encounter and conversation in J's Bar with a woman who makes repeated mysterious phone calls (38-43). He also describes his dreams (e.g., 82). There is a summary of *The Wells of Mars*, a novel by the apocryphal American writer, Derek Heartfield (101-4), and a capsule biography of Heartfield (126-8).

Heartfield, it should be noted, is exactly the kind of writer Boku is not: "In genre, almost everything he wrote was either an adventure or an excursion into the unearthly" (127). In *Hear the Wind Sing*, Murakami is scrupulously "realistic" — no fantastic adventures of the sort that occur in later novels. In a sense, this homage to the mythical Heartfield looks ahead to the kind of writing Murakami himself will later produce. In the context of *Hear the Wind Sing*, Heartfield's fiction provides relief from ordinary reality, just as the fantastic elements in the later novels do. It is as if here, Murakami did not quite have the confidence to mix everyday life and the fantastic, and so adopted the mask of Heartfield to display his interest in "adventure" and "the unearthly."

As well as the elements dealing with Derek Heartfield, *Hear the Wind Sing* contains many other departures from first-person narration. Indeed, as Suzumura points out, fragmentation is the chief feature of this novel's narrative style:

Since *Hear the Wind Sing*, Murakami Haruki has become known as a writer of fragments, a writer who does not make logical connections between the fragments. (10)

A disk jockey's patter on the "Pop Request Hotline" radio show forms all of chapter 11; chapter 13 contains the refrain for the Beach Boys' hit, "California Girls"; chapter 14 is a sketch of a t-shirt; chapter 21 is a quote from Michelet; chapter 32 contains the Derek Heartfield story; chapter 37 is another edition of "Pop Request Hotline." Moreover, the sections dealing directly with Boku's own story alternate unpredictably between the events of a summer holiday and his reminiscences of the previous academic year in Tokyo.

An obvious effect achieved by this strategy is surprise: there is no predictable narrative direction. More importantly, Murakami's fragmentary narrative style permits the introduction of various kinds of social and cultural "documents"; this technique accords with the concern of the Menippean satire "to evaluate the general spirit and direction of evolving contemporary life" (Bakhtin 1984, 118). For example, without explicit comment on the ubiquity of American culture in 1970s Japan, Murakami nonetheless reminds us of its invasive prestige by inserting fragments of American pop music and popular fiction. He does the same for Western "high" culture with references to Michelet, and Romain Rolland.

Murakami's protagonist in *Hear the Wind Sing* (the only one of Murakami's narrators who admits to being a writer) announces in the opening chapter that fragments are indeed what he will write:

What I can write about here is nothing but a list. If it is not fiction or literature, it isn't art either. It's just a notebook with only one rule running down the centre of it. (MHZ 1: 11; translation mine)

Murakami's second novel, *Pinball, 1973*, is similarly constructed. It begins by announcing the narrator's weakness for other people's stories:

I used to love listening to stories about faraway places. It was almost pathological.

There was a time, a good ten years ago now, when I went around latching onto one person after another, asking them to tell me about the places where they were born and grew up. Times were short of people willing to lend a sympathetic ear, it seemed, so anyone and everyone opened up to

me, obligingly and emphatically telling all. People I didn't even know somehow got word of me and sought me out. (5)

Among the people who seek him out are a Venusian and a Saturnian, perhaps a reference back to the subject matter of Heartfield's fiction. These story-tellers dominate the opening pages of the novel, but then disappear, and with them, all traces of the fantastic.

However, Boku continues to tell stories that digress from the narrative of his own experience. For example, he recounts the story of how a well-digger was killed by a train (18); he summarizes an anecdote from Trotsky's memoirs (19-20); he includes an essay "On the Origins of Pinball" describing the game's invention, and an excerpt from the "exegesis of pinball," an imaginary book called *Bonus Light* (25-9). There is a long anecdote about an apartment house Boku lived in when he was a student. All these "stories" act like preludes to the main action of the novel—Boku's quest for the missing three-flipper Spaceship— which does not really get under way until page 117, when Boku announces, "It was the winter of 1970 when I slipped into the enchanted kingdom of pinball." This delaying of the main action is another way in which Murakami resists traditional forms of narrative and the romanesque; it is also a signal, I think, that the "real" subject of the novel is not pinball, but Boku's loss of Naoko.

As Suzumura notes, Murakami's style changes somewhat after *Pinball*, 1973:

From the time of *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982), his writing style, which had been based on an assortment of fragments, underwent a change: ... he began to try to write fiction with a stronger story line... (10)

Even though *A Wild Sheep Chase* more clearly follows a single narrative line than earlier (and subsequent) novels, it too contains fragments. The novel begins, like every good detective novel, with a death. The victim is a girl whom Boku had known in his student days. However, after relating how he met her, Boku then turns to other matters. This girl and her death have nothing to do with the main narrative; her story is one of many which, in Suzumura's words, "do not serve the plot" (10).¹ Other stories told in *A Wild*

¹What it may serve, however, is the political allegory contained in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Murakami has said that the novel's prelude began from the idea of the death of Mishima

Sheep Chase—the Rat’s letters, the Sheep Professor’s explanation of his discovery of the sheep, and the history of the Hokkaido village called Junitaki—interrupt Boku’s first-person narration, but at least they are pertinent to the central mystery.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the unfolding of two narratives—Watakushi’s story in the Hard-boiled Wonderland and Boku’s in the town at the End of the World—seems to preoccupy Murakami; he in general resists the tendency to include additional stories. There is, however, the Professor’s long explanation of how he developed the brain-altering technology that catapults Boku into the End of the World. This account is rendered in a distinctive voice, an old-fashioned, even rural dialect that contrasts oddly with the hi-tech content of the Professor’s story. There are also long excerpts from Jorge Luis Borges’ *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, included as part of Watakushi’s research into unicorns.

Murakami also inserts fragments of stories that digress momentarily from the main narratives. Chance events, such as seeing a couple drive by in a Skyline car, initiate these fragments:

The woman, two silver bracelets on the hand she dangled out the widow, cast a glance in my direction. I could have been a Denny’s restaurant or a traffic signal, it would have been no different. She was your regular sort of beautiful young woman, I guess. In a TV drama, she’d be the female lead’s best friend, the face that appears once in a café scene to say, “What’s the matter? You haven’t been yourself lately.” (188)

Suzumura Kazunari cites another instance in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* of what he calls Murakami’s “mythomania” (141). As Boku follows the Professor’s granddaughter along

Yukio [Murakami Ryu 249.] Inasmuch as other elements in *A Wild Sheep Chase* (discussed above) seem to critique Japanese imperial ambitions, it is interesting to note how Mishima’s failed coup and subsequent suicide are described in the novel: “It was two in the afternoon, and Yukio Mishima’s picture kept flashing on the lounge TV. The volume control was broken so we could hardly make out what was said, but it didn’t matter to us one way or the other.” (8). Mishima’s grand gesture is merely TV background to the conduct of Boku’s brief, passionless affair with the now-dead girl.

the trail of paperclips² to where the Professor is hiding, he listens to the sound of her pink jogging shoes on the wet rocks:

The only thing impinging on my senses at this point was the echo of footsteps.... I tried to impose a verbal meaning on the sounds, but they would not conform to any words I knew. It was an unfamiliar language, a string of tones and inflections that could not be accommodated within the range of Japanese syllables. In French or German—or English perhaps—it might approximate this:

Even—through—be—shopped—degreed—well

Still, when I actually pronounced the words, they were far from the sounds of those footsteps. A more accurate transcription would have been:

Efgvén—ghôuv—bge—shpèvg—égvele—wgevl

Finnish? Yet another gap in my linguistic abilities. If pressed to give a meaning, I might have said something like, “A Farmer met the aged Devil on the road.” (216-7)

Watakushi then launches into a folktale about the Farmer and the Devil, complete with dialect words and agrarian imagery. Suzumura interprets these mini-narratives as a self-conscious device on Murakami’s part to lay bare the process of creating fiction:

“Watakushi” unfolds a brief, well-executed story, but the purpose here is not to show off Murakami’s abilities as a story teller. What he wants us to pay attention to is how this kind of story begins with an incidental, randomly chosen subject as its germ—something like the sound of footsteps or a bracelet. (143)

In *Norwegian Wood*, Boku’s narrative is presented as a piece of self-conscious story-telling: chapter 2 begins “Once upon a time” (*mukashimukashi*). In addition to this central

² The “trail of paperclips” is an industrial version of the motif in the Grimm fairy tale, “Hansel and Gretel”: as Hansel and his sister are taken into the forest by their father (his plan is to abandon the children), the boy drops from his pocket first a trail of pebbles, and then a trail of bread crumbs. Murakami’s use of a fairy-tale motif fits well with the folk-tale narrative he is about to introduce.

story, there are numerous embedded narratives, some in the form of letters and some in the form of stories (*hanashi*). Each of the three women with whom Boku interacts takes the stage at some point to tell her story.

Naoko, Boku's girlfriend who gradually goes mad, writes several letters to Boku from the sanatorium, Ami Lodge; these letters explain her illness and her condition. When Boku visits the sanatorium, Naoko tells him the story of how her older sister committed suicide.

Reiko, Naoko's roommate at Ami Lodge, also has a story, told in two installments. When it grows late on the first night, Reiko promises Boku, "If you want to hear the rest, I'll tell you tomorrow." Boku replies, "Scheherazade couldn't have done it better" (1:234). The dialogue when she resumes the following night further underlines the story-telling device:

So how far did we get yesterday? asked Reiko.

Up to the part where you were scaling the cliff that stormy night to get a swallow's nest, I said. (2:12)

The swallow's nest and stormy night have nothing to do with Reiko's story, but suggest ironically the suspense which Reiko creates by leaving her story unfinished.

Dance, Dance, Dance departs from the pattern established in Murakami's other novels in that all its subsidiary narratives are connected to the main story. Indeed, the protagonist's quest in this novel is to unravel how everyone he encounters is connected: "Everything, everything, was linking up. Except I didn't have a clue what it meant." (275)

In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Murakami returns to a fragmentary style. There is a strong and compelling plot centred on Boku's efforts to locate his missing wife, but (as I will discuss in chapter 12), inserted elements of various kinds consistently interrupt it. One critic likens its structure to *The Thousand and One Nights* ("Aratamete").

Stories from secondary characters make up only one category of the many discourses to be found in Murakami's fiction. Pop lyrics, the recollections of retired army officers, the jargon of teenage girls, the formal speech of wellbred young women, the bafflegab of an

economic pundit, the careful politeness of a hotel manager, official histories, quotations from novels, erotic phone calls, brand names, sweatshirt logos, foreign borrowings in *katakana*— this array of voices and discourses seems to exemplify Bakhtin’s assertion that “[e]very language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives” (Dialogic 411). Murakami’s deft interweaving of these different voices produces a surprisingly broad view of Japanese society — surprising because on first glance, the novels seem so solipsistic, so limited to Boku’s troubles, losses, regrets. Yet, in fact, the worlds of mass media, advertising, American culture, fashion, teenage rebellion, corporate capitalism, academic economics, organized crime, European literature, Japanese militarism, real estate speculation, international tourism are all represented in Murakami’s fiction; they do reflect “a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups” (to use Bakhtin’s phrase). (Conspicuously absent from the scene are specifically Japanese social groups such as the extended family, organized Buddhism, practitioners of traditional arts.)

Brian McHale suggests that postmodernist fiction pushes the heteroglossia of the modern novel into a chaotic polyphony:

Instead of resisting centrifugal tendencies, postmodernist fiction seeks to enhance them. Heteroglossia is used here as an opening wedge, a means of breaking up the unified projected world into a polyphony of worlds of discourse. (167)

While Murakami’s novels always retain the framing narrative of Boku’s personal story, the variety of discourses does tend to “break[] up the unified projected world” of Boku’s narration. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, for example, with its alternation between Boku and Watakushi, projects two different worlds through two different forms of speech. Murakami’s early novels fit Eugene Kirk’s description of the “flagrantly digressive narrative” (xi) often found in the Menippean satire. The use of the disk jockey’s patter, song lyrics, and excerpts from Heartfield’s writings in *Hear the Wind Sing* threatens to overwhelm the slender framework of Boku’s recollections. Similarly in *Pinball, 1973*, conversations with Venusians, accounts of student activism, and digressions on the history of pinball create centrifugal forces that almost succeed in hiding the story of Naoko’s death.

Chapter 10

Parodies of Popular Fiction

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the imaginary American writer Derek Heartfield is praised and quoted at length:

I've learned a lot about writing from Derek Heartfield. Perhaps almost everything. Unfortunately, Heartfield was in every sense of the word a wasted talent. Read him and you'll see. His style is difficult, the stories impossible, the themes infantile. Nonetheless, he was one of those few writers distinguished by an ability to put up a good fight with words. A contemporary of Hemingway, Fitzgerald and that crowd, Heartfield was in my estimation no less a "fighter" than they. It was just that right through to the end Heartfield never got a clear picture who he should have been fighting. Ultimately, that was the waste of his talent. (7)

The apocryphal Heartfield is a pulp science fiction writer. Discovering his works changed Boku's life:

If I hadn't encountered the writer Derek Heartfield, I probably wouldn't be writing novels. While it's not for me to say, I surely would have taken up a completely different path from my present one.

When I was in high school, I bought up a number of Heartfield paperbacks that some merchant marine had left in a Kobe secondhand bookstore. Fifty yen apiece they were. (129)

This description matches Murakami's explanation of his own discovery of American paperback fiction:

Kobe is a big port city with many used-book shops and I could find American paperbacks very cheaply and very easily. It was like opening a treasure chest. I mostly read hard-boiled detective stores or science fiction—Raymond Chandler or Ed McBain or Mickey Spillane. (McInerney 28)

Of these writers, the one who had the greatest influence on Murakami was Raymond Chandler:

Raymond Chandler was my hero in the 1960's. I read *The Long Goodbye* a dozen times. (McInerney 28)

Although Heartfield's chosen genre and Chandler's are different, Boku's description of Heartfield as a writer whose stories are "impossible and the themes infantile" fits Chandler, a writer whose pulp detective stories were an inadequate vehicle for his talents. Another possible link between the two is that Heartfield's biographer is said to be Thomas McClure, a name resembling that of Chandler's biographer, Frank McShane.

Chandler's impact on Murakami's fiction is not primarily through genre, although *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland, Dance, Dance, Dance* and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* all have elements of detective fiction. Rather it is through style:

... From the stylistic level I have certainly borrowed a lot from Chandler.
 ... I must say it is a difficult thing to transpose Chandler's style into Japanese. To begin with, the cultural ideas informing Japanese and English are entirely different. But this is exactly what I was trying to do, to renew the ideas, while transposing the language. (McInerney 29)

One element in Chandler's style is the independent, lonely hero— a figure that Murakami recreates in Boku. I have already discussed Boku as an ironic version of the traditional hero of the *shishosetsu*; this certainly is one dimension of him, but a more important element in his formation is the stereotype of the hard-boiled detective. In a study of postmodern American and Italian detective fiction, Stefano Tani summarizes how hard-boiled detective fiction differs from its predecessors:

American city wastelands replace the idyllic countryside setting of the British detective novel, and the hard-boiled dick, a lonely hero who clings to a personal moral code, no matter how absurd his devotion to it may seem, takes the place of Dupin and Sherlock Holmes. Though the hero of hard-boiled detective fiction is normally unmarried as are Dupin and Holmes, he is far more a flesh-and-blood character. He likes liquor and

women, but his periods of incontinence seem to be the necessary preamble to the “asceticism” of detection, since any asceticism (solution) implies a previous fall. (22-3)

Boku’s situation fits this description well. Except for occasional interludes, he remains a creature of Tokyo. He is a “lonely hero” and despite his obvious lapses, has a “personal moral code.” For example, Boku is loyal to his friends: in *Hear the Wind Sing*, he patiently listens to the Rat’s harangues and is ready to help when the Rat is beset by girl troubles. He writes faithfully to Naoko while she is sick. Boku works hard, whether as a student, law clerk, journalist, translator, or househusband. He tries to be honest, or at least announces his intention to be, at the beginning of *Hear the Wind Sing*. He abhors corruption and hypocrisy: in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, he despises his successful brother-in-law, Wataya Noboru, economist, media pundit, rapist, and keeper of the family honour. And certainly Boku is “a flesh-and-blood character” who “likes liquor and women.” His sexual adventures are described in energetic detail. Although in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* he is married, in both cases the novel begins when the marriage is on the verge of collapse. Like the hard-boiled detective, Boku drinks— “beer in summer, whiskey in winter” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 35).

Boku’s separateness—his lack of familial, corporate, or social ties—is deliberately modelled on the isolation of the Chandler and Hammett detective:

I was impressed by the way that [Chandler’s] protagonists live by themselves and are very independent. They’re lonely but they’re looking for a decent life.

As you know, Japan is such a group-conscious society that to be independent is very hard. For instance, when I looked for an apartment in Tokyo, the real-estate people didn’t trust me because as a writer I was self-employed and didn’t belong to any company. Many people, especially young people, would like to be more independent and on their own. But it is very difficult and they suffer from feelings of isolation. I think that is one reason why young readers support my work. (McInerney 29)

In the society of the *sarariman*, the *bundan* and the *zaibatsu*, the hard-boiled hero is even more of an anomaly than in his native America. I think Murakami is correct in saying that this is one of the attractions of his work. It also adds to his novels a subtle exoticism: Boku, who does not have a job or a family, is an un-Japanese protagonist, a man who is living an American lifestyle (or what readers might imagine is an American lifestyle) in the heart of Tokyo.

What makes the hard-boiled detective novel distinctive is not just the isolation of its narrator/hero. There is a hard-boiled style as well, developed by Dashiell Hammett (modelling himself on Hemingway), and later imitated by Raymond Chandler (Hamilton 151). In her study of American hard-boiled fiction, Cynthia S. Hamilton refers to a study by Philip C. Durham, who first defined Hammett's "objective technique":

... Durham refers to a distinctive quality produced by "a peculiar artistic technique—an exclusive concentration upon what Ernest Hemingway called the 'sequence of motion and fact', which produces an emotion, rather than upon the direct portrayal of emotion or thought [or] upon any rhetorical effort—such as calling attention to a tear-jerking scream—to arouse or direct the response of the reader."

...Durham identifies a number of stratagems associated with the objective technique: the use of simple, stripped-down sentences, the portrayal of actions as a series of component movements, the use of understatement, and the practice of giving descriptively equal treatment to human beings and to inanimate objects. (Hamilton 139-40)

The stratagems enumerated by Durham are central features of Murakami's style as well. The following passage from *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, which describes the Semiotec operatives' attack on Boku, displays Murakami's use of three of these stratagems—the "simple, stripped-down sentences, the portrayal of actions as a series of component movements [and] the use of understatement."

The little guy went to the kitchen and came back with the big guy's knife that had been on the table. Then he flicked open the seven-centimetre blade and, taking his lighter out of his pocket, ran the blade tip through the flame. The knife was compactly made and didn't look too brutal, but

you could see at a glance that it wasn't some sort of cheap thing that they sold at dime stores. It was just big enough to rip apart a human body. A human body, unlike that of a bear, is soft like a peach, and if you've got a strong seven-centimetre blade, it will suffice for general purposes.

When he was finished sterilizing the blade in the flame, the little guy let it cool for a while. Then, putting his left hand on the elastic waist of my white jockey shorts, he pulled them down until my penis was half-exposed.

"This will hurt a little but control yourself," said the man.

... But the guy didn't harm my penis. About five centimetres below my navel, he made a perfectly straight horizontal cut about six centimetres long. The sharp knifeblade was still warm and it ate into my abdomen, running across to the right like a line drawn with a ruler. For a moment, I tried to pull in my stomach, but because I was held tight by the big guy, I couldn't move. To make matters worse, the little guy was holding on tight to my penis. I felt as if cold sweat were pouring out of every pore in my body. Then, a moment later, came a searing pain. After the little guy wiped the blood off the knifeblade with a piece of tissue, he closed up the knife, and the big guy let go of me. (translation mine HBW 1: 265-7)

Short, simple sentences predominate. Actions are shown as "a series of component movements"; for example, when the little guy cuts Boku, each step in the process, from sterilizing the blade to wiping the blood off, is described. Murakami describes Boku's reactions—the sweat pouring out of every pore—but the primary impact of this scene comes from the meticulous description of the little guy's actions. Understatement, too, is evident in such phrases as "it will suffice for general purposes" (大抵、目的には事足りる). The little guy's warning that "it will hurt a little but control yourself" (少し痛いけど我慢しろ) is reminiscent of the wisecracking tendencies of hard-boiled writers.

Murakami's version of the "objective style" is based on his reading of American paperback mysteries. At first, it was not a style he could achieve in Japanese:

I began by writing in a kind of realistic style. But when I tried to re-read my work, I could hardly bear it. So I re-thought things, and tried writing the first draft in English. When I translated it into Japanese, it had a slightly different form. If I wrote in English, I didn't know very much vocabulary, and I couldn't write long sentences. So the result was a rhythm of writing in short sentences with relatively few words.
(Murakami Ryu 246-7)³

By translating his own English drafts into Japanese, Murakami developed in his prose the distinctive features of the "objective style."

Another stratagem listed by Hamilton—"the practice of giving descriptively equal treatment to human beings and inanimate objects"—is also to be found in Murakami's prose. For example, the following passage from *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* devotes more attention to food and kitchen implements than to the human being on the phone:

When I was preparing lunch, the phone rang again.

I was standing in the kitchen. I cut some bread and spread it with butter and mustard; I put a slice of tomato and some cheese between the bread. Then I put it on the breadboard, and was about to cut it in half with the bread knife. Just then the phone rang.

After letting the phone ring three times, I sliced the bread in half with the breadknife. Then I put it on a plate, and wiped off the knife and put it back in the drawer. Then I poured the coffee I had heated up into a cup.

The phone was still ringing. I think it might have rung about fifteen times. I gave up and picked up the receiver. The last thing I wanted to do was answer the phone. But it might be Kumiko.

³ This technique seems like an extreme example of Murakami's detachment from Japanese literary tradition. However, it is worth noting that Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) tried much the same process in order to develop a colloquial style: he wrote part of one of his novels in Russian, and then translated it into Japanese (Karatani 51).

