

**A MIMETIC AND NARRATOLOGICAL READING OF POSTMODERN  
FICTION**

**BY**

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**BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY 2007**

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Thesis submitted to the Institute for Graduate Studies  
in Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Western Languages and Literature

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Bogazici University

2007





## Abstract

This thesis analyzes three postmodern pieces: “Scarlati Tilt”, a short story by Richard Brautigan, *The Body Artist*, a novel by Don DeLillo, and *Adaptation*, a film by Spike Jonze, with an aim to prove that the structure of all three, though highly fragmented and complex, as well as the seemingly absent unified meaning eventually lead to a closure. A reinterpretation of mimetic theory and narratology is necessary to demonstrate how postmodern texts lend themselves to more meaningful interpretations. This thesis explores several mimetic approaches including ancient and contemporary ones to display that even postmodern texts are still referential in the sense that they reflect the perception of the postmodern era which itself is fragmented. Narratology analyzes texts in the light of sequentiality to attribute a narrative value to them; however, after reinterpreting the point of view, exposition and the communication model of narrative, which involves the participation of the implied author, the dramatized narrator, the model reader and the authorial reader, one can see that narrative quality does not necessitate a sequential order. Combining the reinterpreted narratological approaches mentioned above with the idea that mimesis continues to exist in postmodern fiction, this study claims that the fragmentation and emptiness in texts can reveal unified plots. The two-sentence-long short story “Scarlati Tilt” narrates a murder which the text does not explicitly portray; the fragmented novel *The Body Artist* is the narration of a woman’s story by herself in the aftermath her husband’s death, and the film *Adaptation* displays that postmodern fiction may have to cooperate with conventional story telling, thereby being mimetic and narrative.

## OZ

Bu tez parçalanmış ve karmaşık bir anlatıya sahip olan ve de bütünlüklü bir anlam içermemiş gibi görünen postmodern metnin yapısının metni anlamlı kılabilirdiğini kanıtlamayı amaçlayarak üç postmodern çalışmayı inceler: Richard Brautigan'ın kısa öyküsü "Scarlati Tilt", Don DeLillo'nun romanı *Beden Sanatçısı* ve Spike Jonze'un filmi *Tersyuz*. Postmodern eserlerin bütünlüklü ve anlamlı yorumları mümkün kıldıklarını göstermek için Mimetik Teori ve Anlatı Bilimi tekrar incelenmelidir. Bu tez eskiden günümüze birçok mimetik anlayışını, postmodern eserlerin de gerçeğe gönderme yaptığını aslında eserlerde yansıtılan postmodern dönemde zaten parçalı olan algılar olduğunu göstermek için inceler. Anlatı Bilimi metinlerin "anlatı" kabul edilmeleri için bütünlüklü ve birbirini takip eder sırayla öykülenmeleri gerektiğini söyler ama metinlerdeki anlatıcı bakış açisi, geçmişe yönelik açıklama içeren bölümler ve de anlatıdaki yazar ve okuyucu arasında gerçekleşen iletişim düzeni incelendiğinde "anlatı" olmanın bir metin için muhakkak bütünlüklü ve kronolojik bir düzen gerektirmediği anlaşılır. Bahsedilen Anlatı Bilimi araçlarını mimesisin postmodern metinlerde de bulunduğu iddiasıyla birleştiren bu çalışma eserlerdeki parçalanmış anlatı ve boşluğun bütünlüklü hikayelere işaret edebileceğini iddia eder. İki cümleden oluşan kısa öykü "Scarlati Tilt" metinde gerçekleştiği bile açık bir şekilde söylenmeyen bir cinayeti anlatır; parçalı ve 3. şahıs anlatısına sahip olan *Beden Sanatçısı* kocasının ölümünden sonraki halini aslında kendi ağzından anlatan bir kadının hikayesidir; ve *Tersyuz* postmodern metnin klasik anlatıyla iç içe geçip mimetik ve bütünlüklü anlatı özellikleri kazanabileceğini gösterir.

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## Introduction

Postmodernism has left its imprint on many aspects of life such as architecture, visual arts, advertisements, literature, as well as people's reception of and reaction to signs. When one takes literature into consideration one can see that the representation in postmodern literature is dramatically altered. What postmodernism did to the supposedly conventional plot structure of works prior to it may well be explored through a very simple metaphor: scissors cutting through regularly shaped items, distorting them and fragmenting them. The conventional plot structure, which rests on a referential sequentiality, has been torn into fragments floating disorderly. Since postmodern fiction does not abide by the rules of conventional story telling one may have difficulty in finding a chronological order, an expository style that provides the reader with the adequate information about the fictional world and a well-structured characterization revealing about the psychological, environmental drives as well as the physical features of the characters. The lack of detailed characterization results in a greater gap between the characters and the reader since the characters may be trimmed into some void or complicated features that used to constitute only a small part of the whole of which they were composed. The term "page turner" is a practical joke since turning the page no longer means that another very important fact will be revealed. While defining postmodernism, Eagleton does not hesitate to call it something "threatening to collapse into meaninglessness" (200). The threat, as one might infer, is that the point of a literary product might reside in the fact that it lacks a point. What is the reader supposed to do



with it? How is s/he to discover the underlying truth? Eagleton sees interpretation as the only way to produce truth (201). The differences between the interpretations of each reader points out the multi-facedness of truth and automatically recalls what reader response theory entails. Reader response critics explore the kinds of readers various texts seem to imply, the role actual readers play in the determination of literary meaning, the relation of reading conventions to textual interpretation, and the status of the reader's self (Tompkins ix). The emphasis in reader response theory is on the gaps in the texts that are supposed to be filled by the reader's imagination. In other words, reader response theory highlights individual interpretations, individual stories and the polyphony of truth rather than reducing the text to an absolute meaning. Although interpretation is the key word, meaning seems remote, since it changes from one individual to another depending on their personal, cultural, and social background.

A postmodern text offers a challenging way of reading since it may repeat some scenes, or some pieces of information in addition to chopping the whole and serving it disorderly. Brian McHale chooses the term "retake" to refer to "the text's cinematic turn to the places it paid a visit before" (102). However, the retake in postmodern literature does not bring it any closer to the reader. As McHale points out, far from telling us where we are, it leaves us hesitating in between alternative, competing sequences (102). A postmodern piece could do the reverse as well. It might exclude some sequences, leaving the reader unguided as to what is happening in the text. The linear and grand narrative no longer exists in the text because postmodern fiction rather employs shuffled fragments or mini-narratives in text production. Looking at postmodern fiction from this point of view, it seems almost impossible to derive a/some meaning out of it.

The major aim of this study is to discover narrativity in postmodern fiction which requires a fresh look at mimetic theory. Mimetic theory approaches the

relationship between art and life a structuralist manner<sup>1</sup>. As Aristotle suggests, art feeds on life and constitutes itself by imitating reality (*Poetics* IV). On the other hand not all meaning related theories draw on mimetic theory. Although one may relate mimesis to structuralism since both are built on a referential bond between reality and representation, or to new criticism<sup>2</sup> since both support that reality or meaning can be discovered by analyzing the piece, post-structuralism, focuses on the multiplicity of meaning thereby claiming that “meaning is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifier” (Eagleton 111). Trying to build analogies between mimesis and the theories cited above is a challenging task. However, the relationship between “reality” and its “representation” in text or image still preoccupies critics. Duyfhuizen, for instance, reinterprets the relationship between reality and representation saying one does not come after another but instead they both are “parasitic and derivative” (32). Claiming that reality and representation arise from each other and even coexist in the text is a mimetic stance as it builds a bond between reality and the text. Lucy in a way rephrases Duyfhuizen’s idea saying a text’s rhetorical or referential value should not be taken into consideration individually but instead should be seen as a whole. The term Lucy proposes is “composition” which contains both the form and the content of the text and thus builds a close relationship between representation and reality (127). On the other hand, Jakobson concentrates on the relationship between the text and the reader, claiming that there is “a physical channel, a psychological connection” between the two

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<sup>1</sup> Structuralism flourished in 1960s as an attempt to apply Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistics to literature. Structuralists view language, or correspondingly the text, as a system of signs each of which was believed to be made up of a signifier and a signified, that is a sign and its meaning. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is predetermined and also objective. Therefore, the meaning a text conveys is predetermined but still, there is a one-to-one correspondence between what is written and what is meant (Eagleton 83-4).

<sup>2</sup> New Criticism claims that the literary piece is an object in itself and severs it from both author and reader. Author’s intentions in writing, although can be recovered, were of no relevance to the interpretation of the text, likewise the emotional responses of particular readers cannot be used in analysis. The piece means what it means regardless of the author’s intentions or the subjective feelings of the reader derived from it (Eagleton 41-2).

which he refers to as “contact” (33). Fludernik, by focusing on postmodern narrative, points to the fact that there cannot be any narratives without a human experiencer (13). All of these contemporary ideas on text reception have a tendency to establish a connection between reality and the text, thereby displaying mimetic approaches. In its quest for mimesis in contemporary texts, this study also emphasizes the that our reality is itself fragmented and thus postmodern, exemplified by contemporary modes of advertisement such as pop up windows on screens, computerized communication and fragmented reception of street art. If our perception is fragmented, the reality we are exposed to is fragmented too. Due to this fact, one may expect the representations of reality to be fragmented as well. Although this line of thinking can aptly attribute a mimetic quality to postmodern fiction, postmodern text analysis with a mimetic approach still requires the reinterpretation of another field: narratology.

Narratology is a field of literature that mainly focuses on and analyzes the order and sequentiality in texts<sup>3</sup>. For some narratologists like David Herman a text can only gain a narrative quality if it is a “sequentially organized representation of a sequence of events” (Herman 2). This idea might be challenged by using a theory of point of view aptly provided by Jonathan Culler. Culler believes that the lack of order in narrative representation might be the result of point of view (95). This implies that the point of view used in the text may belong to a narrator who is either not capable of narrating the events chronologically or to a narrator who, for a reason, consciously reorganizes the events’ sequentiality. On the other hand, Sternberg highlights the importance of the writer’s authority to select, include, omit or exclude certain parts in the narrative (111). This idea puts a great value on the writer without undermining the reader. As Marie Laure Ryan suggests, the reader’s part in text reception is great since the reader is

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<sup>3</sup> See Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1986).

invited by the author to be immersed in the fictional world and to engage in a reading activity similar to a role-play (167).

The main aim of the reading method this thesis proposes is to reach the underlying meaning in the story, in Genette's terms "the recit", in the complexity of postmodern narrative. Genette makes a distinction between "recit" and "discour", emphasizing that "recit" has some kind of order and that order is reorganized by the author in the "discour".<sup>4</sup> If one delves deeply into the discour, keeping in mind the idea that mimesis still exists and narratology's views on sequential order can be reinterpreted, one can reach the recit even in a complicated, fragmented text.

The relationship between the reader and the author is not onefold. Wallace Martin's narrative model helps one to understand this better. Between the real author and the reader, there are authorial and reader roles which assign tasks to both the author and the reader during the reading activity. Martin talks about the model reader that is the reader accepting the invitation of the author to the fictional world as Ryan also highlights (Martin 154). The model reader, I believe, collaborates with the authorial reader who is aware that the text the model reader is invited to is mere fiction. This collaboration produces the recit and transfers it to the actual reader.

Considering recent narratological approaches like Sternberg's idea of selection/omission, Culler's interpretation of the point of view, Ryan's evaluation of the reading activity, and Martin's narrative model, one realizes that narratology may be revisited as a field emphasizing the sequential order less which would help the reader with the search for meaning in the texts.

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<sup>4</sup> See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* trans by E. Lewin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980). For an evaluation of Genette's theory see Jonathan Culler, "Fabula and Sjuzhnet in the Analysis of Narrative: Some American Discussions" in *Narratology*, ed. Susana Onega and Jose Angel Garcia Landa (New York: Longman Publishing, 1996).

In the light of mimetic theory and narratology, this thesis analyzes three postmodern pieces: a short story, “Scarlati Tilt” by Richard Brautigan, a novel *The Body Artist* by Don DeLillo, and a film *Adaptation* by Spike Jonze, all of which provide the reader with referential aspects, thereby making it possible to claim the existence of mimesis in seemingly non-referential pieces where there is no chronological or sequential order of events. The short story in question, “Scarlati Tilt” by Richard Brautigan, consists of two sentences, namely 36 words including the title. With the reading this thesis provides, the two sentences yield an incredible amount of information that might even be used as the synopsis of a film or as plot for a novel. *The Body Artist* by Don DeLillo is characterized by lack of action, an unusual unravelling of the plot and different fragments treating the same characters in dissimilar ways. The protagonist is a female body artist who recently lost her husband and who encounters a ghost in a remote house and practices transforming her body; however, if the reader closely inspects the piece, s/he may find out information telling the reasons and consequences of the vague actions or situations narrated in the chapters. The novel, which might as well be called a novella, can be considered a postmodern novel with its stingy narrator, silent characters and too casual to write about dialogues; yet, as the so-called story progresses the reader is subtly filled in with details. The protagonist of the novel, Lauren Hartke sees a ghost in her house when she returns there after her husband’s funeral to spend some time alone to get used to her husband’s death. The chapters in *The Body Artist* portray Lauren trying to communicate with the ghost she names Mr. Tuttle. After a while she realizes the ghost can impersonate her husband. She starts impersonating her husband as well. She spends days working on her body in an attempt to transform it. She exercises, imitates people she sees on the street and talks to the ghost. Until an interview in the sixth chapter, which is done with Laruen after her innovative performance which

involves body art, the book provides the reader with scenes depicting Lauren working on her body or trying to communicate with the ghost. Nothing else happens. However, the interview puts all the information together. The repeated exercises, the impersonations are the elements the body artist Lauren Hartke uses in her last performance called Body Time. When one goes back to the chapters and rereads them with the information gained from the interview, the novel claims a narrative quality. *The Body Artist* depicts a woman who is trying to come to terms with her husband's death by spending some time alone and turning her grief into art. The presence of a ghost in the story should not be interpreted literally; the ghost makes it possible for Lauren to contemplate on time. This makes *The Body Artist* a novel that deals with the concept of time as well. The ghost represents the time that seems to stop flowing because he cannot use verb tenses appropriately. He jumps between time fragments and refers to the things that are expected to happen in the future as things that already happened. This is a practical element in the novel since Lauren needs time to get used to the death of her husband, and by stopping the flow of time with an outside force she can move in between time fragments, revisit the times she spent with her husband, and exercise her body for hours. This line of thinking explains the disappearance of the ghost when Lauren excels in impersonation and body modification. This makes the ghost's presence a meditative activity in the book. Lauren, a woman in desperate need of reorganizing time and beginning to feel its flow again, experiences meditative and contemplative moments through which she produces her art and acknowledges that time passes.

