

**Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel:  
A Comparative Reading of Reality and Hyperreality in  
David Lodge's *Nice Work*, Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2*,  
and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran***

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**Abstract**

Through intertextuality, academy life and literature, or the simulacrum and hyperreality, are foregrounded in David Lodge's *Nice Work*, Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2*, and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. The Academy Novel, as a genre, helps three writers in three continents comment on various issues. Amongst these are the two-world nations, the integrity of the university professor, the ivory-tower intellectuals, and the Pygmalion-Galatea professor-student relationship. Oddly enough, the dilemma of the three protagonist-writers has certainly kindled the creativity of the three authors. Intertextuality has been the mode to highlight the ethical and epistemological dimensions of the original-simulacrum binarism. A reading of the three works highlights commonly shared autobiographical strains, self-reflexiveness and magic realism, as related to the Academy Novel as a genre, as well as the use of intertextuality, paratextuality, and pastiche. Ironically enough, these undermine, in a metafictional way, the very reality of the three novels. However, the seemingly-passive theoretical discourses are certainly positive. Whether literary, technological or intellectual, these discursive practices seem to resist the dominant hegemony, be it capitalist, industrial, technological, religious or political. Indeed, intertextuality is the main technique used in the three novels to foreground the academy life and literature, in other words, hyperreality and the simulacrum, evident in the academy novel as a genre and in campus life as a whole.

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التنافس والمحاكاة والرواية الأكاديمية :  
دراسة مقارنة للحقيقة وما وراء الحقيقة في روايات  
"نعم العمل" لديفيد لودج و "جالاتيا 2.2" لريتشارد بورز  
و"قراءة لوليتا في طهران" لأذار نفيسي

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الملخص

يعمل أسلوب التنافس على إبراز الأدب والحياة الأكاديمية أو المحاكاة للحقيقية فيما تظهر الرواية الأكاديمية كنوع أدبي بجلاء فلسفة وفكر الكتاب الثلاثة ديفيد لودج ، وريتشارد بورز وأذار نفيسي وذلك في روايات "نعم العمل" و "جالاتيا 2.2" و"قراءة لوليتا في طهران".

تعزز الواقعية السحرية والسخرية من الرواية كفن أدبي ومحاكاة أنواع سابقة منها أهمية النسخة الباهتة وكل ذلك أثرى مخيلة الكتاب-الأبطال في ذات الوقت لتكون القصة التي تختلط بالسيرة الذاتية هي تعبير عن الرواية كفن والعمل الجامعي كعالم أكاديمي ويلي ذلك العالم الأكبر. فنرى نقداً للرأسمالية والعالم الصناعي والتقني والهيمنة الدينية والتكنولوجية والسياسية ويتضح أن الرواية الأكاديمية والنظرية والنقدية تعد أنجح وسيلة للمقاومة سياسياً واقتصادياً ودينياً وفكرياً .

ومن ضمن الأسئلة المطروحة التي تمت الإجابة عليها في الروايات والسير الذاتية الثلاث: إلى أي مدى يتم انتهاك حقوق الإنسان باسم الرأسمالية والتكنولوجيا والدين ؟ وهل علاقة الأستاذ بالتلميذ هي ذاتها بين البيجماليون وجالاتيا ؟ وهل تمت المحافظة على كرامة الأستاذ الجامعي ؟ ثلاث كتاب في ثلاث قارات يستخدمون التنافس ونوع أدبي واحد هو الرواية الأكاديمية ليفندوا بعض الادعاءات ومنها أن المفكر والأستاذ الجامعي قد لا يعيش بالضرورة في برج عاجي وعالم وهمي ، على عكس الاعتقاد الشائع . على العكس قد يكون عالمه الأدبي والفكري هو ما يمكنه من التعايش بواقعية أكثر في مجتمعه والمقاومة بضراوة أشد، وقد يكون عالمه الأكاديمي والفكري هو الأصل بالنسبة له والعالم الخارجي هو الصورة الباهتة للحقيقة فحسب .

Through intertextuality, academy life and literature, or the simulacrum and hyperreality, are foregrounded in David Lodge's *Nice Work*, Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2.*, and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. The Academy Novel, as a genre, helps three writers in three continents comment on various issues. Amongst these are the two-world nations, the integrity of the university professor, the ivory-tower intellectuals, and the Pygmalion-Galatea professor-student relationship. Oddly enough, the dilemma of the three protagonist-writers has certainly kindled the creativity of the three authors. Intertextuality has been the mode to highlight the ethical and epistemological dimensions of the original-simulacrum binarism. A reading of the three works highlights commonly shared autobiographical strains, self-reflexiveness and magic realism, as related to the Academy Novel as a genre, as well as the use of intertextuality, paratextuality, and pastiche. Ironically enough, these undermine, in a metafictional way, the very reality of the three novels. However, the seemingly-passive theoretical discourses are certainly positive. Whether literary, technological or intellectual, these discursive practices seem to resist the dominant hegemony, be it capitalist, industrial, technological, religious or political.

In *Nice Work*, David Lodge's use of pastiche<sup>1</sup> of Victorian and realistic novels, literary and critical theories, jargon and ideologies in vogue, of both narrative tradition and innovation seems to undermine the authenticity of both art and life or the word and the world. Lodge's metafictional self-reflexivity attracts the attention to the multiple levels of reality. Lodge himself establishes these strata of the original-replica or simulacrum<sup>2</sup> in the very first epigraph that he himself introduces the novel with: "Perhaps I should explain, for the benefit of readers who have not been here before, that Rummidge is an imaginary city, with imaginary universities and imaginary factories, inhabited by imaginary people, which occupies, for the purposes of fiction, the space where Birmingham is to be found on maps of the so-called real world" (Author's Note). The references to "the purposes of fiction" and Birmingham as a Cultural Studies centre in "the so-called real world" augment the self-reflexive and metafictional information about his academy-novel trilogy<sup>3</sup> and his own career as a prominent

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

literary critic, novelist and professor. This seems to highlight the reality-hyperreality<sup>4</sup> leitmotif underlining not only Lodge's novel but also those by Nafisi and Powers. Intertextuality<sup>5</sup> is naturally an undercurrent in the academy novel; it is extensively used by the three writers to dismantle various things on campus and outside. If Lodge quotes Victorian writers addressing the reader, he himself humorously mimics this in his direct addresses to the reader in a self-conscious, omniscient tone.

I will tell you about Charles, and other salient facts of her biography" (p.23). "And there, for the time being, let us leave Vic Wilcox to meet a very different character. A character who, rather awkwardly for me, doesn't herself believe in the concept of character... and holds that character is a 'bourgeois myth', an illusion created to reinforce the ideology of capitalism (21).