"Hello," said a woman's voice. It was a voice I didn't recognize. It wasn't my wife's voice, and it wasn't the voice of the woman who had made the strange call a while back when I was cooking spaghetti. It was another voice, the voice of a woman I did not know. (1: 58-9)

Making a tomato and cheese sandwich upstages the phone call. According to Hamilton, this attention to inanimate detail has the effect of "strip[ping] human beings of their special status and reinforc[ing] the value-set of the exchange mentality" (Hamilton 140). Hamilton's analysis gives a political charge to the emphasis on detail: it is a critique of materialism. Certainly Murakami is a deliberate critic of the "exchange mentality." In *Dance, Dance, Dance*, a novel in which corrupt land development forms one of the subplots, Murakami takes direct aim at the evils of "latter day capitalism":

Not to overstate things, financial dealings have practically become a religious activity. The new mysticism. People worship capital, adore its aura, genuflect before Porsches and Tokyo land values. Worshipping everything their shiny Porsches symbolize. It's the only stuff of myth that's left in the world. (55)

Boku is critical of everyone else's infatuation with material goods, but he too is a consumer. Descriptions of other characters frequently include detailed descriptions of their clothing or cars, complete with brand-names. Here, for example, is Boku's appraisal of the little guy who cuts him up with the knife:

This guy came in at under a meter and half, a slim, trim figure. He had on a light blue Lacoste shirt, beige chinos, and brown loafers. Had he bought the whole outfit at a nouveau riche children's haberdashery? A gold Rolex gleamed on his wrist, a normal adult model—guess they didn't make kiddie Rolexes—so it looked disproportionately big, like a communicator from *Star Trek*. (133)

It is the man's choice of clothes that tells all. Without his brand names, what would the "little guy" be? ("Lacoste," "chinos," "Rolex" and "Star Trek" are all written in *katakana*.) Murakami's focus on fashionable clothing is often regarded as a distinctively postmodern touch, but this too has its antecedents in the hard-boiled style, as the following examples from Raymond Chandler's *Playback* demonstrate:

He was California from the tips of his port wine loafers to the buttoned and tieless brown and yellow checked shirt inside his rough cream sports jacket. He was about six feet one, slender, with a thin conceited face and too many teeth. He was twisting a piece of paper in his hand. (7)

She was quite a doll. She wore a white belted raincoat, no hat, a well-cherished head of platinum hair, booties to match the raincoat, a folding plastic umbrella, a pair of blue-gray eyes that looked at me as if I had said a dirty word.... She had a pair of legs—so far as I could determine—that were not painful to look at. She wore night sheer stockings. I stared at them rather intently, especially when she crossed her legs and held out a cigarette to be lighted. “Christian Dior,” she said, reading my rather open mind. “I never wear anything else.” (2)

In assessing Hammett, Hamilton concludes that “it is [his] style which achieves the fine balance needed to prevent the reader from judging the hero’s behaviour with any certainty” (139). The “objective technique” deprives the reader of information about the hero’s emotional response to events. Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe have opinions about people and things, but they react to everything with the same degree of emotional intensity. Similarly, Boku writes about his girlfriend’s suicide and his loss of a Beachboys’s record in the same tone (*Hear the Wind Sing*); cooking spaghetti is as passionate a pastime as erotic fantasy (*The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*). The ambiguity which Hamilton claims is produced by this kind of style certainly aids Murakami in blurring the emotional centre of his novels. We do not know what really affects Boku, what really motivates his writing; we are not sure what sin he is trying to confess or what loss he is trying to forget.

Although Murakami has modelled important features of his style on the American hard-boiled detective novel, he does not write detective fiction. Alongside the elements borrowed from detective fiction, his novels contain features that could be variously classified as fantasy, science fiction, teen-age romance novel, youthful protest novel, and so on. The detective elements in his novels are merely part of a rich and chaotic mix. Tani’s description of how authors such as Umberto Eco and Thomas Pynchon (who

write what Tani calls “anti-detective novels”) use detective novel conventions applies equally well to Murakami:

The conventions of the detective novel are more exploited than renewed by these writers, who deconstruct the genre’s precise architecture into a meaningless mechanism without purpose; they parody positivistic detection. They dismantle the elegant engine Poe constructed, pulling apart the once functional machinery and removing its pieces (now the plot, now the suspense technique, now the clichéd detective) to do different things with them.... Serious novelists do not even try to “improve upon” detective fiction but rather use the form as a scrapyard from which to dig out “new” narrative techniques to be applied to the exhausted traditional novel; the detective novel clichés are like the spare pieces of an old car that cannot run any more but, if sold as parts, can still be worth something. (34)

In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, one can see clearly the relevance of Tani’s description. There is no “precise architecture”; rather, odd fragments are assembled (e.g., the death of the girl in the opening chapter; the romance with the girl with exceptional ears) that seem to be significant and yet contribute nothing to our understanding of the central intrigue. Even the “facts” that are supposed to explain the wild sheep chase turn out to (in Tani’s phrase) “parody positivistic detection”: the reader is supposed to accept that a sheep bent on world domination is the real villain. The narrative style, as discussed above, supports Boku’s role as the clichéd detective. In addition, the plot puts Boku through many steps familiar to readers of the detective novel. For example, he is summoned by a phone call, just as Philip Marlowe is when he is about to begin a new case. He receives an envelope with a cheque in it to cover his expenses on the wild sheep chase. When he wants to track down his “Subject” he conducts systematic research: in Sapporo, Boku consults books on the geography of Hokkaido and the history of sheep farming in order to locate the valley where the sheep is hiding out. He puts an ad in the classified section of the newspaper, hoping to attract the Rat’s attention. When Boku discovers sheep wool in the backseat of an abandoned Land Rover, he carefully collects it as evidence: “I pulled a tissue out of my pocket, wrapped up the debris, and put it in my breast pocket” (248). Murakami even manages to create a certain attenuated suspense when Boku waits in the remote mountain house for the return of the Sheep Man:

Something funny was going on. You could read it everywhere. Something was going to happen. (260)

Tani asserts that these detective novel clichés, when used like “spare pieces” are “still worth something.” What value do they have in Murakami’s fiction?

Murakami, in the passage quoted earlier, suggests that the figure of the detective is useful as a way of presenting an isolated character who manages to survive in a group-dominated society; one could argue, therefore, that the detective novel clichés Murakami uses simply serve to support this central character. But I believe they have an additional function. As Gilbert Murray pointed out in the much loftier context of classical drama, “[a]ll good parodies try to catch the secret of the beauty of the original” (66), and indeed, the “anti-detective novel” delivers suspense, plot, and detection at the same time that it parodies them. For example, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, one is aware that the idea of the sheep entering Rat’s body is preposterous and no solution at all to the enigma of the Rat’s disappearance, and yet the scene in which the Rat, returning from the dead, explains about the sheep does provide satisfying answers. Similarly, when Boku discovers the clipping of his classified ad in the Rat’s house, he assumes a classic deductive frame of mind:

So the Rat knew I was looking for him. Question: How had he found the item? By accident, when he’d come down off the mountain? Or maybe he’d been searching for something through several weeks’ worth of papers?

And why didn’t he contact me? Had I already checked out of the Dolphin Hotel by the time he came across it?

... I couldn’t figure out what lay at the center of this.

The Sheep Man knew something. That much was certain. (260)

Following Boku’s thought processes provides the mental enjoyment provided by the conventional detective novel, for Boku asks exactly the questions the reader is asking. (Throughout the novel, Boku’s bedtime reading is *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.) But this scene of detection is of course parodic because Boku is looking for answers from the Sheep Man, a man in sheep’s clothing (who turns out to be the dead Rat in disguise).

However parodically the detective novel conventions are used in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, they cannot be dismissed as frivolous ornament. These conventions constitute the basic framework of the novel. Even the narrative fragments that turn out to have nothing to do with the mystery acquire significance from the atmosphere created by the detective novel conventions. One reads these episodes attentively, expecting them to contain clues, though they ultimately lead nowhere. This disappointment of expectations is as much a feature of Murakami's brand of "anti-detective fiction" as are the more conventional satisfactions of suspense and resolution.

Dance, Dance, Dance, the sequel to *A Wild Sheep Chase*, also contains many elements of detective fiction. A woman is murdered: the beautiful call girl Mei is found strangled in a fancy hotel room. Two world-weary cops appear at Boku's door to question him about Mei's death. Boku stays quiet because he met Mei through his filmstar friend Gotanda whose career could not survive any sordid revelations about prostitutes. When the cops release Boku, he alerts Gotanda with a terse phone message: "'Someone's been killed,' I said. 'Someone we both know and the cops are on the move.'" (213)

Boku decides to find out for himself how Mei's death is connected to several other mysterious deaths and disappearances. He draws a diagram (included in the novel) of the people with whom he is currently entangled:

It looked like a chart of the European powers before the start of World War I. I pored over the diagram, half in admiration, half in despair. Three call girls, one too-charming-for-his-own-good actor, three artists, one budding teenage girl, and a very uptight hotel receptionist. If this was anything more than a network of casual relationships, I sure didn't see it. But it might make a good Agatha Christie novel. *By George, that's it! The Secretary did it!* Only who was laughing?

And who was I kidding? I didn't have a clue. The yarn tangled wherever you tried to unravel it. ...

"Hard nut to crack, eh, Watson?" I addressed the ashtray before me.

(295-6)

The references to Agatha Christie and Watson underline Murakami's self-conscious parody of classic detection. They also subtract from the seriousness of the novel. Although Murakami seems to want us to respond emotionally to Mei's death—he

describes her dead body in painful detail—these allusions sanitize the murder in the novel. It turns into just another joke. The reference to tangled yarn is yet another link to the classic detective novel, for the word “clue” comes from “clew,” a ball of yarn or thread—Ariadne’s thread—an etymology that Murakami, trained in classical Greek drama, would be unlikely to miss.

Despite the lines on the chart connecting the characters, things do not fit together. In a dream-like vision, Boku sees a room with six dead bodies—“Death’s waiting room in downtown Honolulu” (348). As the novel unfolds, there are enough deaths to account for five of the bodies. Who is victim number 6 — Boku himself? We are encouraged to believe that there is some pattern and that Boku is on the trail of it: “I don’t know what’s going on, but I know *something* is” (322; italics in original). But when he finally has an interview with the ghostly Kiki, all that she reveals is that the six skeletons are “you.... This is your room. Everything here is you. Yourself. Everything.” (371). Like the town at the End of the World, the whole dark mystery exists only in Boku’s mind. This unsatisfying revelation is another example of Murakami’s fondness for plots that turn in on themselves like “a kind of Möbius strip,” as Suzumura puts it (13). Murakami himself provides another image when, near the end of *Dance, Dance, Dance*, Boku describes his confusion about how all the strange events connect:

When I was little, I had this science book. There was a section on “What would happen to the world if there was no friction?” Answer: “Everything on earth would fly into space from the centrifugal force of revolution.” That was my mood. (362).

Murakami’s plot elements do not hold together as they might in a ratiocinative detective novel; instead, a kind of centrifugal narrative energy keeps dispersing them.

Murakami’s other novels contain elements of the hard-boiled style, and even certain joking references to the detective novel genre. For example, in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, paperclips show up in many places. When Boku descends into the river chasm below Tokyo to meet with the Professor, he notes that on the Professor’s desk is a scattering of paperclips identical to that in the above-ground office that gave entry to this subterranean world. When Boku first meets the librarian, he notes paperclips on her desk:

Paperclips! Everywhere I went, paperclips! What was this?

.... It seemed as if a pattern was establishing itself, but what relationship could there be between skulls and paperclips? (75-6)

Later, when Boku and the Professor's daughter trail the old man from his underground office, they track him by means of a trail of paperclips he has left. (Note 2 of this chapter indicates the fairy-tale associations with the trail of paperclips.) Paperclips, it turns out, ward off the INKlings (carnivorous underground creatures).⁴ Murakami's references to paperclips probably derive from a famous comment by Raymond Chandler on the importance of detail in the detective novel:

The things [*sic*] they remembered, that haunted them, was not for example, that a man got killed, but that in the moment of his death he was trying to pick a paper clip up off the polished surface of a desk and it kept slipping away.... (qtd. in Hamilton 153)

Murakami also makes references to rubber-soled shoes, the "gumshoe's" indispensable equipment (as defined by Poe) for following a "man of the crowd" (Poe 102; Merivale 100). In *Dance, Dance, Dance*, Boku trails the ghost of his girlfriend Kiki into an eerie building:

The whole building seemed to be empty, dead quiet. The gummy slap of my rubber soles on the linoleum steps resounded hollow through the dusty stairwell. (269)

In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, when Boku prepares to scale his neighbour's fence to investigate the possible whereabouts of his missing cat, he puts on rubber-soled shoes, as he does later when he descends into the well in search of his missing wife. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, as Boku follows a young woman down a long, long corridor, there are

⁴ In Japanese, these creatures are called *yamikuro*. This is an invented word, but both elements in it--*yami* and *kuro*--are related to words that mean darkness. INKlings is translator Birnbaum's ingenious English equivalent. Not only does it suggest darkness with the reference to ink; it also suggests the world of literary fantasy, for the Inklings were a group of Oxford writers that included C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

only two sounds: “the same staccato rhythm of her heels, followed by the melted rubber gumminess of my jogging shoes” (10).

Science Fiction

Murakami also adopts certain conventions of a second type of popular writing, science fiction. In this, he resembles other postmodernist authors who “absorb motifs and *topoi* from science fiction writing, mining science fiction for its raw materials” (McHale 65), just as, according to Tani, they use detective fiction as a scrapyard from which to dig out ‘new’ narrative techniques” (34).

Critic and translator Robert Matthew explains the success of science fiction in Japan as an outgrowth of that country’s rapid modernization: “It is the most natural thing in the world that a society that is introducing rapid technological changes should be concerned with the human consequences of such changes and the directions in which change may lead” (2). Murakami’s use of science fiction elements certainly reflects this concern with the impact of science and technology, but it would be wrong to consider his forays into science fiction as a thorough-going critique of modern Japan. Like the historical material Murakami uses, the science fiction elements are scattered, and always subordinated to the personal narrative of Boku. They are also half-hearted, for Murakami takes few pains to make his speculative technologies plausible. To use Noya Fumaki’s description of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, “even though [Murakami’s fiction] is SF-like, it is not SF” (56). Nonetheless, the science-fiction ingredients in his novels present a critique of Japanese society that is consistent with Boku’s expressed disdain for “advanced capitalism” (*Dance* 54) and with the critique of modern Japan Murakami develops through the use of historical material, such as description of the 1968 student uprisings in *Pinball, 1973*.

Of all Murakami’s works, it is *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* that most explicitly and extensively draws on the materials of science fiction. Watakushi (the first-person narrator of the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* chapters) is a Calcutec, a specialized state employee whose job is to launder data in order to foil the Semiotecs, a group of high-tech *yakuza* intent on stealing state secrets. In order to serve as a Calcutec, Watakushi has had his brain electronically altered, using technology devised by a scientist known as the Professor. (Stephen Snyder has noted the parallels between *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and William Gibson’s story “Johnny Mnemonic”: Gibson’s hero contains a chip in his

brain that enables him to be an information carrier for criminal and corporate interests [74, n.18].)

Not only can Watakushi launder data; he can also "shuffle" it, rearranging numbers for computer calculations. This technique is the invention of the Professor, who devised a way to arrest an individual's subconscious at a particular moment so that further experience would not alter it. This frozen subconscious then becomes a stable black box that can function as a scrambling/unscrambling device. Because we are largely unaware of the contents of our subconscious mind, this manipulation goes unnoticed. But while the contents of mind are frozen, the individual goes on accumulating experience. The result is that the Professor's experimental subjects (i.e., the Calcutecs like Watakushi) possess two different cognitive systems, or two sets of memories:

Cognitive system A would be on permanent hold, while the other would go on changing' ... A', A", A"', ... without a moment's pause. You'd have a stopped watch in your right pocket and a tickin' watch in your left. You can take out whichever you want, whenever you want. (258; II 83)

By implanting a junction box in the subject's brain, the Professor enables the subject to switch from one cognitive system to the other. The frozen cognitive system (the "stopped watch") serves as the black box; switching into it by means of a special five-digit code, the Calcutec can scramble or unscramble data.

In order to protect its investment in the Calcutecs, the State (known as "the System") has had the Professor make a computer visualization of the contents of each subject's cognitive system "as a kind of insurance." The Professor explains to Watakushi that he created a visualization for each consciousness, and "gave each one a title, and that title became the title of the black box. Yours is 'End of the World,' isn't it?" (263; II 91).

But the Professor cannot stop there:

I hit upon the idea of installin' another separate circuit to the junction boxes in your brains. ... And into this third circuit I'd load my edited version of your core consciousness. just t'see what effect it'd have on the subjects. I wanted t'find out how an edited consciousness put in order

by someone else would function in the original subjects themselves. (264; II 93)

Like Robert Oppenheimer, enchanted with the "technical sweetness" of the A-bomb, the Professor cannot resist the temptation to pursue his research:

Well, a scientist isn't one for controlling his curiosity. Of course, I deplore how those scientists cooperated with the Nazis conductin' vivisection in the concentration camps. That was wrong. At the same time, I find myself thinkin', if you're goin' t'do live experiments, you might as well do something a little spiffier and more productive. Given the opportunity, scientists all feel the same way at the bottom of their heart. (264)

The Professor's "spiffier and more productive" experiments result in twenty-five dead Calcutecs and one confused one, Watakushi, about to enter his own private nuclear winter—not much of a toll, compared to the work of Nazi doctors or the Manhattan project. Nonetheless, in a novel whose title evokes the apocalypse, the connection between the Professor's unrestrained curiosity and the scientific ambition of other, more dangerous scientists seems deliberate. (The example of unprincipled science that the Professor uses is a European one; but perhaps there is also an echo of similar crimes committed by Japanese doctors during the war, fictionalized in Endo Shusaku's novel, *Umi to dokyaku* 海と毒薬 (Sea and Poison, 1957; tr. 1972).

The early consequences of the Professor's experiments are minor. At first the junction boxes switch from System A to A' not just at the five-digit signal but also in response to certain smells: grape juice, for example. But ultimately there are more serious side effects: soon, of the original twenty-five subjects, all except the protagonist Watakushi are dead. Watakushi remains alive, the Professor hypothesizes, because "it seems you were operatin' under multiple cognitive systems t'begin with ... You probably had your own junction box that gave you a kind of mental immunity" (268). But he concludes that for the other subjects, "switchin' between two different cognitive systems was untenable from the very beginning as far as the brain was concerned" (267).

While Watakushi, due to his unusual mind, seems unlikely to die from the effects of the Professor's experiments, he is nonetheless at risk. He has become a prime target in the information wars between the System and the Semiotecs. The Professor tries to protect

Watakushi by conducting a further experiment, one which, if successful, will supply the System with the information they need without harm to Watakushi. The experiment involves switching Watakushi over to his third consciousness, the edited version entitled "End of the World." Unhappily, the Professor's experiments are interrupted when his underground lab is destroyed by the Semiotecs. Now Watakushi's brain is stuck on this third circuit, with no way of disengaging it. He asks the Professor to explain the situation:

"So how does all this have anything to do with the world ending?"

"Accurately speaking, it isn't this world. It's the world in your mind that's going to end."

"You've lost me," I said.

"It's your core consciousness. The vision displayed in your consciousness is the End of the World. Why you have the likes of that tucked away in there, I can't say. But for whatever reason, it's there. Meanwhile, this world in your mind here is coming to an end. Or t' put it another way, your mind will be living there, in the place called the End of the World.

"Everythin' that's in this world here and now is missin' from that world. ...

In that world of yours, people's selves are externalized into beasts."

"Beasts?"

"Unicorns," said the Professor. "You've got unicorns, herded in a town surrounded by a wall."(270)

The Professor's pseudo-technical description of consciousness (supplemented by diagrams in the text) purports to explain why two parallel stories are unfolding within a single book. Both the Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World are taking place in Watakushi's consciousness. The Hard-Boiled Wonderland is taking place in cognitive system A or Input 1, as the Professor labels it in one of his diagrams. The End of the World is Input 3, the Professor's edited version of the contents of Watakushi's consciousness. But, due to a technical foul-up, Watakushi is about to switch over permanently to Input 3.

The Professor's brain experiments literalize the metaphor of the brain as machine or computer. Watakushi's brain is not only metaphorically "hard-wired," in the psychologist's sense of being predisposed genetically to certain behaviours; his is literally wired, with circuits and junction boxes and switches. And his mind is not merely *like* a

computer. In at least some respects, it *is* one: the Professor loads his "End of the World" scenario into Watakushi's brain just as one might load software on to a hard drive.

The science fiction elements in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* satirize not only the abuses of science, but also the invasion of individual consciousness by the techno-industrial state. Like Watakushi manipulated by the Professor, ordinary citizens give up their minds to the mass media: advertising, pop music, television and movies form their aspirations, desires, and fantasies. The tremendous emphasis in Murakami's fiction (particularly the mid-80s novels, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and *Dance, Dance, Dance*) on brand names, fashion, and popular music seems another way of making this point. (For example, in his *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* life, Watakushi mentions, among other items of Western popular culture, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Otis Redding, Henry Ford, Joseph Cotten, *Casablanca*, Miles Davis, Ray Charles, Bing Crosby, Pat Boone, *tagliatelle*, Paul Stuart menswear, and Nike sporting goods.)

The short story "TV Pipuru" *TV ヒール* (TV People, tr. 1993) is a similar example of how Murakami uses science fiction motifs to deal with the theme of mass media influence on individual consciousness. The protagonist notices that undersized people carrying Sony televisions are invading his home and workplace. One day, one of the TV people steps from the protagonist's living room into the TV itself.

"We're making an airplane," says my TV people visitant....

First, there's an opening shot of a large factory interior, then it cuts to a close-up of the work space, camera centre. Two TV people are hard at work on some machine, tightening bolts with wrenches, adjusting gauges.... The machine, however, is unlike anything I've ever seen

Looks more like some kind of gigantic orange juicer than an airplane. No wings, no seats. (213)

The TV person reassures the protagonist that it is indeed an airplane: "Tomorrow we'll have it the right color. Then you'll see it's an airplane." (213). Boku is still skeptical, but as the television coverage continues, with its "clear-cut, easy-to-follow camera work," and "highly credible, convincing images," (215), his views change: "Strange as it may sound, the more I watch the flawless form of the TV people as they go about their work, the more the thing starts to look like an airplane" (215). At the end of the story, Boku notices that his own hands look smaller. He is starting to shrink to the same dimensions

as the reduced TV people. (As Susan Napier notes, this story is reminiscent of Abe Kobo's 1967 play *Tomodachi* 友達 (Friends, 1967; tr. 1977), in which a man finds his apartment invaded by a family of strangers who refuse to leave and gradually take over his life [Napier 1995, 472.]

