

1986

Romancing the Reader: Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*

Carl D. Malmgren

University of New Orleans, cmalmgre@uno.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uno.edu/engl_facpubs



Part of the [Italian Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Malmgren, Carl D. "Romancing the Reader: Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 6.2 (1986): 106-116.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English and Foreign Languages at ScholarWorks@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

Romancing the Reader: Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*

Carl D. Malmgren

After the process of literary composition has been taken to pieces and reassembled, the decisive moment in literary life is bound to be the act of reading.

Italo Calvino¹

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LITERARY CRITICISM have seen increased emphasis on and interest in reader-oriented approaches to literature, in the forms of "affective stylistics," subjective criticism, reception aesthetics, phenomenology, and an interdisciplinary interest in hermeneutics.² As far as literature is concerned, one can see a comparable development in the changing relations that twentieth-century fiction has posited with its readers, a sequence of transformations involving several stages.³ In the first stage, the modernist novel, there is a willingness or desire on the part of fictionists, for various complex culturological and epistemological reasons, to give the reader more latitude in interpretation, to transfer interpretive responsibilities to the reader. The second stage, that of paramodernist fiction, carries on the modernist program in more radical terms by creating fragmented and polymorphous narratives which readers must actively compose. Paramodernist fiction is the "writerly" text, a "galaxy of signifiers" which readers must constellate.⁴ In the next stage, that of contemporary metafiction, postmodernist authors like Barth, Nabokov, Barthelme, and Coover set about establishing an almost adversarial relation with their readers by cheerfully and ironically adopting the *author*-ial mask and parodying the role of the response-ible reader. The readerly relations enacted by postmodernist metafiction represent a kind of dead end for narrative, one which Italo Calvino attempts to find a way out of in *If on a winter's night a traveler* (hereinafter *IWN*).

The novel is quite literally a Romance of the Reader, in which an ordinary reader becomes hero of the text. The first chapter begins with a sentence of direct address, employing the familiar *tu* form for the second person, the antecedent of which can only be the "real life" flesh-and-blood reader with the novel in his hands: "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every

other thought. Let the world around you fade."⁵ In an intimate and ingratiating manner, the narrator throughout the chapter invites the reader to surrender to the "pleasure of the text," describing in detail the most felicitous circumstances for a good read and summarizing wittily the way in which the reader purchased the novel, took "possession" of it. In the second chapter, given a title, not a number like the first chapter, the "novel" proper apparently begins (of which more later). But in the "third" chapter, identified as chapter 2, the text reverts to the reader supposedly reading *IWN* and to the *tu* form, as "you" realize that you have a defective copy of Calvino's novel and hurry back to the bookstore to rectify the matter. The *you* in the first chapter, though unusual, can easily be naturalized by the reader; he or she only need see that chapter as a kind of preface. The *you* of the third chapter is more disturbing, an increasingly textualized *you*, one beginning to figure largely within his own subsystem in the macrotext, a fact which Calvino makes clear by giving the alternate "reader" sections the consecutive numbers we normally associate with chapter divisions in a traditional novel. The "reader" becomes hero formally in "chapter two" when the narrator endows him with the uppercase ("Reader"), a circumstance that takes place when he encounters the Other Reader in the bookstore (29). The appearance of the Other Reader is necessary to transform the Reader's adventures into the novelistic, as the narrator makes clear in a later digression:

What are you like, Other Reader? It is time for this book in the second person to address itself no longer to a general male you, perhaps brother and double of hypocrite I, but directly to you who appeared already in the second chapter as the Third Person necessary for the novel to be a novel, for something to happen between that male Second Person and the female Third. (141)

The novelistic interchapters employ the second person throughout, in order to "leave open to the Reader who is reading the possibility of identifying with the Reader who is read" (141). The extratextual reader thus participates vicariously in a Romance in the literary sense, a story relating the Hero/Reader's quest for an object of desire, an object which variously takes the form of the Other Reader, a fictional text or texts, and ultimately the macrotext itself, *IWN*.