As for the film *Adaptation* by Spike Jonze, Charlie Kaufman, the real scriptwriter of the film, makes a great attempt at adapting Susan Orlean's half documentary half journal text called *The Orchid Thief* and the result is the film *Adaptation* which turns out to be a film about adapting the *The Orchid Thief* and trying

to find the underlying meanings in between the lines. Charlie Kaufman exists in real world as the film's scriptwriter and in the film's world as its scriptwriter again. The film feeds much on intertextuality but both as a film and as an attempt at adapting a piece of writing which does not seem suitable for adaptation, *Adaptation* tells much about the mimetic quality of postmodernism. One of the parallelisms one can draw between *The Body Artist* and *Adaptation* is related to the ghost theme. The film's credits include another name for the script: Donald Kaufman. Donald is a textualized character in the film, who does not exist in real world, and in the film is Charlie's the twin brother. Since Donald is not a real character, I tend to see a similarity between him and the ghost in *The Body Artist*. The ghost is present in *The Body Artist*, to make life easier for the protagonist by making the death of her husband more bearable and by reorganizing the notion of time. In *Adaptation* Charlie goes through great difficulty adapting *The Orchid Thief* while, on the other hand, his twin brother who is not as sophisticated as Charlie, decides to write a script for a thriller movie and progresses rather fast. The brothers represent two opposites. Charlie wants to make a film which is only about flowers while Donald writes a script which is structured and plotted in such a way that the audience is expected to follow a chronological sequence with the promise that all their questions will be answered and they will be shocked by the ending. It seems plausible to evaluate the brothers' existence metaphorically by relating Charlie to postmodern fiction and Donald to conventional fiction. Surprisingly, Donald dies in the end of the film while he is trying to help Charlie with his adaptation. The film ends, the credits roll, and the script is credited to be written by Charlie and Donald Kaufman. Postmodern fiction survives, conventional plot dies but the result is the combination and collaboration of the two.

This study establishes its own method of reading postmodern fiction, which incorporates a new understanding of mimesis with recent narratological approaches and tries to challenge the postmodern idea of the fragmented void, stating that a dead and cropped story might regenerate itself in an orderly way. In the case of “Scarlati Tilt” the representation of one moment reveals a reality that covers much more than the scope of the story itself. While *The Body Artist*’s scattered fragments congregate and constitute a meaningful whole, *Adaptation* makes the final statement by announcing both the death of conventional plot structure and the inevitability of the collaboration between conventional story telling and postmodern fiction.



## Chapter 1

### Mimesis and Narratology Revisited

Some tongues are capable of realizing the subtleties of taste in pieces of bread. They might perform the ceremonial act of lingering the piece between the palate and the tongue. The doers of this act may be subjected to complicated harmonies: the serene feeling of the olive oil combined with the impulsive presence of the nuts. There are also some bakers so specialized that the bread gets redefined in their kitchen resulting in infinite varieties, nuances, unexpected spices followed by the consequent saturation or intended insaturation.

The complicated play between the taster and the baker yields some prerequisites including the arduous act of deciding what is used in the making and what the proportions are. Whatever the final decision about the recipe is, the first big relief arises from the comfort of knowing the basic ingredients. Even the dumbest taster knows if one is to attempt to repeat or recreate that particular piece, nothing is possible without putting the main ingredients together. What the relief leaves behind is an adventurous play between the two parties. The adventure is dragged to the ground thanks to the presence of the fact that the baker has communicated with the taster through the compulsory presence of the main ingredients.

This very structuralist view serves as presentation of the relationship between the baker and the taster, which represents those between the producer and the consumer, the artist and the observer, the author and the reader; and it seems to repudiate the postmodern stance filled with uncountable flirtations among the signifiers and the signifieds, to disregard the idea of Derridean “différance”<sup>5</sup> thereby losing significance in

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction, Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 46-8

the eyes of the reader who have experienced postmodernism to some extent. How is one to define the relationship then? The primary answer can come neither from the author since the author does not necessarily evaluate the material, nor from the reader since the reader alone is nearly always unguided. The key lies in the text. This said, another rather important question arises. What is text?

Text cannot only be the simple unison of words that gives birth to sentences which in turn accumulate and form a body. It is neither the printed pages in the book waiting on the shelf to be discovered and read by someone. Text, as even most conflicting theories would agree comes into being with the reader's attempts at reaching it. As Roland Barthes puts it in *S/Z*, the writerly text is not a finished thing yet a rather "productive one demolishing any criticism[...]the writerly text is ourselves writing" (226). Barthes makes a certain distinction between the text and the writerly one, saying the former may be used to denote the classic text. He talks about the value he names the "writerly value" as deriving from the possibility of the things that can be written. He supports the idea that there are things possible to write: things within the practice of the writer and things that have left it. Those that provide the possibility to write can also be rewritten. The rewriting practice finds itself in the writing i.e. the writerly text, for the production of the text is only realized with the presence of three things: the text itself, the reader and the reader's evaluation. I strongly agree with this idea of cooperation and have intentions to take it further claiming there has always been, will always be, and must be a certain kind of relationship (maybe even lack of it) between the text and the reader. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the reader is caricaturized as one who can only see through texts using structuralist lenses. In my opinion, each reader tries to bond with the text not to find "the ultimate meaning" but to get the meaning that the author is trying to convey and in cases when authors do not bother to make sense the

reader is driven to figure out why and how there is no sense, how this is represented, how the material can be rewritten. I shall point out that this relationship, although hard to define, is based on a portal between the reader and the text. Through the portal is sent the message, the meaning, metaphorically speaking the major ingredients in the recipe. Structuralists cherish this outcome while the postmodernists see nothing but a chaotic impression, a deformed mold of what used to preoccupy the portal. In the quest of this relationship this study will refer to the basics of text reception and try to cunningly structuralize the postmodern narrative principles. I shall begin by exploring one theory in its fullest sense, the mimetic theory, the theory that retains this magical position of being both archaic and contemporary. The elaborations on the mimetic theory in this study aim at constituting the ground for the analysis of the three primary texts. Only after establishing an idea that even the least mimetic theories still have some affinities with mimesis can one attempt to reach the meaning in postmodern narrative. For this reason a reevaluation of mimesis is vital in this study as it will play a big role in justifying the quest for meaning in texts which do not seem to pertain primarily to meaning.

### **Mimesis Revisited**

[...]the process of imitation is natural to mankind from childhood on: the man is differentiated from other animals because he is the most imitative of them and he learns his first lessons through imitation and we observe that all men find pleasure in imitations (Aristotle 7).

Since Aristotle finds imitation organic to the humankind he puts a great value to it and considers art as an imitative act. Aristotle provides a new approach of mimesis in Poetics. Unlike Plato, he finds it innocent, even beneficial to imitate because he does not

agree that the act of imitation is inferior since it is three times removed from reality. What is more Aristotle states that learning is gained through imitation; that is what makes imitative art acquit and claim its value lost in the hands of Plato. As he elaborates on Plato's and Aristotle's views about mimesis Stephen Halliwell talks about his impression "that mimesis is a key to the structure of the world and reality which is to be comprehended in terms of correspondences and interrelations between mimetic subjects and objects" (118). Whether this impression is or has ever been valid cannot be clearly stated but this controversy presented a rather debatable ground for thinkers and theorists. The presupposition that there is actually a structure to the world is problematic on its own, let alone the claim that the key to the structure lies in art. Probably because of this controversy the absence or presence of a/the meaning in art occupied the minds of many.

With Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics<sup>6</sup>, the organic bond between things and meanings was foregrounded again, this time without the underlined existence of the God-like poet that signifies the ultimate reality. Structuralism believed in the envoy-like quality of the signs and thus the one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and the signified. A structuralist analysis of a text, then, would yield the precise accounts of what signifies what while blocking the path of questions beginning with "why?"

I feel a tendency to tie the structuralists' attempt to claim the existence of one-to-one correspondences between the sign and the meaning with that of the mimesis of antiquity. Although there was not a direct mention of imitation in the structuralist discourse, there is obviously what I will refer to as "representation", that is, certain signifiers standing for certain signifieds. This stance presupposes a meaningfulness reached by representation, which goes hand in hand with the mimetic theory's imitation

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<sup>6</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* ( New York: McGraw-Hill 1966).

concept. It is even possible to cite one very brave attempt, that of new criticism<sup>7</sup>, to support that all possible meanings are allocated to the text only. The idea in new criticism was to strip the text off of its author and of the participation of the reader; for the supporters of new criticism believed a text would communicate to any reader in the same way, in other words uniformly, and make its point without even requiring the reader to look for additional sources. That point made by the text, according to the new critics, would be one definite meaning. The new critical claim at this point can be likened to a structuralist practice reduced to the text itself; that is to mean, both the signifier and the signified reside in the physicality of the text, on the paper, in the lines. This strong formulation about text reception could never be left unrivalled. Stanley Fish argues in his article “Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics” that “the place where sense is made or not made is the reader’s mind rather than the printed or the spaces between the covers of a book” (81). Being a reader response theorist just like Fish, Iser proposes a model of the reading act just to carry the reader response practice further. He believes that the totality of the text is shaped with the help of two areas of comprehension in the reading process: meaning and significance. Meaning in Iser’s words is “the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading” while significance refers to “the reader’s absorption of the meaning into his own existence”. Iser concludes that only the two together can ensure effectiveness of the reading experience “which entails the reader by constituting himself by constituting a reality hitherto unfamiliar to himself” (151). What puts a breach between the mimetic and the reader response theory is the emphasis on imagination in the latter. The reader response critics certainly believe in the comforting possibility that the reader reaches a meaning at the end of the process but

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<sup>7</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (UK: Blackwell Publishing 2003) 38-46.

they can never be sure if this meaning corresponds to that of the text itself. What is more, Iser favors texts that allow one to reach the semantic content [through] some semantic rupture, some discordance for the texts to be received imaginatively (Cohan 136).

As the theories one looks at get more contemporary, mimesis discolors and fades away into the relentless motion of rejecting any meaning or reality. When Baudrillard contemplates on the idea of reality and confirms that it never exists things get a bit more complicated. If in this postmodern world one is forced to think that what one encounters is real, it is only for practical reasons; however, deep inside one knows or should know claiming that the real exists is a laughable act and it only comes from the simulacrum of reality. This break or rupture in a universal reality is typical of postmodernist thought and serves as one of the key themes of postmodernism. Grand narratives are out of the scene because the reality they represent is only a simulacrum, Barthes and Foucault challenged the presence of the author in the text or maybe even existence of an author in general because the authorial reality might disrupt the postmodern chaos and might make it more orderly. So, the main question here to ask is if there is no substantial reality to represent how would anybody in a postmodern world pursue the presence of mimesis in creations and how would the author perform mimesis in the writings?

It looks as if the concept of mimesis got redefined by the contemporary theories as dead. On the other hand, John D. Lyons' outlook on this issue seems to do justice to both the postmodernist cacophony and to the mimetic theory. In his book *In Mimesis: from Mirror to Method* he updates what mimesis represents by trying to wed the mimetic idea representation of reality to the attempts to portray the real. According to him the practice of representation itself should be analyzed more deeply to understand the mimetic theory. He says that “ the sheer fact of reproducing the world as sign, the

world as language may expose and call into question precisely those conventions meant to systemize and objectify representation” (3). He comes to mean that a postmodern view of mimesis is not solely concerned with a depiction of reality but also with what it means to attempt to depict reality. The ultimate real may be swept under rug or dispensed. As Lyons proposes (and I shall agree with him), the practice of representation or even the attempt to show that reality does not exist turns out to be ‘the real’ in the postmodern discourse.

Another approach to be considered is a very influential French critical movement, namely deconstruction. It is basically founded on the basis that there is no certain and predetermined reality. Everything exists in its activity to defer and procrastinate the meaning. The correlation between the signifier and the signified is modeled in infinite varieties and variations. Deconstruction is a direct attack on structuralist logocentrism, which incorporates all one-to-one correspondences and thus the mimetic relations as well. Bernard Duyfhuizen points out to the fact that mimesis is conventionally understood by the statement “art imitates life” in the deconstructive sense. He says that this automatically orders the thinker to make a distinction between the reality and representation. Although he admits this opposition seems logical or natural in the traditional sense, he employs the tools of deconstruction itself to allow the deconstructive techniques accommodate mimesis. Representation according to Duyfhuizen is already coexistent with reality. He claims that “the representations (texts) that contain our culture also overdetermine our existence” (32). He deconstructs the idea of mimesis saying neither reality nor the representation is prior, “both are parasitic and derivative” (32).

Duyfhuizen refers to Roman Jakobson’s concept of “contact” which, although not totally making a drastic turn to the hermeneutic faith, seems to justify the ongoing

existence of the mimetic theory. Contact, according to Jakobson, is a “physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee”, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication (33). Contact here, I shall presume, is mimetically grounded since it presupposes the idea that a communication between the reader and the text already exists. However, Duyfhuizen finds it risky to categorize Jakobson’s concept of contact as truly mimetic for if it means to signify a channel particularly designed for the reception of a message it turns out to be narrow and easily dismissed. Contact, in Jakobson’s words, is not a thing but a process engaging “activities of sending, receiving, coding, referring and meaning that occur in any communication” (33).

Whatever the textual reality, no postmodern mind can deny the fact that there is a reality of reading as experience of a process and writing as experience of the pre-process which involves creativity. In his book called *Postmodern Literary Theory* Niall Lucy tries to broaden the description of the literary writing or the writerly text saying it excludes nothing. “There is in fact no single style of writing that defines the literary[...]literature is irreducible to the purely rhetorical” (126). The fact that Lucy elaborates on the text as something that cannot be purely rhetorical or referential, I believe, again arises from the mimetic tendency that still manages to prevail. Even if the text prepared the ground for reduction of itself to sheer rhetoric just like Baudrillard seems to believe the simulacra do, then the dominant theory in text reception (whatever it may be called) would again be incredibly structuralist in the sense that text would exist as signs which on the surface seem to mean things and denote a made up reality but are actually meaningless. Acknowledging that signs do not necessarily point to reality and exist as false representations of what seems to be real might lead one to systemize the lack of relationship between signs and reality. It would not be wrong to claim that



this systemized relationship is structuralist in that it always arrives at the conclusion that signs do not mean anything. Yet, this idea is a meaningful analysis of signs and reality and thus still is related to mimesis.

One should reconsider what postmodernism entails and how it manages to outlive all the attacks directed to it. All postmodernist discourses derive the power they possess from the non-deterministic stance they employ. They do not absolutely reject an idea. Lucy interprets this as a fear of settling down. If postmodernism or post-structuralism could settle down in one way or another, the idea of fragmentation, the mini narratives, and intertextuality become norms of the postmodernist discourse. Postmodernism is cunning in refusing to reject any deterministic view. As Lucy puts it, “any choice between the traditional and the radical that is based on a rejection of the traditional then cannot be a radical choice” (127). That is probably why no one has a definite answer to the questions asking what postmodernism is and what it entails. Based on this, I find it possible to say postmodernism, in its attempt to stay radical, might have to partly embrace some of the very theories it challenges. This broadness of postmodernism is both the power that makes it survive and the weakness that might in turn expose it to destructive interpretations.