Because of Murakami's avowed indebtedness to American popular fiction (both detective novels and science fiction), it is easy to assume that the antecedents for a novel like *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* are to be found in such writers as Raymond Chandler or Philip K. Dick. The numerous references in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* to Western literature also point to Western "high" culture authors as possible sources. Two precursors of modern science fiction get a mention in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*: H.G. Wells and Conan Doyle. So too does Jorge Luis Borges, the writer some call the architect of postmodernism, whose works, like Murakami's, combine elements of the detective novel, fantasy, and science fiction. Works by these Western writers unquestionably have an explicit bearing on the themes of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* (notably Borges' *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, Wells' *The Time Machine*, and Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*). However, the most important source for the science fiction motifs of this novel is another Japanese work, Kobo Abe's *Dai yon kanpyo-ki* 第四間氷期 (Inter Ice Age 4, 1959; tr. 1970).

Abe's novel, also a science fiction/detective/fantasy hybrid, contains many elements later used by Murakami in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*. An indirect clue to its importance lies in references that both works make to H.G. Wells. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the librarian is reading a Wells biography (Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie's *The Time Traveller*) when Watakushi first meets her. In Abe's novel, the protagonist, who has invented a predicting machine peruses a scrapbook of clippings about his invention. He quotes from one of the invention's early advocates:

H.G. Wells's Time Machine was after all child's play, for he could only grasp the transition of time by translating it spatially, although he spoke of traveling *in* time.... At last the Time Machine has become a reality. We stand now at a new turning point in the history of civilization. (7)

These references to Wells suggest that both Abe and Murakami see themselves as writing in the "scientific romance" tradition established by Wells. Murakami's link to this

tradition is made via the intermediary of Abe, for Murakami's version of time travel in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* draws heavily on Abe's version in *Inter Ice Age 4*.

On the face of it, there are many dissimilarities between *Inter Ice Age 4* and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*. The Abe book is grimly ironic: the predicting machine turns on its inventor and predicts, and therefore controls, his behaviour. It has its moments of black humour, but in contrast, Murakami's book is light-hearted, jokey, fantastic. Murakami's Professor is a quaint folk figure, given to speaking in old-fashioned, honorific Japanese. Abe's protagonist/inventor, Professor Katsumi, is a dour, pessimistic man. Abe's novel, written in 1959, resonates with Cold War tensions: the Russians have also invented a predicting machine and the Americans are trying to repress the Japanese development of a similar one in order to reduce the possibility of conflict. Murakami's novel unfolds in an ahistorical world; while there are references to student rebellions and the 70s, the time of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is uncertain and geopolitics plays no role in the novel's conflicts. Abe's protagonist is a depressingly prototypical Japanese male of his period: loyal to his employer, curt and peremptory with his wife, a stranger to his child. Murakami's protagonist is a bachelor, self-employed, without family attachments or other loyalties.

Despite these differences in tone and context, there are compelling resemblances. First, both novels turn on the idea of the divided self. In *Inter Ice Age 4*, the predicting machine usurps the personality of its inventor. It becomes a second version of the man himself. Just as the protagonist of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is divided into Watakushi and Boku, Professor Katsumi in Abe's novel becomes two men, one clinging tenaciously to the present, another resolutely committed to the future.

In both novels, a scientific quest leads to criminal behaviour. Professor Katsumi of *Inter Ice Age 4* becomes implicated in a murder because he was trailing the victim, hoping to trap him for use as a guinea pig in prediction experiments. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the Professor's desire to perfect his control of mental systems leads him to conduct unethical experiments on the protagonist and other Calcutecs.

The most important resemblance, however, lies in the image of a computer that can duplicate or control human consciousness. In *Inter Ice Age 4*, Abe imagines a self-programming machine that, on the basis of residual patterns of nerve activity in a corpse, can recreate the human consciousness that once dwelt in the body:

I got [the pathologist] to assemble the responses of the brain cells to various stimuli; I would try to have them decoded and memorized by the machine. Perhaps it would be necessary to have it digest at the same time, as a sample, the brain waves of a living man. Certainly a detailed map would be necessary; in the case of the dead body we would divide the brain into at least eight or more areas. (46)

... at last they got to the brain waves.... They stimulated the sense organs such as the eyes and ears. A receiver was lowered to the ears and a device like a pair of large-sized binoculars to the eyes; sounds and images began to come in, whereupon the eighty delicate wave ripples on the screen began to undulate violently. (48)

The parallel here with the Professor's "visualizations" in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is an obvious one. Murakami simply makes Abe's idea less macabre and more hi-tech:

It's rather involved, but t'put it simple for the layman, the tracin' system works like this: first, we input the electrical pattern given off by your conscious mind. This pattern varies slightly with each readin'. That's because your chips keep gettin' rearranged into different lines, and the lines into bundles. Some of these rearrangements are quantifiably meaningful; others not so much. The computer distinguishes among them, rejects the meaningless ones, and the rest get mapped as a basic pattern. (261)

The parallel also extends to the relationship that develops between man and machine. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, because the implanted junction box malfunctions, Watakushi is stuck in the "End of the World," the consciousness created by the Professor and his computer. Watakushi's mind becomes a mind created by a machine. In *Inter Ice Age 4*, the predicting machine ultimately usurps the mental life of the protagonist. Early on, Katsumi senses that he possesses an enemy, but only near the end of the book does the enemy reveal himself:

"You don't get it, do you.... This isn't me. It's you yourself. I am you!" (149)

"I have no actual body.... But I possess reliability and certainty that go beyond perception. I know what's going on in your thoughts long before you think them. No matter how you may try to behave independently, you can't take a single step outside the prearranged program in me." (149)

The enemy is the predicting machine that has absorbed the consciousness of Katsumi himself. A lab assistant named Tamonogi has conspired with the predicting machine to do this, but it is the machine itself which is controlling events. The central character feels "a confusion ... comparable to a disagreeably bitter sense of despair as if in a dream I had become a dead soul, hovering near the ceiling, looking down at my own corpse" (148-9). He is now "a dead soul"; his body is now a "corpse," animated by a machine. The parallels between this scene and passages in Murakami's *Dance, Dance, Dance* are striking. For example, when the ghost of Kiki leads Boku into the dream room in Honolulu, she shows him six skeletons; one of these is possibly Boku's own. She later reveals in another dream that the six skeletons are "you... This is your room. Everything here is you. Yourself. Everything" (371).

While *Inter Ice Age 4* (unlike the works of Wells, Borges, and Conan Doyle) is never explicitly mentioned in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the similarities in theme and motifs strongly suggest a connection between the two works. Murakami has expressed some interest in Abe:

... the three main writers of the generation preceding mine are Mishima, Kobo Abe and Kenzaburo Oe. Among them I would have to say I like Abe best and Mishima least. (McInerney 28)

This cautious statement is a long way from acknowledging influence or indebtedness, but it does leave open the clear possibility that Abe's scientific romances are precursors of Murakami's own.

Menippean Satire and Parody

The link between the Menippean satire and Murakami's parodies of popular fiction is twofold. First, parody, according to Bakhtin, is "an integral element in Menippean satire" (127). Parody is an ambivalent, carnivalized mode that destroys the dignity and

wholeness of whatever it imitates: it is “an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees” (127). Even though the modes Murakami parodies are hardly serious or tragic, his mock detective novels and science fiction spoofs contribute to the feeling of dislocation in his fiction. The actions of his “detectives” do not produce solutions to any crimes. In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, his science fiction elements do not explain any mysteries; instead, what begins as a technical slip-up turns into a metaphysical labyrinth.

The second way in which these popular fiction parodies are linked to the Menippean satire is through the “adventure-story” plot. Both the detective novel and science fiction can provide an “*extraordinary situation* for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea” (114; italics in the original). In the detective novel vein, Murakami introduces missing people, political conspiracies, industrial espionage, rape, and murder; in a science fiction mode, he uses the trope of the cybernetic brain implant. These topoi or devices place Boku in “extraordinary situations” — situations that require him to discover his own strengths and confront the “other world” of death, magic, and fate.

Chapter 11

Other Worlds

Critics frequently refer to Murakami's use of the trope of parallel worlds (e.g., Rubin 494, Suzumura 57; Noya 56). Looking at the structure of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* in particular, one could readily conclude that this is indeed its dominant trope. The novel is made up of two stories: *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and *End of the World*. The protagonist is two men: "Watakushi" and "Boku." He is also himself and his Shadow. Characters in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* have their counterparts in the *End of the World*: two female librarians, two wise old men, two savage bullies.

A Wild Sheep Chase and *Dance, Dance, Dance* also use similar tropes. For example, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, when Boku examines himself in the mirror (discussed above on p. 183) he sees the mirror and the world in which he himself stands as two separate realms. In *Dance, Dance, Dance*, the ghost of Kiki leads Boku into a building in Honolulu which contains six skeletons; she walks through the wall of this building and disappears. The room in Honolulu is attached to the real world, in that Boku runs along an ordinary street to gain access to it, yet it does not follow the rules of ordinary physical reality.

But none of these represents, strictly speaking, a "parallel" world. A parallel world exists alongside a "real" or unitary fictional one; both the real and the parallel world have equal ontological status, and, like the parallel rails of a train track, do not meet or join. Murakami's multiple worlds, however, intersect, join, blend together, appear, and disappear.

The result is "an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural," to use Brian McHale's phrase for "the postmodernist condition" (37). According to McHale, "[w]hat postmodernist fiction imitates, the object of its mimesis, is the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cultures" (38). This landscape is represented not only by heteroglossia—by the speech of various elements in the pluralistic landscape; it is also represented by a literalization of the metaphor of "worlds in the plural."

The trope of “other worlds” or alternate realities is much documented in literature on postmodernism. Brian McHale calls it “the zone,” a “heterotopian space of postmodernist writing” in which “a large number of fragmentary possible worlds coexist in an impossible space” (45). Scott Bukatman, writing on postmodernist science fiction, borrows a term coined by writer and critic Samuel Delany: *paraspaces*. Delany defines it as “an alternate space, sometimes largely mental, but always materially manifested, that sits beside the real world, and in which language is raised to an extraordinarily lyric level” (Bukatman 157). Linda Hutcheon describes the “interzone”—the “space in between”—as “the postmodernist space *par excellence*” (*Likely Stories* 12).

The main spatial quality associated with the Menippean satire is what Bakhtin calls a “three-planed construction” of Earth, Olympus, and the Underworld. Other critics such as Kirk and Frye are less definite on this matter, although the many examples of Lucianic satire cited by Kirk as representing the Menippean tradition in the Renaissance do, of course, carry on the idea of the Underworld as an important setting in the Menippean satire. While the particular “other world” evoked in the Menippean satire may resemble the alternate spaces in other postmodernist writing (e.g., the zone, *paraspaces*, or the interzone), it is clearly identified with the Underworld or world of the dead.

This dual ontology—the everyday world and the world of the dead—seems to be the pattern employed by Murakami. It makes its first appearance in Murakami’s second novel, *Pinball*, 1973. The allusion in the opening pages to conversations with “a guy from Saturn and another from Venus” (6) alerts the reader that something more than ordinary reality is to be included in the landscape of this novel. There are no further extraterrestrial references, but the relationship that develops between the protagonist and a certain 3 Flipper Spaceship pinball machine becomes a similar violation of normal reality. The machine goes missing, and the novel is ostensibly an account of Boku’s search for it. When he finally tracks the machine to the secret warehouse of a pinball collector, the encounter verges on the romantic:

So how’s tricks, I said ... or maybe I didn’t say it.. But in any case, I laid my hand on the glass top. Cold as ice, it clouded over from the heat of my hand, leaving the white outline of ten fingers. Only then did she recognize me and smile up in my direction. It was a smile just like old times. I smiled, too.

It seems so long, she said. I feigned a preoccupied look, and flexed my fingers. Three years it's been. Like no time at all.

We nodded to each other, then fell into a hush. If it had been a coffee shop, we'd have sipped our coffee and fingered the lace curtains. (160; ellipsis in original)

This rendezvous takes place on a former chicken farm, in the building where the chicken carcasses were kept. Now it is home to seventy-eight decommissioned pinball machines:

It'd be hard to find a more disturbing structure.

The kindest thing you could have said about the place was that it was reminiscent of an elephants' graveyard. But instead of the whitened skeletons of elephants with legs collapsed under them, the concrete floor was covered as far as the eye could see with rows of pinball machines....

The whole place was as motionless as a fly sealed in acrylic. Not the slightest hint of movement. Seventy-eight deaths and seventy-eight silences.

Cold. That and the smell of dead chickens. (154-5)

The warehouse is one of what Suzumura calls the "fatal dead spaces" (10) in Murakami's fiction, a manifestation of the world of the dead, just like the town at the End of the World in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the farmhouse in Hokkaido in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the room in Honolulu in *Dance, Dance, Dance*, and the well in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. Boku likens it to an elephants' graveyard, a striking image that recurs in a different context in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* when the Professor is attempting to explain the mystery of human consciousness:

...we all carry around this great unexplored 'elephant graveyard' inside us. Outer space aside, this is truly humanity's last terra incognita. (256)

In English, "elephant graveyard" sounds like gratuitous whimsy. But in Japanese, the character for "elephant" 象 can also mean sign or symbol. If one thinks of the "elephant graveyard" of the mind as a place where signs and symbols collect, then the analogy suggests a resting place for the residue of past experience, a graveyard of memories. The pinball warehouse might be a real building, but it also is a structure in Boku's mind, and,

like the elephant graveyard in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, it is made of “countless memories and bits of knowledge” (HBW 256).

The pinball machines with their images of superannuated movie stars and superheroes come to life briefly when Boku turns on the electricity, but their animation is temporary. Boku knows that the warehouse is “a graveyard of old, old dreams beyond recall” (158). His encounter here with his beloved 3 Flipper Spaceship is a visit to the underworld, a farewell to a departed spirit.

In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, several spaces or places represent incursions of the world of the dead into ordinary reality. First among these is the house in the wilds of Hokkaido where Boku tracks down his missing friend, the Rat. On the way up to the house, the caretaker who is driving Boku and his girlfriend leaves them at a curve in the road — the “dead man’s curve” (233). Here a trickle of water crosses the road and the softened, loose rock is dangerous: “Even the sheep are afraid of it.” (232). From this point, they proceed on foot; the trickle of water is perhaps an attenuated version of the Styx, the body of water that must be crossed in order to enter the Underworld.

The house up on the mountain plain has many attributes of the haunted house: it is “an old American-style two-story wood-frame house,” with blistering paint and overgrown garden. There are signs of recent habitation—the grandfather clock has been wound, there are groceries in the kitchen— but the house is empty. The dusty dining room looks like “the vacant aftermath of a room” (241). The house exists in a time zone of its own: “The house kept its own time” (241). Soon after arriving, Boku’s girlfriend mysteriously disappears, leaving him alone. The house is the classic “gothic enclosure,” Rosemary Jackson’s term for a space where the fantastic intrudes into everyday reality (46-7).

Two visitors appear. First is the Sheep Man, a short man-like creature dressed in a sheep costume, but with real horns protruding from the hood. Not only is his appearance peculiar — what is he, man or sheep? — but he speaks a strange dialect; moreover, when Boku looks in the mirror, he realizes that the room is reflected, but not the Sheep Man sitting in the room. The Sheep Man belongs to some intermediate realm, not quite of this world, but not wholly of any other one.

The Sheep Man tries to make Boku leave, but he is determined to stay until the Rat appears. When the Rat finally does come, his opening words clarify which world he

belongs to: "I hanged myself from a beam in the kitchen" (280). The Rat, it turns out, is also the Sheep Man. He explains why he chased Boku's girlfriend away:

"I meant this to be an in-group party.... We should never have allowed her to get mixed up in this. As you know very well, the girl's got amazing powers. Still, she wasn't meant to come here. The place is far beyond even her powers." (285)

If the house is "far beyond even" the clairvoyant powers of Boku's girlfriend, then clearly it belongs to some otherworldly domain.

The morning after the Rat's visit, Boku packs to leave: "The room took on a forlorn air. Everything was coming to an end." (289). When he finally makes it back down the road, past "the unlucky bend in the road" (290), to the village of Junitaki, he feels relief that he has "made it back to the land of the living" (292).

Murakami also invokes another world in *A Wild Sheep Chase*—the worm universe¹:

There are symbolic dreams—dreams that symbolize some reality. Then there are symbolic realities—realities that symbolize a dream. Symbols are what you might call the honorary town councillors of the worm universe. In the worm universe, there is nothing unusual about a dairy cow seeking a pair of pliers. A cow is bound to get her pliers sometime. It has nothing to do with me. (66)

As he is being driven to the Boss's estate, Boku dreams of a cow looking for a pair of pliers; when he arrives at the estate, he feels has come to "the epicenter of the worm universe" (66-7). Since it is here that he will be forced into undertaking "the wild sheep chase," the chase must be some kind of "symbolic reality"—an event in the worm universe, governed by symbols—"the honorary town councillors." The worm universe is

¹ The reference to worms possibly derives from the concept of the "wormhole," a hypothetical passage leading from a black hole into a white hole. If wormholes exist, then they could conceivably provide a means of long-distance space travel. See Stephen Hawking's *Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays* (London: Transworld-Bantam, 1993), 119-120.

a manifestation of the Möbius-strip-like structure that Suzumura identifies in Murakami's fiction:

Murakami Haruki's fiction is not constructed with an absolute, ultimate exit from "I" to "the other," from one world to another world. There is an exit, but when you pass through it, the other side [mukogawa] is still this side.... When one reads Murakami Haruki, it is a matter of tracing together with Boku this kind of Möbius strip— no goal, no reason, let alone any solution to the puzzle. (11)

The wild sheep chase is both in the ordinary world and in the "worm universe" of symbols. It is impossible to find the boundary between these two realms, for one leads into the other.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, the two realms—the Hard-boiled Wonderland and the town at the End of the World—seem distinct. But they too are joined and interconnected. The town at the End of the World is in Boku's consciousness — which is in his body, which is in the Hard-boiled Wonderland. So the Hard-boiled Wonderland contains the End of the World. And when the Shadow leaves the End of the World, he plunges into the whirlpool that connects the two realms. This impossible topography—two separate worlds, one inside the other, one joined to the other through a vortex—again returns us to the illogical geometry of the Möbius strip.

Furthermore, within the Hard-boiled Wonderland, there is also a subsidiary realm—a zone underneath Tokyo— which Murakami specifically identifies as the underworld. To escape it and return to the above-ground world requires swimming across an underground lake:

I was swimming. Orpheus ferried across the Styx to the Land of the Dead. All the varieties of religious experience in the world, yet when it comes to death, it all boils down to the same thing. At least Orpheus didn't have to balance laundry on his head. The ancient Greeks had style. (298; II:147)

Suzumura Kazunari finds the reference to Orpheus significant:

It certainly might be possible to interpret *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* in terms of the structure of the Orpheus myth. Here all the elements are present to lead to that interpretation—the descent to the underworld (Hades), music, the disappearance of sunlight, plus the women who draw near ... to both Boku and Watakushi. (119)

There are indeed many ways in which Watakushi's journey with the Professor's granddaughter parallels Orpheus and Eurydice's ascent to the daylight, even though the Orphic parallels are not always direct. Murakami often jumbles them and mixes in assorted other classical motifs.

The girl's description of the terrain makes it clear that this is an underworld, not just literally in the sense of a zone under Tokyo, but in the sense of a Hades or hell:

"This place is a Pandora's box sealed over by the earth's crust. Filth was concentrated here. And we're going to pass right through the center of it."

"You make it sound like hell."

"You said it." (213)

As they make their way through the darkness, Watakushi notes regretfully, "I can't play any musical instrument" (213), a lament that links him with Orpheus. When the girl asks Watakushi to sing, he replies, "I don't sing in dark places" (214).

In Murakami's crazy quilt of allusions, patterns get reversed. On the long climb up the sacred mountain, Watakushi falls asleep, and the girl has to slap him awake.

"If I hadn't looked back, you probably would have slept there for ... for ages."

"Ages?"

"Yes, that's right. You'd have been a goner..." (218).

The woman looks back, and instead of consigning her companion to the underworld, as Orpheus did Eurydice, she awakens him and saves him. The Orphic story then is overlaid with a reference to the myth of Ariadne and the Labyrinth: "You have rope in your knapsack, don't you?" asks the girl. When Watakushi produces some, she ties them together "so we won't get separated" (219).

The many references to music—classical, pop, jazz— in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* also contribute to its Orphic subtext. Perhaps the most important occurs when Watakushi of the Hard-boiled Wonderland spends his last night at the apartment of the librarian (whose husband was a jazz aficionado). At the end of the evening, Bing Crosby singing "Danny Boy" provides an elegaic note. "Danny Boy" also appears in the End of the World chapters. In the town at the End of the World, Boku discovers a disused accordion but cannot remember any music to play on it; there are no melodies in his mind. Then, he remembers "Danny Boy":

The title brings back the song: chords, notes, harmonies now flow naturally from my fingertips. I play the melody again.

When have I last heard a song? My body has craved music. (368-9)

The music returns to Boku and the librarian the human quality they lacked:

My search has been a long one. It has taken me to every corner of this walled Town, but at last I have found the mind we have lost. (370)

Music works an Orphic magic here, for it brings the dead town to life. Just as Orpheus was able to charm Pluto into releasing Eurydice, Boku, with his accordion, is able to charm himself and the librarian into having feelings, memory, and mind once more.

Disappearance of the daylight, which Suzumura also mentions as an Orphic motif, certainly occurs during the underground journey. As Watakushi and the plump girl in pink traverse the subterranean paths, they need a light, both to frighten off the INKlings and to find their way. Sunlight also disappears in the End of the World chapters: Boku's eyes are put out when he enters the town.

Perhaps the strongest link to Orpheus is through the tradition of Orpheus as the musician/poet. As Suzumura points out, the protagonist(s) of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is strongly identified with literature:

[Boku], who bears the mark of the dream reader, recalls to the reader the existence of the novelist. Rather than novelist, here it might be better to say poet. Boku possesses the qualities of a poet in the extremely old meaning of a teller of

ballads. Boku recovers from his sense of loss for a world where the sunlight has disappeared through a song, a song played on an old-fashioned musical instrument, an accordion. (119)

If we see the protagonist as a musician/poet, it is possible to interpret *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* as a parable about writing—about how writers become trapped in worlds of their own making.