Thus the phrase, the Romance of the Reader. But *IWN* is a Romance in the colloquial sense as well, a love story in which Reader and Other Reader meet, are separated by, among other things, the claims of other suitors, and are reunited in marital bliss. Most importantly, *IWN* is a Romance in the sense that it attempts to establish a new relation with the extratextual reader (and that means all of us), a relation which confounds interpretation, refuses the gambit of writerliness, and quite literally "romances" the reader, calling for an erotics of reading whose foundation is Desire. *IWN* examines from many angles the question *comment lire?* and proposes a novel answer.

The novel consists of two separate subsystems, one dealing with the

Reader's quest for a seamless copy of "IWN", the other made up of the ten narrative incipits, each one broken off just as it gets interesting, that the Reader is given in the course of his quest. Each of the subsystems explores the central theme: how to read. For example, at the level of the Reader's plot, the hero, a surrogate for the "real" readers outside the text, encounters any number of character types, all of whom represent possible relations with texts and who define their own perspectives: the Other Reader, the Publisher/Editor, the Professor/Professional Reader, the Nonreader, the Activist Reader, the Translator, the Writer, and the Censor. This portion of the novel culminates in chapter 11, where the frustrated Reader repairs to a great library to find complete copies of the ten truncated fictions and finds instead seven readers reading, each of whom describes an archetypal reading strategy or posture. These seven readers "solve" the Reader's dilemma and give his quest an end.

In the Reader's plot, then, the whole question of reading is foregrounded. Not so obviously, however, the narrative incipits also explore the dynamics of reading, and in a number of ways. For one thing the first of the incipits acts out a phenomenology of reading. "If on a winter's night a traveler" begins as follows: "*The novel begins in a railway station, a locomotive huffs, steam from a piston covers the opening of the chapter, a cloud of smoke hides part of the first paragraph*" (10). Following Roman Jakobson's description of communication, we can refer to the phrases I've italicized as *metalingual* commentary in that they make explicit reference to the codes, conventions, or the act of novelistic narration. They explicitly remind the reader that he or she is beginning to read a fictional text and in the process situate that reader at a remove from the action, outside the fictional world, in a neutral zone created by self-conscious awareness of the onset of narrativity. The character who makes his entrance in this paragraph naturally appears in the third person, since for the reader he (the character) is a perfect stranger: "There is someone looking through the befogged glass, he opens the glass door of the bar" (10). The first two paragraphs contain several metalingual comments (like "The pages of the book are clouded," "the cloud of smoke rests on the sentences," and "so it seems from the series of sentences in the second paragraph") that serve to remind the reader of the exact locus of the act of attention and thus to distance him or her from the ongoing action.

In the third paragraph a gradual shift begins to occur, marking the reader's gradual process of identification with the unfolding action. The reader is still addressed in the second person, but the character assumes the first person ("I have landed in this station tonight for the first time in my life") as if to signal grammatically the collapse of selves into the experiencing "I." The next paragraph, of course, marks a retreat from this kind of automatic or premature identification: "I am the man who comes and goes between the bar and the telephone booth. Or, rather: that man is called 'I' and you know nothing else about him, just as this station is called only 'station' and beyond

it there exists nothing except the unanswered signal of a telephone ringing in a dark room of a distant city" (11). Early in the reading process, the reader alternates between moments of identification with the protagonist and moments of distancing based on awareness of the act of reading a fictional text. Much of the entire chapter acts out this process of alternation by interpolating sections of first-person narration with metalingual commentary and second-person direct address. Calvino captures the dynamics of this process in a passage like the following: "Where would I go to? The city outside there has no name yet, we don't know if it will remain outside the novel or whether the whole story will be contained within its inky blackness. I only know that this first chapter is taking a while to break free of the station and the bar: it is not wise for me to move away from here where they might still come looking for me, or for me to be seen by other people with this burdensome suitcase" (14). By the end of the chapter, however, the process of identification is complete—the final metalingual interpolation occurs some three pages before the end of the chapter (21).