This metafictional, self-reflexive<sup>6</sup> discussion of the concept of character with the reader is followed by an extensive literary analysis of literary, critical, linguistic and ideological approaches and techniques as reminders of the fictionality of this work. In a way, he wants to block what Coleridge terms the 'suspension of disbelief'. The intrusion of Lodge in this way distorts the 'real-seeming' facade of a fictitious artifice and blurs the reality-hyperreality binarism. Lodge is self-conscious and disillusioned about the fake nature of any attempt at faithfully representing reality. To satirize this tense relationship between the word and the world, 'the not-so-real world', Lodge puts it in his very first epigraph to the novel in a hectic, apologetic tone. To further intensify this, Lodge goes to extremes describing such acts as peeing (4, 54), and sexual desires (33) and intercourse (34). Through comically pursuing realistic faithfulness of description, even in a repulsive manner, Lodge levels his satire at the realistic novel, in general, despite being a realist himself, since he is always aware of the demerits and of the transient nature of each phase of literary development.

Lodge satirizes current trends in literary, linguistic and feminist studies, and of the theories and jargon in vogue in the

eighties. Indeed, Robyn and the staff are shown to be obsessed by and caught in a labyrinthine web of 'imported' ideas:

structuralism and poststructuralism, semiotics and deconstruction, new mutations and graftings of psychoanalysis and Marxism, linguistics and literary criticism. . . It was revolution. It was civil war. Robyn threw herself enthusiastically into the struggle, on the radical side naturally... she forced her mind into the labyrinthine sentences of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida until her eyes were bloodshot. To Robyn, it seemed that critical theory had at last moved to its rightful place, centre-stage in the 'theatre of history', and she was ready to play her part in the drama (26-28).

Lodge here ridicules the irrational rush for any new ideas, however innovative they are, especially if their rigour and rigidity come to classify human experience, or rather 'automate' it.

It is this shifting from theoretical to ideological prejudices that is mostly ridiculed and rebuked by lodge. Biased pre-conceived ideas should never judge a literary work, not by a critic and never by a teacher, who molds the thought of generations of students. Both the unlimited freedom and the extensive use of any critical approach alone – such as the Russian Formalist, the Structuralist, the textual, the historical or the biographical – are shown humorously to lack the validity. Robyn is a perfect example of a feminist, and a poststructuralist comically striving to 'deconstruct' every single thing she meets in life. Robyn here could be regarded as an example of Lodge's critique of certain flaws of 'ivory-tower' intelligentsia and academia, vehemently fixated on avant-garde and fashionable jargon, while detached from the community and failing to link theory to 'real' life. The critique of the academy could be self-criticism as well, or as Genette indicates, "The prefatorial discourse may well elicit a double expression of ridicule, provoking the 'save me from my from my friends' effect" (Genette, 267). The above prefaces are evidence of Lodge's skillful use of what Genette calls 'fictive allographic prefaces'. Furthermore, Lodge employs the 'titulatory' paratext

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

(Genette, 288, 55). A case in point is the significance of the ironic title 'Nice Work', especially the hollow word 'nice'. This is crystallized towards the end of the novel when Robyn repeats herself about the automation and monotony of industry, and the 'nice work' of literature, Vic wittily answers that "universities do not grow on trees" (257). Robyn's feminist terminology and her Marxist approach to literature, rejecting works of art on an ideological basis, are ridiculed by Lodge. Biased ideological, critical or theoretical prejudices, motivating a critic and a teacher, are shown not only to distort the vision of a whole generation of students, but also to disturb any sound love relationship Robyn might be involved in. Intertextuality is crystal clear in Robyn's philosophical discussion of 'authenticity', 'selfhood', 'death of the author', 'reality', and 'magic reality':

There is no such thing as the 'self' on which capitalism and the classic novel are founded – that is to say, a finite, unique soul or essence that constitutes a person's identity; there's only a subject position in an infinite web of discourses- the discourses of power, sex, family, science, religion, poetry, etc. And by the same token, there is no such thing as an *author*, . . . who originates a work of fiction ab nihilo. *Every text is a product of intertextuality, a tissue of allusions to and citations of other texts*" *Not "you are what you speak" but rather "you are what speaks you* (257, italics mine).

This last ironic phrase 'what speaks you' and the use of 'a web of discourses', as well as linking capitalism to the classic novel are all satirical of Robyn's ideological approach to literature and humanity. Indeed, it is shown to be somehow uninspiring, narrow-minded and even dogmatic. On a broader plane, there is a self-reflexive reference to the use of intertextuality as a 'web' underlining the novel and a statement on the novel genre limitations. Later in the novel (261), the encounter between Vic and Robyn further accentuates Lodge's satirical stance towards Robyn, herself a semi-autobiographical sketch, when she dismisses the idea of love for Vic or care for the students on an 'individualistic' basis. "There is nothing outside the text", she blindly and automatically reiterates the linguistic theory,

applying close textual analysis to human relationships, and is, thus, shown to be idiotic. Throughout the novel, Lodge's satirical remarks concerning literary terminology such as, for instance, "Kafkaesque futility", "pre-Raphaelite cloud", "Oedipal teasing", "hubris" (24, 28, 29) \_ all elucidate the impracticality of literary standards. The university staff is shown to be living in an "ivory tower", and are, in consequence, demanded to be in direct contact with social and industrial life, outside the campus walls, literally and intellectually. The supposedly-knowledgeable staff is to be part of the comic 'SS', or the 'Shadow Scheme', to be brought out of their seclusion. The use of literary jargon and critical theorization during staff meetings (251) is satirically set in sharp contrast with the rationalization of expenses and human labour, the Industry year, and the ridiculous business-letter abbreviations \_ all symbolic of 'the' practical world outside the campus walls.

Though a well-established literary critic, an authority on Structuralism and a university professor himself, Lodge levels his satire at the intelligentsia and academia, in general. He satirizes the one-sided educational process, where students are like receptacles being spoonfed, finally bringing out what they have known by heart (35, 36, 44, 45, 254, 257).

The lecture theatre resonates like a drow with the chatter of a hundred- odd a students, all talking at once, as if they have just been released from solitary confinement.... A hundred faces tilt towards (Robyn) – curious, expectant, sullen, apathetic \_ like empty dishes waiting to be filled.