While Murakami's underworld motifs have a predominantly classical (Greek) tinge, there are also references to a Japanese myth of the underworld: the story of Izanami and Izanagi. The *Nihon Shoki* recounts how the deity Izanagi travelled to the underworld—the *yomi no kuni*—to be reunited with his dead sister-wife, Izanami. But when he found her, she was hideous. Her body was decayed, her flesh was rotting. Izanagi fled, and Izanami pursued him. When he reached the Level Pass of Yomi, the dividing place between this world and the world of the dead, Izanagi blocked the entrance to the underworld with a stone so that his dead wife could not follow him back into the world of the living.

Izanagi is a creative deity: from his discarded clothes spring up various other gods. But unlike Orpheus, he has no particular associations with poetry and music; perhaps this is why Orpheus features more clearly in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* than does Izanagi. However, there are some details that suggest Izanagi: for example, the leeches that infest the underground sanctuary recall the squirming maggots in Izanami's putrefying body.

Lest it seem far-fetched to link this postmodern novel to ancient Japanese myth, Murakami's short story "Odoru kobito" 踊る小人 (1984, *The Dancing Dwarf*; tr. 1993) makes unmistakable reference to the story of Izanami and Izanagi. The hero makes a Faustian bargain with a mysterious dwarf: the dwarf will give him the power to dance and thus attract a beautiful woman. But if the hero speaks, the dwarf will take over his body. The hero successfully uses his dancing ability to seduce the woman he desires without having to say a word:

I kissed her on the lips and drew back from her, looking at her face once again. She was beautiful, as beautiful as a dream. I still could not believe I had her in my arms like this. She closed her eyes, waiting for me to kiss her again.

That was when her face began to change. A fleshy white thing crept out of one nostril. It was a maggot, an enormous maggot ... Then came another and another, emerging from both her nostrils, and suddenly the stench of death was all around us. (262-3)

In this story, embracing the decaying flesh saves the protagonist. He does not recoil from the woman's corpse. He kisses it, knowing that only by facing the fact of her loss can he save his own life.

Norwegian Wood, unlike Murakami's other novels, does not present a landscape of various ontological realms. It stays safely within a single fictional world, even though the novel is suffused with death and loss, themes which in his other novels lead consistently to an "other world" or underworld. Perhaps this difference can be explained by a quasi-metaphysical proposition Boku offers early in the novel:

But however much I cleared away, I was left with great lumps of void, of empty space. Then as time went on, these lumps began to assume a simple form, a form I can transpose into words.

Death exists not as the opposite of life but as a part of it. (I:48; italics in original)

Norwegian Wood is a predominantly realistic novel; the Menippean topos of the descent to the underworld is clearly not appropriate.

In *Dance, Dance, Dance*, however, Murakami returns to representing death as a separate space or world. This world of the dead is made manifest in three ways: the Dolphin Hotel; a film in which Boku's vanished girlfriend Kiki makes a brief appearance; and a room in Honolulu.

In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku first made contact with the Sheep Professor at the Dolphin Hotel in Sapporo; it was at the hotel that he first got on the trail of the Rat and the sheep. When Boku returns to Sapporo in *Dance, Dance, Dance*, he finds that "an enormous Bauhaus-style twenty-six-storey building with modern curves and large areas of glittering glass and stainless steel" (1:50) has been erected on the site of the old Dolphin Hotel. To all appearances, the new Hôtel Dauphin, with its lobby the size of a

gymnasium, shopping arcade, indoor pool, health club and so on, is a “super A-class sumptuous hotel” (1:60). But inside there is something incongruous: a corridor from the old Dolphin Hotel, and the lair of the Sheep Man. It is a receptionist from the hotel who first discovers it: she steps out one night onto the sixteenth floor expecting to enter the staff lounge, but instead plunges into total darkness. Even the air is different from the carefully controlled air of the Dauphin Hotel: it is “musty, like the smell when you open up the old storehouse when visit your grandparents in the country” (1:82). One night, Boku too steps off the elevator of the Hôtel Dauphin into “jet black darkness”; the air is “chill and musty”; he feels himself “standing paralysed, alone, the darkness” (1:130). Like the receptionist, Boku is terrified:

Where on earth am I? It’s not the Hôtel Dauphin. No mistake about that. This is some absolutely different place. I’ve crossed over something and ended up in this strange place. (1:133 translation mine)

He moves down the corridor and knocks on a door, and the Sheep Man—the half-man, half-sheep creature from *A Wild Sheep Chase*—answers. The Sheep Man explains that his room, which resembles the Sheep Professor’s archive from the old Dolphin Hotel, exists for Boku:

“It’s all right. Don’t worry. You are truly part of the Dolphin Hotel,” the Sheep Man said quietly. “Up to now you have been part of it and from now on you will be part of it. Everything starts from here, everything ends here. This is your place, and that won’t change. You are tied to here. This place is tied to everything. This is your knot.” (1:145; translation mine)

The Sheep Man repeatedly tells Boku that “[t]his is a world that exists for you” (1:147), just as the Shadow tells Boku in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* that “[y]ou yourself created this Town” (399). When Boku asks, “Is this the world of the dead?” (1:154), the Sheep Man asserts that it is not, and that he himself is alive (even though he last appeared in *A Wild Sheep Chase* as an avatar of the definitely dead Rat). But the realm of the Sheep Man is not part of the ordinary world; it exists apart from “the outside world” (1:141), apart from the “real world” to which Boku returns via the elevator (1:155). The corridor with its “jet black darkness” is an intermediate zone between life and death.

The second otherworldly place is a B-movie in which Kiki, Boku's missing girlfriend, appears, along with Boku's old school friend, Gotanda. Having glimpsed Kiki in the movie, Boku looks up Gotanda, hoping he knows her whereabouts. But Kiki has vanished. The only place Boku can find her is in the film, which he sees time and time again.

The third otherworldly place in *Dance, Dance, Dance* is the room where Boku is led by the ghost of Kiki. After failing to trace Kiki through Gotanda, Boku suddenly glimpses her as he drives down a back street in Honolulu. He leaps out of his car and follows her several blocks to a building:

No one was in the foyer, and the elevator door was just shutting. It was an old elevator, the kind with a clock-like dial that told you what floor it was on. ... Eight. She'd gotten off on eight. I pressed the button, then impulsively decided to take the stairs instead.

The whole building seemed to be empty, dead quiet. The gummy slap of my rubber soles on the linoleum steps resounded hollow through the dusty stairwell.

The eighth floor wasn't any different. Not a soul in sight. I looked left and right and saw nothing to suggest life. (269)

The cinematic quality of this scene—the “gumshoe” pursuing his subject up the stairwell—fits with the film motif associated with Kiki, whose only appearance in the “ordinary world” in *Dance, Dance, Dance* is as a minor player in a B-movie. The many references to death, or the absence of life, in this description foreshadow what Boku will find.

The sound of Kiki's high heels suddenly precipitates Boku out of this world:

All of a sudden, I was wandering through the labyrinthine viscera of a large organism. Long-dead, cracked, eroded. By something beyond reality, beyond human rationality, I had slipped through a fault in time and entered this ... thing. (269; ellipsis in original)

Then he enters a room that opens on to a stairwell. He climbs “into what became total black darkness” and finds a door to another room (270). In this room is an assortment

of furniture: "The stage had been set as if by centrifuge, surreal but real" (270). Sitting "in natural positions" on the furniture are six skeletons. Kiki is gone. He hears footsteps again, but cannot locate them: "As far as I could see, this room was a dead end" (271). The six skeletons turn out to represent the people who die in this novel or in its predecessor, *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

When Gotanda the film star kills himself (after confessing to the murder of Kiki and perhaps of the call girl Mei), Boku takes stock:

Four down, two to go. Sooner or later, bleached white bones ferried to that room via some impossible architecture. Death's waiting room in downtown Honolulu, connected to the dark chill lair of the Sheep Man in a Sapporo hotel, connected to the Sunday morning bedroom where Gotanda lay with Kiki. (348-9)

Murakami's reference to "impossible architecture" suggests his ambition to create an Escher-like image of irresolvable contradictions. He does, but in an ultimately conventional way, for these three realms in *Dance, Dance, Dance* remain on the same narrative level—Boku's story. Other postmodernist novelists create "impossible architecture" by violating narrative hierarchies: characters slip from frame-story to embedded narrative, from paintings into action, from action into "stills" (McHale 118-9). Such "tangled hierarchies" (to use Douglas Hofstadter's term for Escher's prints) represent a much more radical attack on narrative than Murakami, faithful to his Boku, attempts here.

Furthermore, Murakami ultimately contains all the otherworldly spaces within the frame of a realistic fiction: he explains them as dreams. When Boku returns to the "big empty death chamber in downtown Honolulu," it is via a dream or "some act akin to dreaming" (369). In the dream, the six skeletons are gone. Kiki appears, explaining that "[i]t was you who called yourself. .. I'm merely a projection. .. I'm your shadow. I'm not anything more." (370). She asserts that although she was strangled by the film star Gotanda, she is not dead:

"I just disappeared. I do that. I move into another world, a different world. Like boarding a train running parallel." (370)

She then walks through a wall, inviting Boku to follow. He does, and finds himself back in his own apartment, holding the telephone: "I put the receiver to my ear, but the line is dead" (373).

At the end of the novel, Boku returns to the Hôtel Dauphin and, with the receptionist Yumiyoshi (now his lover), enters once more the Dolphin Hotel corridor. The Sheep Man is not there. As Yumiyoshi and Boku examine his papers, Boku lets go of her hand.

I rushed to grab Yumiyoshi by the wrist. *If we don't let go, we'll be safe.* But it was already too late. At the very moment I extended my hand, her body was absorbed into the wall. Just like Kiki had passed through the wall of the death chamber. (390; italics in original)

Yumiyoshi's disappearance seems reminiscent of Eurydice's: like Eurydice, she enters the world of the dead because of her lover's carelessness. Yumiyoshi urges Boku to follow, but he at first resists:

"Don't be tricked. You think it's simple, but you'll never get back. It's different over there. That's the otherworld. It's not like here." (391)

He then succumbs, and, passing through the wall, enters a realm where "time wavered, sequentiality twisted, gravity lost its force Flesh melted to the bone and blew away like dust" (391).

Murakami takes the easy way out: the next thing we know, Boku "emerge[s] through this layer of chaos, naked, in bed" (391). It was only a dream; he and Yumiyoshi are safely back in their room in the Hôtel Dauphin.

Murakami's preoccupation with the boundary zone between life and death, between the "real world" and the "other world," has a certain relationship to his fragmentary, polyphonic style. One way to categorize his fiction is as a kind of "carnivalized literature":

... carnivalized literature is heterogeneous and flagrantly "indecorous," interweaving disparate styles and registers.... carnivalized literature interrupts the text's ontological "horizon" with a multiplicity of inserted

genres—letters, essays, theatrical dialogues, novels-within-the novel, and so on. Carnivalized literature, in other words, is characterized by stylistic heteroglossia and recursive structure—features we are already familiar with in postmodernist fiction. (McHale 172)

Murakami's texts possess the "stylistic heteroglossia" of carnivalized literature; moreover, they employ a plot type frequently found in that literature:

The typical plot of carnivalized narrative is that of a picaresque adventure-story in which the *pícaro* seeks not social and economic advancement, or not only that, but answers to "ultimate questions." This philosophical pursuit of ultimate questions lead the *pícaro* to the very limits of his world, or even beyond them. He visits heaven, hell, or other planets, and engages in "threshold dialogues" with inhabitants of those worlds. (172)

Boku's conversations with the pinball machine, with the Professor in his underground lab, with the Saturnian and Venusian, with the ghost of Kiki, with the ghost of the Rat, with the Sheep Man and with the Sheep Professor are all threshold dialogues; the place where Boku meets these interlocutors is the boundary between life and death, between this world and the underworld.

When all these elements in Murakami's fiction are taken together— "stylistic heteroglossia," the picaresque adventure story, the journey to the limits of the world, the threshold dialogues— the net result, of course, is something that resembles very closely the Menippean satire.

Chapter 12

The Wind-up Bird Chronicles

Introduction

The Wind-up Bird Chronicles, Murakami's most serious and sustained work to date, is also the one which most strongly conforms to the conventions of the Menippean satire. Fantasy, heteroglossia, inserted genres, ultimate questions, unusual states of mind, oxymoronic contrasts, the descent to the underworld, threshold dialogues, documentary (but satiric) treatment of contemporary life—all these Menippean traits are readily identifiable.

The Wind-up Bird Chronicles has one central story—Boku's attempt to find his missing wife, Kumiko—but, over the course of three volumes, this central story is interwoven with numerous other narratives. In order to discuss the Menippean qualities of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, it is necessary to provide at least an outline of this very long novel and its numerous tributary stories.

The opening chapter of Volume 1 introduces Boku's wife Kumiko; Wataya Noboru, Boku's missing cat, named after Kumiko's older brother; an unnamed woman who makes erotic phone calls to Boku (interrupting him while he is trying to cook spaghetti); and Masahara Mei, a teenaged girl who lives in a neighbouring house.¹ Boku meets Mei when he ventures along a blocked-up lane behind his house in search of the missing cat. The "wind-up bird" also makes its appearance in the opening chapter:

From the grove of trees in our neighbourhood, we can hear a bird song; it's a series of "giii" that sounds just like a spring being wound up. We call it the "wind-up bird"; it was Kumiko who gave it that name. I don't know its real name. I don't know what it looks like. But, nevertheless, every day the wind-up bird comes from that nearby grove of trees and winds up the spring of the quiet world we belong to. (1:14)²

¹This chapter was originally published in 1986 as the short story "Nejimakidori to kayobi no onna" (*The Wind-up Bird and Tuesday's Women*, tr. 1993).

²All translations from *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* are my own.

When Mei complains about Boku's boring name — Okada Toru— he invents for himself a nickname: "Nejimakidori san" (1:113). As the novel progresses, the cast gradually swells, but four characters —Boku, Kumiko, Wataya Noboru (the man), and Mei— remain central.

Soon added to the cast is a psychic named Kano Maruta (Malta). On his first meeting with her, Boku asks Malta why his cat has suddenly disappeared. "I cannot tell you for sure but perhaps it's because the flow has changed. Through some connection, the flow has been blocked." (1:80) Malta is especially interested in water: she went to Malta to research the water there (hence her adopted name) (99).

A second psychic enters the scene: a deaf old man named Honda. A veteran of the Nomonhan Incident, Honda is greatly esteemed by Kumiko's family as a fortuneteller (1:88).³ Honda, like Maruta, has a significant message for Boku:

When it is time to go up, climb to the top of the tallest tower; when it is time to go down, find the deepest well and go to the bottom of it. If there is no flow [*nagare*], it is best to sit still and do nothing. If you oppose the flow, everything dries up. If everything dries up, this world turns to darkness. (1:94).

Honda also foreshadows the troubles that lie ahead for Boku: "It is hard to wait for the flow to come out, but you must wait. While you are waiting, it would be better to be dead" (1:96).

³ In early May, 1939, troops of the Mongolian People's Republic crossed the Halha River and harassed a small Japanese garrison at Nomonhan, "a remote speck in the boundless steppes" (Harris 264). The Kwantung Army then moved a division up to Nomonhan in order to retaliate. The Soviets responded with almost twice the force of the Japanese, and with much more sophisticated military equipment. The Soviets, led by Marshal Zhukov, devastated the Japanese: of a force of 56 000 Japanese soldiers, 8500 were killed, and a similar number injured. A ceasefire was finally called on August 22, 1939. It was a frightening defeat for the Japanese, rendered even more so by the news on the following day that the Germans and the Russians had signed a non-aggression pact; there would be no help from the Axis powers when the Japanese became engaged in a full-scale war with the Soviets.

In chapter 5, Boku (donning his rubber-soled shoes) enters the lane to search again for the missing cat. Mei finds him standing in the yard of a vacant house that, like her house and Boku's house, backs on to the lane; although the Miyawaki family left some time ago, the vacant house is still known as the Miyawaki house. Mei asks him, "Hey, Nejimakidori san, do you want to see a well?" (1: 120). She shows him the abandoned well by the side of the house. When he draws close to inspect it, he sees that "it was made in a much older time" even than the somewhat run-down empty house: "Perhaps long before the house was built, the well was here." (1:121). Like the old corridor where the Sheep Man lives in the Dauphin Hotel of *Dance, Dance, Dance*, the well has a "musty smell" (1:121). Mei tosses a fragment of burnt tile down the well: "A little later, I could hear a small dry sound. That was all." (1:122). When Boku sees the well in the garden of the abandoned house, he remembers Honda's advice (1:122).

Boku's brother-in-law Wataya Noboru is next to appear. An economist and media pundit known for his pronouncements on the issues of the day, Noboru is, in Boku's view a "chameleon .. [who] changes his colours according to his opponent's colours" (140). Boku keeps encountering him in the media:

I don't have a television at home. But the weird thing is that every time I happen to see a television screen someplace, there's always Wataya Noboru holding forth about something. (1:148)

Boku admits that "maybe the fact is that I hate Wataya Noboru" (148).

Next, Kano Crete appears at Boku's home. Like her sister, Crete has taken the name of a Mediterranean island and is interested in water. She seems to be stuck in the 1960s: "If *American Graffiti* had been set in Japan, Kano Crete could have been an extra" (153). Crete has come to report her sister's views that Boku's problems are not limited to his missing cat: "This could turn out to be a longer story than it appears" (158).

Boku then has his first glimpse of the "other world." In a dream, he meets Malta in the bar of a hotel; Malta disappears. Boku orders a Cutty Sark scotch, and then a man with

no face appears. The man leads Boku to Room 208 where Crete is awaiting him.⁴ It is an erotic dream. Things are going well when suddenly Boku stops Crete: "Wataya Noboru is coming here soon. It would be terrible if we bumped into him here. I don't want to meet that man in this kind of place" (188). The dream ends. The elements introduced in this dream will recur in the subsequent "other world" experiences Boku has.

From his uncle who owns the house where he and Kumiko live, Boku learns that before the Miyawaki family owned the empty house, it had been the property of a military man. During the war, this man had seen distinguished service in North China, but there were also rumours about war crimes that occurred under his command: prisoners of war were executed, and thousands of peasants died in forced labour camps (213). After the war, he shot himself rather than be tried by the Americans.

Meanwhile, Boku receives frequent phone calls from an anonymous woman. They are always erotic phone calls. In one of her calls, she makes this observation that foreshadows Boku's descent into the well: "We have all come from the mud and sometime again we will return to the mud" (236).

Another war veteran makes an appearance. It is Lieutenant Mamiya, a friend of Honda's who had been with him in Manchuria. From his home in Hiroshima, Mamiya writes Boku to announce Honda's death, and to make arrangements to deliver to Boku a small memento left to him by Honda. When Mamiya visits Boku, he begins a story that runs through all three volumes. While numerous other stories (many related in some way to the war) appear and disappear, Mamiya's forms a sustained counterpoint to the private sufferings of Boku. Murakami seems deliberately intent on making his young readership re-discover the truth of Japan's war. Mamiya tells Boku, "Young people like you, Okada san, probably find this kind of old story boring. But one thing I want to tell you, we were ordinary young men like you once too. I never once thought I wanted to be a soldier. I wanted to be a teacher" (1:243)

The remainder of Volume 1 consists of the first instalment in Mamiya's story. As a geographer with the Kwantung Army in Northern Manchuria, he was doing reconnaissance work on the frontier when he and an assistant were captured by

⁴ "208" seems to be an important number to Murakami. In *Pinball, 1973*, Boku is living with twin sisters known only by the numbers on their sweatshirts: 208 and 209 (36).

Mongolian soldiers.⁵ On the orders of the Russian intelligence officer commanding the Mongolians, the assistant, a man named Yamamoto, was flayed alive. Mamiya was forced to watch this most hideous death (described in excruciating detail by Murakami). He then had to choose his own fate: be shot and die instantly, or jump into a well. One of the Mongol soldiers tossed a stone down the well: "To judge from the time the stone travelled until it reached the bottom, the depth seemed considerable"(NK Vol 1:291). Mamiya chose the well, expecting to die there of starvation or exposure. But, miraculously, Honda, who had escaped the Mongolians, managed to rescue Mamiya.

At the end of volume one, after he has walked Mamiya to the bus stop, Boku opens the box left to him by Honda: it is empty.

Volume 2 opens on the same day: "On the evening of the day when I saw Lieutenant Mamiya off at the bus stop, Kumiko didn't come home" (2:7). Gradually, Boku realizes that his wife has left him. The family, through Wataya Noboru, requests a divorce. Boku refuses until he has had a chance to meet with Kumiko face to face. He senses that things are going wrong for him: he is unemployed, alone; even his cat has left him. He tells Kano Malta, "I have lost my way; truly, I have lost my way" (2:14).

Lieutenant Mamiya sends Boku another letter. He wants to explain a certain vision he had in the well:

When I was abandoned by the Outer Mongolian soldiers in the middle of the Mongolian steppes at the bottom of a deep dark well, my legs and shoulders injured, without food or water, I simply waited to die. Before this, I had seen a man flayed alive. Under such unusual circumstances, my awareness was extremely heightened, so perhaps that is why when, for a moment, a brilliant light came shining down on me, I was able to go directly to the very kernel of my own consciousness. In any case, I saw the

⁵The choice of name—Mamiya— may be a reference to the explorer and writer Mamiya Rinzo (1775-1844). Mamiya Rinzo established that Sakhalin was an island; he ascended the Amur River. His work made a significant contribution to the geographic and ethnographic literature on Russia. However, Mamiya was suspected of being a spy and informer for the Shogunate; he died alone and impoverished. ("Mamiya Rinzo," John J. Stephan, *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 1983.)

shape of something there. My surroundings were covered by that intense light. I was in the midst of that flood of light. My eyes could see nothing. I was completely covered in nothing but light. But I could see something [*nanika*] there. In my temporarily blinded eyes, something was trying to take shape. It was *something*. It was something alive. In the middle of the light, just like a solar eclipse, something seemed to be floating upwards blackly. But I couldn't clearly define its form. It was trying to come towards me. It was trying to offer me something that was like a kind of grace. As I trembled, I waited for it. But that "something," whether it ran out of time or changed its mind, in the end it didn't come to where I was.