Lucy comments “if realist and postmodern literature were absolutely different, then it might be possible to describe the realist text as predominantly referential in contrast to the predominantly postmodern text” (127). He then proposes to use the term ‘composition’ instead of both “rhetoric” and “reference”. Composition is a very handy word since it incorporates both the style and content of the text. If the text’s stylistic and the content-related aspects are to be taken into consideration as a whole then there emerges a hope of finding the underpinning of the text. I do not want to sound deterministic about my outlook on meaning here but I at least have the intention to

display that even a postmodern text claiming the loss of all attachments to the reality and meaning might be considered meaningful as a piece on its own. Lucy adds, the composition would enable the readers make comments other than the innocently formulated statements “by a text (what it wants to say). The reader would be able to make situated statements about a text (even if it were an assertion of what the text wants to say)” (127). The positioning of content in Lucy’s frame of reasoning echoes in Monica Fludernik’s words in “Towards a Natural Narratology” which state that there can be “narratives without plot but there cannot be any narratives without a human experiencer of some sort at some narrative level” (13).

Even the theorists who are not as comfortable as Lucy and Fludernik to accommodate content in the postmodern narrative realm, consciously or unconsciously form bonds between mimesis and the anti-realist postmodern. McHale, for instance, notes that “postmodern fiction turns out to be mimetic after all, but this imitation of reality is accomplished not so much at the level of its content, which is often manifestly un- or anti- realistic, as at the level of form” (38). All these formulations cited by different thinkers and theorist show that postmodernism is naturally capable of accommodating ‘the real’ and thus ‘the mimetic’.

David Lodge’s grievances about the thoughts of two very influential modern theorists relate to my concept of postmodernism incorporating the real and the mimetic. In his essay “The Novel Now”, he cites of Roland Barthes’ famous words from “The Death of the Author” and Paul de Man from “Criticism and Crisis” saying to the former that he actually feels a parental responsibility for the novels he writes, that the composition of them is in a sense his past. The dead author of Roland Barthes, in other words the scriptor, does not resonate in Lodge’s writings. To de Man who claims “ sign and meaning can never coincide in what is precisely taken for granted in the kind of

language called literary” Lodge says that his fiction has not for ever taken leave of reality but in a significant sense is a representation of the real world (148).

Within the scope of this study, individuals or pairs of conflicting theories were analyzed with one focal question in mind: Is the mimetic practice an outdated lie? Each and every era and movement evaluated mimesis differently and reached dissimilar conclusions about the place it occupies in art. When I used the word art I specifically meant the art that includes active usage of words, that is, the text. The solution I subtly offered lies in the definition of mimesis itself. If art is meant to imitate life/reality, one should define what life/reality is. How should one regard life and reality? As Aristotle put it, art should feed on life and be both credible and dignified enough to be remote and close to the reader. For Aristotle the ideal text is structured around a basic, realistic storyline which the reader would cling to and certain improbabilities are employed in the plot.<sup>8</sup> I presume, no one would ever deny the fact that Greek tragedies, the most mimetic texts for Aristotle, are stylized too. It is hard to tell how close it gets to reality and life when it is produced stylistically or in such a way that it inspires awe. From the beginning reality was represented with a false and remote simulacrum but the text still had ties with the real. How can we still convince the postmodernist thinkers that texts continue having affinities with the real? The concept of life/real in mimetic theory should be revisited and modified. The text may imitate life and prepare ground for certain cathartic moments or it may imitate the human mind, the act of the imitation itself, the evolving text. Only then can we explain the presence of a movement like the stream of consciousness. Ages ago, the reality of life that was being structures could be the didactic human story, as centuries passed it became the reality of life that was seen as the preoccupied human mind jumping from one thought to another, maybe the harsh

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<sup>8</sup> See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Leon Golden (USA: Florida State Press, 1981) Book IX 16-8.

reality that came with modernity. Each and every period or movement in history employed different perspectives of reality. Postmodernism and all other deconstructive discourses are very smart in escaping such categorizations as stated before. That is why mimesis seems to be neither totally absent nor completely present in postmodern texts. It is treated like a ghost incapable of even haunting the text occasionally. However, it does haunt the text and that happens more than occasionally.

The concept of the real and life get reshaped with each new era or movement. There is no way to deny the fact that we live in a postmodern world. Everyday we are exposed to pop-up windows on computer screens, we see advertisements as we travel on the tube, jump between TV channels, get introduced to street art, graffiti and so in just seconds, watch mainstream films meant for the ordinary audience which might represent intertextual moments. All these happen as we continue living our lives. Our perception has to, and I believe does, keep up with the fragmented pieces of information scattered everywhere. With the pace and nature of the presentation changed, perception cannot stay unaffected. Considering the fact that we manage to live in and make a meaning out of our fragmented perceptions, how can we not claim that our reality is postmodern and the postmodern art itself is in a sense still mimetic?

Revisiting mimetic theory is the first major step one has to take if one is to analyze postmodern texts with the aim of relating them to reality and finding the underlying meanings in them. The shockingly short piece of Richard Brautigan may be read as two sentences and be enjoyed as a literary piece. However, to understand how and why the piece is structured in that particular way requires deep analysis most of which is meaning oriented. Looking for a meaning in a postmodern text would prove to be a groundless act without looking for and actually finding the mimetic quality of postmodern narrative. The same is valid for DeLillo's *The Body Artist*. Without a

meaning oriented stance the book would only provide the reader with almost static sections in which nothing happens. The film *Adaptation* occupies a different place in that it is not only a text to be analyzed with the same techniques applied on the former two, it is also an intertextual practice trying to generate its narrative from non-fiction. Considering the fact that the movie is a loose adaptation of The New Yorker journalist Susan Orlean's book titled *The Orchid Thief*, one can find valuable insights about the narrativity that comes with every single creation, the battle between the conventional story which relies on twists and turns and unexpected endings and an innovative approach to the story that makes a brave attempt at making a film only about flowers and the passion felt for them.

Claiming that mimesis consistently exists in texts, regardless of the era they were created in, does not provide one with ample theoretical background to analyze complex postmodern texts and find meanings in them. To get a cohesive background to analyze texts one should explore another field of literary analysis.

### **Narratology Revisited**

Although all narratological approaches do not have geometrically definable schemes serving for the benefit of the fiction reader, it is not wrong to suppose that some part of the narratological readings still has affinities with the French structuralist movement. This is not so surprising since narratology itself originated from French structuralism. For a work of fiction to be inspected through narratological lenses, I believe, there has to be a certain space reserved for presupposition. To illustrate this case, it is possible to provide an example. The physical presence of a fictional book presupposes the prior existence of trees or the printing process or the publisher. When this analogy is carried to a contextual level it becomes possible to claim that the verbal

content of the book presupposes the existence of a raw material. Raw material is meant to denote any kind of material that serves as a drive for writing for the author. It might be a catastrophic event that has a conventional story value or it might simply be a single thought, an image or an instance. In cases where the raw material is not a complete story but is instead some part of the whole, the meaning in the text becomes less apparent. However, this does not necessarily mean the structuralist nature of narratology that relies on the reflection of a story in a certain order cannot be used in analyzing that kind of texts. The presupposition that the author was impressed by something and as a result created a literary work can be valid for almost all texts and for this reason attributes structuralist qualities to the text.

In “Fabula and Sjuzhet in the Analysis of Narrative: Some American Discussions” Jonathan Culler elaborates on the issues of point of view saying the study of the relationship between the discourse of a text and the story it tells, “the notion of fabula, story, plot, action –call it whatever you will- becomes the ground of one’s endeavor” (94). His line of reasoning seems to underline my emphasis on the presuppositions because he clearly sees that, for the study of point of view to be plausible, there must be various and to some extent contrasting manners of viewing and telling any given story, thus forcing the story to be “an invariant core” as he calls it or a sequence of actions which can be presented in various ways. Believing in the prior existence of the story, be it a traditional or a rather innovative one relying on fragments, moods rather than action, makes any text more available to the reader. The Maupassant style short stories innately display this quality and might show signs of connection with the story’s reality preceding the reality of the text. Juxtaposing postmodern fiction with conventional one might seem a bit too naïve since the former is a quite disorganized and muted version of the latter since postmodern fiction is not very expressive in telling a

conventional story in the traditional sense. However, combining the theory of Genette, a very influential narratologist, with that of Culler the analogy between the extremes does not seem so far fetched. As Culler points out, Genette's distinction between the story or the "recit" and the text or the "discour" proves to be useful in that Genette believes in some kind of order that is present in the "recit". So, the narrative presupposition of a certain story might easily be regarded as the transformation of true or original order of events. Based on this assumption, Culler concludes, one can claim that the lack of order in the narrative representation is the result of point of view (95). This makes it easier for the text to blame its creator's point of view for the disorganization and the muted character it possesses. The stance I took while I was trying to re-evaluate the mimetic theory goes in line with what Genette and Culler have to say about point of view. In the previous section, a definition of reality, which, in this thesis's scope, embraces the distorted perception of the creator, was made. This line of reasoning would aptly be used to refute Willam Labov's take on evaluation in which he puts the stress on the post-text question "so what?" that needs to be posed by the reader. Labov believes that to ward off the questions trying to evaluate the presence of the text every narrator should indicate "the point of the narrative, its *raison d'être*" (366). The underlying reason behind this urge to justify the narrative is directly related to the evaluation of the term 'pointless'. What Labov would call the "point" is missing in postmodern texts; yet, its absence is present which resonated in Robert Venturi's words from his revolutionary article "less is more".<sup>9</sup>

One of the major aims in this study is to try to focus the idea of making a point by referring to seemingly pointless texts which actually carry meaning in the core or by simply examining pointless parts and claiming that making no point may well be a very

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<sup>9</sup> For further information on Robert Venturi's article see Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

strong point. As I try to uncover postmodern narratives using narratological tools, I shall refrain from using any narrative strategy with its inherent meaning. By undermining the meaning of narratological tools I mean to challenge the broad definition of narrative in narratology's scope. As David Herman puts it, narrative, in its broadest sense, may be defined as "a sequentially organized representation of a sequence of events" (2). This definition is commonplace in any book concerning narratology. I actually find this approach a bit problematic since it confines narrative in such a way that a single defect in sequentiality results in the loss of narrative quality. Herman, in a very conservative way, believes that the difference between narrative and non-narrative sequences originates from a higher order sequential structure. To illustrate, he uses the following example.

- 1) The battle was over. The battle was imminent. The fight took place
- 2) The battle was imminent. Then the fight took place. As a result, the battle was over.

The first set, according to Herman, is mere agglomeration while the second one, because of the structure into which states and events are ordered, is narrative. He regards the imminence of the battle as the source state and the fact that the battle was over as the target state. The states following each other in the second set are attributed with meaning by the event and that, for Herman, represents a higher order structure (1-3). This highly confined view degrades most of the postmodern narrative which rests heavily on shuffled states and probable lack of events. In the postmodern narrative there cannot be a necessity to tie the source to the target with (an) event(s), or more importantly, whether there is a source or a target in the postmodern realm is open to debate. Turning back to the sentence set Herman sees fit for the narrative, one can always question why the first set is not or cannot be considered as narrative. If we are to take the "recit" in



Genette's terms as the same for the two sets (the battle was about to happen, it took place and it ended) how can we suggest there is only one point of view that can be represented? Maybe the narrator of the first set is still in a trance state reminiscing over what happened during the battle in a traumatized way. How then is it possible to agree with the idea that the first set is not narrative? As before, some distortions in the order of sequences that might occur in the text may originate from the narrator's point of view. It is understandable that a first person protagonist who has fought in a battle has a distorted vision and this vision is reflected in his narrative, which in turn ends up being a mimetic account of the battle as an experience.

If one is to go further to play with the "recit" and redefine it as two consecutive battles taking place. By doing so, it is possible to challenge Herman's idea of sequentiality with the idea itself. This time the two sets get interconnected and form a whole presented in two different points of view. The first set narrates the end of the first battle and the beginning of the next one. When the second set takes over, the narration goes on. The second set begins narrating in medias res not to turn back to the beginning but to keep on narrating until the second battle ends. The scheme for this interpretation looks like this:

The recit: The first battle → The end of the first one → The beginning of the second battle → The end of the second battle

1<sup>st</sup> set: Exposition ( the first battle), the first battle is over, the second one is about to begin, and it begins.

2<sup>nd</sup> set: Exposition (The second battle is about to begin), the second battle begins, the fight takes place and the fight is over.

My evaluation of the two sets is meant to show the tendency of narration to prevail although the sequentiality that Herman talks about leaves the ground. Another very

important issue to explore here is exposition. Meir Sternberg, in his studies of narrative, is very much interested in exposition and he states that “the writer of fiction is necessarily confined to presenting his characters in action within the limits of a certain period of time (104). The reason for this is obvious: nothing can be told as a whole. Exposition is the literary device that allows authors to acquaint the reader with the characters or the situations they wish to portray. The classical understanding of exposition necessitates information about time, place and action. Again, the question arises about non-classical, non-conventional, namely, the postmodern fiction: can the text refer to the information about what happened before the main action took place while the main action itself is blurred with mini narratives and disorderly fragments? Sternberg talks about the possibility of making a meaning out of what he calls “the quantitative indicator” which, according to his theory, serves the reader by “revealing the principles of selection operating in the text...[and forming] one of the reader’s indispensable guides in the process of interpretation in that it helps him to determine the text’s general tendency” (111). The quantitative indicator owes its ability to convey meanings to the text the logical selection/omission policies of which are somehow apparent. To make this point clearer, Sternberg points out to the fact that “there is a logical correlation between the amount of space devoted to an element and the degree of its aesthetic relevance or centrality” (111). Postmodern fiction still does not get unraveled with Sternberg’s idea because what is foregrounded and aesthetically centralized in the postmodern fiction may either prove too weak to correspond to the exposition of the traditional narrative because its relationship with the raw material, in spite of being structured to some extent, is not referential enough to decode with one single idea such as the quantitative indicator or the postmodern fiction may end up being a chance unit extracted from any sequence of any event.