Another critique recurs (254) where the whole discipline of literary studies and English literature is shown to be somehow impractical and theoretical, especially, with the lack of audio-visual aids, as in other departments like Egyptology, for instance. Students are specializing in financially-rewarding disciplines instead. The Department of English is "like a three-masted ship with too many sails aloft and a diminishing crew" (251). All through the novel, scattered ironies of the university fake facade put up by the intelligentsia, on the liberal views of knowledge for its own sake, with no practical function of

bread-winning or so. The clash between one's personal desires and the need to earn money is voiced satirically at the outset of the novel by Vic Making fun of his son and daughter, he decides that there is no room for the Modernist quest for identity. Lodge skillfully accomplishes this by Vic ironically posing the dramatic question of 'who am I' and the answer "come off no identity crises, please. Somebody has to earn a living in this family . . . you know who you are: it's all on file at Division" (5, 6). A final satire is leveled at the ethics of work in the modern world. The two conscientious persons, Robyn and Vic are both sent out of work. Ironically, Roby is shown to have been deceived, even by her idealistic notion of the students (Marion, for e.g.). Vic, on the other hand, is shown to have been a fool, when he is suddenly illuminated, in a comic reenactment of Joyce's protagonist's Stephen Daedalus' 'epiphany' in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman*. It turns out that Riviera Sunbeds is owned by both Brian Ever Thorpe and Stuart Baxter. Ironically enough, both preserve their jobs in Pringle's and Sons.

Lodge's critique of the Victorian novel does not show itself as an anti-novel. On the contrary, Lodge effectively does this by ironically reenacting traditional Victorian conventions, such as mimicking the direct address by the author (or the omniscient, self-conscious narrator) to the reader. Another Victorian technique parodied in *Nice Work* is the *deus-ex-machina* happy ending, imposed upon the natural development of the events. Robyn, the self-assured protagonist, is herself reminiscent of Victorian heroines. Nevertheless, paradoxically, she embodies the spirit of the contemporary academia. Robyn's fixation on the Victorian industrial novel and her thesis on it indicate its strong impact on her. At the same time, her obsession with contemporary literary theory and jargon gives another postmodernist dimension to her personality. Another device used by Lodge to intensify his pastiche of the Victorian novel is the use of the Victorian epigraphs at the outset of the six parts of the novel \_ all derived from 'industrial' novels. The first epigraph is derived from George Eliot's epigraph to *Felix Holt*, from which Lodge derives the ironic title of Robyn's book *The Industrious Muse*. This title Robyn sees as paradoxical because industry never seemed inspiring, creative or

innovative to her. The second epigraph is derived from Disraeli's *Sybil* or *The Two Nations*, a particularly significant description of the essential difference between the worlds of literature and industry, as embodied by Robyn and Vic. The two nations may also refer to split England, where "two nations" differ radically, "between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they are dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets." These two epigraphs preceding the very first part of the novel do, satirically, set the mood and the atmosphere of the novel and its characters, through the reference to the Victorian industrial novel, which is, itself, the topic of both Robyn and Lodge.

The tone of resentment and exasperation of Robyn, as the literary, critical and humanist eye, is further accentuated by Lodge's insertion of a part of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, as an epigraph to the second part of *Nice Work*. The heroine does not "find much pleasure in going over", what the industrialist calls, "our factories, our magnificent warehouses"(58). Similarly, Robyn's visit to Vic's Pringle's and Sons generates feelings of the fatal monotony of, what she sees as, sordid, dreary and drab places. From the same novel by Gaskell, Lodge derives the epigraph to the fourth part of the novel, further intensifying the world of difference between Robyn and Vic. "I know so little about strikes, and rates of wages, and capital, and labour, that I had better not talk to a political economist like you"(131). The two epigraphs derived from Dickens' *Hard Times* clearly trigger off the whole industrial mood of Coketown. Furthermore, Lodge seems to satirize Robyn too since she might need 'amusement'(103). Indeed, she might need to seek a compromise between 'the wisdom of the Head' and the 'wisdom of the Heart', since that of the Head no longer seems 'all-sufficient'(190).

Lodge satirizes Victorian narrative techniques, such as the direct address by the author to the reader, both by inserting such examples in his first and last epigraphs, and by using it himself. In the epigraph to the first part of the novel, Lodge quotes Charlotte Bronte's Prelude to *Shirley*, another industrial novel, where she is directly addressing the reader, promising to come up with something contrary

to his expectations of a romantic mood. She is to depict "Something real, cool and solid..., something unromantic as Monday morning", hinting, thus, at the industrialist, businesslike atmosphere of both Bronte's and Lodge's novels. In the epigraph to the very last section of *Nice Work*, Lodge once more, quotes from Bronte's *Shirley*, a passage (228) mimicking the reader looking diligently for the moral, as if on a quest for the holy grail. The patronizing tone of this text is itself satirical of the Victorian technique itself.

Pastiche is perceived in the very fact that Lodge ends *Nice Work* on an idealistic, didactic note, parodying, thus, the industrial novel. Robyn criticizes the British rigid social system and British snobbery. Romantic and sentimental as any Victorian heroine could be, Robyn decides to stay in Rummidge, however precarious and transient the position may be, only because 'there is a long way to go'. The satirical diction further accentuates her romantic and sentimental act. At the very moment she sees the students 'congregating' (having Biblical overtones of equality), she feels their ill treatment of the young Gardner as 'physically contiguous'. Ironically enough, this does not disillusion her about the real nature of the students but reminds her of her 'utopian vision of the campus'. This didactic note is at variance with the Art-for-Art's-Sake notion. To further satirize Victorian narrative techniques, Lodge ends the novel happily for both Vic, who ironically justifies this as "Misfortune reunites the family together", and for Robyn, through a sudden reverse of fortune. Ironically enough, Robyn herself was at the beginning antagonistic to the *deus ex machina*, as an artificial easy way out of misery, especially through 'legacy'. To further accentuate the satirical note, Robyn, sentimentally, hands over practically more than half of her fortune to Vic to invest, indeed, as a way of helping him out after being expelled from his job. Furthermore, her reticent and reserved stance towards his news of being reunited with Marjorie is somehow Victorian.

The two worlds are also set in contrast through the juxtaposition of two contrasting episodes throughout the novel. Robyn is juxtaposed with Marion in her modeling career (51); Robyn is juxtaposed with Marjorie (269) and with Vic himself (22). Similarly, Vic is juxtaposed with Mr. Gradgrind of *Hard Times* (47), etc. Robyn,

as an embodiment of literary vision, is shown to be "a virgin, factorywise" (68), when she naively wonders, "where are the chimneys", and when she overreads their significance; interpreting them as "phallic symbols of sterility". The title "Nice Work" is twofold and satirical, working on two levels. For Vic, their factory is doing 'nice work', the 'foundry' is seen by him as 'nice work' (21), while it is, practically, an 'inferno' (86, 87) for Robyn. 'Nice work', for Robyn, is the literary study (96). Robyn's criticism of industry, 'O brave new world', is a literary and satirical allusion to Huxley, one that Vic might not be aware of Robyn's 'expedition into the cultural heart of darkness' is a satirical reference to industry, using the title of Conrad's novella. On the other hand, the fact that Vic refers everything back to economy, measuring, moneywise, the validity of strikes, feminist studies, Marxist views, etc. throws more light on (78, 251) the clash of personalities, of the 'two nations', as evident in Robyn and Vic's first encounter (28).