... Inside that well, I was starving and dying of thirst. That was no ordinary kind of suffering. ... But what made me suffer most in that well was the pain of not being able to discern the form of that "something" that was in the light. (2: 65-66)

Soon after receiving this letter from Mamiya, Boku, equipped with an earthquake emergency backpack (2:83) and a rope ladder, descends into the well in the yard of the empty Miyawaki house. For reasons he cannot explain, the bottom of the well seems the right place to "think about things" (2:150). After spending the night there, Boku has a dream:

Before dawn, at the bottom of the well I had a dream. But it wasn't a dream. It was something [*nanika*] that happened to take the form of a dream (2:130)

In this dream or dream-like state, Boku finds himself in a hotel lobby. On a giant television screen, his brother-in-law Wataya Noboru—economist, pundit, media personality and would-be politician—is holding forth. A hundred or so people in the lobby are watching the screen intently. Wataya Noboru's words seem like general advice, but Boku knows that Wataya Noboru is speaking directly to him:

"Foolish people can never get past the surface complexity of things. So, not understanding a single thing about the the state of this world, they go to their deaths wandering around in the darkness looking for a way out.

They are like people who lose their way at the bottom of a deep well or in the heart of a deep forest." (2:131)

When Boku attempts to leave the lobby he encounters again the man with no face, the one who in the dream guided Boku to the room where Kano Crete awaited him. The man with no face issues this warning: "Now is the wrong time. You must not be here now" (2:132). Boku pushes him aside and carries on. From behind, he hears the man:

"I am saying this for your own good," the faceless man said from behind me. Each word he uttered pierced my back like a sharpened fragment. "If you advance from here, you can never return again. Is that all right?"

Boku does not heed his warnings and proceeds down the corridor — "a long twisted corridor lined with identical doors" (2:133). Finally he encounters a room service waiter with a silver tray; on the tray are two glasses, an ice bucket, and a bottle of Cutty Sark. The waiter is whistling a Rossini aria. After following the waiter for a long time, Boku notices that he has stopped at room 208. The waiter knocks three times, enters, and shortly after emerges empty-handed. Boku waits for the waiter to disappear down the hallway, then knocks on the door. No answer. Again he knocks, then turns the doorknob. The door opens inward, and Boku finds himself in a darkened room. Boku recognizes it from the dream in which he once made love to Kano Crete (2:135). Standing in the darkness, Boku hears a woman's voice: "Please don't turn on the light" (2:135). The voice belongs to the woman who has been making the erotic phone calls. Boku advances in the darkness toward the bedroom and addresses her:

"Ever since you began making those mysterious phone calls to me, it was like opening a surprise box; one after another strange things began to happen. Then Kumiko disappeared. So I have come here alone. Who on earth you are I don't know but you somehow hold the key." (2:136)

The woman insists Boku already knows who she is: "If you can find my name, I will be able to leave here. If that happens I can help you find your wife" (138). Suddenly, the woman warns Boku to leave:

It would be better if you had already left here.... *If that man* finds you here, things are sure to get messy. *That man* is dangerous, much more

dangerous than you think. *That man* might really end up killing you.”
(2:139; italics in original)

When he tries to ask who “that man” is, she remains silent. Boku begins to feel strange; the air is full of pollen from the flowers; it seems to be making him feel dizzy and confused. The woman metamorphoses into the woman of the erotic phone calls, promising to “do anything, even the things your wife never did for you; I’ll make you feel so good you’ll never forget it.” (2:140)

Then comes a knock at the door.⁶ The woman takes his arm, saying “Come quickly this way. You must leave here. There is only one way to get out of here.” As she pulls Boku into the darkness, he can hear the doorknob turn.

At the same moment that the light from the corridor suddenly shone into the darkness of the room, we slid into the wall.... Oh, great, I thought, I’m going to pass through the wall. In order to move from somewhere to somewhere, I am passing through the wall. Yet, as I did it, it seemed a perfectly natural thing to do. (2:140)

A number of powerful sensory experiences accompany the moment of passing through the wall:

I could feel the woman’s tongue in my mouth. It was a warm, soft tongue. As it licked around inside my mouth, our tongues became entwined. The oppressive smell of the flower petals stroked the walls of my lungs. In the depth of my groin I felt a languid desire to come. Closing my eyes tightly, I managed to resist. A little later, on my right cheek I felt something like an extreme heat. It was a strange sensation. It wasn’t pain. Just a sensation that there was heat there. I couldn’t even tell whether this heat was something from the outside or whether it was boiling up from inside myself. But finally, it was all gone—the tongue, the smell of the petals, the

⁶ The persistence of this knock seems an echo of the collection of stories by science fiction writer Shin’ichi Hoshi, *Nokku no oto ga* (1972; *There Was a Knock*, trans. 1984). Each story begins with the same sentence: “There was a knock.” The knock signals the entry of something supernatural or menacing into the sphere of ordinary life.

desire to come, even the sensation of warmth on my cheek. Then I passed through the wall. When I opened my eyes, I was on this side of the wall — on the bottom of a deep well. (2:141)

In this experience on the other side of the wall, Boku brings together the erotic imagery and physical detail of his dream of Kano Crete (the hotel room, the flowers, the whisky) with the metaphysical yearning that Lieutenant Mamiya experienced in that dry well in Mongolia. Boku descends into the well in order to understand his life. Mamiya saw “something” — some kind of grace when he was in the well; despite (or perhaps because of) hunger and starvation and the prospect of death, he was able to see beyond ordinary reality. In his own way, for entirely personal reasons, in a yard in a high-class neighbourhood in Tokyo, Boku is trying to do the same thing. He compares his experience to that of Mamiya: “It was just as Lieutenant Mamiya said. From the bottom of the well you can see the stars even at noon.” (2:142)

As he sits in the well, memories of the hotel room — the scent of the flowers, Wataya Noboru on the television screen— come back. He can’t shake them off “*because that was not a dream*” (2:144; italics in original). Suddenly he discovers that his rope ladder is gone. There is no way to get out of the well. But after the initial panic is gone, all he feels is resignation (2:146). Then Mei shouts down from the opening of the well, announcing that it was she who took away the ladder; she intends to leave Boku there to die. Her motive is curiosity: “Curiosity. How does a person die. What kind of feeling is it when a person is dying? That sort of thing. Just curiosity” (2:163). She even closes up the top of the well so that Boku is left in utter darkness.

While I was confined at the bottom of this well, maybe the movement of the world had stopped. Gradually the spring was unwinding. Then, at a certain point, everything — the flow of the rivers, the rustling of the leaves, the birds flying in the sky, everything — would stop. (2:176)

It is Kano Crete — “the *real* Kano Crete” (2:180; italics in original)— who rescues him. For unexplained reasons, she is able to find him in the well. Once they get back to Boku’s house, she asks him, “By the way, Okada sama, during however many days you spent there, didn’t you notice something, like a significant physical change?....The sort of change that anyone could notice just by looking at you?” (2: 201) The next day when he is shaving Boku discovers the change:

On my right cheek there was some kind of bluish-black mark. At first I thought something was stuck by mistake to my cheek. I wiped off the rest of the shaving cream, and carefully washed my face with soap and then rubbed vigorously at part of the mark. But I couldn't get it off my face.... I stroked it with my finger to see what it was like. Compared to the rest of my face, the skin in that area seemed slightly warmer, but other than that, it didn't feel particularly different. It was a *birthmark*. A birthmark had appeared at exactly the spot where I had felt the warmth when I was in the well. (2:209; italics in original)

Boku comes to feel that the birthmark is a punishment for staying in the world of the dream, for going where the faceless man told him not to go.

Maybe this birthmark is a brand that that strange dream or illusion placed on me. *That wasn't just a dream, they were using the birthmark to tell me. That was something real. Now every time you look in the mirror, you will have to remember that.* (2:210-211; italics in original)

Boku decides to get in touch with his uncle, the owner of Boku's house, to ask him if there are any bad associations with the house; perhaps some bad karma surrounds it. The uncle refers Boku to Toshikawa, a local real estate agent. (214), but Boku does not bother calling his office.

One night, Kano Crete mysteriously appears in Boku's bed. She proceeds to tell him a very long story about her life. She suffered from a strange condition, a paralysis of the emotions and senses, brought on by a car accident. She became a prostitute in order to earn money to pay for the costs of the accident. One of her clients was Wataya Noboru. In a strange way, he violated her: "He seemed to be looking at something beyond my body" (私のかうたの向こう側にいるもの...) (2:230). Yet this rape produces a transformation in Crete: she regains her feelings and sensations:

... That man opened up something in my body.... There was unquestionably a kind of pollution in me. It was a contradictory feeling. Do you understand? The transformation I experienced was, in itself,

something right. There is no mistaking that. But on the other hand, what produced this transformation was something polluting. (2:240-241)

Boku and Crete become lovers (in the real, not just the dream, world). Plaintively, Boku asks her, "If sometime I can find the spring and I can wind it up, will my ordinary life come back again?" When Crete cannot answer this question, Boku comes to a gloomy conclusion:

"Nobody knows," I said. Like Lieutenant Mamiya said—*There are some things in this world that it is better not to know about.* (2:263; italics in original)

Boku and Crete decide to go together to the island of Crete. Boku arranges with his uncle—a sensible, plain-spoken businessman—about what to do with the house in his absence. Boku senses the gap between his own confused life and his uncle's life:

Over the last few months, some strange flow [*nagare*] had carried me to this point. Between the world I was now in and the world my uncle was in, there was something like a wall, so high and thick you couldn't see over it. It separated one world from another world. My uncle was in *that* world, I was in *this* world. (2:303-4; italics in original)

The uncle cannot explain Boku's strange situation, but he offers some advice, based on his own "magic touch" (2:309) in business. He chose the location for his restaurant by standing on a street corner looking at the faces of passersby and he advises Boku to do something similar:

Just patiently stand on the corner of some street every day, every day and look at people's faces. There's no need to settle anything in a hurry. It might be hard but you have to be patient; it's something that just takes time. (2:309)

Boku follows his uncle's advice, and spends ten days sitting on a bench in Shinjuku. Like Poe's narrator in "The Man in the Crowd," Boku watches all the types of his society pass by in the crowd. Once, an elegant middle-aged woman stops to ask Boku if he has money problems. Boku says no, and, after scrutinizing him carefully, she walks on past.

Then, “on the evening of the tenth day, something strange happen[s]” (315). A man with a guitar case appears; Boku recognizes him as the musician who was singing in a coffee bar in Sapporo the day Kumiko (Boku’s wife) had an abortion. Like Poe’s narrator, who, upon seeing in the crowd a face that “at once arrested and absorbed” his attention, experienced a “craving desire to keep the man in view” (101), Boku decides to follow the man. “I stuck to his trail, varying the distance according to the place, keeping a suitable distance so that he wouldn’t notice me” (2:318). Boku trails him to an old apartment building in a narrow twisted side street. It is a quiet, deserted street; Boku feels as if he has “gone back twenty or thirty years in time” (2:319). The man enters what looks like an abandoned apartment building; Boku waits and then follows him. The man attacks Boku with a baseball bat; Boku fights back, nearly beating the man unconscious. Boku makes his way home, bloodied, and carrying the baseball bat.

That night, he dreams of the man with the guitar case. The dream repeats the experiences of the day but adds a gruesome touch reminiscent of Mamiya’s experience in Mongolia: when the man is knocked down onto the floor, he takes out a knife and begins to cut away his own skin “just like taking the peel off an apple” (2:326). He flings the bloodied skin on to Boku. The dream so terrifies Boku that he decides not to go to Crete: *“I can’t run away; I should not run away.”* (2:327; italics in original)

Boku writes a letter to Mamiya in which he describes his situation; he also mentions the empty box he received from Honda. In his reply, Mamiya suggests that Honda wanted Boku and Mamiya to meet each other:

I think there’s an explanation why the gift was an empty box. Honda san’s bequest was that I would come to visit you. (2:340)

At the end of Volume 2, Boku is swimming in the community centre pool when he has a “kind of vision” or “maybe it was a revelation” (2:347). He is swimming in a well: “the whole world was a well, and I was the only person in the world” (2:347-348). When the sun comes directly over the well mouth, he sees something like a solar eclipse: “a black birthmark [*aza*] covers about half the moon” (2:349). The more he looks at it, the less he can define what it is. Boku begins to doubt his own existence. In his confused state, one fact suddenly emerges with clarity: the woman in Room 208, the woman who has made the anonymous phone calls, is Kumiko: “Kumiko is confined in that dark room and she’s trying to find a way to be rescued. No one but I can rescue her.” (2:352)

Volume 3 chronicles Boku's efforts to return to room 208 and rescue Kumiko. In order to reach the room, he must have access to the well. But the Miyawaki house has been torn down, and the lot is for sale. Despite his lack of resources, Boku resolves to buy it.

Chapter 2 of Volume 3 is a magazine article headed: "Setagaya Landmark: The Mystery of the Hanging House." The subhead hints at dark things: "Who has bought the land cursed by a family suicide? What is going on now in a corner of this high-class residential neighbourhood?" The previous owner had strangled his wife and daughter and then killed himself, and now the house seems to have acquired "bad karma" (3:17).

In winter, several months after his uncle first mentioned the real estate agent, Boku finally visits him. The agent, Toshikawa, explains that the house was sold the previous year to a development company, but because of the bad karma associated with the house, the company has not been able to find a customer for it. When Boku returns home that night, he discovers that his birthmark, like the protagonist's mask in Abe's *Tanin no kao*, has developed a will of its own.

That night around eight o'clock when I was washing my face in the bathroom, I noticed that the birthmark on my cheek was beginning to be warm. When I touched it with my finger, I could feel a slight warmth that wasn't there before. The colour too was more vivid than before; now it was tinged with purple. Without breathing, I looked into the mirror for a long time. I stared so hard that my own face began bit by bit not to look like my own face. That birthmark was looking at me as if it were asking for something. As I stared at the self on the other side of the mirror, the I that was on the other side stared silently back at me.

No matter what, I must have that well. (36; italics in original)

Boku returns to the bench in Shinjuku and waits. On the afternoon of the eighth day (3:41), the elegant middle-aged woman appears again. He explains that he needs money. She gives him a business card with an Akasaka address and tells him to go there on the following day.

The next chapter is the story of a little boy who wakes during the night. In his garden there is a bird calling; it makes a sound like a spring being wound up. Then he notices

two men in the garden. One climbs the tree in which the bird is calling; the other digs a hole and places something in the hole. Then both men disappear, and the little boy goes back to bed.

The next chapter returns us to Boku's story, as he approaches the address given to him by the elegant woman. It appears to be a "fashion design" office. A mute man, impeccably dressed, blindfolds Boku and leads him into an inner chamber. There a woman massages the birthmark on his face, "as if she were reading secret letters engraved there long ago" (3:64). Boku gives himself over to the woman. He becomes the empty house, the dry well, the weeds: "The woman knew what was inside this empty house of my self If this woman was looking for something inside it, then I should give it to her" (3:65). Afterwards, Boku showers — a kind of purification, perhaps?— and puts on new Calvin Klein underwear provided by the office. As he leaves he is given an envelope containing twenty ten-thousand yen notes. He feels that "*anyway, everything has started to move... at least for now it is a different place*" (3: 72; italics in original). Indeed, when he gets home, the missing cat has returned.

The mystery woman takes Boku on a shopping expedition to Omotesando, in the course of which, with unerring taste, she buys him the best clothing to be had in Tokyo. Afterwards, they have lunch together. She identifies herself only as "Nutmeg"; her son, the mute in the office, is "Cinnamon." She offers to explain the gift of money that she has made to Boku. As she is about to do so, the chapter ends, and the scene switches to the bottom of the well.

Boku sits at the bottom of the well, the baseball bat across his knees. (Boku keeps the bat — a memento of his fight with the guitar case man— at the bottom of the well as a kind of security.) Boku tries to return to Room 208:

Now what separates me here from that strange room is nothing more than one wall. I should be able to pass through that wall. With my own strength and the strength of this profound darkness. (3:100)

This time, he does not succeed in entering the room, but he can see it: "Like an imaginary bird floating in an imaginary sky, from above I am looking at that room" (2:102). (This view of the room is a classic Menippean catascopia, the trope of viewing things from an

unusual perspective.) But as soon as he tries to enter the room, there is a knock at the door and his vision of Room 208 fades. He is back in “the world of this side” (3: 103).

The narrative returns to Nutmeg, whose story, like Mamiya’s, is about the war. Her father was a veterinarian in Shinkyō⁷; as the Soviet troops advanced on the city in August of 1945, orders were given for all the animals to be killed. In tandem with the story of the “zoo massacre,” Nutmeg describes her own experience at the war’s end. When the Soviet victory in Manchuria seemed inevitable, Nutmeg and her mother were sent home. On the way back to Japan, their ship encountered an American submarine. It prepared to attack, but at the last minute, the guns were lowered: although Nutmeg and the people on board the Japanese ship did not know it, the Japanese had just surrendered. The return home was not a joyful one: “The people on board the ship felt as if they had been overcome by an hallucination that they had returned, by mistake, to a country of the dead.” (3:133)

The novel returns to the second instalment of “The Events in the Middle of the Night,” the story of the little boy. He has a dream, a very clear dream, in which he goes into the garden to dig up the parcel buried by the mysterious man. It contains a human heart, still beating. The little boy cannot understand the link between this dream and what he saw before: “In this dream, I am digging up again a hole that really was dug up. So I wonder how I can distinguish between the dream and what was not a dream? For example, is this a real shovel or just an imaginary shovel?” (3:143). When, in the dream, he returns to his bed, he discovers someone else there — someone who looks just like him. He tries to wake the other self and push him out of bed, but without success: “I have to hold on to my own place. If I don’t, then maybe I’ll be pushed out of the real world.” (3:145) When he wakes in the morning, there is no one beside him; everything seems back to normal. And yet, somehow “the air and the light and the sound and the smell are just a little bit different from usual” (3:145). He checks his own body; everything seems as it was, and yet “something has changed; he feels as if he is being put into a different container.” Then he discovers what has changed. He tries to call for his mother but cannot:

⁷ Shinkyō is the name the Japanese gave to Ch’ang Ch’un when they made it the capital of Manshukoku (Manchuria).

... the word “mother” itself seems to have vanished from the world; but before long the boy notices that what has vanished is not a word but something else. (3:146)

Later we learn that Cinnamon, Nutmeg’s son, became mute when he was a little boy. His father was brutally murdered in a hotel room—he was slashed open and all his organs were removed. But it is never made clear whether the little boy of “The Events in the Middle of the Night” is indeed Cinnamon.

Next appears a newspaper article about an actress, known only as “M,” who has received “occult treatments,” first from a woman, and now from a young man with a birthmark on his cheek. As Nutmeg’s story unfolds in subsequent chapters, it becomes apparent that she is the healer. She has chosen Boku as her successor, and so has enabled him to buy the house. Her clientele is comprised of middle-aged women—mostly the wives of politicians and businessmen—who require discretion. The house in Setagaya provides an even better location than the “fashion design studio” for carrying on this business.

However, Boku’s enemy, Kumiko’s brother Wataya Noboru, warns Boku (via the intermediary of a kind-hearted thug named Ushikawa) to stay away from Nutmeg and her son Cinnamon. Wataya Noboru is about to take over the Diet seat vacated by his deceased uncle; he does not want any scandal occasioned by Boku to tarnish his political image. With his contacts in the media, Noboru has planted the magazine article about the mysterious healer so that Boku’s clients will be frightened off. Aware that the press may destroy their anonymity, Nutmeg and her son Cinnamon (they never reveal their real names) disappear. Left alone, Boku returns to his old apartment.

Once more, he decides to descend into the well. By now, he knows the well “like I know my own body. Its darkness and smell and quiet had become part of me.” (3:386) In the well, he falls into a deep sleep — “like suddenly being dragged into an unknown room” (3:391). When he awakens he recognizes the sharp smell of the pollen: “I was in that strange hotel room. I had passed through the wall.” (3:391)

The room is as he remembers it— the whisky in the glasses, the smell of the flowers. But the bed is empty; there is just the trace of somebody being there. He decides to try to find the lobby where he once saw Wataya Noboru on a television screen; “If I can get

there all right, maybe I can find some clue there." He steps along the carpeted hallway silently in his soiled tennis shoes (3:396). Once again he hears the whistling waiter. The waiter appears, with the same silver tray, Cutty Sark bottle, glasses and ice. Boku trails the waiter. When they arrive once again at Room 208, the waiter knocks and waits. There is no response but finally the door opens. There is someone in the room, but Boku decides not to enter the room now, but to "follow the waiter's trail" (3:397).

As Boku follows the waiter down the twisting corridor, he leaves a trail so that he can find his way back to room 208: "When we came to a fork in the road, I made a small blue 'x' with a ballpoint pen on the cream-coloured wall" (3:419). Finally they reach the lobby. There is the same television screen, and the same crowd of people watching it. But on the screen this time is a NHK news broadcast, announcing that Wataya Noboru has been attacked and is in critical condition. The description of his assailant matches Boku's appearance:

He was wearing a dark blue jacket and a dark blue woolen ski cap; he was wearing dark sunglasses. His height is about 175 cm, and on his right cheek there is a bruise-like mark; he looks about thirty years old. (3:423)

The attacker's weapon was a baseball bat. Boku realizes that he will be a prime suspect:

I didn't beat Noboru Wataya with a baseball bat. I'm not that kind of person. Besides, I'm not carrying a baseball bat. But they won't believe what I say. **They'll believe what the television says.** (3:424-5; boldface in original)

Boku flees the lobby. Just at the moment when he hears the crowd come after him, the lights go out. Boku makes his way down the corridor; someone grabs his coat from behind. As he tries to get away from his pursuers, Boku wonders whether perhaps he really did beat Noboru with a baseball bat:

To get to Akasaka, I would have had to get on the Odakyu train, then change to the subway at Shinjuku. Could I have done that without knowing it? That's impossible. **Unless there is another one of me.** (3:427; boldface in original)

Then Boku hears a voice beside him in the darkness. It is the man with no face. He leads Boku down the hallway to room 208.

When Boku enters the bedroom once more, he asks the woman whether she is indeed Kumiko, but she neither acknowledges nor denies that she is. Boku presses her to explain her sudden exit from his life. He suggests that Wataya Noboru played a role in it: *“you moved from the world of my side to the world of Wataya Noboru’s side”* (3:440; italics in original). Boku reconstructs for Kumiko the story as he understands it: he believes that Wataya Noboru possesses some kind of evil power. Noboru used this to defile Kumiko’s sister, who ultimately committed suicide; Kumiko too fell under his spell. Boku now resolves to take Kumiko home, away from the dark hotel room.