The entire chapter is written in forms of the present tense, a device which serves to emphasize the simultaneity of the act of reading and the narrative action, while at the same time reinforcing the reader's identification with the protagonist/narrator. Calvino also manufactures a condition of similarity between reader and character by foisting an epistemological disadvantage upon the latter: the character, like the reader, is ignorant of both his past and future, and only gradually comes to understand the nature of "mission" (again, exactly like the reader): "Something must have gone wrong for me: some misinformation, a delay, a missed connection: perhaps on arriving I should have found a contact, probably linked with this suitcase that seems to worry me so much, though whether because I am afraid of losing it or because I can't wait to be rid of it is not clear. What seems certain is that it isn't just ordinary baggage, something I can check or pretend to forget in the waiting room" (13). The verb tenses, the words of qualification or hesitation, the tentativeness and confusion all highlight the extent of his ignorance. When he goes to place a telephone call, he surmises that it is a long-distance call only by the fact that he is putting many tokens in the machine, at which time he realizes that he is a "subordinate" taking orders from some unknown group. The narrator's gradual apprehension of his situation coincides with that of the reader and promotes the act of identification between the two. This, Calvino implies, is what necessarily happens in the act of reading a fictional text. From a secure position outside the text the reader is gradually drawn into the fictional world, moving from here to there without really being aware of it. This, of course, is exactly what happens to the Reader/Hero who goes off in search of "IWN."

Such movement, Calvino insists, is not without its share of risk (one more reason to transform reader into Reader and make him the real Hero of the text). To surrender oneself and identify with a fictional character is to expose

one's self to the vicissitudes of the other's fate. In one of the metalingual commentaries, the reader is warned that

a situation that takes place at the opening of a novel always refers you to something that has happened or is about to happen, and it is this something else that makes it risky to identify with me, risky for you the reader and for him the author; and the more gray and ordinary and undistinguished and commonplace the beginning of a novel is, the more you and the author feel a hint of danger looming over that fraction of "I" that you have heedlessly invested in the "I" of a character whose inner history you know nothing about, as you know nothing about the contents of that suitcase he is so anxious to be rid of. (15)

Identification is dangerous because something necessarily happens, but as the end of the passage suggests, the reader takes the risk, makes the identification, in the hope that ultimately the suitcase will be passed on, that something of value will be exchanged—an empty suitcase for one with contents of some kind.

In general, the first several narrative incipits reenact the reading process, in ways similar to "If on a winter's night a traveler," playing out the reader's gradual immersion in the "destructive element" of the fictional text. The latter truncated narratives (from "Leaning from the steep slope" on) do away with direct address, as if to acknowledge the fact that we readers can no longer revert to a safe vantage point outside the text, that we are "hooked" by the macrotext of *IWN*. These narratives do not entirely dispense with metalingual commentary (e.g., "In a network of lines that enlace" begins: "The first sensation this book should convey is that I feel when I hear the telephone ring"), but this commentary is always grounded firmly in the discourse of the first-person narrator, never located in that indeterminate zone inside and yet outside the text. Moreover, in many of the narrative incipits, the narrator's situation is in some way analogous to that of the reader: the narrator/protagonist feels that the world is sending him signs to decode or read, or he suffers vertigo from the sense of surrendering himself to an abyss, or he fears telephones because a ringing telephone signifies a hearkening from the unknown, or he undertakes a project of systematically erasing the commonplace and contingent world. In each case the fictional text recalls obliquely the fate of reading and of the reader.

In this respect, it is useful to investigate whether these ten narrative starts, admittedly encompassing a broad spectrum of narrative subgenres and manifesting distinctive idiolects, have features in common. At the risk of overgeneralization, one can say that they all involve the following motifs: an object of desire, in the form of an erotic interest; the problematics of making connections, seen variously as dangerous/desirable; an atmosphere of potential violence; and an enigma to be decoded. As reviewers of the novel have noted,⁶ these are all features of the detective-thriller genre, and thus it is not accidental that the author-figure in the novel, Silas Flannery, writes novels of that sort. It should be added, moreover, that the detective-thriller is

itself an offspring of the Romance and that this is the form into which the Reader's adventures cast themselves. For Calvino, then, by extrapolation, the act of reading shares the main features of the detective-thriller: eros, mystery, suspense.