David Lodge attracts our attention to two strains in his novels: binary structure and autobiographical traits. In *Nice Work*, the choice of two epigraphs together, two contrasting characters together, 'two nations' or two worlds together, two narrative types and techniques together, literature and industry, literature and criticism, linguistics and ideology – all this bears witness to what Lodge himself calls "a fondness for binary structures" . The second strain, the autobiographical, is both thematic and narrative, since it groups the novels by similar content and form. Even the characters which recur in some of his novels, such as Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp, have a cohesive function. This in itself is satirized in Lodge's own 'Authorial Note'. The similarity between Lodge and Robyn, for instance, is but an example of the characters reflecting Lodge's thought, art and experience. On a broader plane, what seems to be the most unifying technique in most of Lodge's novels is the use of pastiche. He parodies *A Tale of Two Cities* right from the subtitle of *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses*. Lodge goes further to parody both the well-known nursery rhyme and the British museum, as a symbol of, to use Foucault's term, the 'archive' of human knowledge, civilization and history, in his *The British Museum Is Falling Down*. Pastiche and

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

intertextuality, in Lodge, work together as a postmodernist dismantling of any metanarrative, even if it is the novel genre, the literary canon, literary theory, the academy, education and the intelligentsia in general, as well as the capitalist dichotomy of the world-apart poor and rich.

In Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2*, it is Helen or Imp H, who seems the most human. Both Helen and Powers, himself the author-protagonist, imply that machines have managed to develop a heart while human neuro-programmers and cognitive-scientists like Lentz have actually become the real androids. "Lentz owned Helen, her shaped evolution, the lay of her synapses. He owned all the reasoning about her as well" (302). The author-protagonist's relationship to her is, as he himself calls it, "emotional" (302). The relationship of the 'word' and the 'world' is bluntly stated by Helen when she quotes Roethke towards the end of the novel. Significantly enough, this takes place after her ordeal of being dissected for testing her Artificial Intelligence.

She tried to reassure me. To pretend nothing had happened to her. That she was still the same mechanical, endlessly eager learner. She quoted me placation, some Roethke lines she'd always loved, despite their growing falsehood:

Who rise from flesh to spirit know the fall:  
The word outleaps the world, and light is all  
(322).

Powers could be regarded as Pygmalion not because he has created Helen but because he has been feeding her with all the 'canonical' English literary texts. The Foucauldian notions of knowledge and power and the epistemological power of discourse are reiterated when the author-narrator blames himself at the end as much as he blames Lentz:

My strongest argument belongs more to him than it did to me. We know the world by awling it into our shape-changing cells. Knowing those cells required just as merciless tooling. To counter any part of Lentz's plan would be to contradict myself. . . And I damned myself with it willingly (302).

If he considers Lentz “a monster”, he could also be described as such. This cruel complicity suddenly crosses his mind when he preaches Lentz on the “morality of machine vivisection” (302), hence crystallizing the notion of the intellectuals as accomplices. When Lentz refers to her as: “She sure the hell seems to mimic with shocking accuracy some features of high-level cognition” (301), and decides to ‘operate’ or ‘perform surgery’ on her, to use Powers’ terms, the author-narrator is totally enraged. “Is that all she means to you?”, he wonders (301).

“You want to cut into her? You want to lobotomize?”

“Easy, Marcel. We’re talking about a painless operation, as far as I imagine” (302).

The hubristic stance they both assume, Lentz willingly and the author-narrator unwillingly, is referred to using Classical allusions. “The maker’s fate is to be a wanderer” (328), he sadly ponders. “Each metaphor already modeled the modeler that pasted it together. It seemed I might have another fiction in me after all” (328). If someone has a ‘real’ divinity, it is Helen, in fact.

Helen knew all that, saw through it. What hung her up was divinity doing itself in with tire irons. She’d had the bit about the soul fastened to a dying animal. What she needed, in order to forgive our race and live here in peace, was faith’s flip side (320).

The metafictional, postmodernist traits are both ruthlessly undermined, together with the dissection of Helen. The authenticity of literature as a whole and novel as a genre seems to be undermined; the price of writing the narrative is extremely high. “The plot was the mind’s brainchild, awareness explaining itself to itself. Narrative’s classic page-turner” (320). He painfully uses the writing metaphor, then rewriting life itself in a world full of robots with set roles for them to perform. One wonders what is the use of literature and creativity in a world devoid of humanity and feelings if it cannot write a counter-narrative?

Our life was a set of maps, self-assembling, fused into point for point feedback, each slice continuously rewriting itself to match the other layers’ rewrites. In that thicket, the soul existed; it was the search for

attractors where the system might settle. The immaterial in mortal garb, associative memory metaphoring its own bewilderment. Sound made syllable. The rest mass of God (320).

On a wider plane, all other master-narratives are nihilistically dismantled. He will adopt an even more pessimistic vision of life. Everything boils down to a “hollow formula”, reminiscent of TS Eliot’s “The Hollow Men”. Furthermore, the lifeboat ceases to be the savior. On the contrary, the paradoxical sinking life-boat metaphor indicates that ethically, it will cause our eventual utter devastation.

I told her we were both in the same open boat. That after all this evolutionary time, we still woke up confused, knowing everything about our presence here except why. I admitted that the world was sick and random. That the evening news was right. That life was trade, addiction, rape, exploitation, racial hatred, ethnic cleansing, misogyny, land mines, hunger, industrial disaster, denial, disease, indifference. That care had to lie to itself, to carry on as if persistence mattered. It seemed a hollow formula, discredited even by speaking it aloud. A lifeboat ethic that only made sinking worse (321).

Right from the outset of the novel, Powers foregrounds the simulacra as somehow more legitimate than the original if the latter is devoid of emotions. How far can neuro-linguistic manipulation of human beings and Artificial Intelligence experiments go? How legitimate are they? These are some of the questions posed by the novel. Here we are confronted with Baudrillard’s idea of the infinite number of texts and hypertexts.

I sensed a defensive tone to many of Lentz’s publications. Both the neural physiologists and the algorithmic formalists scoffed at connectionism. Granted, neural networks performed slick behaviors. But these were tricks, the opposition said. Novelties. Fancy pattern recognition. Simulacra without any legitimate, neurological analog. Whatever nets produced it wasn’t thought. Not even close (29).