Then, there is a knock at the door “like the sound of a nail being driven into a wall.” The voice of Kumiko tells him to leave: “If you go now, you can still pass through the wall.” (3:448) But Boku stays and fights with the unknown intruder. Boku is stabbed three times with a knife — his shoulder, his right cheek and his throat. Then, with the bat, he hits his assailant in the neck. There is a horrible smell: “It was the smell of brains, the stink of violence, the stench of death” (3:454). When the fight is over, he goes back to find Kumiko, but she has disappeared. Then he passes “through that jelly-like wall again” by “entrust[ing] [his] body to the peaceful flow”. When he is back in the bottom of the well again, Boku notices that something is different:

I had come back to the bottom of the well. However it was not the same well bottom as before. There was something new there that I didn’t remember.There was water around me. (3:456)

Boku asks himself, **“Did what happened there have some connection with this reality?”** (3:456; boldface in original) Certainly the injuries he sustained in the fight “there” are real. As the water ineluctably rises, Boku thinks, “I am going to die. Just like everyone else who lives in this world.” (3:461) But when we next meet Boku, he has been rescued by Cinnamon, and Nutmeg is caring for him. His birthmark is gone.

It turns out that, in the real world, Wataya Noboru has had a stroke in Nagasaki; he remains in a coma in hospital. Boku remembers what he saw in the hotel lobby: “It was nothing more than the news in that world... In reality in this world I didn’t beat Wataya Noboru with a bat”(3:475). It is Kumiko who ultimately kills Noboru: she removes his IV

tubes and then surrenders to police. The novel ends with Boku visiting Mei in the country town where she lives. He travels back to Tokyo on the train:

I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. But I couldn't, because it was not until much later that I was really able to sleep. In a place far from anywhere, far from anyone, for a brief moment I fell quietly into sleep.
(3:492)

Languages of the Novel

Throughout this 1150-page “chronicle,” the narrative energy is sustained by the intensity of Boku’s quest to regain Kumiko. But true, as one might say, to Menippean form, this energy is frequently dispersed in subsidiary stories. For example, in volume 3, seven chapter-long letters from Masahara Mei (now working in a wig factory in the countryside) interrupt Boku’s quest. Even in the chapters that deal explicitly with Boku, digressions abound. When, for example, Boku catches sight of the whistling waiter, he reminisces about a recording of Rossini his parents once owned; he compares that performance, conducted by Toscanini, with a more recent version featuring Claudio Abbado (3:397-8).

In addition to the “other world” of Room 208, Murakami also evokes a number of specific domains or sectors of the ordinary world in his novel: the world of fashion design (which Nutmeg worked in before she became a healer); the world of politics (which Wataya Noboru aspires to enter); the world of the mass media (in which Wataya Noboru frequently appears as a commentator); the world of adolescence (represented here by Masahara Mei); the business world (represented by the real estate agent and by Boku’s uncle); a country town with its small factory (documented in Masahara Mei’s letters in Volume 3); the underworld of the small-time crook (represented by Wataya Noboru’s secretary-cum-thug, Ushikawa); the world of an older, educated generation (represented by Mamiya). There is also, most importantly, the world of government and the military, evoked by Mamiya’s stories, and, to some degree, by an article written by Wataya Noboru.

Each of these worlds has its own style, its own language. The inclusion of “documents” in the novel, such as magazine articles, letters, and e-mail messages, highlights this

heteroglossia. Abrupt shifts from, for example, Nutmeg's conversation to the story of the little boy, or from Masahara Mei's letters to Mamiya's account of a Siberian prison camp further emphasize the disjuncture between these worlds. Whereas Mamiya employs a formal technical language, Mei does not: even the look of the pages is different, for while the text of Mamiya's account is dense with Chinese characters, Mei's letters contain comparatively few. Masao Miyoshi, in his discussion of *genbun itchi*, claims that "how the mixture of *kana* and ideograms on a page strikes the eye, is in fact a serious matter" (9, note).⁸ Certainly in Japanese, differences in language level are *visually* apparent, to a degree not possible in English.

Each speaker or storyteller in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* has a distinctive voice. Lieutenant Mamiya, for example, tells his story in a formal, old-fashioned language, befitting his age and his post-war status as a university lecturer:

私は大学で地理を専攻しておりましたので、地図を専門とする兵要地誌班という部署に所属することになりました。

Because I had specialized in geography at university, it happened that I was posted to the Military Strategic Locations Record Unit, specializing in maps. (1: 245)

Kano Malta and her sister Crete tell their stories in a formal language as well. Here is Crete, resuming a story interrupted in an earlier chapter:

私があの日話の途中で突然席を立って帰ってしまった理由は、私にまたそれをお話しするだけの準備ができていなかったからなのです。それでも岡田様には話せるだけの

⁸ *Genbun itchi* ("unification of the spoken word and writing") refers to the movement of the 1890s (third decade of the Meiji period) to adapt written narrative so that it more closely resembled everyday spoken Japanese.

本当のことを正直に話したほうがいいと思っ
たからこそ、私は話し始めたのです。

The reason why I got up and left in the middle of my story that day is that I was not yet ready to talk about it. I began to tell my story precisely because I thought it would be better if I could tell Okada sama [you] the truth as directly as possible. (NK 2: 228)

She uses humble forms (*ohanashi suru*) and polite verb endings (*dekimasen deshita*) and she addresses Boku as *Okada sama*. The scrupulous use of the honorific style makes her speech markedly different from that of other characters such as Boku and the teenaged Mei, who never use polite forms. Although Malta and Crete are young, they seem to belong to a different generation from that of Boku.

The heteroglossia of Boku's world (or worlds) is heightened, too, by the abundance of foreign words. Boku's familiar interest in Western music, for example, provides one frequent source of words in *katakana*. The e-mail conversations in Volume 3 provide another realm in which foreign words abound. While the use of foreign (predominantly English) words seems to reflect the contemporary scene in which American movies, music, and consumer goods provide a constant source of new vocabulary, it is worth noting that foreign words have appeared in Japanese prose fiction for more than a century. Masao Miyoshi describes the dialogue among the middle-class students in Tsubouchi Shoyo's *Tosei Shosei Katagi* (1885-86, *The Temper of Today's Students*) as "slang largely made up of English, German, and French words" (20).

This mixture of languages is certainly a Menippean characteristic. In the history of the genre, linguistic anomalies such as neologisms and bilingualism can be seen to originate in the imitation classical Greek that Lucian employed for his satires, and in Varro's inclusion of Greek words in his Menippean satires. But if one ignores the history of the genre (as one must, I think in the case of Murakami), what functional reason might there be in a modern (postmodern?) Menippean satire for the persistence of this feature?

One explanation might be that it is necessary to provide a language (or languages) that can evoke the fantastic dimension of this genre. Neologisms have been, for example, a necessary aspect of such fantasy genres as science fiction which, in order to describe what does not yet exist, must invent new words (Bukatman 11-12). Murakami, however,

makes comparatively little use of neologisms for this purpose: one thinks, for example of the *yamikuro* of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, or the *mekurayanagi* of the story of the same title. But the “impossible” events and places in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* (e.g., passing through walls, birthmarks that appear and disappear, accurate predictions by fortunetellers) are evoked in concrete, familiar language. The unusual or imported words he uses evoke not fantasy “other worlds” but rather the consumer world of computers, popular music, and brand-name clothing.

Nonetheless, the “unconventional diction” of the Menippean satire (which might include “neologisms, portmanteau words, macaronics, preciousness, coarse vulgarity, catalogues, bombast, mixed languages, and protracted sentences” [Kirk xi]) is most definitely on display in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. Its primary function, here, I believe, is to support Murakami’s encyclopaedic ambitions in this novel—his attempt to embrace as much of contemporary Japan as possible. (Encyclopaedic scope, it will be remembered, is one of the features of the Menippean satire [Frye 311; Clark 9].) Bombast, for example, is a necessary tool for portraying Wataya Noboru as economic pundit and would-be politician. A certain preciousness in Mamiya’s letters reinforces his role as representative of the “old Japan.” Mei’s slang confirms her role as representative of youth. The vulgarity of the speech of “Boris the flayer” (the Soviet intelligence officer who captures Mamiya, orders the flaying of Yamamoto, and ultimately ends up running the Siberian prison camp) underlines the man’s bestiality, his greed, and his cruelty. The use of mixed languages (e.g., English loan words associated with computers) demonstrates the extent to which Japan is no longer a unitary culture, but one penetrated by global influences.

One might argue that it is scarcely possible to write a Japanese novel today *without* employing a large number of loan words in *katakana*. Waka Tsunoda reports that “in nationally circulated, news-oriented weeklies, 10 to 25 percent of the words are imported” (425). Furthermore, many recent literary works advertise their embrace of foreignisms by employing *katakana* words even in their titles: think, for example, of *Kitchin* キッチン (Kitchen; tr. 1993) by Yoshimoto Banana 吉本ばなな; *Koin rokka beibizu* コイン・ロッカ・ベイビズ (Coin Locker Babies, 1984; tr. 1995) by Murakami Ryu 村上龍; *Nantonaku, kurisutaru* なんとなく、クリスタル (Somehow, crystal, 1981) by Tanaka Yasuo 田中康夫; and, of course, *Dansu, dansu, dansu* and *Nejimakidori kuronikuru*. This “kozui of *katakana*” (flood of *katakana*), reflects in, Tsunoda’s view, the “deep-rooted Japanese adoration and romanticization of the West” (425). I think, however, in the case certainly of Murakami, that while “adoration” of the

West may be on display, alongside it (or behind it) is also an ironic critique of the Japanese tendency to romanticize (and then buy) anything Western. Surely this irony is the justification for his sometimes tedious catalogues of Western pop tunes or brand-name clothing.

Moreover, I think it is sufficient to look at the "pure" Japanese of Mamiya's letters or the story of the little boy in order to conclude that Murakami's choice to use imported words in other contexts must be a deliberate strategy. Here, for example, is the coolly lyrical passage from "The Events in the Middle of the Night," one of the chapters dealing with the little boy:

秋の終りの満月が空の真中に大きく白く
 浮かんでいて、庭の風景も昼のように見
 渡すことができた。庭の樹木は少年が
 昼間見るのとはずいぶん印象が違って
 見えた。そこにはいつもの親しさのよなもの
 のはまったく見受けられなかった。堅い木
 はそのもったりとした枝葉をときおりの
 風に不服げに震わせ、さざざという嫌
 な音を立てていた。庭石はいつもより白く
 滑らかで、まるで死んだ人の顔のように取
 り澄ましてしっと空を見上げていた。

The full moon of late autumn floated huge and white in the middle of the sky. He could look over the garden as if it were noon. The trees and shrubs in the garden made a different impression on the boy than they did in the daytime. He couldn't see at all the usual familiar quality of the garden. The leaves and branches of the oak tree made a complaining sort of noise, an unpleasant wheezing sound, as they swayed in the wind. The

stones in the garden were smoother and whiter than usual; they were like the faces of dead men staring up at the sky. (3:46)

There is a marked contrast between the style of this passage and the style of the first-person narrative of Boku, in which Murakami frequently employs foreign loan words. The peculiar names Murakami uses — Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Crete, Malta—seem another aspect of his attempt to eschew “Japaneseness” in favour of a more international style. I think here too, one can detect Murakami’s ironic rendering of such trends as Western names (e.g., Yoshimoto Banana) and “Japlish” clothing logos. In discussing the style of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Koizumi Koichiro points out that while the names of Boku (Okada Toru), his wife Kumiko, and brother-in-law Noboru are routinely rendered in katakana, the names of Honda and Mamiya are not. Koizumi feels that “the fact that the witnesses of the Nomonhan Incident, Honda and Mamiya, always appear with their real names shows the author’s feeling of respect towards the historical events that they represent” (28). (Koizumi also notes that “Boku of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* seems to make spaghetti his staple food; there is not a glimpse in the novel of rice, which Japanese generally have as a staple food. Boku’s extremely peculiar eating habits are enough to make me want to call it—no joke—a ‘spaghetti novel’ [28].)

Masao Miyoshi points out that neologisms and a kind of enforced bilingualism (e.g., the use of many English loan words) have presented stylistic problems to Japanese writers since at least the Meiji period:

It is hard to keep in mind that a mere hundred years ago so many words crucial to the conduct of life in present-day Japan were simply not in coin: almost all political terms, Western philosophical concepts, names of Western imported objects; all the Japanese equivalents for, say, democracy, train, equality, idealism, and trousers. The words had to be coined as the concepts or objects were introduced. And the neologisms had to be negotiated into literature with all the uncertainties of intelligibility, connotation and propriety that this implied. Especially when English and other European words were directly incorporated, the uncertainties were bound to increase, causing writers to worry a great deal about accuracy in the process of Japanizing the sound and sense—as once, centuries before, they must have worried when borrowing massively from Chinese. Insofar as a novelist was concerned with

depicting contemporary scenes, he could not evade the job of somehow, either by approximation or new coinage, finding words for Western ideas and things. Even now the difficulty is very acute, neology being one of several serious problems for the Japanese novelist ... (16)

Miyoshi wrote this in the 1970s. Twenty years later, it seems that a writer such as Murakami is no longer concerned about the frequency of neologisms in his text. Indeed, Murakami seems to go out of his way to use borrowed words, even when there are perfectly good Japanese ones. For example, in volume 3, when Boku realizes that he is trapped at the bottom of the well with the water rising, he imagines Mei coming to save him:

I imagined her coming finally, and opening the cover of the well. It was so real. It was so clear. (3:458)

For “real” Murakami uses *rearu*, in *katakana*, instead of something like *genjitsu*; for “clear” he uses *kuria*, instead of *hakkiri*.

It is not just in vocabulary that Murakami is indebted to English. Some critics detect in his narrative style strong influences from the syntax and idiom of American English. Matsuoka, for example, demonstrates many parallels between Murakami’s style and that of Raymond Carver (whom Murakami has translated). She suggests that Murakami’s narratives “seem to be written in both Japanese and English at the same time”; they are written in idiomatic Japanese “and yet carr[y] the flow of the American English” (434). While this “translation Japanese” may seem like an incursion of foreignness into Japanese culture, Matsuoka claims that the “American English-like Japanese of such writers as Murakami is also authentic Japanese at the present time” (435). Inasmuch as American popular culture remains an important influence on popular culture in Japan, one could say that mimesis is the function of the heteroglossia in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*: it evokes the multiplicity of Japanese society, of the “real” world one reads about in the newspapers and sees on television and encounters on the subway.

This effort to represent the many aspects of contemporary life is also reminiscent of Bakhtin’s observation that a “concern with current and topical issues” characterizes the

menippea. His description of Lucian's satires could apply equally well to the three volumes of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*:

... taken as a group, [they] are an entire encyclopedia of his times: they are full of overt and hidden polemics with ... the tendencies and currents of his time ... the images of contemporary or recently deceased public figures, "masters of thought" in all spheres of societal and ideological life ... ; they are full of allusions to the great and small events of the epoch; they feel out new directions in the development of everyday life; they show newly emerging types in all layers of society, and so on. They are a sort of *Diary of a Writer*, seeking to unravel and evaluate the general spirit and direction of evolving contemporary life. (118)

Other Worlds

The most important "other world" of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* is the hotel and Room 208. The well itself is a transition zone—the passage from the ordinary world to a different realm. Interestingly, in his very first novel, Murakami provides a description of wells that suits perfectly the well in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, Boku summarizes "The Wells of Mars," a story by the (imaginary) American novelist Derek Heartfield:

The story concerns a youth who goes down in one of the myriad bottomless wells sunk into the surface of Mars. These wells seem to date from tens of thousands of years ago, but the strange thing is every last one was carefully dug to avoid hitting any water veins.... (101)

The "well passages" the youth travels through "were dug to curve along the warp of time" (103). The dry well into which Boku descends similarly distorts time, permitting him to enter a space where "real world" events are prefigured or recapitulated.

The important residents of the "other space" are not dead: Kumiko is alive, somewhere in the real world, and so is Wataya Noboru. But in other respects, the hotel and Room 208 do resemble the Underworld. For example, darkness is its normal state: whenever Boku enters the room, the woman reminds him not to turn on the light. It is unchanging,

unvarying—the same bottle of Cutty Sark, the same glasses, the same tray.⁹ When, on his final visit, Boku finds that the woman has gone, the empty bed looks to him “like an ancient grave after the graverobbers had carried off the corpses.” (3:393). The man with no face, a regular inhabitant of the hotel, also seems to be a kind of corpse. Even the whistling waiter does not seem quite alive: Boku describes him as walking with the rapid, unvarying pace of “a mechanical doll” (398). The man with no face warns Boku, “If you advance from here, you can never return again” (2:133); this warning seems to echo the fate of an underworld visitor such as Persephone who, once she had taken food or drink in the realm of Pluto, was condemned to reside there. Boku does drink the Cutty Sark whisky in Room 208. After his final encounter with the knife-wielding attacker, Boku is aware of “the stench of death” (4:454). And Boku’s conversations with the woman in the bed can be seen as threshold dialogues—conversations between someone who still dwells on earth, and someone who is condemned to the Underworld. Boku’s repeated intention to take Kumiko home seem to echo the Orphic motif so prominent in earlier novels such as *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*.

Boku’s panic that he will be mistaken for Wataya Noboru’s attacker can also be seen as reinforcement for the view that this “other world” is the underworld. The crowd in the lobby seem intent on pursuing and punishing Boku for his imagined crime, as if this hotel were going to become Boku’s hell. Certainly Boku does experience hellish things in the hotel: for example, the terrible attack in which he is slashed with the knife. If there is a devil in this hell, it must be Wataya Noboru. In Boku’s very first dream of Room 208, he warns Crete that Wataya Noboru is coming. In his next sojourn there, the woman warns Boku to leave because “that man” is coming. In the final visit, Wataya Noboru’s identity is even more attenuated: now he is only an unnamed, invisible, dangerous presence. But clearly, this is his realm. In the real world, Wataya Noboru (in the real world) has been keeping Kumiko confined in an unknown location; if the woman in Room 208 is Kumiko, then Wataya Noboru must somehow be in control of the hotel.

While Room 208 and the hotel constitute the primary “other world” of this novel, there are in fact multiple “other worlds” in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. The little boy of the dream is aware of three realms: his everyday reality, a dream, and then “that” — the

⁹ In this respect, it resembles the house in Hokkaido in *A Wild Sheep Chase* with its library of books that were “an intellectual’s required reading forty years ago” and the hi-fi equipment from the mid-sixties” (240-241); the house is a place where “[t]ime was dead in the air” (239).

vision he saw in his backyard. The events of the vision blend uncannily with those of the dream. Both the vision and the dream are forays into a realm that resembles the *ikukan* — the “other space” of the tales of Miyazawa Kenji 宮沢賢治. In Kenji’s tales, the protagonists are often children or mentally handicapped adults; only those who are not part of the adult world can experience the miraculous things that occur in the *ikukan*, a place where animals dance, the stars speak, and humans fly (Hagiwara 244-245). Murakami’s choice of a child protagonist in these chapters provides the same atmosphere of innocence that pervades Kenji’s fiction. It is not a cloying innocence: the little boy in Murakami’s vignettes finds something terrible buried in the ground—a human heart, still beating. So too in Kenji’s tales there is a powerful contrast between an atmosphere of innocence (created by child protagonists, fantasy elements and frequent use of rural or woodland settings) and other elements, such as violent death and strange mineral and mechanical imagery.

There is also a realm in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* which is simultaneously the real world and an “other world”: Manchukuo¹⁰— a specific historical space/time which, nonetheless, cannot be separated from the unreal realms into which Boku ventures. As I have noted, throughout all three volumes, the stories of Lieutenant Mamiya form a sustained counterpoint to Boku’s narrative. His experiences on the Mongolian frontier and later in prison camp in Siberia are not presented as fantasy; they are, on the contrary, factual, concrete and detailed. (Murakami lists nine books as sources at the end of Volume 1 and two more at the end of Volume 3; Kawamura Minato’s essay “*Nejimakidori kuronikuru no bunseki: Gendaishi to shite no monogatari - Nomonhan jihen o megutte*” [Analysis of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*: The novel as modern history – about the Nomonhan Incident] discusses the extent to which specific incidents described in these works might have influenced Murakami’s novel.)

But the world of the war, as evoked by Mamiya’s stories, Honda’s reminiscences of the Nomonhan Incident, and the account of Nutmeg’s father’s last days in Shinkyō, contains many images and topoi that overlap with Boku’s adventures. The well is the most conspicuous example of this overlap. Mamiya is trapped in a dry well in Mongolia, Boku in a dry well in Setagaya. Boku has a birthmark on his right cheek; so does

¹⁰I have called this realm “Manchukuo” even though it includes some events that actually occur in Mongolia and Siberia; when Boku talks about this “other world” he calls it Manchuria (Manshu) (3:275).

Nutmeg's father. With a baseball bat, Boku beats the guitar-case man and the unseen assailant in the hotel room. In Manchuria, Nutmeg's father sees the execution of a Chinese prisoner of war who had attacked his guards with a baseball bat. The unhappy lieutenant who must carry out this execution explains the orders to Nutmeg's father:

"I've received orders from above that this man is to be beaten to death with the same weapon," the lieutenant said in a dry voice, lightly tapping the ground at his feet with the tip of the bat. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, eh. With you, I can speak frankly, but it's a senseless order. Killing these men now, what on earth is the point? We don't have any more planes, we don't have any more battleships, most of the good soldiers are already dead. With a new type of special bomb, Hiroshima was wiped out in the twinkling of an eye. Soon we will be driven out of Manchuria, or else we'll be killed; whatever happens, China will belong to the Chinese again. We've already killed a lot of Chinese. It is meaningless now to increase the number of corpses. But an order is an order. I'm a soldier and I have to follow orders no matter what they are. Just like we killed the tigers and the leopards yesterday, today we have to kill these men. Please watch, sir. This is another way for a man to die. You're a doctor. You must be used to knives and blood and guts, but you've probably never seen anyone clubbed to death with a baseball bat."
(3:320)

This passage refers to two events in the war— one which could be said to symbolize Japan as aggressor, the other, Japan as victim. The lieutenant's comment that the Japanese "have already killed a lot of Chinese" refers, I believe, to what is known as the Rape of Nanking. In December and January of 1937-38, Japanese soldiers killed an estimated 22 000 civilians in Nanking¹¹; thousands more were killed in the surrounding area (Harris 225-227). The other event the lieutenant mentions is Hiroshima. Even though the fire bombing of Tokyo claimed more lives, it is the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima that is remembered.

¹¹ Some estimates are much higher. The Tokyo War Crimes Trial estimated that 42 000 civilians, most of whom were women and children, were killed; about 20 000 women were raped. See "Nanking Incident," *Kodansha Encyclopaedia of Japan* (1983).