And how does one read this kind of arche-typical (in the sense that it embodies and enacts the very contours of reading) text? One alternative is offered by the example of the "professional" reader—Professor Uzzi-Tuzii. The philologist's way (and in this Uzzi-Tuzii stands for all academic, scholarly, "new critical" readers) is to "translate" the text word-for-word (and this of course is quite literally what Uzzi-Tuzii sets out to do), to substitute learned and ingenious interpretive glosses for the original text. Becoming aware that "all interpretation is a use of violence and caprice against a text" (69), the professor eventually gives it up, reverting in his oral reading to the original Cimmerian which the Reader "naturally" (!) understands. The final meaning does indeed reside "outside" the text—not in its innumerable, perhaps infinite, translations, interpretations, or glosses, but rather "in the beyond" (71), an elusive, immaterial, invisible elsewhere.

Lotaria, the Other Reader's sister, represents another type of reader, one who also does violence to the text, in a more literal sense. First, she takes the various chapters of a novel and distributes them severally to various study groups, prompting the following interchange between the Reader and her.

"Excuse me, I was looking for the other pages, the rest," you say.

"The rest? . . . Oh, there's enough material here to discuss for a month. Aren't you satisfied?"

"I didn't mean to discuss; I wanted to read . . ." you say. (91)

The study group itself continues the process of text mutilation by further dissecting the text according to any number of sociological, political, and semiotic concepts. This whole process culminates in Lotaria's final reading program, which consists of breaking a novel down into the words themselves, listing those words according to frequency of appearance, and categorizing the book by "reading" that list. Lotaria, an example of the political or sociological reader, "manhandles" the text in an attempt to get it to *do* things, radically fragments the text in order to use it or else to label it. In this way, this kind of reading (and here one might lump all sociological and Marxist readings) discovers only what it decided beforehand was already there. As Silas Flannery says of Lotaria's reading of his novels, "I am sure this Lotaria . . . has read them conscientiously, but I believe she has read them only to find in them what she was already convinced of before reading them" (185).

If a professional reading turns one text into another one and a political reading carves up a text in order to confirm its own presuppositions, then *comment lire*? A suggestive answer is given by the publisher/editor Mr. Cavedagna, who in his conversation with the Reader expresses a nostalgia

for the days of childhood when he (Cavedagna) would hide in the chicken coop and give himself over to a cheap edition of a novel. This option the Reader refers to as "the possibility of innocent reading" (115).⁷ But this formulation is both misleading (would an innocent reading be free of desire?) and vague (what are the parameters of such a reading?). Calvino's notion of reading involves more than the regressive desire to revert to the wonderful readings of yesteryear.

Mired in his own self-consciousness and haunted by a feeling that fiction is an exhausted genre, the narrator/author of John Barth's "Life-Story" almost wistfully proposes that fiction might "establish some order, acceptable relation between itself, its author, its reader."⁸ By coming at the problem from the vantage point of the reader, Calvino has mapped out the contours of such a relation and perhaps pointed the way to new narrative domains. Calvino attacks the problem by broaching the question "why read fiction?" in the first chapter of *IWN*. He suggests that reading is fundamentally rooted in a desire for difference. In his informal direct address to the reader, dealing with the "why" of reading, the narrator says, "You hope always to encounter true newness, which, having been new once, will continue to be so" (6-7). And when "you" discover that the book is not quite what you expected (as must certainly be the case for anyone reading the first chapter of *IWN*), you are not at all disappointed, because you "prefer it this way, confronting something and not quite knowing yet what it is" (9). Opening a fictional text, a reader encounters Otherness, Difference; in fact, the Desire for exposure to Otherness, Difference, is essentially erotic in nature: "Of course, this circling of the book, too, this reading around it before reading inside it, is a part of the pleasure in a new book, but like all preliminary pleasures, it has its optimal duration if you want it to serve as a thrust toward the more substantial pleasure of the consummation of the act, namely the reading of the book" (8-9). The foreplay of handling the text must be consummated in reading it.

Since fiction is rooted in desire, it follows, then, that the Reader's adventures do not achieve the status of fiction, do not become novelistic, until he encounters an object of Desire, in the form of the Other Reader, Ludmilla. His heroic story necessarily entails the quest for the Other, simultaneously a woman and a text: "You can no longer distinguish your interest in the Cimmerian novel from your interest in the Other Reader of that novel" (51).