Reading postmodern fiction without getting lost in the narrative complexity requires a certain stance. The first and the most important aspect of that stance was covered before while the mimetic theory was being revisited. If one can redefine reality that is to be represented in art as something more general rather than a sequence of events, one could easily claim any artistic product may be regarded as mimetic. My proposal for this is to see reality as something fluid that gets redefined with the perception of the artist. This; however, is not enough to approach postmodern fiction as a piece yielding meaning. Narratology, although very deterministic at some points for it emphasizes that the sequential order is a must in narrative, may still serve in making the text more approachable to the reader. Yet, classical narratological tools are not enough to make the postmodern text accommodate a certain meaning derivative of reality. Based on this restriction, one should also get help from recent and innovative narratological approaches. Micheal Kearns's narratology and his understanding of narrative might provide a key to the core, the plot, the recit of the postmodern text. In his study of narratology, Kearns regards 'context' as the central. He believes that no textual element by itself can guarantee a text's quality as narrative but "if the context directs an audience to that end many texts we might at first think of as non-narrative may actually be taken as narrative" (ix). Kearns' idea might cooperate with the exposition and presupposition of the text and yield subtle references of the text. If one can reach the context of the text using presupposition as a tool and the expository parts in the text as clues, one is able to derive at least a sense from the text if not a complete meaning. The sense that is achieved might be giving clues primarily about the existence of the text by answering the question "why did an author feel a need to produce this certain text?". The idea of context in Kearns's terms may be likened to a reformulation of Jakobson's idea of contact or Lucy's idea of composition mentioned in the previous

chapter. All three words utilize the act of reading, thus the relationship between the reader and the text, and work on the assumption that communication between the parties is possible. The reader composes the meaning with the help of the contact built through the context.

In “Postmodernism and Panfictionality” Marie Laure Ryan talks about the fictional communication saying it presupposes a layered situation in which an author addresses a real or authorial audience.

The author and her audience are located in the real world, while the narrator and his audience are members of the so-called fictional world. The phenomenology of the mediation between these two distinct acts of communication has been described in terms of such concepts as make believe, role-playing, and recentering into the fictional world. The author invites the authorial audience to imagine a world on the basis of the narrator’s discourse, and to regard this world as real in make-believe. By accepting the invitation, the reader becomes immersed in the fictional world, and identifies with the narrative audience. (167)

Immersed in the fictional world, the reader experiences the narrator’s point of view and is aware that what comes through that view does not only originate from the narrator’s fictional being but also from the author’s prior intrusion in the relationship. In my opinion, author’s intrusion in the text consists of the task of reshaping the raw material; so, practically speaking, if the reader can reverse the design of the material back to the ‘context’ might all of a sudden appear.

In this play between the reader and the author, one might question the role of the author. The classical view obviously suggests the author has a messenger like quality revealing the meaning to the reader and by doing so giving pleasure through the use of

aesthetics. How can we define the postmodern author's role then? One of puzzling the reader and perpetually deferring the meaning? Wallace Martin makes an elementary comparison by juxtaposing the stories to inanimate or unconscious beings and points to the obvious but his statement really goes hand in hand with the position I see fit for any author. He says "unlike plants and planets, stories and their writers know that readers are observing them" and concludes that awareness of the presence of an observer can affect behavioral patterns (175). This idea cannot be refuted by any approach since it is known that among the infinite varieties of organizing the text the author picked one and thus automatically determined at least some of the experience the reader will have with the text. In *Story and Situation* Ross Chambers calls the text "situationally self-referential" based on an idea that resembles to Martin's idea of the author as the creator who is able to determine some parts of the relationship between the reader and the text. What Chambers means by the situational self-referentiality is again directly related to the relationship between the text and the reader who is not totally unguided. Texts, according to him, specify the "conditions –the necessary understandings between reader and text- for them to be successful as acts of literary communication" (26). While showing such an attitude that gives so much power to the text, Chambers makes sure the situational self-referentiality in the text is only a part of it and the reader doesn't ever refrain from making interpretations independent from the historical and ideological production of the text. Interpretations do not harm the text's existence as a creation which can also continue existing on its own and the reader is able to interpret as much as the author; for this reason reader's interpretation may be regarded as a rewriting process. And for a rewriting process to exist, one has to discover the raw material.

Wallace Martin also analyzes writing as a process and thinks that there has to be two activities involved in narrative construction: naming and ordering. An author has to

name his objects accurately and present objects and events in an order. This understanding is very basic to conventional story telling; yet, Martin does not stop there.

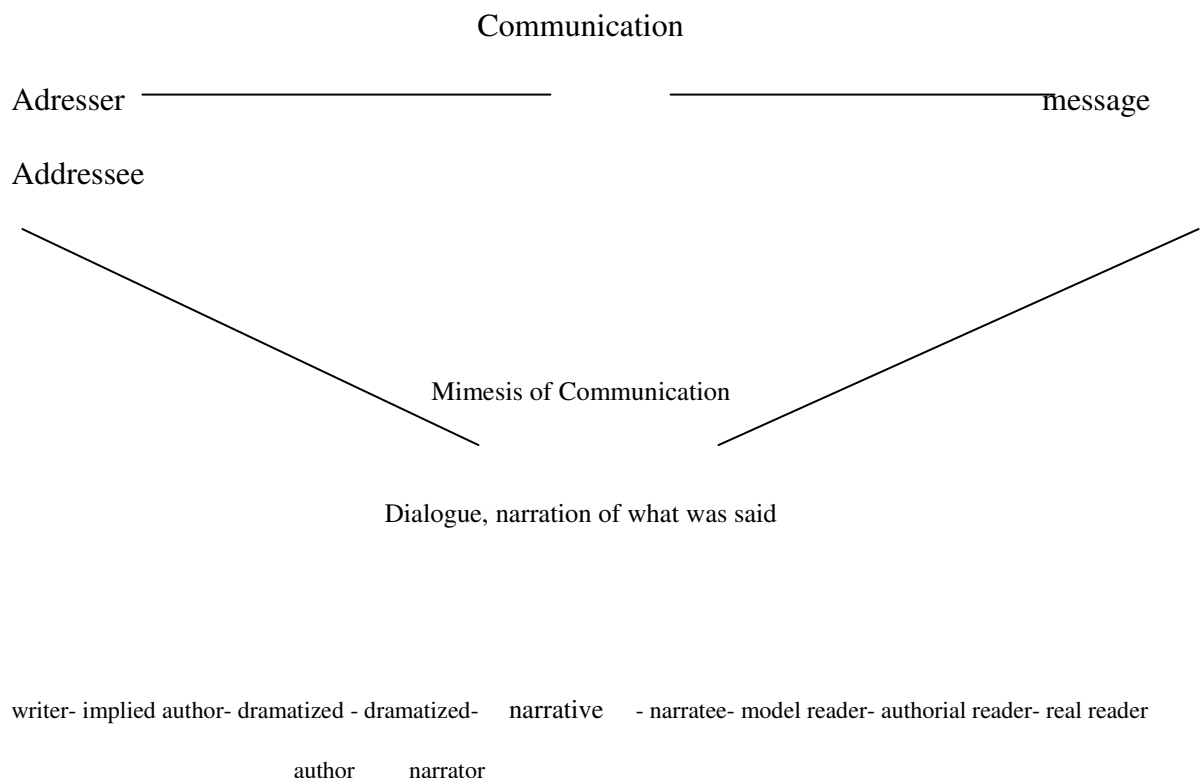
But what if the story told is one that leads to a realization that the process of naming and ordering was false?[...]the protagonist or the reader finally sees that the events and the words do not match either because the protagonist imagined something that was not really present or because the conventional words and perceptions did not represent the reality of the situation (177).

This type of text, which plays with the reader's imagination and perception, defines the reading process as a multi-dimensional one. The fact that the plot is represented falsely in the text implies there are other ways to present it. Martin adds to his discussion of the reading process saying "what we or the narrator must do, then, is return to the beginning of the story and reread it in light of our new knowledge" (177). This line of thinking goes parallel to this study's evaluation of the postmodern fiction as something capable of yielding meaning. The answer lies in the relationship between the text and the reader. The reader has to engage in this multi-dimensional reading process during which he has to pay repeated visits to the text having learned more about the text's reality. Martin talks about a certain stage in narrative reading when the words are no longer a record of what really happened; they are now seen as an allegory, and the text as one in which every word stands for some idea that is different from what it names. The text might be seen as a body of words which are impossible to read twice in the same manner. The fact that it is almost impossible to reread the narration in the same frame of mind might make the text at some level "a story of the failure to read" (177-8). Once the reader can categorize the text as one written on the failure to read the text gains meaning and thus become readable. It sounds quite paradoxical but still it can be illustrated with an extreme example. A group of code breakers receive a seemingly undecipherable text and

after diligent work decode what is said in there. The message reads “it is impossible to read this text”. Once this revelation has been made, at least one layer of the reading process is complete. One main meaning is uncovered. What the reader or the interpreter has to do for the rest of the reading process includes practices of trying to figure out why such a text exists. The questions to pose might involve wondering why the author chose to write on unreadability. When a situation or an event or part of a speech is presented to say “communication is long dead” there is no reason to label this discovery as mere communication.

Having made clear that even an action or plot lacking text is able to communicate a central meaning to the reader, one may arrive at the conclusion that a referential reading of postmodern narrative is possible. This thesis tries to theoretically attain this possibility by creating a reading method that presupposes the existence of mimesis. Mimesis, as explained before is present in the text either in the form of mere imitation of reality or in such forms that convey vague ideas but still can communicate a central meaning by making the reader pay attention to the writing process. Exposition is yet another literary device that needs to be analyzed deeply in the mentioned postmodern narrative reading practice. It might be used in the texts in the traditional sense and inform the reader of the events that do not happen during the time narrated. However, the power of exposition is not only limited to the traditional use of it. Some postmodern texts may consciously or unconsciously use exposition in such a way that the expository statements are very subtle. Even the fragments in a postmodern piece might make the events prior to the text’s discourse known to the reader. This type of approach will be analyzed in *The Body Artist*. Or, as it will be inspected closely in the analysis of “Scarlati Tilt” a single sentence which does not seem to narrate an event may reveal the big event that happened prior to the time the text narrates. The reading of

postmodern narrative could also accommodate the basic principle of the speech act theory on which most of the Kearns' rhetorical narratology is based. The speech act theory, in its simplest sense, states that by saying something we not only say something but also do something by saying it, which means that the speech is not the only element to consider in text analysis; the interpreter should take into account what the author intends to do by making one character utter a line or narrating the text with a certain line other than any line available. While on one hand one focuses on what is presented in the text, one shall also look deeply into how actions that are not present as sequences might be grasped. For this practice, I shall not take any other source than the text itself. Last but not least, a structuralist communicative narrative model, which was drawn with detail by Martin, will be at hand to see the backbone of the text. The model I will refer to is the following:





Many texts do not have all of the above-mentioned types of authors and narrators. The implied author is the transcendent presence of the writer who never speaks directly to the reader while the dramatized narrator uses the pronoun 'I' and speak to the reader. Dramatized narrator is the first person narrator who is a character in the story. Narratee is to whom the narrative is addressed. If narratee is not a character in the story then it is the implied reader. Model reader is the reader whose characteristics are delineated by or inferred from the text. The model reader is almost like a role player who exists both in the real and the fictional world. The authorial reader is the reader between the real and the model. Authorial reader is aware that fiction is fiction and does the reading activity to get something, a sense if not a coherent meaning (Booth 150-3). The gradations between the writer and the reader can be seen as units capable of extracting the meaning of the text, be it obviously meaningful and mimetic or muted and fragmented.

## Chapter II

### “Scarlatti Tilt” and *The Body Artist*

My analysis of the postmodern text will begin with a short story “Scarlatti Tilt” by Richard Brautigan. The short story in question is an unconventional practice fiction writing in general, let alone the specific short story form. Richard Brautigan wrote two sentences in 1972 and called it a short story. How can two sentences provide the reader with at least one main character, a setting, information about time, and an order of events? Postmodern fiction does not require any of the narrative tools listed above and it is not interested in grand narratives. Coherence is not a must in postmodernism because reflecting unity cannot be cited among postmodernism’s aims. Postmodern fiction may interfere with the Maupassant style of short story which is basically formed on the units of Freytag’s triangle and may get rid of the order, the progression of events or the meaningfulness of fiction. The Freytag’s triangle is a method of constructing and analyzing plots that pertain to the Aristotelian unity. According to Freytag’s triangular plot structure, the plot of the story follows a sequential order beginning with the exposition or introduction. There needs to be a conflict in the plot and the action rises until it reaches the climax after which the falling action begins until the plot reaches a resolution. Brautigan must have thought two sentences are just enough to be called a short story because no matter how limited they look, they actually provide the reader with a story and expose the “recit” to the interpreter.

“Scarlatti Tilt”

“ ‘It is very hard to live in a studio apartment in San Jose with a man who’s learning to play the violin.’ That’s what she told the police when she handed them the empty revolver.”

The first thing one notices in the story is that it presents a moment that happened after the progression of Freytag's triangle. On the surface, it seems like there is no exposition in the story, no apparent characterization. The main action that might have happened is not mentioned and the only thing that is revealed to the reader is a single fragment of the many preceding it. One might argue these two sentences are too informative to be regarded as a fragment. However, when considered as a small part of the whole action, the story itself may well be accepted as a fragment. Even after considering all these facts it is hard to call the story a mere journalistic attempt. The reason why the short story quality of this rather short text continues to overpower other non-narrative approaches lies in the formalistic interpretive reading it provides. I will try to analyze the story under five categories all of which have been covered theoretically beforehand.

#### The Triangular Plot Structure and Scarlatti Tilt

“Scarlatti Tilt” might be the last sentence of a conventionally plotted story. Conventionally plotted stories are designed in such a way that every element in them has a certain place in the progression of events. So, the end marks the final point and concludes the story. Considering that “Scarlatti Tilt” shows a very postmodern attitude since it takes one sentence of a conversation and one observatory sentence as the whole body of a short story, it gets harder to define it a text aiming at any meaning. However, Brautigan highlights one very important issue by rejecting to confine his story within the limits of conventional story telling which requires a certain exposition followed by the presentation of the conflict and creation of suspense till the action rises and encounters the dramatic turn, the climax, and begins to loosen with the resolution. He shows the reader that the triangular plot structure is just one way to make art correspond to reality. The communication continues to exist even after the triangle. I agree with this stance for

two particular reasons. I can see how the story manages to persist even in one fragment of the whole. This might theoretically be explained through three very close concepts of time melted in one single pot by Karl Simms. The Aristotelian theory, also adopted by St. Augustine and later by Ricoeur, suggests that time is a series of "now"s. Whenever one says "now" the time it signifies has already gone. This is to say that it is impossible to isolate the present from the past and the future. "now" comes from the *future*, passes through the *present* and goes to the *past*. The problem not only arises from the word "now" but also from the concept of "present". The present is like a lightning in the sky winking at us and then converting into history (Simms 80-3). In the light of this concept of time it is possible to suggest that one single moment that is labeled as "now" inherits the past and foreshadows the future. The conventional view of presenting a story in a chronological order is almost like a conservative act after looking at one single concept of time elaborated by three different theoreticians from three different eras. The triangular plot structure suggests that the reader gets what he sees and what he is told explicitly while, I guess, Brautigan would disagree and say the plot is there waiting to be explored. One can conclude with the help of the fact that Brautigan does not categorize "Scarlati Tilt" as journalistic writing, or an anecdote or scribbled observation of an intern at the police station but he regards it as a short story. And by doing so, he consciously or unconsciously makes a point which goes hand in hand with my way of reading of postmodern texts. Even if the two sentences were written in the form of journalistic writing or were amateur ramblings of a witness, the story prevails, the point is made and there is communication. The other reason why I believe communication does not cease to exist is directly related to authorial choices. Authorial choices are vital in terms of selection/omission and representation. The main reason for a characteristic in the form of the text such as brevity, bluntness or whatever quality you may think a text

possesses, originates from the fact that the author wanted to present the text in that certain way. Why the author chose to communicate with the reader through two detailed sentences rather than a conventionally structured body, as the speech act theory would support so, can be theorized.