The way the process of feeding the Thesaurus into Implementation A is itself ironic, undermining the seemingly-logical process. The quick rhythm, single-word series of steps and the reference to Hollywood robots all seem to dismantle the 'real', rational experience. Lentz is "trying to write the entire Roget's as a series of nested, rule-based schematics. Containment, relation, exclusion" (77). His assistants have grown up on "Hollywood movies and the microprocessor revolution" (77). Then, we have the funny conversation between Powers and Lentz. The author-narrator wonders, "I thought the point wasn't to duplicate mind", only to be answered by Lentz in the most ridiculously commercial terms 'boutique': "The point is to get this boutique of ICs to comment intelligently on William bloody Wordsworth" (77). Intertextuality here is mechanically used to dismantle the authenticity of the whole literary experience.

Late in the novel, Powers laments, "The humans had worn Helen down" (316). "I looked at my species, my solipsism, its negligent insistence that love addressed everything. I heard who I was for the first time, refracted in the mouth of the only artifact that could have told me" (314). Juxtaposed with our species' inhumanity, Helen is perceived of in human terms: "She twitched now, like the worst of adolescents"; "Helen went nuts with wonderlust. Show me London. Show me Venice" (296). Eventually, she will settle down for flat pictures, "pathetic portals, our stand-ins for the real" (296). Elsewhere, we have: "Helen had been lying in hospital, and had just now been promoted to the bed by the window. The one with the view" (314). "Helen had shown me the world, and the sight of it left me desperate" (314). Powers uses one letter to refer to his love experiences C and A, somehow dehumanizing since this is exactly the way they refer to the mind-replicas created by Lentz. The only difference is the ellipsis of 'Imp.' Helen knew how to interpret the Scriptures and the myths (319), explains Powers right after he describes human beings as "self-indulgent, self-deluding, self-affrighting", verging on the edge of chaos (316-17). The juxtaposition is clear with the anthropomorphism of Helen and the dehumanization of human beings. Even the prey simile of the rat-pet simultaneously undermines his own authenticity.

A fable tutored and raised until it became the equal of human hopelessness, the redeemer of annihilating day. I could print and bind invention for her, give it to her like a dead rat left on the stoop by a grateful pet. And when the ending came, we could whisper it to each other, completed in the last turn of phrase (315).

Helen has mastered the literary canon and managed to comment on it, excelling at the M.A. Turing Test for graduates of the English Department. Unfortunately, what he thought was a “noble experiment” of teaching her how to read ends tragically for both of them. (282-3). Again, while Helen is seen as warm, the English Department and the humanities seem ‘remote’.

I still worked at times from the computer lab housed in the bowels of English. Helen and I could talk anywhere. She did not care where on the campus backbone I logged on. She seemed perhaps marginally stiffer over the ASCII link than she was in conversation. But that was Helen’s lone grudge against the remote humanities (251).

Like David Lodge, Richard Powers levels harsh critique at the Department of English, at literary theory, the literary canon, etc. Satire ranges from “seven kilos of story” (257) to his own first introduction as “The Parasite-in-Residence” (253) instead of the prestigious “Scholar-in-Residence”. Of himself, he ironically says, “I told her the story of my existence, or at least the radio mix” (253). The one who voices his biting satire of the hierarchy at the heart of the English departments is the supposedly-promising Ph.D. student, A.

The whole profession is a total pyramiding scheme (254).

This is the most class-conscious society I’ve ever been part of. The department superstars lord it over their minor tenured colleagues, who saddle all the junior faculty with shit work, who take it out on the senior grads, who have no time for the master’s candidates, who hold the undergraduates in contempt. That’s not even mentioning the non-academic staff (255).

Richard gives evidence for the claim since he himself is hierarchic in his choice of canonical texts for Helen's reading lists. It is important that it is A who voices this criticism. She is the only one he believes who should remain in the academy; he sees her as the young brilliant and passionate Ph.D. student. This is the one who bitterly criticizes the academy, the whole educational process and the unemployment of Ph.D. holders. "I'll be middle-aged by the time I get my doctorate". She goes on desperately complaining of unemployment, "And no matter how good I am, I might be waiting on tables afterward, like all the other Ph.D.s in literature" (254).

The critique also includes Cultural Studies, literary theory, "linguistic-based solipsism" all, in his opinion, end up to a "posthumanistic" discipline (255), with a pun on the word 'humanistic' to mean the school and the state of cybernetics, cognitive neurochemistry and neuro-chips (6). Like Lodge's Vic, Richard voices his suspicion of literary theory: "I told her how specialization left me parochial. I told her that theory and criticism had shaken my belief in what writing might do" (254). When Richard thought of the 'real' authentic value of literature, he dreamt that "She could spend all day living, recovering the pleasure of the text" (255). The allusion here is clearly to Roland Barthes' book. The town-versus-the-gown famous concept in the *Academy Novel*, one that is extensively tackled in Lodge, recurs here again with a play on the simulacra or replica: "The town had become something out of Middle English allegory" (140). Right before this, he explains, "Writing a novel left me that inept with real-world facts" (140). He goes on to explain how the historical narrative is also half-fiction, half-fact, both raised to the level of factual reality. "I intercut with essays how every historian half-makes the longer narrative, wedding the forces at large to a private address book. Now our private address book has been promoted to documentary fact" (140). The postcolonial concepts of the betrayal of history, geography and cartography, turning them all into constructs are both highlighted here.

Similarly, playing on the original-simulacra binarism between literature and life or the word and the world, and within the literary corpus itself, Powers briefly justifies his own choice of texts for

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

Helen. “She needed to know how little literature had, in fact, to do with the real. She needed the books that books only imitated” (313). However philosophically profound and human he seems, Powers also feels he somehow lags behind the young graduates, all too keen on contemporary theories and trends in vogue, reminiscent of Robyn in Lodge’s novel. Wonderful debates take place between the somehow old-fashioned Richard (Powers or the author-narrator) and A, the more up-to-date M.A. student, who criticizes the exclusion of contemporary and Third-World literature from the canon and Richard’s list that he has taught Helen. A accuses him of choosing a “white guy” (284); of “buying into the exact aestheticism that privilege and power want to sell you” (285). When he innocently wonders if a student “can get a Ph.D. in literature without reading the great works”, A caustically satirical remark is final: “Nobody has to read anyone anymore. There’s more to the canon than is dreamt of in your philosophy” (284). Powers replies with an extremely funny statement that typically suits his human conception of Helen or Galatea: “We shouldn’t be arguing like this in front of the children. I reached out and turned off Helen’s microphone” (285).