This notion of an erotics of reading culminates near the middle of the novel when the Reader and Other Reader consummate their relationship, and lovemaking is explicitly equated with reading—"lovers' reading of each other's bodies" (156).⁹ The two activities are not identical (for one thing, lovemaking, unlike reading, is not a linear process), but "what makes lovemaking and reading resemble each other most," according to Calvino, "is that within both of them times and spaces open, different from measurable time and space" (156). In each activity the participant is "thrown" into an

elsewhere and elsewhere.

In the act of love which is reading, the reader surrenders control to the text. In an interview in the *New York Times Book Review*, Calvino describes himself as a "more sadistic lover than ever" in *IWN*: "I constantly play cat and mouse with the reader, letting the reader briefly enjoy the illusion that he's free for a little while, that he's in control. And then I quickly take the rug out from under him; he realizes with a shock that he is *not* in control, that it is always I, Calvino, who is in total control of the situation."¹⁰ If reading is an act of love, it is nonetheless a power struggle in which the reader is at the mercy of the text. The ten narrative incipits, as Mary McCarthy points out, in effect tease the reader, becoming "ten cunningly regulated instances of coitus interruptus in the art and practice of fiction."¹¹

And yet, though Calvino may assert that he's in complete control, the actual situation is not so one-way. The Ideal Reader, Ludmilla, though she goes through many metamorphoses as a reader, continually looking for different types of novels, perfectly acts out the reader's polyvalent relation to the fictional text. For her, "Reading means stripping herself of every purpose, every foregone conclusion, to be ready to catch a voice that makes itself heard when you least expect it, a voice that comes from an unknown source, from somewhere beyond the book, beyond the author, beyond the conventions of writing: from the unsaid, from what the world has not yet said of itself and does not have the words to say" (239).¹²

From one perspective the reader may be at the author's mercy, but reading ultimately involves the desire for the "beyond"; a reader goes to a fictional text, surrenders to it in order to make elusive and ephemeral contact with something that is lacking in the real world; the book's "subject should be what does not exist and cannot exist except when written, but whose absence is obscurely felt by that which exists, in its own incompleteness" (172). A fiction, then, responds to an absence, a lack, a gap, an empty space, and this incompleteness manifests itself in Desire: "I wanted to read . . ."

We've seen that the modernist and paramodernist novel elicited from their readers certain instrumental activities, like interpretation and composition, and that certain postmodernist authors reacted radically against this trend by overdetermining their texts and parodying readerly conventions and expectations. In a recent essay, "The Literature of Replenishment," John Barth admits that his metafiction of the "literature of exhaustion" phase, with its self-reflexive parody, its lack of contact with the "real world," and its total absorption in its own processes, represents a kind of "late modernism," and as such is "a kind of pallid, last-ditch decadence, of no more than minor symptomatic interest."¹³ Both modernist and late modernist fiction, because of their relative difficulty of access for the reader, engendered a "necessary priestly industry of explicators, annotators, allusion-chasers, to mediate between the text and the reader"¹⁴ (and this is so despite the fact that metafiction calls in question and parodies the critical function; witness

the army of Barth and Pynchon explicators). Barth goes on to suggest that the true postmodernist program entails a relative democratization of accessibility in narrative, based on a synthesis of premodernist narrativity (as in Dickens and Tolstoy) and modernist self-conscious formalism. Not surprisingly, Barth cites Calvino and Gabriel García Márquez as two novelists undertaking this synthesis.

Now one may take issue with Barth's disparagement of the purely meta-fictional phase of the "postmodernist breakthrough," but it is clear that various fictionists *are* trying to pass beyond metafiction by reimagining the relation between fiction and reality and thereby transforming the role of the reader. The proliferation of unrealistic forms like fantasy, "magical realism," science fiction, and neo-Gothicism represents a conscious attempt, not to abolish Reality, but to reassert the primacy and integrity of fictional worlds and to deemphasize reading as a purely exegetical activity. Reading can no longer be translation or interpretation (or, for that matter, gap-filling or assemblage), conventions which substitute one text for another, because reading is rooted in Desire for the Other, the need to listen for a voice from the beyond.