#### Exposition in “Scarlatti Tilt”

The usual need for exposition as Sternberg states arises from natural limitations imposed on the author. No single story could be narrated from the beginning to an end simply because no raw material for a text can be perceived as a whole. Therefore, the author has the right to choose between actions, states and details. This confinement makes any author dependent on exposition. However, I do not mean that each and every author has to present the characters and the events leading to the story explicitly at the beginning of the text. What I try to pinpoint as exposition in any text is directly related to the concept of time discussed before. With the help of the concept of time as a series of nows, one can conclude that even a single moment of a story may still have a strong connection to the past and that one single moment can also transcend the present to merge in the future. Based on this, it is possible to claim that some sentences may automatically have exposition just because they represent moments which are still connected to the past and at the same time herald the future. To add to this automatic exposition quality, an author might plan his text in such a way that every single word or information that needs to be in the text for a certain purpose might be used to trace the text back to its past.

“Scarlatti Tilt” can be analyzed in two dimensions of time, the first one being the time it portrays directly and the second one being the time it implies, which can only be inferred upon closer inspection. The time portrayed directly in “Scarlatti Tilt” involves a

woman making an odd confession to the police. So, the time portrayed directly in the story is an instance that lasts only a few seconds. Nevertheless, the direct time in the story, as discussed before in the time concept of nows, point to other time spans just like how each moment refers to the past and herald the future. In the direct time, she utters a sentence given in quotation marks. This quoted sentence on its own sounds like a complaint:

“ ‘It is very hard to live in a studio apartment in San Jose with a man who is learning to play the violin’ ”

This sentence alone gives a considerable amount of information about certain things existing in the text’s world, which are to be analyzed later; however, one can claim that it does not refer to any major action. All the reader is presented with is a statement of a person living in a studio apartment with a man and a man trying to learn the violin. The first sentence in quotation marks is followed by the second one.

“That’s what she told the police when she handed them the empty revolver”

From this sentence, we can infer that the first sentence is uttered at a police station and the words in the first sentence belong to a woman. The second sentence does more than identifying the setting and the gender of the protagonist. The words “empty revolver” revive the potential meaning in the first sentence. We learn that the woman shot the man and is making a confession at the police station. The main event happened before the actions described in the text itself. So, the concept of time as a series of “nows” may help the reader reevaluate the story and see the implication. The “now” that took place at the police station is also representative of the “nows” which occurred prior to it and will occur after it. The moments prior to the text’s actual moment provide the reader the elements of traditional narratives in the text. A protagonist, an antagonist, a conflict, the turning point, also called the climax, and the resolution.

There are at least 4 characters in the story: the woman, the man, two police officers minimum, who are referred to as 'them'. The woman and the man constitute the major characters; yet it is up to the reader to decide who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist. If the reader chooses to identify with the woman then she is the protagonist, if the reverse happens the man becomes the protagonist. The conflict that gave rise to a dramatic action is the fact that the man was trying to learn the violin, thereby causing unbearable noise. The turning point happens when the woman cannot take the man's practices any more and shoots him. There may be other events leading to the shooting; however, the reader is given only one major cause and is free to believe that the woman in the story is impulsive and intolerant enough to commit a bloody crime after being exposed to out-of-tune violin sounds. The action arrives at a resolution when the woman decides to confess what she has done.

The above-mentioned fiction elements are not the only elements the brevity of the short story unexpectedly provides. The title tells a lot about the story that happened before the confession. Scarlatti most probably refers to the renowned Scarlatti family, the members of which were influential Italian composers. Two of the ten Scarlatti children Domenico and Pietro Filippo were musicians. The more commonly known Domenico received his training from their father Alessandro who was also a musician. Domenico became very popular in the first half of the eighteenth century producing many operas and hundreds of sonatas. With this information in hand, the reader finds out about a rather surprising detail from the extremely short story. There is a character in the story who is learning to play the violin and the title of the story includes the name of a western classical music composer. Semiology helps the reader with decoding a postmodern short story by relating the title and the character. The direct relationship between the man and the word Scarlatti results in the incidental information about what

type of music and which composers the man plays while struggling to learn to play the violin. The other word of the title 'tilt' is very useful in terms of relating to the main plot that happened all through the triangle. The connotations of 'tilt' in the dictionary are generally related to movement while one specific meaning involves fighting. Thesaurus cites "thrusting at with a lance or a weapon" as one meaning (792). The action that the word 'tilt' brings to mind forms the climax of the story. So, after further exploration it seems obvious that the title functions as foreshadowing which tells the reader that there is going to be an action involving weapons and fights and that this action is somehow related to the Italian Scarlatti family.

At first reading the story seems not to tell much about anything. However, after the relationship between the story and the reader gets less slippery through some thinking on the content and time concept of the story, the reader or the narrator –as Martin suggested- should return to the beginning of the text and reread it. The whole of the story represents a tiny fragment in the triangle and what is more, the details in this fragment are yet other fragments to be studied. Moreover, the study of each fragment brings the reader closer to the text and its meaning. The reader can gradually perceive every fragmentation in the tiny fragment interconnected, which requires careful reading with both structuralist and some poststructuralist attitudes.

#### The Point of View in "Scarlatti Tilt"

"Scarlatti Tilt" is narrated in third person. The narrator does not disclose his identity until the second sentence. When the reader finishes reading the first sentence, the story gives him/her the impression of being narrated in the first person but the second sentence frames the quoted sentence and reveals that the whole of the story is narrated in third person. On the other hand, the third person narrator does not seem to



have knowledge of everything that is essential to the world of the story. Therefore, it is more appropriate to call the narrator a scenic one rather than an omniscient narrator since the scenic narrator is not capable of entering the minds of the characters. The scenic narrator only records what s/he sees and hears.

In the previous chapter I elaborated on Culler's thoughts about the point of view in narration. Culler is not conventional in the sense that he does not attempt to force an order in the narrative probably because he was aware of the power of point of view. He thinks any irregularity in the sequential order of the narrative originates from the point of view. When we delve deeply into story telling and specifically how exposition and plot structure are employed in *Scarlati Tilt*, it is vital that we define the scope of the story. The major questions to pose here are about the degree of involvement and the choice of a narrator. Why does an author narrate in first person or third person? To what extent are the characters involved in the story? Does the degree of the author's involvement in the story define where a character or a narrator should stop? One may suppose that the narrator in "*Scarlati Tilt*" was a neighbor in the studio apartment, who was the first hand witness of the main action. The neighbor heard the man play the violin, maybe even complained about it. The neighbor might even have heard the gun shot. Considering all these, it is possible to claim that the story may turn out to be a conventional one if someone encountering what happened in the first hand narrated the story. If, for instance, the neighbor narrated the story with a sequential structure including the noises the man makes with the violin, the couple's fights, the details about the murder day and the aftermath in a chronological order, the story would be conventional in terms of both content and form. Postmodern narrative does not prioritize the narratives told in a linear manner by a narrator employing conventional story telling techniques. This makes it easier to label *Scarlati Tilt* as postmodern since the narrator is

a person who heard the woman's sentence at the police station and this fact seem to go hand in hand with the emphasis on the mini narratives in postmodern literature. The story is told through a narrator who happens to be where the woman uttered the sentence. The narrator obviously is not a part of the story's plot, s/he is just a person who heard the woman's sentence. This means Brautigan wants us to see the event from the eyes of a stranger, or just an ordinary observer. The narrator is just a mini part in the story and the story is told through his point of view. Employing imaginative readings, one could say a random taxi driver who gave the woman a lift and realized the empty revolver in her hand may well have been the narrator and the outcome would still be a seemingly mini narrative told through a stranger. Because of Brautigan's choice regarding the narrator, the reader is exposed to a very limited part of the plot. Going back to Fludernik's idea of invitation of the reader into the fictitious world, it seems possible that Brautigan chooses to invite the audience in a world where the reader can only see through the eyes of an officer or a stranger. This invitation has got to do with the author's intentions as much as with the narrator's position. Brautigan probably picked someone observing the end of the story rather consciously and plotted the effect on the audience so skillfully that the audience gets exposed to a wide range of time levels only through two simple sentences.

Brautigan, on the other hand, might not have done all these intentionally and consciously. Maybe he was just experimenting with new ways of creating short stories. We can never know about this; but still it is obvious that he chose this point of view rather than many other alternatives and by doing so added to the fragmented nature of the presentation which thus can be characterized as postmodern. The postmodern quality of the short story can nevertheless be challenged with the collage of theories presented in this thesis. In spite of the analysis of the story is based on narratological tools such as

exposition, time sequences, and the plot structure, this study's aim is not to refute the idea that the text is postmodern. This study's aim is to reveal the possibility that the postmodern fragmentation in the pieces could subtly accommodate a narrative.

#### The Narrative Model and Scarlatti Tilt

The most simplified version of "Scarlatti Tilt's" narrative model consists of three major components:

Richard Brautigan the writer –"Scarlatti Tilt" a short text meaning a lot more than it seems- the reader

There is no dramatized author in the story as we never hear Brautigan's authorial voice speak directly to the reader. Moreover, one can realize the false impression that the text has a dramatized narrator, the woman who utters the first sentence. However with the second sentence the main narrator proves to be a third person scenic one. The story is most probably not directed to any character in its own world so the narratee is the implied reader. I would now like to focus more on the collaboration of model reader and authorial reader. The model reader as Martin put it, is the reader that is very eager to dwell in the fictitious world of the narrative almost like a role play practice. As a reader tries to uncover what is beneath "Scarlatti Tilt" s/he has to abide by the rules of the narrative itself. The reader has to get information about certain signs such as the title and then try to build an analogy between the title and the body of the story. By focusing mainly on details such as why the couple lives in a studio apartment, the reader gets immersed in the text. The final verdict, on the other hand, is achieved by the authorial reader since the authorial reader knows that what he's just read is a work of fiction designed with an aim to reveal more than it shows. We can say correspondence takes place as the model reader gets deeper into the text and then the communication is finalized with the help of the authorial reader. The authorial reader, on the other hand,

has a direct connection with the implied author who is positioned in between Brautigan and the narrator. The implied author is not visible in the text but actually its presence is to revealed after the authorial reader asks questions about the reasons for the text's existence and the intentions of the author. This means the reading process is finalized with the cooperation of Brautigan's implied intentions and the conscious authorial reader. This model fits perfectly the way I analyzed the text. The analysis used the premise that no matter how short a text is, there is a mimetic quality in it and the referentiality it possesses might be revealed by analyzing the use of narratological tools such as point of view, exposition, triangular plot structure and the narrative model. It is possible to claim that through this analysis, the recit becomes more available to the reader.

#### The Recit, The Invariant Story and "Scarlati Tilt"

The experience of reading "Scarlati Tilt" reshapes itself during the process of reading. The first stance of most probably any reader would be to regard it as an experimental postmodern text the meaning of which is constantly deferred; however, with the redefined use of formalistic devices, some narratological tools such as the point of view, exposition and the plot structure and with a belief in mimetic persistence the story proves to be based on a rather unified. Moreover, the elements that constitute the unified plot such as what really happened in the apartment, what sort of music the man played, how his performance was are interconnected thereby forming a story. All things considered, there is a reason behind the text of Scarlati Tilt, a cause, the story, an invariant core, or in Genette's terms the recit. The basic difference between a conventionally structured story and "Scarlati Tilt" is about the relationship between the 'recit' and the 'discour'. The discour in "Scarlati Tilt" reflects only one part of the recit

while actually being capable of representing the main components of it. No matter how cropped and fragmented “Scarlatti Tilt” is, its postmodernist form accommodates a conventional story.

## *The Body Artist*

*The Body Artist* is a rather short novel consisting of seven chapters. Before analyzing the work under the guidance of mimetic theory and narratological tools, one should try and reflect neutrally what each chapter and intersection is about.

The first chapter takes place mostly in the kitchen of a couple. The man is waiting for his toast to go brown and the woman is preparing blueberries and soya granules for her cereal. They dwell in their own individual worlds but at times they engage in conversation that may or may not make sense to one or the other or both. The woman watches the feeder through the kitchen window as the man reads his newspaper and waits for the toasts. The woman realizes that there is a hair in mouth neither hers nor his. She then contemplates on the impossibility of lack of human contact between strangers even in a secluded town. The man pours himself some juice and asks the woman if she wants juice too. She never drinks juice. We learn they are not acquainted enough to know their habitual ways. They sit in the places they reserve for themselves and have their breakfast. There are things and rights that belong to the man and those that belong to the woman for instance the newspaper and the radio belongs to the man while the tea and the computer are hers. At one point they talk about the uncanny noise in the house coming from upstairs. The man is almost sure it is the scampered animals making the noise while the woman thinks the noise must come from something different. She sees a blue jay on the feeder, which is a rare occasion. They finish their breakfast, the man smokes, the woman thinks about casual things including the detergent she needs to get. The man moves to the doorway asking her about his keys. The woman talks about the muscle rub she has recently bought. The man emphasizes all his keys are in one ring then the chapter gets interrupted by a formal writing which

seems almost like an obituary of a 64 year old film director called Rey Robles. The written piece gives information about his film career and informs the reader of his three marriages, the last of which was with a body artist called Lauren Hartke who is told to have saved Rey's life until he commits suicide in his first wife's house.

The second chapter focuses on Lauren after Rey's sudden suicide. She goes back to the house they rented for six months in which they could live only for four months until Rey's death. She cleans the house with sprays and chemicals, browses through the pages of his incomplete autobiography, smells his smoky smell, refrains from answering the phone calls. The reason why she chose to come back to this isolated place with almost no human contact is probably to wait for the death of her husband to get more real in her mind. She begins going through some changes. Her body feels different, tight, framed, unfamiliar, and different. She feels her body would collapse not suddenly like a breakdown but there are sudden moments when she forgets how to stand. She answers a phone call from a friend and engages in reluctant conversation. After that, she hears the noise coming from upstairs again. The following day she finds a man in the third floor in an empty bedroom sitting on the edge of the bed wearing only his underwear. He looks smallish, fine-bodied almost like a kid roused from deep sleep or medicated.