Murakami employs multiple strategies to provoke his readers to re-examine Japan's war and its human cost. On a straightforward narrative level, the stories of Lieutenant Mamiya and of Nutmeg's father describe the suffering that individuals experienced and witnessed. But *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* (despite the obvious historiographic intention expressed in the title) is not a historical novel. The horrors of war are subsumed in what is a comparatively trivial story about a man who has lost his wife, his cat, and a certain polka-dot tie.

While it is not possible to say that the story of Boku is an allegory of Japan at war, there are, nonetheless, certain allegorical relationships. For example, one might think of Boku's descent into the well as a way of coming to terms with human evil, as represented in the person of Wataya Noboru. Through his government, business, and media connections, Wataya personifies Japan's ruling elite. Boku's efforts to pass through the wall and confront Noboru can be interpreted as the imaginative effort to see and to understand human evil: it is the effort of someone of Murakami's generation to come to terms with what happened during the war, both with the evil the Japanese did and with the suffering inflicted on them. Boku, it will be remembered, wields the baseball bat (in self-defence, it must be noted) and injures two people; however, he in turn is injured and bloodied.

Why, one wonders, is a baseball bat Murakami's weapon of choice? There are the obvious American connections, but I do not think Murakami is suggesting that America is the source of Japanese aggressiveness. Perhaps he is suggesting, however, that Western influences had a role in setting Japan on the road to industrialization and imperialism. On the other hand, the choice of baseball bat may simply be an example of Murakami's satirical tendency to deflate events, to throw them slightly off-centre lest anyone suspect he is getting serious. What lends a note of gruesome comedy to the scene of the execution is that the Chinese prisoner is wearing a baseball uniform. He and the men who tried to escape with him stole the uniforms so that they would not have to flee in prison clothing. In the narrative of this scene, Murakami refers to each prisoner by the number on the back of his uniform.

The relationship of this scene to the novel as a whole is further complicated by the fact that it is set in a particular frame. One night, Boku finds the following message on Cinnamon's computer:

You now have access to the program "Wind-up Bird Chronicles." Please select from chapters 1 to 16. (3:302)

Boku chooses number 8, and finds the story of the execution. Although presented as an historical account, the story must be invented: Nutmeg never saw her father again after she left Manchuria, so how could she or her son know what he had witnessed in the last days of the war? Moreover, this chapter is a *mise en abyme* of the work as a whole: it is a "Wind-up Bird Chronicle" within *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, a "disruption of the logic of narrative hierarchy" (McHale 125). Is Boku the avatar of Nutmeg's father? Is his story somehow the same as the story of Nutmeg's father?

As for the uncanny correspondence between the bat used to kill the Chinese prisoner and the bat that Boku takes with him to the well, could Cinnamon have known that Boku beat the guitarcase man with the bat? Is that why he writes a baseball bat into his account of his grandfather's experiences? These are unresolved and unresolvable questions. One feels that there must be some secret linkage among all the levels of story. Boku himself meditates on the relationships that tie together the characters in his story:

Everything was connected in a kind of circle and the thing in the middle of this circle was the Battle of Nomonhan, Showa 14, in Manchuria, in Asia, before the war. But why Kumiko and I were being dragged into the middle of this kind of historical karma, I couldn't understand. It was something that had happened long before Kumiko and I were even born. (3: 275)

The exact structure of the links is impossible to untangle: there is no explaining, why, for example, Boku should develop spontaneously the same kind of birthmark as Nutmeg's father. Yet even when one's efforts to explain the linkages are frustrated, the sense that everything is somehow *significant* persists.

Kawamura Minato makes a very interesting connection between events on the Mongolian frontier and Boku's adventures down the well. Mamiya and Yamamoto are captured by the Outer Mongolian soldiers because they have crossed the frontier—the Halha River—from Manchuria into Mongolia.

In short, it [the river] is the boundary dividing “this side” from “that side”; indeed, it is because Yamamoto and Lieutenant Mamiya violate the border between “this side” and “that side” and penetrate deeply into “that side” that they must receive terrible retribution. The two worlds, “that side” and “this side,” are not places that one can so easily travel between and make a return journey. Even though out on the empty steppes the borderline is wandering and random, people who try to ignore or defy it must receive a suitable punishment. Yamamoto, who is killed by the brutal method of flaying, is not killed because he is a spy who does not hand over the important papers to the enemy side; rather it is because he too easily tried to travel back and forth between “that side” and “this side” that his own body is turned inside out (the skin on his whole body is flayed) ... (61-62).

Kawamura wrote this article before volumes 2 and 3 of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* were published. His comments on the significance of Yamamoto’s death seem almost prescient, for they provide a way of understanding the relationship between what happened to Yamamoto and Mamiya in Manchuria, and what (in the later volumes) Boku undergoes in the world on the other side of the wall. Just as Yamamoto and Mamiya violated the boundary between “that side” and “this side” in the real world, Boku violates a boundary between the ordinary world and that other world on the far side of the wall.

Kawamura interprets the prominence of the Nomonhan Incident in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* as a symbol of contemporary ethnic and territorial conflicts:

... with respect to what we might call the borderless present, perhaps it is possible to define the Nomonhan Incident as an initial skirmish in the wars about borderlines that appear frequently in every country. In short, it symbolizes the pointless, bloodstained battles about the borders that define “that” side and “this” side. (62)

In the context of the Menippean trope of the descent to the underworld, the Nomonhan Incident and the other stories related to the war in Manchuria perhaps represent the hell on earth that man can create. Nothing in Boku’s “other world” is as horrifying as the

events chronicled in Mamiya's recollections. The last episodes in his story deal with his experiences in a Siberian labour camp, a place Mamiya describes as "hell" (3:410).

So far, I have been discussing the "other world" in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* in terms of the Menippean trope of the descent to the underworld. Both the hotel, with its menacing atmosphere of violence, and the terrible memories of the war introduce a kind of secularized hell, the hell that men make for themselves. But there is another dimension to this other world, one which derives from Japanese folk religion. In her famous study of Japanese shamanism, *The Catalpa Bow*, Carmen Blacker describes two types of shaman. One is the oracle, the receiver of messages from the spirits. The other is the ascetic:

He is primarily a healer, one who is capable of banishing the malevolent spirits responsible for sickness and madness and transforming them into powers for good. To acquire the powers necessary for this feat, he must accomplish a severe regime of ascetic practice, which should properly include ... a journey to the other world. ... [he] must leave our world and make his way through the barrier to visit [the world of the spiritual beings]. This journey he may accomplish in ecstatic, visionary form; his soul alone travels, his body left behind meanwhile in a state of suspended animation. (22)

Blacker offers summaries of a number of premodern Buddhist stories which feature a journey to hell; in some of these stories, the protagonist descends to hell in order to rescue a wife (190). In describing the asceticism—the shaman's development of his powers—she mentions an "ecstatic interior heat" that he experiences as "proof that he has risen above the ordinary human condition" (93). The shaman receives help from "a retinue of assistant spirits" and "a panoply of magic clothes" (25). In order to prepare for the mantic journey to the other world, the initiate may undergo *komori*, the practice of "seclusion, preferably in the darkness of a cave" (98): "In this womb-like stillness he undergoes his fasts and recites his words of power, emerging only to stand beneath his waterfall" (99). Avoiding human contact can be another aspect of training (164). Many ascetics experience an initiatory dream, the "distinctive feature" of which is that "the figure who appears to the sleeper is a spiritual being who afterwards functions as his guardian numen" (169).

Set against this description of the “other world” journey in Japanese folk religion, Boku’s experiences seem less like wild invention on Murakami’s part, and more like a deliberate re-casting in contemporary terms of ancient folk tradition.¹² Boku is a healer: Nutmeg takes him on as her successor. During the winter after Kumiko leaves him, he becomes a hermit, seeing no one. The well he enters is a dark, secluded enclosure. He has to pass through the wall in order to visit that other place. The birthmark he acquires when returning through the wall glows with a mysterious heat. He keeps the bat in the well with him because it makes him feel safe (3:95). The “wind-up bird” (which no one ever sees) and the cat (which mysteriously reappears after its long absence) are associated with Boku: could they be his “retinue of assistant spirits”? In his first stay in the well, Boku fasts—he has only water and lemondrop candies with him and these soon run out. When he emerges from the well, he takes a shower. It is perhaps also noteworthy that Boku experiences a powerful vision while swimming in the community centre pool.

The constant associations with water and flow (*nagare*) also point to a Shinto or folk religion context. When Boku returns from his last journey to the other world of the hotel, he is covered in blood; blood and association with death are forms of pollution. Perhaps the magical re-appearance of water in the well is a kind of *misogi*, a cleansing of body and mind that enables Boku to return to the ordinary world.

Asked in an interview to describe what he considers “great writing” (*meibun*), Murakami named F. Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, Raymond Chandler, Kurt Vonnegut, and Ueda Akinari (Murakami Ryu 248). The inclusion of Akinari seems at first startling, but when one considers the prevalence in Murakami’s fiction of ghosts, violent death, and the supernatural, Akinari seems like an entirely logical ancestor. The tales in Akinari’s *Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語 (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1776; tr. 1977) contain many elements from folk religion and popular superstition—the journey to the other world, the ghostly lover, supernatural intervention—that Murakami also employs.

In a study of how (or whether) the protagonists of modern Japanese novels reach maturity, Kinya Tsuruta discusses the importance of “a temporary regression,” a stage he calls the *mukogawa* (the other side) (2). In examining novels by such canonical writers

¹² Blacker also describes at length the importance of mountains in the shaman’s journey. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku must ascend the mountain above Junitaki to reach the house where was living. The shaman’s journey may serve as a subtext for this novel as well.

of the modern period as Kawabata Yasunari, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Natsume Soseki, and Abe Kobo, Tsuruta identifies a number of features associated with the *mukogawa*.

The *mukogawa* space is always accented by the presence of a body of water such as a pond, a river a spring ... The hero always seems to descend into this space rather than ascend...

The approach to *mukogawa* plays an important part. On the whole the approach has two characteristics: one is that it is quite hazardous, with an obvious intent to weaken the hero physically, sometimes going as far as to injure him. The other is that it confuses him mentally, depriving him of the sense of direction, time and even dimension. ...

The main player in the *mukogawa* is the woman who resides there. She is the spirit of the place. ... the outstanding attribute of the woman is that she is a nurturer/mother. Another attribute is her overpowering sexual attraction. (4)

All of these features apply to Boku's descent into the well (and indeed to the other-worldly experiences he has in Murakami's other novels as well).¹³ In addition, Tsuruta notes that the woman of the *mukogawa* "seems to combine several (sometimes conflicting) attributes": she is at once "virgin, mother, prostitute and Bodhisattva" (6). Kano Crete is a prostitute, but also Boku's saviour when he is trapped at the bottom of the well; Kumiko is Boku's wife (and therefore a potential mother), but she is also the woman of the erotic phone calls. (Kiki of *Dance, Dance, Dance* who leads Boku to the room of the skeletons is also a prostitute and clairvoyant.) Thus Boku's journeys to the other world of the hotel can be seen to fit into a well-established narrative pattern in modern Japanese fiction.

¹³ In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, Watakushi must pass through a leech-infested zone in order to reach the sanctuary in the underground world. The leeches seem a deliberate echo of the leeches which fall upon the priest in Izumi Kyoka's *Koya hijiri*: (1900; *The Saint of Mt. Koya*; trans 1990) , one of the texts Tsuruta cites as a central example of the *mukogawa* pattern.

Conclusion

In this final section, I have employed two ways of approaching Murakami's fictions: via "Western" genre theory, and via Japanese literary tropes such as the *mukogawa*. I do not think that either, in itself, is sufficient. The reasons for examining Murakami's work in the context of Japanese literature and culture are obvious. Despite the "foreignness" of his diction, his borrowed styles, and the intertextual references to Western literature, Murakami is writing in Japanese for a Japanese readership. Moreover, Murakami describes himself as a person who "might be moving towards that which is very Japanese":

I am not really sure what I mean by "very Japanese," but I feel in an indistinct way that what I am aiming at is something that is inherently Japanese. (Murakami Ryu 250)

While, in Iwamoto's words, "[s]ome Japanese critics have expressed dissatisfaction with Murakami, complaining that his works lack a deep-seated sociopolitico-historical awareness," it would seem that the publication of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, a novel so obviously permeated with "sociopolitico-historical awareness," will definitively clear Murakami of the charge that he is not concerned with proper Japanese topics.

As for the "Western" qualities in his fiction, and the consequent justification for the use of Western genre criticism, one can begin by pointing to his wide knowledge of Western literature. He studied classical Greek drama at university; in his adolescence he was already reading French and Russian literature; his translations include the works of serious as well as popular American writers. Indeed, Murakami may know the "Western canon" better than some of his American counterparts. Like so many Japanese writers of the modern period, Murakami has read widely outside Japanese literature. Since the Meiji period, Japanese authors have often been translators and/or scholars of foreign literature: Natsume Soseki 夏目漱石 wrote about the novels of Jane Austen; Mori Ogai 森鷗外 translated Schiller and Goethe; Dazai Osamu 太宰治 and Endo Shusaku studied French literature at university. Just as many originally "Western" consumer products such as automobiles, television, and computers have become thoroughly naturalized in Japan, so, too, have many features of the "Western" novel.

Moreover, the particular approach that I have used—genre criticism—has a modest goal: to “bring[] out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them” (Frye 247-8). This goal is relatively free of overt cultural or ideological content, although it does rest on the assumption that some kind of universal values underlie all literature. The very notion that there are such things as genres could be regarded as ethnocentric. But without such an assumption, even as a heuristic device, it would be very difficult to proceed with a comparative study. At this moment in the literary history of Japan, it is no longer possible to identify confidently a given narrative element as “Western”: Murakami’s detective-story parodies, for example, reflect his reading of Raymond Chandler, but they may also reflect his knowledge of Abe Kobo’s works. Thus it is not possible to determine whether “Western” critical approaches are productive only because one is using them on “Westernized” texts, or whether they truly apply to contemporary Japanese fiction. It seems to me that the “Western” (e.g., Canadian) scholar of Japanese literature can only rely on the body of critical approaches that form the discourse of literary study in her own culture, maintaining, meanwhile, a vigilant skepticism about their universal appropriateness.

It is worth noting that the contemporary Japanese critic Karatani Kojin is not at all hostile to the work of Western formalist critics. In categorizing the works of Soseki, Karatani uses Northrop Frye’s four categories of prose fiction. He identifies Soseki’s first novel, *Wagahai wa neko de aru* 吾輩は猫である (I Am a Cat, 1905-6; tr. 1986), “with its pedantic dialogues and display of encyclopaedic knowledge” as an anatomy, Frye’s term for the Menippean satire (175). Karatani argues that the tremendous prestige of the European nineteenth-century realist novel “extinguished” the varied prose genres that had existed in Edo fiction before its advent. It was Soseki who “carried on the legacy of Edo fiction” (178) in the form of Menippean satire. Soseki’s awareness or appreciation of forms other than the dominant realist novel was evident even in his critical writings on English literature in which, according to Karatani, “he gave the highest critical evaluation to the writings of Swift and Sterne” (177), both authors of Menippean satires. I mention this aspect of Karatani’s writings in order to point out that even a critic such as Karatani, who is sensitive to the difficulties of applying Western concepts to Japanese literature, nonetheless finds the Menippean satire a useful category for Japanese fiction.

Conclusion

The Menippean Satire: A Genre for Our Times?

In my introduction I suggested some sources for the Menippean satire in Hoban's own career and formation as a writer— his background as a writer for children, his knowledge of classical literature, and his familiarity with popular fantasy fiction. Similarly in the case of Murakami, an acknowledged interest in the novels of Dostoevsky, American popular fiction, and the tales of Ueda Akinari indicate possible sources for Menippean tropes and narrative strategies. But there is another way to think about why writers such as Hoban and Murakami might choose this genre.

The Menippean satire is often associated with postmodernism: indeed, as I noted earlier, Brian McHale has identified the postmodernist novel as “the heir of the Menippean satire and its most recent historical avatar” (172). M. Keith Booker, in his study of Flann O'Brien, similarly, though less explicitly, links Menippean satire and postmodernism.

Certainly many formal characteristics associated with the Menippean satire appear in definitions of postmodernism. For example, Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* notes that the weakening of generic boundaries is typical of the postmodern novel (e.g., 60); the Menippean counterpart of this trait is the use of inserted genres. Many postmodernist novels employ “parodic intertexts” (Hutcheon 130); so too do Menippean satires (ranging from Lucian's parodies of Homer to Murakami's parodies of Raymond Chandler). Hutcheon also notes that postmodernist fiction tends to muddle the distinction between high and low art (44); a similar mixture of high and low is evident in the Menippean satire.

Brian McHale is unusual among critics of postmodernism because he focuses his attention narrowly on a particular group of literary texts. Inasmuch as he does limit his definition of postmodernism to “a poetics which is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism,” he achieves his announced aim of providing a description that is at least “internally consistent ... neither indiscriminately broad nor unhelpfully narrow”; his definition also succeeds in being “both productive and interesting” (5).

Other critics attempt to survey the whole range of phenomena that might be considered postmodernist, including architecture, philosophy, critical theory, painting, cinema, music, dance; even events in the economic and technical spheres attract their attention. This ambitious scope has a certain internal justification, inasmuch as one feature of postmodernism is the erasure of boundaries between, for example, critical texts and literary ones, artistic objects and manufactured ones, technological phenomena (such as virtual space) and mental ones. It also makes a certain amount of historical sense, too, for the simple reason that people who write novels live in particular places and times. Their choice of form must somehow be related to the world they live in. Theodor Adorno makes this point (with obvious dialectical undertones):

The unresolved antagonisms of reality reappear to art in the guise of immanent problems of artistic form. This, and not the deliberate injection of objective moments or social content, defines art's relation to society.
(8)

Marxist critic Fredric Jameson seems to be operating from a similar standpoint when he writes of postmodernism as “the cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism” (46)—that is, the reflection in cultural form of the present economic structure. When the world economy moved into the phase Ernest Mandel labels late-modern capitalism, cultural production also moved into something new — something we now recognize as postmodernism. (Many theorists of the postmodern might regard this assertion as historicizing, an attempt to impose patterns of “development” on events, but Jameson sees it as his role to think historically about the present—i.e., to see the dialectical forces that have produced the present situation.) Among the economic shifts Jameson notes are “the destruction of precapitalist Third World agriculture by the Green Revolution” (36); “the rise of the media and the advertising industry” (36); the emergence of “a great global multinational and decentered communicational network” (44); the expansion of multinational business (5); the megalopolis (35); and the transition into a “Third Machine Age,” of which the chief symbol is the computer (37; see also xix in Jameson for a similar list). In his discussion of the postmodern, Jameson tackles film, painting, fiction, poetry, and architecture. He emphasizes that his essay is not merely “an account of one cultural style or movement among others”; it is, rather, a “periodizing hypothesis” that attempts “to grasp postmodernism not as a style, but rather as a cultural dominant” (3-4).

Another way of thinking about the postmodern is to distinguish, as Bryan S. Turner does, between “postmodernity” and “postmodernism”:

Briefly, postmodernity refers to the extension of the processes of commodification to everyday life and the impact of mass consumer cultures on cultural systems, blurring the distinction, for example, between high and low culture. Postmodernism means the use of simulation in cultural production, and in stylistic terms it involves self-parody and irony. Now much of the postmodern debate has been concerned to assert the importance of difference and otherness, so there is a connection between a postmodern critique of universalistic categories and the process of indigenization. (9)

Turner goes on to attach specific political values to postmodernism:

Following J.-F. Lyotard in *La Condition postmoderne* (1979) we can define postmodernism simply as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives.’ Postmodern philosophy offers a simultaneous condemnation of exploitative capitalism and bureaucratic socialism as ‘grand narratives’ which have imposed a barren sameness on the modern social world. Postmodernism, which has found important allies in feminism and anti-colonialism, condemns the uniform, patriarchal, rationalist and hierarchical structures of Western modernism. While many critics of postmodernism have mistakenly assumed that it has no political message, postmodernism suggests a new vision of justice which gives primacy to difference, to heterogeneity, to paradox and contradiction, and to local knowledge. (11-12).

For Turner, postmodernity is an economic and social phenomenon (parallel to Jameson’s “late capitalism”), while postmodernism is an aesthetic one. The political agenda Turner associates with postmodernism—to “condemn[] the uniform, patriarchal, rationalist and hierarchical structures of Western modernism”—resembles Hutcheon’s association of the postmodern with “the “ex-centric, the off-center” (60). She discusses the approaches of black, feminist, postcolonial, and Asian-American writers as examples of postmodernism in practice, and suggests that “the theory and practice of postmodern

art has shown ways of making the different, off-center, into the vehicle for aesthetic and even political consciousness-raising—perhaps the first and necessary step to any radical change” (73).

Japan and the Postmodern

If we turn to examine the possible relations between postmodernism and Japan, we are faced with additional complications. Not only is it important to consider the distinction between postmodernism as a style (literary or cultural) and postmodernism as an economic and social phenomenon. It is also necessary to consider whether “postmodernism” in all its forms is only a Euro-American development. While Hutcheon and McHale include literary works from other parts of the world (e.g., South America, India), and Turner examines the claims of Islam to succeed Western imperialism as the dominant mode in the postmodern era, it is clear that the major focus of postmodernist criticism remains the culture of Europe and North America. Is there a Japanese postmodern?

Inasmuch as this is a thesis in literary studies, not cultural criticism, an analysis of postmodernity in Japan is beyond its scope. However, it seems safe to assert that many of the economic features Jameson notes as postmodern—the megalopolis, multinational business, the exploitation of Third World agriculture and resource bases, the prominence of the media and advertising, global communications networks based on the computer—can be observed in Japan today. In one of his less opaque moments, Jameson asserts that “postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good” (ix). When one walks along a beach in Japan, where concrete riprap has almost entirely replaced the natural shoreline, it seems indeed that postmodernism has arrived.

As for the appropriateness of calling a work of Japanese fiction “postmodern,” it depends on how much one wants to assert with this term. Many formal characteristics associated with postmodernism can certainly be found in Japanese literature; but just as some feminist critics have found postmodernist features in writings by women of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, so too the energetic critic could find many examples of postmodernist tropes and strategies in *premodern* Japanese literature. And if *postmodernism* has some relationship to modernism, then any assertion about

postmodernist Japanese literature presumes the existence of modern Japanese literature. Karatani Kojin points out the difficulties of defining the modern in the Japanese context:

The concept of the “modern” is an extremely ambiguous one. This is true, not only for Japanese but for non-Western peoples generally, among whom the “modern” and the “Western” are often conflated. Since in the West as well as Asia, the modern and premodern are distinct from one another, it stands to reason that modernity must be conceptualized separately from Westernness. But since the “origin” of modernity is Western, the two cannot so easily be separated. This is why in non-Western countries the critique of modernity and the critique of the West tend to be confused. Many misperceptions arise out of this. One, for example, is that Japanese modern literature, because it is not Western, is not fully modern. The flip-side of this idea is that, if a work’s materials and themes are non-Western, the work must be antimodern. (192).