In his idiosyncratic "autobiography," Roland Barthes mentions in passing that his distinction in *S/Z* between readerly and writerly texts may have been premature and incomplete: "I now conceive (certain texts that have been sent to me suggest as much) that there may be a third textual entity: alongside the readerly and the writerly, there would be something like the *receivable*. The receivable would be the unreadable text which catches hold, the red-hot text, a product continuously outside any likelihood."¹⁵ Barthes goes on to say that, when confronted with such a text, the reader can only respond: "I can neither read nor write what you produce, but I *receive* it, like a fire, a drug, an enigmatic disorganization." He neglects to provide a formal description or example of such a text, although his partial and ambiguous commentary seems to suggest a text so radically discontinuous and subversive that it is unpublishable.

Be that as it may, the terms Barthes uses are helpful in relation to Calvino's *IWN*. *IWN* resists the categories of the readerliness of the traditional "classic" text and the writerliness of the text which is a "galaxy of signifiers." It offers itself not to be interpreted or assembled or rewritten, but simply to be read, received by a reader who exists in a relation of need vis-à-vis the text, an addict in search of a narrative fix.¹⁶ In a very real sense, the novel interrogates the "pleasure of the text" and subsumes it within an erotics of the text, a desire for the Other, the hearkening to a voice from the beyond. "Reading is going toward something that is about to be, and no one yet knows what it will be" (72). And what is this longing for the beyond that consumes the reader? It is not, I would suggest, the metaphysical longing for presence that Derrida has so skillfully defined and dismantled in his critique of Western philosophy and literature. Rather it has to do with the *jouissance*

experienced in the recognition of the onset of narrativity itself, the moment so well captured by the kernel text of *IWN*:

If on a winter's night a traveler, outside the town of Malbork, leaning from the steep slope without fear of wind or vertigo, looks down in the gathering shadow, in a network of lines that enlase, in a network of lines that intersect, on the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon around an empty grave—What story down there awaits its end?—he asks, anxious to hear the story. (258)

NOTES

- 1 Italo Calvino, "Notes toward a Definition of the Narrative Form As a Combinatory Process," *Twentieth Century Studies*, 3 (1970): 96.
- 2 Two anthologies which provide a sampling of the reader-oriented critical spectrum are Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980); and Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981).
- 3 For a much more detailed account of the following argument, see my *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1985), esp. chapters 2-4.
- 4 Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 5.
- 5 Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveler*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 10. All subsequent references to the novel will be included parenthetically in the text.
- 6 E.g., John Updike, in "Readers and Writers," *The New Yorker*, 3 August 1981: 90-93; and Mary McCarthy, in "Acts of Love," *The New York Review of Books*, 25 June 1981: 3-6.
- 7 Updike notes perceptively in his review that *IWN* is a "plea for innocent reading."
- 8 John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968; rpt. New York: Bantam, 1969), 125.
- 9 Cf. Mary McCarthy, in "Acts of Love," 6: "The act of reading, when finally consummated, is seen to be parallel to the act of love." Barth draws a similar parallel in *Chimera* (New York: Random, 1972), 24-25. The novellas in *Chimera* explore the question of an erotics of the text from the point of view of writing and narrating.
- 10 Francine Du Plessis Gray, "Visiting Italo Calvino," *New York Times Book Review*, 21 June 1981: 23.
- 11 McCarthy, "Acts of Love," 6.
- 12 Cf. Calvino, "Notes toward a Definition," 97: "But surely literature is constantly straining to escape from the bounds of this finite quantity, surely literature is constantly struggling to say something it does not know how to say, something that cannot be said, something it does not know, something that cannot be known."
- 13 John Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," *Atlantic*, January 1980: 69.
- 14 John Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," 69.

- 15 Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 118.
- 16 Cf. Mary McCarthy, "Acts of Love," 3: "The addict can no longer be choosy; we behold him at the mercy of his habit, suffering withdrawal symptoms when the supply [of narrative] is abruptly cut off."