The third chapter begins where the previous one has left off. Lauren, unaffected by the sudden appearance of a total stranger in the house, tries to question him about why and how long he has been there. The man looks strange and does not act according to the usual patterns of communicating with somebody. He talks about the recent severe precipitation, which did not actually happen. He gives bizarre answers to her questions. She decides to call the man Mr. Tuttle and thinks his voice is variable. His voice carries things from the past and there is even a point when she finds similarities between his

voice and hers. All the conversation that takes place between the two of them seems pointless. Mr. Tuttle gives the impression of not actively engaging in real conversation but instead impersonating a person or people conversing. She realizes Mr. Tuttle utters words and makes hand gestures that actually belong to her, done in the past intended for Rey. She leaves Mr. Tuttle's voice behind and goes out to get inside the car, contemplating on the stimuli around her but focusing mainly on Mr. Tuttle's voice and hand gestures that belong to Rey this time.

The fourth chapter mainly centers on Lauren and Mr. Tuttle's conversations. Lauren uses the tape recorder Rey used to record some scattered ideas about likely scripts. Mr. Tuttle does not keep eye contact while talking. Lauren tries to give their conversations a hermeneutical quality but Mr. Tuttle keeps on sticking to bizarre answers by repeating the last few words she said or by simply uttering syntactically wrong sentences. After a couple of attempts to make meaning out of Mr. Tuttle's words she comes to a realization that the mastery he shows at reproducing other voices, especially hers and Rey's, might originate from the fact that he heard Lauren and Rey's conversations repeatedly on the recorder. She clearly remembers talking to Rey as he recorded ideas for film scripts. In the following days she devotes herself to her body doing crossovers on the bare floor, pelvic stretches, making gestures such as hailing a cab or checking the time on the wristwatch. She receives a rather disturbing phone call from Rey's first wife. Mr. Tuttle continues hanging around which makes her contemplate on his existence both literally and metaphorically. She phones her friend Mariella who has been trying to reach her for some time after the funeral; she hangs up after listening to the answering machine repeatedly. Through the end of the chapter she begs Mr. Tuttle to impersonate Rey's voice. Mr. Tuttle falls asleep and she can only go to sleep after watching online the two-lane highway in Kotka, Finland.



In the fifth chapter Lauren continues to occupy herself with body practices, making funny noises, going about on all fours, continuously checking the time and so. She and Mr. Tuttle keep on having strange conversations. Mr. Tuttle utters sentences in a delirious state, which sound like singing to her. She tries to make Mr. Tuttle talk about Rey but the only thing she gets is her own contemplation on Rey. She tries to figure out to what Mr. Tuttle is connected and can only come up with the idea that truth and time cannot be attributed to him. They get used to each other and in a way co-habit in the house. She continues doing the body exercises and he goes on living in a sort of muted state. Lauren tries to rationalize his existence by trying to imagine a man, the owner of the house, arriving in the house. The man in her imagination is looking for Mr Tuttle who supposedly left a facility he had been taken care of. After this thought, she engages herself in the most mundane things such as cleaning. There are some moments when Mr. Tuttle feels no need to talk and some moments when he feels rather keen on saying things. He impersonates both Lauren and Rey talking to each other which leads Lauren to think about the conversation, obviously the last one, she had with Rey. If he ever finds his keys, Rey says, he will go for a drive. She falls into uncontrollable hysteria again and sobs as she crawls on the floor thinking Rey is alive in Mr. Tuttle's mind.

Chapter 6 is one of the most disorganized chapters. There are sudden changes in the point of view and there is almost no action. She calls to the lawyer. Mr. Tuttle continues saying meaningless sentences. She is a bit more outward in that she can consider going outside with more ease. Mr. Tuttle, who ate almost nothing before, stops eating and Lauren begins eating less too. After she goes out for a drive she comes back only to realize that Mr. Tuttle is gone. She looks for him everywhere in the house in vain. She thinks about the time and its meaning for Mr. Tuttle. For a while she stops answering the phone and then one day she chooses to answer it and realize that she uses

Rey's voice. The chapter contains another sub-part titled "Body Art in Extremis: Slow Spare and Painful". The part is an interview done with the body artist Lauren Hartke on her last piece of performance called "Body Time". The interviewer is Lauren's friend Mariella who also talks about her observations about the performance in the interview. Mariella sees Lauren as an incredibly transformed woman who looks colorless bloodless and ageless. The piece begins with a Japanese lady gesturing in a very stylized manner and ends with a naked man desperately trying to tell the audience something. In between the two the piece is accompanied occasionally by the robotic answering machine announcement and Lauren changes into an executive woman with a briefcase hailing a taxi or checking the time and then back to the Japanese woman. She repeats actions in slow motion and as she starts impersonating the naked man who is trying to tell something she uses the tape to make his voice heard intermittently and lip-synchs to the words.

The seventh and the last chapter mostly portrays Lauren alone, peacefully mourning and adjusting to her new life after Rey's death. She is happy and hopeful coming back to the house again. She shops, drives, cleans the tiles and thinks out loud. She does not practice anymore since she has already become another person. She thinks about death, the death of a loved one and decides death should ruin one. One is not supposed to accommodate the death of one's loved ones, one should sink as low as possible, feel the pain of death. The owner of the house, this time for real, comes to the house. At first she gets intimidated by his presence; yet, within one or two minutes she gets used to him and they start talking. The man came there to kindly ask for permission to take an item that is located in one of the empty rooms on the second floor. The item is valuable for family and is in two pieces. The conversation does not end. Lauren and the owner stand in the driveway and look at the house. In this chapter Lauren tries to

remember what Rey looked like and to make it easy for herself to remember she looks at herself in the mirror. She believes he still exists in the house. She enters the room knowing she will have already been there. The only thing she needs to do is to fit into the moment. He is also there. She imagines the two of them as two real bodies that make love. She thinks about the time Rey left the house after looking for the keys. She imagines taking the keys, hiding them, hammering, beating, even eating them just so he cannot leave. She steps into the room this time for real. The room is empty. Nobody in the house. The bed is empty. She walks into the room and goes to the window, opens it to feel the sea tang on her face and the flow of time in her body.

As is understood from the summary, the chapters in *The Body Artist* do not involve a major action and a progression of events. As pieces of the whole, the chapters seem like they do follow a chronological order; however, the fragmented nature inside them seems to make the novel difficult to reach. I will try to analyze the novel under certain headings focusing on separate aspects of it just to combine them together in the end and find the central meaning in it. The first thing to consider will be the fragmented nature of *The Body Artist*. Although the novel looks fragmented, it pertains to a unified plot. Most of the fragmentation originates from the unpredictable switches in the point of view.

#### The Point of View in *The Body Artist*

Time seems to pass. The world happens, unrolling into moments, and you stop to glance at a spider pressed to its web. There is a quickness of light and a sense of things outlined precisely and streaks of running luster on the bay. You know more surely who you are on a strong bright day after a storm when the smallest falling leaf is stabbed with self-awareness. The wind

makes a sound in the pines and the world comes into being, irreversibly, and the spider rides the wind-swayed web. (7)

The excerpt quoted above is the very first paragraph of the novel. It does not clearly tell the reader what the point of view of the novel is. There are two likely interpretations. The narrator may either be a third person omniscient narrator who sees no harm in addressing the reader or a first person narrator who is speaking to himself. The interesting thing is that the rest of the chapter is narrated in third person without directly addressing to the reader. The omniscience of the narrator goes to such extremes that the brain activity of the character is revealed.

She crossed to the cabinet with the blueberries wet in her hand and reached up for the cereal and took the box to the counter, the mostly brown and white box, and then the toaster thing popped and she flipped it down again because it took two flips to get the bread go brown (8).

The “toaster thing” is mentioned again which sounds a bit odd coming from an omniscient narrator; yet, only after a few sentences comes another sentence about the toaster.

“What’s it called, the lever. She’d pressed down the lever to get his bread go brown” (9). This would be expected in a novel narrated from the third person omniscient point of view since the omniscient narrator is capable of seeing through the minds of the characters and making the reader aware of what the characters feel. However, in this case the narrator does not quote the character’s words, nor formulates a sentence like “she tried to think hard to remember what the toaster thing was called and she found out it was lever”. There is yet another instance which is again related to the words, this time on a linguistic level.

She went to the counter and poured soya over the cereal and fruit. The lever sprang or sprung and he got up and took his toast back to the table and then went for the butter[...] (10).

The past form of the verb spring is either sprang or sprung, so it is possible to claim there is logic behind this odd sentence. On the other hand, it is not certain if the sentence is what crosses the mind of one of the characters or just the outcome of the liberty of the narrator. If the sentence has got to do with one of the characters, it is strangely formulated since it looks as if it belongs to the narrative role of the third person narrator. If the latter is the case, this means DeLillo interprets the third person omniscient narration in a different way. Third person narrators are normally capable of expressing their own persona in the pieces; however, third person omniscient narrators disguise their presence and act almost like god. In this example the narrator behaves like a character that bears this strange connection to the main characters in the text.

The consistence of the third person omniscient narrator is interrupted before the end of the first chapter when Rey's death is told in the form of an obituary. The language is formal and lacks depiction of such details as incidental movements. The second chapter repeats the first chapter's practice in terms of beginning. There is again a paragraph with a narrator either addressing the reader asking them to suppose things or the narrator is the first person talking to himself.

It is a hazy white day and the highway lifts to a drained sky. There are four northbound lanes and you are driving in the third lane and there are cars ahead and behind and to both sides although not too many and not too close.  
(31)

All of a sudden, after the second paragraph the pronoun becomes "she" instead of "you" just as it happened in the first chapter. The rest of the novel continues in third person

narration until the sixth chapter which copies the first two as it begins with a paragraph addressing “you” and switches back to the third person narration. The last time this sudden change happens is in chapter seven and it happens exactly in the same way.

Considering the switch from and back to the third person narration, it is possible to tie in the approaches to the point of view with the title. Body art or body modification in its simplest sense require keeping a distance from the default body and experiencing new expressive and visual states. So, if the protagonist of the book, Lauren Hartke, the body artist, is taken as the narrator as well, the switches in the point of view gain more meaning. Lauren as the body artist is experiencing new selves and paying visits to the past to make peace with the unexpected death of her husband and turns this experience into a performance. As it is revealed in the ending of the book almost all the intricate fragments in the chapter, which portray her doing strange body exercises, get together and reveal themselves in her performance called the Body Time. If one were to take each chapter as a meditation on a certain moment/s in the past the scheme gets more meaningful. She begins talking to herself using the address word “you”, observing herself from the outside but still having some sort of a connection. As she manages to conceptualize herself in her art, the inner voice addressing her forsakes the pronoun “you” and sticks to “she” instead.

### The Narrative Model and The Body Artist

writer- implied author- dramatized - dramatized- narrative - narratee- model reader- authorial reader- real reader  
author narrator

The basic three components of the narrative model, the writer-narrative- the real reader, exist by default. What makes reading *The Body Artist* and making meaning out of it a meaningful experience is what takes place between the components. Don DeLillo, the writer. reaches us, the reader, through the narrative, *The Body Artist*. The narrative

in turn makes itself known and gets deciphered with the help of the other components in the narrative model. The implied author, for instance, is DeLillo scheming the novel in such a way that it both looks intricate and at the same time unravels itself to more open readings. The choice of the implied author includes those of selecting the point of view, omitting some important sequences. In this case DeLillo waits until the end to tell the reader that all the strange actions that are portrayed in the novel are actually elements for a performance. So, as told in the previous chapter the disorder or disorganization of the novel stems from the implied author who is most probably consciously initiated by Don DeLillo. There is no trace of a dramatized author in the book while the same thing cannot be said of the dramatized narrator. In Martin's model the dramatized narrator is the first person narrator who uses the pronoun "I". This does not apply to *The Body Artist*. What *The Body Artist* has instead of a first person narrator is a combination of the dramatized narrator and the narratee to whom the story is being told. Based on my argument about the point of view of the book, the body artist Lauren Hartke is the disguised first person narrator who engages in an inner dialogue almost all through the book. As she transforms her body, she transforms her voice as well which goes parallel to the switch in the point of view. She is the dramatized narrator who is so remote from herself that she cannot use the pronoun "I", and she is the narratee as well since she is trying to recover from her husband's sudden and unexpected death and therefore converses with herself, with the past, the present and the future. How is the reader supposed to infer all these from a text that is hidden in the chaotic representation of patched up meditative activities and body transformation? The answer lies in accepting the invitation Marie Laure Ryan thinks every text offers. The reader should be ready to step into the world of the narrative and think in its own terms. The equivalence of this act is the existence of the model reader in the narrative model. The model reader, taking

up the act that in a way resembles role playing, should come up with all these. Model reader should be an adventurous one and be able to thin in terms of the narrative's own realm. I tend to believe even the switches in the point of view should be ample for this activity, since with some careful inspection it puts forth the almost hybrid protagonist Lauren Hartke who is the disguised narrator of the novel occupying herself with the duties of both the dramatized author and the narratee. The authorial reader should work on the final touches of the reading activity and prepare the model reader to get out of the fictitious world. And it is the "reader", who receives the end product.

Deciphering the narrative model, in spite of blowing meaning into the text, does not conclude the reading of *The Body Artist*. There is another major issue yet to be analyzed: The time concept in the novel.

#### Time and *The Body Artist*

The narrated time in *The Body Artist* is open to interpretation. If the reader is inclined to see the represented time close to the duration of what is being narrated, then the actions tin the *Body Artist* should be around a time span stretching from about a couple of days to a few weeks. The last day Lauren and Rey could spend together is covered in the first chapter and the rest is all about Lauren trying to recover from the death and devote herself to her art which involves imagining a ghost, training her body and performing the end result. Going back to the discussion about the point of view, which entails Lauren as the disguised first person narrator of the whole book, one is even free to claim the duration of the time narrated is no more than the duration of the time it takes for a woman to reminisce over her dead husband and engage an intense



inner dialogue about this. No matter what the narrated time is, it is wide enough to accommodate expository moments intended for the provision of some vital information.

Although it is neither narrated nor talked about, the reader gets to know about the details of Rey's death thanks to one or two sentences in the formal obituary like writing. His film career and his marriages are also told in that piece. The fact that they have not been married for long is revealed both in the first chapter when Rey cannot decide if Lauren likes juice or not and in the phone call Rey's first wife makes to Lauren saying she could not have known him in such a limited time and concurring that is why Rey chose to commit suicide in her house rather than the house he rented with Lauren. Mariella's interview with Lauren tells much about what the chapters seem to miss out on. Without that interview the experience in the house would not that easily make sense. The interview acts almost like what McHale calls the retake in postmodern literature. However, contrary to McHale's thoughts about retakes, this particular retake actually brings the text closer to the reader. And the reader, having not been exposed to Lauren's intention of performing her intuitive art on stage, can figure out why certain strange body movements were portrayed in the previous chapters. In that sense Mariella's interview with Lauren reorganize the debris and renders the existence of the recit in a more meaningful sense.