Karatani attributes modernity in Japanese literature to the *genbun itchi* movement of the late Meiji period (the 1890s). Ostensibly, the aim of this movement was to alter the language of literature so that it would more closely resemble everyday spoken Japanese. But Karatani argues that *genbun itchi* produced just another kind of writing, not a direct, transparent mode of expression:

... insofar as it was maintained that writing was only a transparent instrument for the transmission of ideas, *genbun itchi* eradicated writing. An internal subject and an objectively existing “object” were thus simultaneously produced. This was the starting point both for the notion of self-expression and for that realistic mode of writing known in Japanese as *shajitsu* (copying). (193)

In an essay entitled “The Discovery of Landscape,” Karatani argues that Japanese painters and writers of the late nineteenth century had to “discover” the Japanese landscape in order to write about it and paint it in the way that European contemporaries represented their surroundings. Before, Japanese artists had largely perceived the landscape in terms of the tropes of Chinese literature (20); in order to represent it in the tropes of a different artistic tradition, the Japanese had to discover the landscape of their own land. Karatani explains his purpose in exploring this process:

... I used the term "discovery of landscape" to connote the inversion whereby something which had never existed before came to be seen as self-evident, as an existence which in fact preceded the invention. It is an allegorical representation of the material apparatuses of modernity. (193)

By "allegorical representation," I think Karatani means that other aspects of modernity in literature—notably the notion of the "inner life," the inner man, the perceiving subject—were, like "landscape," inventions brought to Japan. Once they had been installed, the fact that these notions were new and not universal or permanent was gradually forgotten.

One can argue with Karatani's position. For example, one might find many examples in premodern Japanese literature of precisely the sort of subjectivity that he claims was a modern invention. Are these premodern "subjects" merely conventions, in the same sense that the pine grove and the mountain of traditional painting were conventions that did not represent any particular, actual tree or landform? Did the lyric poets of the Heian period not think of themselves as individuals, with an inner life? One can speculate about such questions, but I think they are ultimately unanswerable.

Nonetheless, Karatani's essays force one to recognize that "modernism" in Japan may be something quite different from modernism in Euro-American literature. Karatani also reminds us of the vexed debates that have surrounded modernity in Japan: he discusses, for example, the wartime "Overcoming Modernity" debate, in which nationalist scholars and thinkers tried to imagine how Japan could expunge the negative "Western" aspects of modernity without losing the military and industrial strength that modernity had brought.

Although Karatani obviously views modernism as a problematic concept, he seems able to identify postmodernism in Japan without hesitation:

In Japan in the 1980s modern literature seems to have died once and for all. All of the concepts which had been dominant until that time—those of the "inner self," of "meaning," of "the writer," and of "depth"—were rejected, while language, what had been subordinated to them, was set free. Another way of describing this might be as the reinstatement of

various genres—wordplay, pastiche, romance (including science fiction), satire—which had been excluded from modern literature. This was the emergence of the situation which has been described as postmodernism. (187-188)

I assume Karatani means that the dominant concepts of modernity (such as the inner self and depth) were now ironized or de-centred in this fiction of the 1980s. He seems also to be suggesting that the advent of postmodernism enabled Japanese writers to throw off modernism, a relatively recent transplant that had never taken. It is interesting to note that the features he identifies as reappearing in Japanese literature in the 1980s are also typical of the Menippean satire.

The Menippean Satire as Postmodern Genre

If we put aside the problems associated with defining postmodernism, it is nonetheless evident that the world in which we live is a different place than it was fifty or sixty years ago. The Anglo-American experience has changed, and so has the Japanese. Starting from this very basic assumption, it does not seem foolhardy to posit a change in the forms of fiction. At root, this is all that “postmodernism” implies: things are different, and we need a different way to write about them.

In the case of Murakami and Hoban, the postmodern world in which they find themselves presents certain unavoidable features. One is the Second World War, the divide that separates the modern from what has become the postmodern. For Hoban, the killing of the European Jews is an incomprehensible fact, a terrible demonstration of God’s silence, and he cannot lose sight of it, whether he is writing about the Crusades or life in 2050. A similar fact is the existence of nuclear weapons. One can think of *Riddley Walker* as an artist parable or a book about writing or a virtuoso display of linguistic inventiveness, but it is also a book about nuclear war. I do not think Hoban intends us to forget this while we are admiring the other things *Riddley Walker* achieves.

For Murakami, the Second World War is also a kind of moral datum point, an event which has shaped his world. The war’s importance in his thinking is most evident in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, but even in earlier novels, such as *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the actions of the Japanese in Manchuria remain a significant subtext. It is possible to

interpret *A Wild Sheep Chase* as a kind of political allegory about how imported ideas (e.g., the sheep, a non-indigenous animal) led Japan into becoming an imperialist nation.

The end of nature is another aspect of the postmodern world that has not gone unremarked in the novels of Murakami and Hoban. Hoban's description of the "countryside" that Fremder and his lover visit is a dismaying picture: only a single owl, glimpsed flying overhead, seems to remain from the old world of field and forest. Murakami's characters are totally engrossed in an urban world; there are no visits to relatives in the countryside, no outings on the weekend. Yet Murakami does work in a considerable number of references to birds and animals. There is not just the wind-up bird of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* (which also features in earlier short stories). There is also a persistent elephant. One of Murakami's short stories, "Zo no shometsu" 象の消滅 ("The Elephant Vanishes") describes how an elephant and its keeper simply disappear without a trace, or any visible means of egress from the elephant's cage; this story is, I believe, Murakami's re-writing of a story by Shin'ichi Hoshi 新-星 "Tomo o ushinatta yoru" 友を失った夜 (The Night We Lost a Friend; tr. 1981), a science-fiction tale about the death of the world's last elephant. The strong subtext of shamanism in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* also reflects Murakami's concern about the loss of the traditional Japanese connection to the natural world.

Another, perhaps less serious, aspect of the postmodern world to which Hoban and Murakami have responded is the commodification of culture. Murakami's obsession with Western popular music and brand-name items both demonstrates and satirizes the global penetration of consumerism. (Murakami's books are themselves successful consumer items: his best-selling *Norwegian Wood*, which appeared on the market just in time for Christmas, was packaged in two volumes—one red, the other green.) Hoban, former adman, makes frequent comic use of advertising slogans, brand-names, and marketing strategies; he also satirizes the process that turns literature into a commodity in, for example, his portrait of Saul Mazzaroth in *The Medusa Frequency*. The entry of computers into our lives also receives attention from both writers, both in the sci-fi trope of the cyborg, and in the everyday sense of the writer's tool.

I mention these features of the postmodern condition in order to point out how certain issues of our time are very much present in the fiction of Murakami and Hoban. While it might be possible to categorize their works as postmodern precisely because they do deal with such issues, I think Menippean satire is a more accurate and helpful category.

By thinking about their novels as Menippean satires, one can see more clearly how a range of characteristics that might, in the postmodernist vein of criticism, be simply labelled as heterogeneous or decentred, actually form a neatly interlocking system of tropes and narrative strategies. As a critical tool, the generic conventions of the Menippean satire give more purchase on a work of fiction, more ways to examine it, more specific questions to ask. From the point of view of the writer, central features of the Menippean satire—fantasy, crudity, philosophical dialogues, inserted genres, heteroglossia, and the descent into hell—are particularly appropriate for the fictional treatment of life in a postmodern world.

How might fantasy serve the postmodern writer? First, it enables him or her to think the unthinkable, to invent what does not yet exist, to create unexpected juxtapositions of the “real” and the unreal, the past and present, the present and the future. To return again to Brian McHale’s hypothesis that the postmodern has an ontological dominant, then what fantasy permits is the creation of multiple, contradictory worlds. McHale talks about the evocation of multiple or parallel worlds in postmodern fiction as a literalization of the metaphor that each person lives in his or her own world. Perhaps what fantasy allows the postmodern writer to do is literalize the metaphors that we use to describe not only our individual condition but also our collective cultural one. *Riddley Walker* takes the metaphor of “bombing them back to the stone age” literally: what would happen if England, as a consequence of a nuclear war, were reduced to a neolithic state? *Kleinzeit*’s central trope—personification of such abstract entities as hospital and death—really rests on the literalization of metaphor: Hospital becomes a cat, ready to pounce on Kleinzeit; Death is a sly chimpanzee with sharp claws, always waiting for Kleinzeit. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*, Boku’s descent into the well is a literalization of our metaphors about going inside the self, or going “down deep” to find our authentic self. The town at the End of the World is a literalized metaphor for the individual consciousness, for the separateness of each person’s inner life. By literalizing these metaphors through the exercise of free fantasy, Murakami and Hoban are able both to ironize them, and to exploit their suggestive potential.

Crudity and vulgarity—the qualities Bakhtin labelled “slum naturalism”—also have their uses, particularly in juxtaposition with other features of the Menippean satire, such as the philosophical dialogue or the descent into hell. Murakami, for example, seems attuned to an audience whose primary source of entertainment is television and film: just when his forays into fantasy or meditations on loss threaten to become tiresome,

Murakami deftly turns to something with shock value —e.g., Reiko’s account of being seduced by a twelve-year-old in *Norwegian Wood*, or an erotic dream or phone call in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles*. Violence provides a similar abrupt and attention-getting alteration in tone. I hasten to point out that I do not think Murakami uses sexuality and violence only to pander to an audience jaded by action movies and overheated adult comics. This is one motive, but certainly in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* the violence is absolutely necessarily thematically; without such scenes as the flaying of Yamamoto or the baseball bat execution Murakami could not have conveyed with such effectiveness the horrors of the war in Manchuria. As for the scenes of sexuality, they too have a thematic role. If it were not for Boku’s occasional sexual encounters, his life would be impossibly circumscribed and unemotional. In most of his incarnations, Boku is without family or close friends; only via sexual encounters does he escape his isolation.

The function of crudity or vulgarity in a Menippean satire is to demonstrate that “truth” (however conceived) is not to be found only in books or in the words of the powerful. Truth is also in the humblest, most grotesque aspects of human life, and these cannot be ignored. In *Pilgermann*, for example, the recurring image of death as a lascivious old man, raping children and coupling with pigs, is repellent, crude, vulgar; yet it is an unforgettable demonstration of the principle that the very forces that create life will also take it away. This capacity of the Menippean satire to fuse the teaching of truth with the portrayal of crudity seems well-suited to a postmodern world in which all the former strongholds of the truth—established religion, high art, even liberal humanism—have crumbled, or seem remote.

In the Menippean satire, scenes of “slum naturalism” coexist with philosophical dialogues. There are philosophical dialogues of a pedantic kind, rendered satirically. In Murakami’s fiction, the speeches of the black secretary in *A Wild Sheep Chase* or of Wataya Noboru in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicles* are of this kind. So too are the speeches delivered by Hoban’s doctors and the exegeses of Abel Goodparley. There is also a second type of dialogue, one which goes straight to the “ultimate questions” that Bakhtin characterizes as the territory of the Menippean satire. In the Menippean satire, it is possible to ask where God is, what happens after death, and why people commit evil acts. These are the questions that Pilgerman and Riddley Walker, Fremder and Herman Orff ask; these are the questions that send Boku down into the well. Despite the attempts of poststructuralist theory to focus philosophical attention on language, these ethical and moral questions remain of vital importance in the postmodern world. Indeed,

they seem particularly acute in this time, when either our weapons or our wastes seem likely to bring an end to humanity.

The descent into hell, that hallmark Menippean trope, also has its particular postmodern uses. One might argue that the horrors of the megalopolis, or of sectarian violence, or twentieth-century warfare are not qualitatively different from those of previous times. But these failures of reason or tolerance in our time seem more discouraging because we have no consoling hope in progress. Technology is not going to wipe out poverty: we have more machines and more hungry people than ever before. Education does not seem to make humans kinder or more sensible; terrible things have happened in countries with high rates of literacy. Nor can there be a technical fix for whatever environmental or resource crisis confronts us: our technical solutions generally turn out to create more problems than they solve. Moreover, there is now no “away” to get to: there is pollution at the North Pole and Kentucky Fried Chicken in Bali.

To write about such a world, the trope of the descent into hell serves very well, for it offers a way to render imaginatively the problems that surely preoccupy every thinking person. In the process, these problems are transformed; they are re-configured so that one can begin to accept and understand them, and to place them in the larger context of the ebb and flow of human history. Furthermore, the comic and satiric energies of the Menippean satire make it possible to write about the worst one can imagine—i.e., hell—with humour and even some kind of joy. Hoban’s *Riddley Walker* confronts us with the potential hell of nuclear war, but it is not a despairing or pessimistic book. Hoban describes the purpose of art as enabling us to confront the worst:

... It doesn’t matter that the sun is going to become a red giant and swallow up the earth and then it’s going to become a white dwarf and a black hole and that everything that we associate with life, even in our posterity, will be gone. It doesn’t matter, because it’s part of the action of whatever there is—of the universal mind, of the fluctuations of the universe— and when you meet it you feel up, you don’t feel down.
(Hoban in interview, Brooks 75)

Hoban claims—and he is right—that “[t]here is no despair in my books—my books are full of delight” (Brooks 74).

Inserted genres and heteroglossia also seem useful narrative strategies for fiction in a postmodern world. One feature of postmodernism often mentioned by cultural theorists is globalization, not only in manufacturing, trade, and finance, but also in popular culture. In a country such as Japan, the incursion of cultural commodities from elsewhere is particularly noticeable against the background of a homogeneous traditional culture. The heteroglossia of Menippean satire provides a way to render this phenomenon linguistically. Inserted genres accommodate tones and moods that a single narrative style would not permit. This inclusiveness is particularly useful in a time when many styles no longer seem to have a place in serious fiction—straightforward realism, lyrical prose, social documentary. One can argue that they have lost their place because we no longer believe in the power of realism to represent reality, or of lyrical prose to express that now-contested entity, the inner self. Whether one accepts these arguments or not, it would probably be hard to take seriously now a work that relied unquestioningly on any one of these styles. But the strategy of inserted genres frees the writer to employ them. Murakami, for example, manages to play many different notes in his fiction, ranging from the the hard-boiled detective novel to historical narrative to lyrical fairy tale.

As I have been at pains to point out elsewhere, I do not think that either Murakami or Hoban has chosen the Menippean satire in deliberate imitation of classical or Renaissance models. They may know these models; they most certainly know later works identified as Menippean satire, such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Alice in Wonderland*. However I think it is best to think of their use of the Menippean satire not as conscious selection, but as a kind of accident. Perhaps they began with certain fictional strategies—fantasy or a fragmentary style. Then, it seems to me, something like a memory of the Menippean satire genre might have begun to work. Once a writer is working in a fantastical vein, what is to stop him from visiting hell or incorporating strange and unusual states of mind? Once a writer has distanced himself or herself from genres that postulate a unitary, rational world, then the door is open to parody, madness, doubles, vulgarity and so on. Once a writer has decided that anything—letters, reports, drawings, maps—can be included in a novel, then the way is clear to document daily life in whatever comes to hand, to invent new languages, to throw out the apparatus of realism, and to try on a variety of styles and voices. The end result might be something that very closely resembled the Menippean satire.

For reasons that I hope this study makes clear, Menippean satire seems a better critical tool than the term “postmodern novel” for discussing the fiction of Murakami and

Hoban. It is more specific and more concrete, and it is largely free of extra-literary political and theoretical associations. Moreover, I think that Brian McHale is right when he suggests that a great number of other works currently labelled “postmodernist” might usefully be examined as Menippean satires.

I hope, too, that my study has indicated why the Menippean satire, despite its origins in Western classical literature, is a useful generic category for Japanese fiction. Considering Murakami’s works as Menippean satires does not require one to detach them from Japanese literary tradition; on the contrary, it enables one to identify certain constellations of features that can be then considered in the context of both Euro-American and Japanese literature. Both these contexts are important in the study of a writer such as Murakami whose knowledge of Western literature is extensive.

I think there is a further reason for preferring the term Menippean satire to postmodernist fiction. Hutcheon asserts that postmodernist fiction “articulates and problematizes the assumptions of our dominant culture” (227). This statement suggests that cultural criticism is the primary role of fiction. She also argues for “a postmodern poetics [that] would account for the theory and art that recognize their implication in that which they contest: the ideological as well as aesthetic underpinnings of the cultural dominants of today—both liberal humanism and capitalist mass culture” (222). Here again, she suggests that postmodern fiction can be identified by its ideological component, the purpose of which is to “contest” prevailing values. While one could construe novels like *Riddley Walker* or *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* as contesting liberal humanism and capitalist mass culture, such an approach would be an extremely limited way in which to regard them. I am not sure that Russell Hoban and Murakami Haruki have anything against liberal humanism. Moreover, if one focused on their “implication in” and “contest[ing] of” liberal humanism and capitalist mass culture, one might not be able to accommodate what Hoban himself says about his role as a writer: namely, that he believes in “the universal mind and the universal consciousness” and that “something is speaking to us, something is thinking us” (Brooks 76). Similarly, an emphasis on the ways Murakami contests humanism and mass culture might be hard to reconcile with his own estimation of what great writing is: “It is writing that knows shame, writing that has conviction; even if there is a touch of self-hate or self-mockery, it should be writing in which the heart is opened and faces outward” (Murakami Ryu 248).

Adopting the term “postmodernist” seems to require one to engage with certain political issues, or at least to spend some time (as Brian McHale does) fighting them off. I do not mean to suggest that it is wrongheaded to consider how fiction might contest prevailing political values. It is just not the task I wanted to undertake; nor did it seem, in the case of these two writers, likely to produce the most useful results.

Would Russell Hoban and Murakami Haruki be surprised to find themselves associated with Carroll, Soseki, Swift, Sterne, Rabelais, and Lucian as writers of Menippean satire? Perhaps. They might even be pleased to be in the company of writers not only so distinguished but so distinctive. The Menippean satire is a genre governed by certain conventions, but it is also a remarkably free genre, one that permits its users to pursue unusual and sometimes surprising solutions to problems such as representation, structure, and point of view. In calling Hoban’s and Murakami’s works Menippean satires, I do not intend in any way to diminish the inventiveness of their fiction. I hope, on the contrary, that it is understood as a tribute to their seriousness and originality.

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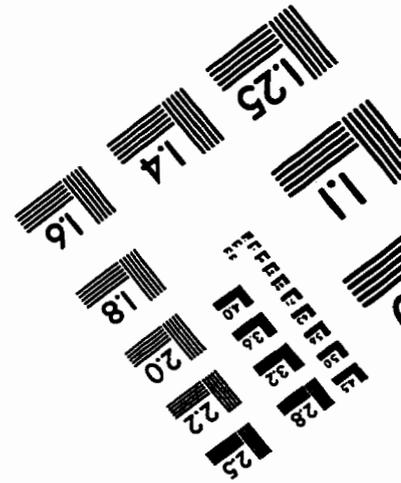
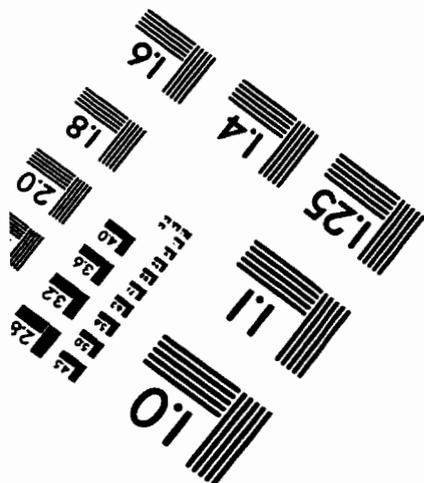
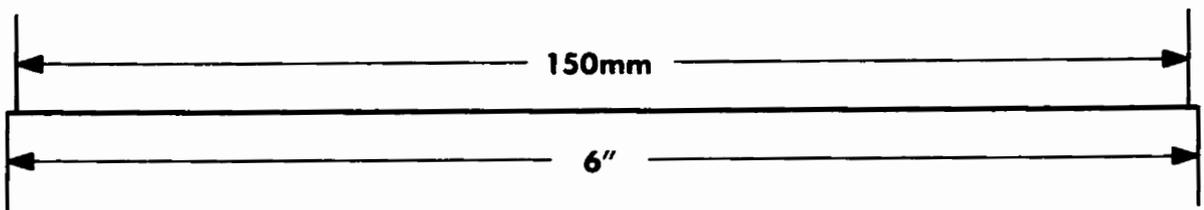
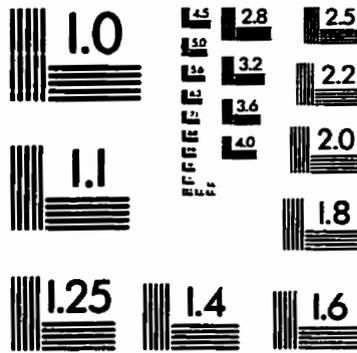
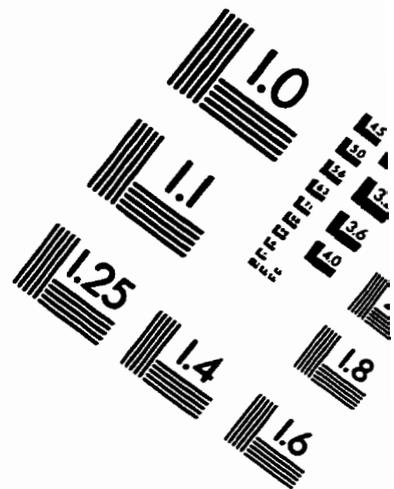
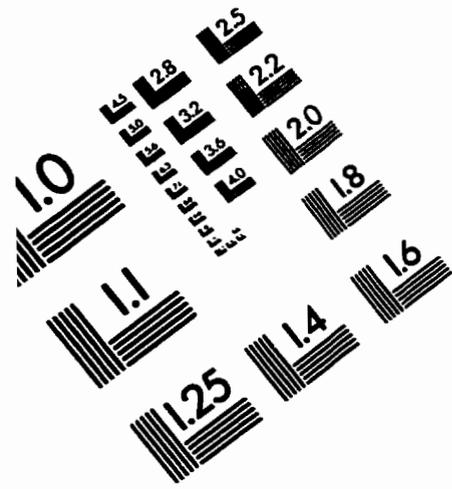
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