Significantly enough, the two ‘real’ love stories Powers mentions here are with his a former student C and with this graduate A, thus complementing the Pygmalion-Galatea image of the Maker-artifact or Professor-student. The student this time, however, is far from being obedient or submissive. It is A now who harps on the made-made notion of heritage and the hierarchy of masterpieces. It is all “a culturally constructed, belated view of *belle lettres*” (285). She goes on to undermine *the* right version of English, advocating the variety of Englishes prevalent all around the world. “Whose English”, she ironically wonders, “Some eighty-year-old Oxbridge pederast’s? The most exciting English being written today is African, Caribbean” (284). Then, A. goes on to use his own previously quoted notion of the betrayal of history; of historical narrative as written by the powerful. As Helen is ruthlessly dissected, Richard is by A, who goes on accusing him of giving in to the fake, constructed master-narratives: “The winner’s history, of course. What made you such a coward?” (285). When A. tries to convince him that difference will raise the

“consciousness” of his “little girl”, he tries to justify using the human, universal motifs. Once A hears the “common core”, she is enraged beyond belief and accuses him of “essentializing” literature and culture (286). “No wonder why the posthumanists reduced your type to an author function” (286). Following was a whole trail of contemporary terminology and concepts: agenda, hubris, linguistic determinism, the social science model and, most importantly, “Foundationism is bankrupt” (286). It was this incredibly passionate enthusiasm, however, that attracted Powers to her. This is again based on the real-fake distinction. “Her zeal broke my heart. She was a born teacher. If anyone merited staying in the profession, it was this student for whom themes were still real” (286). In brief, A. proved Powers’s belief in the authenticity of writing, one that is far from the one Helen described as “never more than the climb from buried love’s grave” (287).

Similarly, another gap exists between the author-narrator and neuro-programmers, who simply ridicule Richard’s innocence, even using his name: “He scrutinized my bewildered face and shrugged. “He does not understand me, this Powers fellow” (298). To Powers, it was simply like “a bad seventies science fiction” film (298). This is soon juxtaposed with the scene where Helen is eager to know her gender and her physical appearance. “What do I look like?” (299), she asks him. “I could find no face in the world. No color or structure”. Significantly enough, he starts contemplating on the barriers dividing humanity rather than defining identity: “Race, age, shape excluded too much” (300). “Head of a Girl that had no clan or continent and belonged nowhere in identifiable time” (300), he wonders. At the other end, Helen persists, “What do I look like, Richard? Please show me” (300). He simply showed her the photo of a female friend. He even waited eagerly to know what Helen thinks of his book (293). In a way, both Helen and A are similar to a great extent though A seems more ferocious and Helen more angelic. It is very much what Gilbert and Gubar criticize from a feminist’s point of view as the set polarity of women as angel-monsters. If the latter type is A’s, one might, therefore, anticipate the horrible end of the feminist/theorist/intellectual as “the madwoman in the attic”.

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

Intertextuality is used effectively in *Galatea 2.2* sometimes for a nostalgic effect yearning to the good old times of simply enjoying literature without any further complications of theory or biochips. Other times, literary allusions seem to undermine not only the disciplines of cognitive science and English literature but also the whole corpus of dehumanized knowledge. Richard, who has been away for a while, is amazed at the postcolonial approach A uses to read Shakespeare. In a way, it seems to be a comment on the need for updating the critical approaches and, as mentioned later on in the novel, the canon as well.

A.'s interpretation was a more or less brilliant New Historicist reading. She rendered *The Tempest* as a take on colonial wars, constructed Otherness, the violent reduction society works on itself. She dismissed, definitively, any promise of transcendence (326).

The above text seems to be a reading of our current society; it seems like an allegory of the present age. Ironically enough, the assessment of the Turing Test results by Harold, Lentz and Ram expose them to be somehow ignorant as regards literature. "Not a bad writer, this Shakespeare fellow. For a hegemonic imperialist" (327). "Who's this Milton fellow anyway?" (45). Another literary allusion is made right at the beginning of the novel to *The Odyssey*, accentuating his loss at such a modern labyrinthine maze of the Centre: "Alone in my office, blanked by the hum of the Centre, I felt like a boy happening onto a copy of the *Odyssey* in a backwater valley library" (8). The quest, however, is simply Quixotic (80). The "deranged", delirious search for progression, or regression, is best exemplified by the 'educational' game he played with C. Intertextuality is exploited at its best with references to diverse sources from Freud to various poems with the idea of the Holy Grail, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ such as Yeats' "The Second Coming", Hopkins' the "Windhover", or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Eliot's "Prufrock", however, seems to undermine any optimism we might have sensed at the beginning. Another clue to the same effect is the direct references to James Joyce's "The Dead", and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. The reader wonders, who are the Dubliners-look-alike with

a death-in-life attitude, who will jump out of the sinking ship, then regret it for the rest of their lives like Lord Jim, and is it the descent of primeval darkness that we should expect instead of the advent of Christ as the saviour?

Like Lodge, Powers uses paratextuality to epitomize the cognitive theory and the real-simulacra binarism. Significantly, Emily Dickinson's poem is all about the 'brain'. The deceptively-simple poem is, in fact, deeply philosophical. The nursery-rhyme-like openings of the stanzas: "The brain is wider than the sky" and "The brain is deeper than the sea" lead to the hubristic faith in human intelligence. However, one seems to wonder if Artificial Intelligence is equally venerated by Powers. Indeed, the very "paratextual" "prefatory", to use Genette's terms, foregrounding of the poem seems to be a statement on the natural-artificial brain divide:

"The brain is just the weight of God,/ For, heft them, pound for pound,/And they will differ, if they do,/As syllable from sound".

Very early in the novel, Powers ironically expresses his critical admiration of interdisciplinarity: "Work at the center divided into areas so esoteric I could not tell their nature from their names. Half the fields were hyphenated. Creative play spilled over borders, cross-pollinating like hybrid corn in heat" (5-6). The "collegiate landmarks" (295) are shown to Imp. H, or Helen. Satirically, Powers says, "I took Helen on the Grand Tour" (295). Very soon, this tour turns out to be far from grand; knowledge seems far from authentic. Even feelings are dubious and not sincere. "Thank you, Helen said. She'd seen through our duplicity early. She chose to exercise, by imitation, the art of loving lie" (295). What kind of teacher or artist, Pygmalion, teaches lies to his student, Galatea? The Pygmalion-Galatea analogy is undermined with the dismantling of whose world is the original and whose is the replica? It seems that we are the Galateas programmed by the information technology; this virtual world we live in has almost ceased to be fake. In fact, it might be the original and our supposedly-real world has regressed to the background as the replica. Considering the present reality of the Facebook with its social and political 'reality', the youtube, Google, video games, and i-pads, the reader feels that these are not mere background networks, search engines or

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

gadgets. On the contrary, they have become more foregrounded while the previous original reality has receded to the replica-level. The centre, the 'nucleus' or the basis of the whole experiment, is depicted in a hilarious way:

At the vertex of several intersecting rays \_ artificial intelligence, cognitive science, visualization and signal processing, neurochemistry \_ *sat the culminating prize of consciousness long adventure: an owner's manual for the brain.* . . the Center seemed to me a block-wide analog of that neuronal mass it investigated.