Other than the time the expository parts reveal, there is one very important time concept in the book. The majority of the novel's philosophical meditation seems to rest on time as a concept itself. Formalistically speaking, the book begins with the sentence that portrays the flow of time: "Time seems to pass, the world happens unrolling into moments[...]" (7), and ends with the flow of time as well: "She wanted to feel the sea tang on her face and the flow of time in her body, to tell her who she was" (124).

Most of the novel that is in between mainly meditates on the absence of time and incorporation of different time sequences. Time, which got disoriented after Rey's death, lies in the core of the book. This fact is even openly stated in one of the sentences in the second chapter. "The plan was to organize time until she could live again" (37). Going back to the form of the novel, the beginning and the ending sections which portray the flow of time act like elements framing the whole body of the novel which focuses on the disruption and dysfunction of time. This is the main reason why I reject to call the novel a ghost story for I believe Mr Tuttle's existence in the novel functions merely as a tool enabling Lauren to meditate on time.

He said, 'But you did not leave.'

She looked at him.

'I will leave. In a few weeks. When the lease is up. Or earlier. I will live.'

'But you do not' he said.

This shift from past tense to present had the sound of something overcome an obstacle or restriction. (49)

Lauren, as she turns back to visit the time she spent with her husband, and the time she lived without him as well, meets a character who talks about future as past. An analogy could again be built here between the existence of Mr. Tuttle in the novel and the theory of time that centers on the progressions of a series of nows inherited from Augustine and Ricoeur. Now does not exist; what is more, the future and the past are intertwined.

Did you ever? Look at me? Did you ever look at Rey the way we are talking now?

We are talking now.

Yes? Are you saying yes? Say yes. When did you know him?

I know him where he was.

Then and now? Is that what you are saying?(62)

After having conversations with Mr. Tuttle Lauren seems to understand the implications of his existence as she is the one in this conversation asking “then and now?”. The moment is never only a moment for her. The moment is haunted by Rey’s death and determined to result in the transformation of her body. Nows leave after one another and it is the possible to do the same thing simultaneously then and now because everything takes place in a disoriented fashion with the impact of death and the attempts to revive past moments in the present and future ones. At one point, when Lauren describes Mr. Tuttle she says,

Maybe this man experiences another kind of reality where he is here and there, before and after and he moves from one to the other shatteringly, in a state of collapse, minus an identity, a language, a way to enjoy the savor of the honey coated toast she watches him eat. (64)

As the chapters progress, the ghost-like quality of Mr. Tuttle turns more into an imaginary one. Lauren in a way rehabilitates in her own way using her imagination and art. She imagines being haunted by a ghost so much like and so much unlike Rey, which gives her the opportunity to study Rey as a character she wants to revive in her life and as a persona she wants to impersonate in her performance to make peace with herself.

Being here has come to me. I am with the moment. I will leave the moment.  
Chair, table, wall, hall, all for the moment, in the moment. It has come to me.  
Here and near. From the moment I am gone, am left and leaving. I will leave  
the moment from the moment (74).

The Augustine-Ricoeur analogy is definitely applicable here. The idea of leaving the moment from the moment is like mimicking the flow of time. The encounter with Mr.

Tuttle proves to be an encounter she uses to reorganize her time, her life and her art. This leads one to think that Mr Tuttle metaphorically represents Lauren's inner dialogue.

#### Recit in *The Body Artist*

When one is able to establish Lauren as the disguised narrator of the book, the recit becomes more available because the underlying story in the book is not a woman's encounter with a ghost but is instead a woman's contemplation on the death of her husband. The contemplation involves a meditation on time and a devotion to body art. The recit in the book narrates the story of Lauren. She marries Rey Robles, a director, and moves to a house for 6 months. They do not know each other a lot since they haven't lived together for a long while. They generally lead a quiet life, each involved in their own world. One day, Rey leaves the house never to return again. He goes to the house of his first wife and commits suicide there. Lauren is distressed by what happened so much that she decides to avoid human contact and begins living in the remote house they rented. There, in a delirious state, she misses Rey, the time they spent together and starts revisiting those times. Rey has a tape recorder which he uses for stashing ideas for film scripts. Lauren is in some of the recordings as well since she conversed with him while the machine was on. Lauren begins exerting herself with difficult exercises, she eats less and listens to the recordings over and over again. As time passes, she realizes most of her observations in the remote town, her work concerning her body and even the recordings can be incorporated together to form the main elements of a performance titled *Body Time*. She turns her grief into art, reorganizes her time, and tries to understand who she is after being so many people. At the end of the book she goes to the

window, opens it and wants to “feel the sea tang on her face and the flow of time in her body to tell her who she was” (124).

## **Chapter III**

### **Adaptation**

With the advent of projection technology in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the viewer's relationship with the film was no longer private. The viewer did not have to look through early peepshow devices to see motion pictures. Cinema became an art for the masses that could be experienced as a group in a theatre. The early producers of film faced some problems since projection technology was relatively new at the beginning of the century. During projection, the reel goes through the device with a powerful source of light going through the frames and making it possible for them to be reflected on the white screen. During the first years, even though the projection system was working properly the end result on screen was less than satisfactory. The image was blurred and even vague at times. The solution found for this problem was intermittent motion. Only after the reel's continuous motion was interrupted could the projectors create a clear image on the screen. The projectors using the intermittent motion worked on the premise that a continuously moving celluloid strip created a blurred image and for this reason its motion had to be interrupted. Today's projection technology uses the intermitting motion as well. Each frame in the strip stops in front of the lens for the split of a second, the powerful light goes out and comes back again. This happens incredibly fast; so, the viewer is not aware of what is going on in the projection room. However, this does not change the fact is the image stops for some time and the light goes out. In fact, there is darkness in the film as much as there is light. This means half of the motion picture watching experience takes place in complete darkness.

However, the viewer does not perceive interruptions. On the contrary, the technique helps the clarity of the image. But still, one may use this phenomenon as a metaphor of the viewer's tendency to receive a disrupted message. The human brain discards darkness and focuses on light during the film.

Intermittent motion works on human brain and enables the viewer to see the image by showing him/her the frames in a fragmented fashion. However, it is not a conscious brain activity. On the other hand the beginning of cinema provides other examples of reception that might be directly related to perception and conscious brain activity. The first examples in film history reveals how the reception of the viewer can be redefined with new modes of expression achieved through filmic techniques such as editing and angle changes.

When the first films were being shot, the producers or directors did not have the opportunity to experiment. The technology was new to them as it was to the viewer. The first films were extremely "simple in form and style. They usually consisted of a single shot framing an action, usually at long shot distance" (Bordwell 466). Considered among the first film makers The Lumière Brothers Auguste and Louis shot a film called "L'Arrivée d'un train en gare" (Arrival of a Train at a Station) which is believed to mark the beginning of the cinema. The film lasted about 45 seconds and displayed a train arriving at a station as its name suggests. The camera does not change angle or stop recording during the 45 seconds and nothing actually happens other than the arrival. In the screenings of the film "the audience are said to have dodged aside at the sight of the locomotive barreling toward them into the foreground on the screen" (Cook 11). This experience was new to them and they were most probably awed by the moving image. Lumière Brothers continued making profit with their films and the audience showed great interest until a magician Georges Méliès started producing films. Since Méliès was

a magician he knew how to do tricks with the images and he used the cinema's advantage over the live performances by doing many takes until the desired scene is achieved. The viewers were exposed to Méliès' films which, unlike those by the Lumière Brothers, included editing and angle changes. The introduction of editing changed both the production and reception of films. Méliès did not push the record button and shoot a single scene but instead collected different fragments and brought them together. He conceived his films in terms of dramatic "scenes played out from beginning to end rather than in terms of shots, or individual visual perspectives in a scene" (Cook 14). The fact that Lumière brothers' films lost impact shows how people's perceptions might change and thus reality can be redefined. When people are subjected to a new phenomenon long enough it becomes the norm. Viewers in the late nineteenth century encountered cinema through one-take films of Lumière; however, after they were exposed to the edited scenes of Méliès, they began adapting to edited films. That is why contemporary viewers do not problematize a dinner scene that does not portray two characters having dinner from the beginning to the end. On the other hand, today, the static camera and a long shot which lasts minutes without cutting have become characteristics of independent films while the mainstream films edit the scenes and present a complicated collage of moving images to the viewer. The people whose perceptions were shaped by Lumières' films would be awestruck after seeing a simple contemporary commercial from the TV. Similarly, many contemporary viewers would find films in which trains come and go tedious. One could argue that exposure to new conditions and the changes in perception that come with it determine the relationship between the receiver of art and the art object itself. That is probably why a film like *Adaptation*, despite its intricately edited scenes which depict the production of itself in



addition to narrating the story in a non-linear manner, is a studio film meant for large audiences rather than a low budget independent one.

Adaptation is a movie about the adaptation process of Susan Orlean's journalistic book titled *The Orchid Thief* based on her interviews with the orchid breeder John Laroche. A production company assigns Charlie Kaufman to do the work. Although he is very interested in the project and feels a connection to the book he has trouble adapting the book because of the book's non-narrative quality. As his stress level rises, his social skills worsen. He cannot communicate with people, makes a habit of leaving the parties early, and misses the chance of establishing a relationship with Amelia, the only woman who seems interested in him. In the meantime Susan Orlean who is also a character in the film celebrates the success of her book in her apartment at a dinner party with her friends. They talk about Laroche's eccentricities in a mocking tone. The film portrays Susan's meetings with Laroche with the help of flashbacks. Susan learns about Laroche through an article in a newspaper that heralds his trial due to the illegal flower extraction from a protected swamp. She wants to interview him and goes to the trial. They talk a little and Laroche strikes her as a character living in his own imaginary world. On the other hand, Donald, Charlie's twin brother moves in with Charlie and begins scriptwriting as well. Donald is considerably better at using his social skills and he communicates with people all the time. He decides he should write a thriller film centering around a serial killer. Charlie seems disturbed by Donald's existence and does not take his scriptwriting ambitions seriously. When Donald asks for his help from Charlie about the thriller film he is working on Charlie gives absurd answers and interestingly Donald gets impressed by them and wants to use them. The two brothers completely differ from each other in their perspectives about scriptwriting. Although months pass Charlie cannot make progress in the script while Donald finishes

his script titled “The 3” about a serial killer with a dissociative identity disorder. Charlie’s agent loves “The 3” and thinks they can make millions out of it. Donald advises Charlie to attend one of the workshops of the scriptwriting guru Robert McKee. Charlie is repelled by the idea because throughout his career as a scriptwriter he has avoided McKee’s approach to scriptwriting. McKee believes in the necessity of a central plot, a conflict that drives the characters to act in certain ways and a change in the protagonist that comes within. Frustrated by his inability to bring his work to completion, Charlie seriously begins considering attending one of McKee’s workshops. Donald encourages him and Charlie finds himself in a theatre listening to McKee’s lecture, which he soon regrets. He cannot help but ask the question: “What if the writer wants to write a script in which nothing happens? What if life is not as eventful as it is thought to be?” All of a sudden McKee gets incredibly angry and calls a script without a proper plot dull simply because he thinks life is full of action: betrayals, murders, and wars. Charlie gets very uncomfortable and tries to talk to McKee at the end of the workshop, asking for help for his script. They go to a pub to talk about the script. McKee cannot understand why a person wants to make a film about flowers and does not see a way of mending the script other than making the ending very dramatic and eventful. He advises Charlie to make his characters naturally motivated to engage in actions and leaves saying if he can make his characters act in a way that they are motivated from within, everything is going to be fine. Feeling a lot better, Charlie calls Donald and asks for his help on the script. They work on the script together. The fact that he is a character in the script as well surprises Donald but he finds it too eventless to be shot. As the twins look deeper into Orlean’s book, the solution to solve the problem in the script seems more remote. Donald gets bored and stops working. He says he wants to go online and browse Laroche’s adult web site which Orlean describes in the book as

one of Laroche's new obsessions. On the site they see Orlean's nude picture and understand Laroche and Orlean have a deeper relationship than one between a journalist and her subject. The two brothers travel to Laroche's house in Florida just to find Laroche and Orlean having sex, high on the drug extracted from an orchid. Laroche notices Charlie peeping through the window. Orlean, concerned about her career in *The New Yorker*, wants to kill Charlie because she does not want to be related to anything that has to do with drugs and extramarital sex. They drive to the swamp to kill Charlie there. Just before Susan pulls the trigger, Donald, who has been hiding in the car, gets out of the car and distracts her. After a long chase sequence, Charlie and Donald hide in the swamp and fall asleep together. As they wake up the next morning they find Laroche and Susan asleep near the car. They get in the car in a hurry, an act that results in a serious car crash. Donald flies through the windshield and dies. Susan and Laroche arrive, realize one of the twin brothers is dead and continue chasing Charlie. In the swamp, Laroche is attacked by an alligator as he approaches Charlie and dies. Susan has a nervous breakdown. Charlie calls his mother and talks to her with a very sad voice. All of a sudden the scene near the swamp cuts to a scene where Amelia and Charlie are hiking and talking about his soon-to-be finished script. As Charlie says goodbye to Amelia he suddenly decides to end the script. The ending of the film shows Charlie making the decision to end the script.

Self-referentiality in *Adaptation* is very dominant. It is a film that seems to portray the pre-production process of itself. Charlie Kaufman, the real scriptwriter of the film, is also a character in it who is trying to adapt Susan Orlean's journalistic book titled *The Orchid Thief*. The division between the real Charlie Kaufman and the textualized character Charlie Kaufman is important. For this reason I will refer to the real Charlie Kaufman as Kaufman and to the character in the film as Charlie. The

finalized version of the film which reaches the viewer after the post-production process, is a piece that functions both as the adaptation of *The Orchid Thief* and as a piece meditating on the pre-production process. This self-referentiality brings a new dimension to the time concept analyzed in “Scarlatti Tilt” and *The Body Artist*. “Scarlatti Tilt” displays a moment after the recit of the story takes place and gives references about the past. It is possible to regard the sentences of “Scarlatti Tilt” as its present, its “now” giving references about its past. On the other hand *The Body Artist* pretends to stop the flow of time in between the first and the last paragraph of the book to portray its character while she is contemplating on the death of her husband. *The Body Artist*’s present, in other words its “now” is the time when an emotionally challenged protagonist attempts to make peace with and reorganize time. On the surface, it looks as if the time that *Adaptation* portrays is the time in which the whole movie was planned. This does not necessarily mean the film functions as a piece that portrays the making of the film as well. *Adaptation* is not a film that merely gives information about its production process but is instead a separate film on its own. The reason for this is the fact that the character Charlie’s script does not exist as a film in the real world; yet, it exists as a material for the real Kaufman’s film. This can be understood when the beginning of the film is analyzed.

The film begins with a dark screen accompanied by the textualized character Charlie’s voice over. The viewer hears his inner dialogue

“I am old. I am fat. I am bald[...] My toenails have turned strange”

In the meantime, the black screen cuts to a dinner table at a restaurant depicting Charlie with the representative of the producer. She is congratulating him on his former work. Charlie looks uncomfortable. The beginning of the film is appropriate since it portrays a scriptwriter with problems related to self-esteem. The rest of the movie focuses on the

difficulties Charlie encounters as he tries to adapt *The Orchid Thief*. In the later sequences there will be times when he will completely lose hope or occasionally feel better when a good idea comes to his mind since he will feel relieved by the prospect of completing the script. When Charlie makes a decision about how to begin the film he feels motivated. He decides he will begin the script with a sequence depicting the formation of the earth. The sequence begins with the liquid earth solidifying, followed by an image of a pool of water with organisms forming inside. The image then cuts to the dinosaurs that get extinct by the meteor. Following the dinosaur scene, more familiar animals dominate the image. The scenes portraying settlements, industrial advances, the birth of a child and Susan Orlean writing *The Orchid Thief* in her room conclude the sequence. However, this is not how *Adaptation* itself begins: it begins with Charlie's dinner with the representative of the production company. This discrepancy highlights the fact that there are two scripts for the adaptation of *The Orchid Thief*; one is the script the character Charlie is working on while the other one is the script the real Kaufman wrote, which eventually became the film *Adaptation*. This division is a very important issue that needs further analysis since it tells much about the reading practice and what it necessitates.

Marie Laure Ryan's interpretation of the reading may help one understand this division better. Because she believes that there is a role making value in reading, in the sense that the written piece is an invitation to the fictional world and that the authorial reader, the reader that the author can establish a communication with, becomes immersed with the fictional world (167). One might find it relevant to see Charlie as the representation of Kaufman himself immersed literally in the world of *The Orchid Thief*. Throughout the film, he rarely puts down the book and is always so interested in the world of the orchids. One might claim that Kaufman intended Charlie to be the

representative of his reading activity of *The Orchid Thief*, which involves a kind of role play. That is probably why Charlie goes to the orchid show in the film. By observing orchids and thus knowing more about them he tries to put himself in the shoes of Susan and maybe even Laroche. He forsakes his former self who did not have much to do with the orchids and plays the role of a Charlie trying to get himself in the world of the book. Based on this analysis, one can see the relevance of the title. If it were a direct adaptation of the book, it would rightfully be called *The Orchid Thief*. However, it is the story of the process of adaptation to film, intertwined with the mini narratives in the book and the imagination of the scriptwriter. The film is not an adaptation; instead it is the story of an adaptation. That is why the title is appropriate to the subject matter of the film. Yet another reason for the film's title springs from the script itself. During one of Susan and Laroche's meetings Laroche mentions the quality of animals and flowers to adapt to the changes happening in the environment. One may think that this meaning of adaptation is subtly used for Charlie's character as well. Although he is an acclaimed scriptwriter who amazes people with brilliant ideas, he cannot form healthy relationships with others. In a way, he cannot adapt to the social environment that evolves around him. The presence of the twin brother may be regarded as the antithesis of Charlie's character since Donald, in spite of not being able to impress people with innovative ideas, is an outgoing person. The title, in this sense, points to the adaptation of the flowers and animals to changes in nature, of the book *The Orchid Thief*, and of Charlie to the social environment.

Exploring the time in films generally necessitates a detailed analysis of shooting and editing techniques but the time concept in *Adaptation* can be likened to the time in *The Body Artist* since it incorporates the past into the present and the future. The viewer witnesses the time during which Susan is writing the book, which is achieved through

flashbacks. The viewer witnesses the time Charlie reads the book. This seems to form an organic bond between the past and the present. One moment in the film aptly portrays this. Susan and Laroche go to the swamp to look for an orchid together but they cannot find one. The viewer hears Susan's voice over contemplating about beauty and obsession. The scene cuts to Charlie who is reading the sentence in the book. Although the time is totally different in the two scenes the voice over continues forming a bridge between the times. The voice over represents Susan's thoughts which made their way into the book in the future. This ties the present with the future. The fact that Susan had those thoughts is represented in the book. Taking this argument further, one could tie this even to the time of an individual who is reading the book. Susan's thoughts resonated themselves as she wrote them in the book, since she had to contemplate on them and later, the thoughts were resonated when Charlie read them in the book.

Another instance in the film provides possibilities to view the time as progression of moments derivative of each other. When Charlie feels trapped in the complication the adaptation causes, he asks himself the question 'How did I get here'? All of a sudden the scene cuts to 'the world of the history' sequence explained above. In the sequence time is represented from the beginning with quick-paced editing. The viewer sees the formation of the earth, formation of life, dinosaurs, the meteor colliding with the earth, animals, settlements, industrial advances and the birth of a child consecutively. The answer to the question is not related to the adaptation job Charlie was assigned to do but instead is to an uncountable number of instances that followed each other until Charlie found himself having trouble adapting the piece.

The time concept in the film complicates the narrative structure; however, one can unravel it with the understanding of time as 'series of nows' applied to the former analysis of texts. When one takes the characters in the film into consideration, it is

possible to see that the film continues to complicate itself as Charlie Kaufman does not only duplicate himself by making himself a character in the text but also creates a twin brother who looks exactly like the textualized Charlie but is a less sophisticated and more outgoing person.

Other than being a postmodern text, filled with self-referential and intertextual details, the script of *Adaptation* metaphorically represents the discrepancy between the conventional writing and the postmodern writing. Charlie Kaufman adds to the script himself and his imaginary twin brother whom he chooses to call Donald. One can even build a thematic analogy between *Adaptation* and *The Body Artist* in this sense. *The Body Artist* features a ghost character who might be regarded as the product of Lauren's mind. The ghost Mr. Tuttle exists in order to enable Lauren to meditate on time, death and sorrow. Mr. Tuttle leaves when she reestablishes her attachment to life through her art and learns to live with the pain caused by the death of a loved one. In *Adaptation*, Charlie is seen as a character having difficulty in transferring the content of a non-fiction book to the material that might be used for a script. Orlean's book is based on her interviews with John Laroche and her observations about the obsession he possesses for the orchids. The idea of writing a script that is only about flowers excites Charlie but he is also concerned about the narrative quality that the flower obsession will not be able to bring to the script. He says that for the first time in his life he wants to write something that does not tell anything, but one can claim that the real Charlie Kaufman that cannot forsake the narrative quality. Kaufman designs the finale of the film in such a way that it incorporates chasing scenes, car crashes, which are aspects peculiar to mainstream films. The two brothers, with an aim to uncover the relationship between Susan and Laroche, get in trouble as they witness Susan and Laroche using the drug extracted from orchids. Charlie wants to add action to the book and search for



Susan's relationship with Laroche because he is encouraged by Donald to do so. One can see metaphorical level of meaning highlighted through the presence of the twin brothers: Charlie represents postmodern narrative while Donald represents the conventional strategies of story telling. Metaphorically, postmodern narrative asks for help from the conventional story telling. As Donald dies in the end, which signifies the conventional story's death, Charlie is not completely left alone since Kaufman chooses to cite Donald's name next to Charlie's as the other scriptwriter of the film. Postmodern narrative prevails, and conventional story telling is dead but postmodern narrative still originates from the collaboration between the two.

## Conclusion

This thesis offers a mimetic and narratological reading of postmodern fiction in the light of an approach which claims that seemingly non-referential texts may point to reality no matter how fragmented their presentation is. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the characteristics of postmodern fiction, one can claim that the blurred distinction between absence and presence is one of the main tenets of postmodern fiction. The first literary piece this study analyzes is the short story “Scarlati Tilt” by Richard Brautigan which strikes the reader with its brevity. The fact that the story consists only of two sentences constitutes it as being postmodern since the brevity of the text calls for absence. Almost no element referring to a narrative value is present in the story. The words might lead the reader to various possible signifieds, thereby decentering the meaning of the text. On the other hand, one cannot deny the fact that some words highlight the presence of a pre-existing reality. The word “empty” in the second sentence, for instance, does not leave much room for doubts as to the woman’s having committed the murder and killed the man who had been bothering her with poorly played music. The fact that the text both decenters the meaning and at the same time makes it possible to infer some invariant information is paradoxical. Yet another paradox arises from the word “empty”. It is the most important signifier in the text for it points to a dramatic event that took place, but it is “empty”. The emptiness referring to a central meaning highlights that the text’s absent point may refer to a presence. This study’s aim is to foreground the empty signifiers and the absences in the texts because they would in turn be used to constitute a meaningful presence.

The absence of/in “Scarlati Tilt” as a complete text generates a presence. The reader understands that the empty revolver signifies the murder of a man who was trying

to learn to play the violin. There are more things one may be able to infer from other words: The fact that the couple lives in a studio apartment reveals their financial state as a moderate one. The name “Scarlatti” in the title gives clues about the kind of music the man tries to play with the violin since the title can be associated with the Italian Scarlatti family whose members are famous composers of western classical music.

The words are not the only reference points in the text. The narrative point of view of “Scarlatti Tilt” may be used to piece together the fragments of the text. The whole text might be read as the aftermath of the murder without the verbal mention of the murder itself. In this sense, the two sentences serve as a fragment of a unified whole. This study argues that “Scarlatti Tilt”, as a single fragment, possesses a narrative quality although it does not display a linear order of events. As Culler very aptly states, the distortions in the order of events in a text may result from the point of view the narrator employs in the text. The reason why “Scarlatti Tilt” does tell the story in a conventional sequential order is because Brautigan narrates the story from the eyes of an observer at the police station. If one assumes that a chance observer or a policeman narrates the story, one concludes that the text reflects the real perceptions of that observer, thereby making the text mimetic. The observation includes a sentence that on one hand establishes certain aspects of the truth that lie in the text and on the other decenters the meaning.

The point of view is a very important indicator of narrativity also in *The Body Artist*. The whole novel looks as if it is narrated in the third person. However, the changes in the addressee from the pronoun “you” to “she” might be associated with Lauren’s being the disguised first person narrator of the book. Since Lauren tries to modify her body and become another person, it is very likely that she is trying to alienate herself from her body. Three of the chapters begin with paragraphs in which the

addressee is the pronoun “you”. This may be the portrayal of Lauren talking to herself from a distance and practicing her body art, yet all of a sudden, the addressee becomes ‘she’. The pronoun ‘she’ may be Lauren who is completely modified and is to see herself as another person. Since this study suggests that *The Body Artist* is a novel that depicts the contemplation of a woman on the death of her husband and on the concept of time, one may regard chapters as fragments of contemplation. In this sense a thematic analogy may be built between “Scarlati Tilt” and *The Body Artist* since they both depict their characters in the aftermath of death. The two texts are formalistically alike too. Both provide the reader with tiny fragments that might be related to what happened before the narrated time. The narrated time in *The Body Artist* is the time during which Lauren meditates about time and death and watches herself become another person. The ghost Mr. Tuttle, on the other hand, represents the non-linearity of time. The book is framed between the sentence that portray the flow of time; however, the time in between is not flowing but rather ceasing to pass and occasionally jumping to other fragments of time. This strange time quality is achieved with the presence of Mr. Tuttle since he cannot evaluate time in a linear sense. One can consider the presence of Mr. Tuttle as a tool enabling Lauren to meditate on time and jump between time sequences. This line of thinking makes the whole book a meditation, some kind of a mind exercise for Lauren, through which she regains the linear time concept and the power to get used to her husband Rey’s death. This meditation, as Duyfhuizen would support, cannot be interpreted on its own since it is derivative of what happened before. The ‘discour’ of the book, which is provided through a disguised first person narrator, is derivative of the ‘recit’. The reader can infer basic information about the relationship between Lauren and Rey, what kind of life they led together, what caused so much distress for Lauren and how Lauren produced her last performance piece called “Body Time”.

A reading that yields meaning in postmodern fiction is possible when one realizes the mimetic quality that resides in postmodern fiction. What gives rise to this realization that the perception of reality that gets reshaped with the form of the signifiers one is exposed to. Human perception has to adapt to the way representation is organized. Contemporary reader and viewers are accustomed to watching rather short advertisements which do not name the product but still make us relate to it, seeing posters in a very blurred manner as we go past them while traveling in the tube, and watching mainstream films with intricately edited sequences. Considering all these, it is possible to claim that our perception is itself postmodern. This gives the postmodern author an opportunity to express himself in a fragmented, intertextual, thus postmodern fashion but still convey a central meaning among many other decentered ones.

Contrary to conventional narratology's belief in the need to express a story in a sequentially referential order, postmodern fiction presents a rather intricately formed plot structure. Receiving the meaning from this complicated set of fragments requires analyzing the text in terms of the narrative model of communication Martin provides. Between the text's creator and its receiver there are other roles shared by the author and the reader. Sternberg mentions the author's role in selecting and omitting parts in the fiction. The implied author in Marin's narrative model may be regarded as the author's selection and omission mechanism, which determines how the content and the form of the piece will be constructed. If one can discover the intentions of the implied author, one gets closer to the text's reality. Making this discovery might involve what Marie Laure-Ryan calls the role-play quality of the reading act. The model reader in Martin's model is able to engage in role-play since s/he is the part of the reader who thinks in terms of the world of the fiction. S/he, in Ryan's sense, is the reader who accepts the invitation of the author and gets immersed in the fiction. The authorial reader has the

ability to analyze fiction from a distance realizing that the text is a structured and planned creation. In this sense, the authorial reader collaborates with the model reader to relate the analysis both to the world of the fiction and the real world which the text seems to represent. At the end of this process the reader himself receives the message.

The third piece this study analyzes is a film by Spike Jonze, *Adaptation*. The film's role in this study is more to support its theoretical stance with a metaphor than to provide another text to be exposed to the reading method proposed in the scope of this thesis. The film features its scriptwriter Charlie Kaufman as a character in it. Moreover Charlie also has a twin brother who does not exist in the real world. Charlie is an experimental and innovative scriptwriter who does not believe in conventional story telling while Donald, the twin brother is interested in writing a structured screenplay of a thriller film. Charlie and Donald are almost in a continuous battle throughout the film until Charlie feels he cannot finish the script he is working on and asks Donald to help him with it. They begin collaborating, a metaphor of the cooperation of postmodern fiction with conventional narrative strategies. Interestingly, Donald, who represents the conventional narrative, dies in the end. However, the film *Adaptation* is credited with two writers: Charlie and Donald Kaufman. In the film's fictional world, which is dominated by postmodernism, the conventional story telling is dead; however, the end result belongs to both postmodern and conventional narrative strategies. The metaphor *Adaptation* provides concludes this thesis proving that no matter how cropped, fragmented, decentered it is, postmodern fiction is still mimetic and thus can be analyzed in a narratological sense.

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