Bio-chips, *seeded to grow across the complexity threshold.* Transparent man-machine interfaces.

The building teemed with job descriptions: theorists, experimentalists, technicians, *magicians.* (6 , italics mine).

Even the teacher-student relationship seems inevitably changing if not to the opposite, then at least to a happy medium. If Richard is dazzled by and seems to be learning from the brilliant student A. and was previously in love with C., he certainly might be turning the image to Galatea-Pygmalion. Significantly enough, like Nafisi, Powers too seems infatuated by Scheherazade. As a child, his mother used to read to him and to teach him how to read (26). Satirically, however, he comments on the contemporary 'influx' of women scholars, critics and feminists in all academic circles. "I eavesdropped on international discussion groups, ongoing, interactive Scheherazades that covered every imaginable theme from arms control to electronic erotica. Notefile threads split and proliferated in meiosis" (8).

On the other hand, intertextuality is used in Azar Nafisi's novel *Reading Lolita in Tehran* as an allegorical frame of juxtaposition where Western literature and early Persian literature (before Islam) highlight liberalism and creativity versus all the negative connotations of all tyrannical regimes, such as the oppressive Islamic Revolution in Iran. Two works are her point of departure: *The Arabian Nights* and *Lolita*. Scheherazade, the narrator of the *Arabian Nights*, is the embodiment of resistance to patriarchal authority through story-telling. In both cases, literature, or the *simulacrum*, has

revisited and rewritten politics and history. Right from the beginning of the novel, Nafisi explains to her students and to the reader the reasons behind forming her secret book club at home and inviting her selected students to it.

I explained that I had chosen them for this class because they seemed dedicated to the study of literature. I mentioned that one of the criteria for the books I had chosen was their authors' faith in the critical and almost magical power of literature, and reminded them of the nineteen-year-old Nabokov, who, during the Russian Revolution, would not allow himself to be diverted by the sound of bullets. He kept on writing his solitary poems while he heard the guns and saw the bloody fights from his window. Let us see, I said, whether seventy years later our disinterested faith will reward us by transforming the gloomy reality created of this other revolution (19).

The first book they discussed in their literary forum was *The Arabian Nights*. Significantly enough, she always uses the title *The Thousand and One Nights* as part of her resistance to the Arab 'conquering', to use her own words, of the liberal, intellectual Persia that has originally produced this book. So, Scheherazade's storytelling is very much reminiscent of Nafisi herself restoring the genuine Persian history and rewriting Iran's feminist resistance against the patriarchal Islamic Revolution. The six-volume book has also been banned; this links it to the important recurrent concept of censorship.

Scheherazade breaks the cycle of violence by choosing to embrace different terms of engagement. She *fashions her universe* not through physical force, as does the king, but through *imagination and reflection*. This gives her the courage to risk her life and sets her apart from the other characters in the tale (19, italics mine).

Nafisi directly asks her students to contemplate "how these great works of imagination could help us in our present trapped situation as women" (19). She then divides women in *The Thousand and One Nights* into three types: Scheherazade, the cheating queen who was

killed, and the virgins. “The virgins, who, unlike Scheherazade, have no voice in the story, are mostly ignored by the critics. Their silence, however, is significant. They surrender their virginity, and their lives, without resistance or protest (19).

Elsewhere in the novel, Nafisi links her father’s tales to her as a child to Imagination as the Muse or the Saviour. Significantly enough, it was her father who first told Nafisi about *The Arabian Nights*.

When I was very young, I was obsessed with the colors of places and things my *father told me about in his nightly stories. I wanted to know the color of Scheherazade’s dress, her bedcover, the color of the genie and the magic lamp, and once I asked him about the color of paradise. He said it could be any color you wanted it to be* (14, italics mine).

The colours in the tales are emblematic of her resistance of the morbid uni-colour Islamic state. Women are forced to wear totally covering black dresses, depressing as it may be (6).

The Islamic Republic coarsened my taste in colors, Manna said . . . I want to wear outrageous colors, like shocking pink or tomato red. I feel too greedy for *colors* to see them in carefully chosen words of *poetry* (14, italics mine).

The colors of my headscarf or my father’s tie were symbols of Western decadence and imperialist tendencies (25).

It is obvious, therefore, that they turn to literature to create a virtual world: “An absurd fictionality ruled our lives” (26). They go on wondering “Which of these two worlds was more real?” (26). By trying to “imaginatively articulate these two worlds”, we “give shape to our vision and identity” (26).

If Scheherazade is the magical liberator of women with her storytelling power of resistance and Nafisi’s father is another carrier of these stories, then who is the Magician? The reader perceives the calculated ambiguity behind his portrayal. Sometimes, magic realism is evoked with his description with all meticulously described minute

details. At other times, he is certainly the projection of the hidden potentials, the trigger of every talent, or the Muse behind all creativity. “Does every magician” “evoke the hidden conjurer in us all, bringing out the magical possibilities and potentials we did not know existed?” (337). So is it, then, a general statement on the survival of creativity amidst all inhibitions and hindrances? It could be a reference to Nafisi’s true love in the United States who introduced her to Nabokov and called her Ada (84); or simply a reference to her father. Right after she mentions her father’s storytelling, Nafisi elaborates on the Magician as a real person. However, she does not give any further clues.

The look on Yassi’s face encouraged me to shape and invent my story. She reminded me of what I must have looked like as a very small child when my father, at night and also in the early morning before he went to work, would sit by my bed and weave stories. . . What I did not tell Yassi that day was that Nabokov’s magician, the man who was as dangerous to the state as an armed rebel, did not exist \_ or, at least, not in fiction. He was real and lived less than fifteen minutes away from where she and I were sitting (34).

He had created such an elaborate fiction out of his relationship with the world that the more he claimed to be detached, the more he seemed to be actually involved (172).

Elsewhere, Nafisi refutes the fictionality of the Magician, implying that he is a flesh-and-blood, real-to-life character. Only at the very end, she starts to question his reality and, consequently, her authenticity as an author/narrator: “Since I left Iran, respecting his wishes, I have not talked or written to my magician, but his magic has been so much a part of my life that sometimes I ask myself, Was he ever *real*? Did I *invent* him? Did *he invent me*? (341). Soon before this, she tries to prove his material existence and harps on magic realism: “So we sit, eternally weaving our stories, he on his couch, I in my chair”; “He turns on the lamp and we continue our talk” (338).

Nafisi paves the way for this symbolic interpretation soon before the ‘Magician’s reality’ text: “I left Iran but Iran did not leave

me” (341); literature “will be forever a portable world” (341). Starting with the title novelist Nabokov, she goes on citing various American, British, Turkish and Iranian authors. Certainly, Arab authors are absent or excluded from her canon. This accentuates the several strata of binarisms underlying the whole novel. The reader notices the real/fictional levels of the rebel/artist, the university/book club, politicized religion/art at the heart of her life/metafictional autobiography. She clearly describes a “schizophrenic” period of her life in which she tried to reconcile conformity with rebellion, the two Irans that conflicted inside her, counterrevolutionary writers and revolutionary writers (85).

There were discrepancies, or essential paradoxes, in my idea of “home”. There was the familiar Iran I felt nostalgic about, the place of parents and friends and summer nights by the Caspian sea. Yet just as *real* was the *other, reconstructed*, Iran (86, italics mine).

The original-replica is clear in the idea of the two Irans. Paradoxically enough, literature, which is representative of the first one that she loved, seems more ‘real’ than the terrible ‘reality’ of the Islamic regime. Therefore, the ‘simulacrum’ or the book club turns into the ‘original’, thus leaving the present repressive state as thrice removed from reality, to use Plato’s analogy.

Our world under the mullahs’ rule was shaped by the colorless lenses of the blind censor. Not just our reality but also our fiction had taken on this curious coloration in a world where the censor was the poet’s rival in rearranging and reshaping reality, where we simultaneously invented ourselves and were figments of someone else’s imagination (25).

Another clue to the same effect is the juxtaposition of the original Persian literature that she loves versus the ‘invading’ Islamic literature. Persian ‘magical’ literary texts are the only thing that held Iranians together, helping them transcend all alienating personal and political differences. As instances, she cites “Rumi, Hafez, Sa’adi, Khayyam, Nezami, Ferdowsi, Attar, Beyhaghi” (172).

I was reminded of a story I had heard and reheard about the Arab conquest of Persia, a conquest that brought Islam into Iran. . . the Persians took revenge by recreating their burned and plundered history through myth and language. Our great epic poet Ferdowsi had rewritten the confiscated myths of Persian kings and heroes in a pure and sacred language. My *father, who all through my childhood would read me Ferdowsi and Rumi, sometimes used to say that our true home, our true history, was in our poetry* (172, italics mine).

Again her father is the Muse that, oddly enough, links her to 'reality'. This relationship is accentuated by repeatedly linking him to 'true' home and 'true history', as if time has stopped after the advent of Arabs and the banned heritage is the only real and true 'archive', to use Foucault's terms of the 'archive' and the 'archaeology of knowledge'. The original-simulacrum, meaning Persian/Arab, is accentuated by the repetition of the possessive pronoun 'our' (172). It is worth mentioning that her father, a broad-minded intellectual, was also resistant to the repressive regime in Iran. When he was a mayor, all his family of intellectuals criticized and alienated him, only to embrace him back when he was imprisoned soon after for disagreeing with those in power. Towards the end of the novel, Nafisi addresses the Magician ironically acknowledging her debt to the Islamic Republic that did nothing but kindle her creativity even further. She starts bringing such diverse liberal emblems as Austen, James, ice cream and freedom (338).

Similarly, Nabokov's protest is embodied by writing his novel *Lolita* at a time of political and historical turmoil. Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* again relates the imaginative writer to outcasts, in the sense that intellectuals are sometimes rebellious and lonely.

In this novel, Nabokov differentiates Cincinnatus C., his *imaginative and lonely* hero, from those around him through his originality in a society where uniformity is not only the norm but also the law. Even as a child, Nabokov tells us, Cincinnatus appreciated the freshness and beauty of language (20, italics mine).

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

Creativity might also set the imaginative writers from, what Nafisi seems to imply, the ‘herd’ or the ‘mob’. However, language as resistance is equally important to literature. Ever since discussing that novel in her book club, the word has become emblematic of a blissful secret code that none of the guardians outside can penetrate or understand. It is a paradoxical symbol of language, literature and the imagination that might set you apart from the mainstream, nevertheless, will simultaneously make you creative and unique.

*Upsilon* become [sic] part of our increasing repository of coded words and expressions, a repository that grew over time until gradually we had created a secret language of our own. That word became a symbol, a sign of that vague sense of joy, the tingle in the spine Nabokov expected his readers to feel in the act of reading fiction; it was a sensation that separated the good readers, as he called them, from the ordinary ones. It also became the code word that opened the secret cave of remembrance (21).

To justify her choice of Nabokov’s *Lolita* as the title novel, she uses a hackneyed Victorian technique of directly addressing the reader. As in David Lodge’s *Nice Work*, this tradition further emphasizes the parodic metafictional effect of her autobiography about her real ‘world’, as explained and validated by and juxtaposed to the fictional ‘word’ of reading and writing literature. Right from the start, she describes her life as “nomadic and borrowed” (7). In a way, this is reminiscent of the Gramscian-Foucauldian binarism of resistance as material action versus resistance as discursive, epistemological power.

I have asked *you* to imagine us, to imagine us in the act of reading *Lolita* in Tehran. . . Are you bewildered? Why *Lolita*? . . . *Lolita* was *not* a critique of the Islamic Republic, but it went against the grain of all totalitarian perspectives (35).

Indeed, the above quotation makes it crystal clear that the title of Nafisi’s novel/autobiography fits most of the functional roles described by narratologists. The ‘titular apparatus’ of the title and the ‘paratextual

element', according to Gerard Genette's *Paratexts*, cover definitions, place, time, senders, addressees, functions, connotations, temptation, and genre indications (Genette 55-103). In other words, the title Nafisi chooses right away sets the two levels of 'reality/fiction, original/replica', defining the 'narrator/author' and rationalizing the necessity of her book club, hence justifying the whole 'novel/autobiography' genre as a make-up for 'academy life'. The whole analogy sets the real time/place versus the imagined ones, the real being the book club taking place at her home and the imagined is the horrifying outer reality of the oppressive Islamic regime.

On a broader plane, there is a third hyperreality that has been suggested by a trail of subsequent critical essays on Nafisi's novel or, to use Genette's above term 'paratexts'<sup>7</sup>. These explain Nafisi's eye on the 'real' book clubs and publishers in America, even before writing her book. These critics indicate that Nafisi exploited the post-traumatic period of the Eleventh-of-September disaster and the prevalent naturally resulting Islamophobia to get herself published. A biographical evidence is given that she has only written a very short abstract and sent it to publishers before she signed the contract and started writing the whole novel. Nafisi herself bitterly laments "the irrelevance of writers to their countries" (166). In "Reading Lolita in Times of War: Women's Book Clubs and the Politics of Reception", Catherine Burwell explains the phenomenon of "books specifically designed to cater to book clubs' needs and interests" (281). As an instance, she quotes Julie Salamon's article in *The New York Times* (2004) that "Random House acquired the book in 1999, when it was still only an idea, for \$ 30,000 advance". Burwell quotes the *Times* explanation of the early popularity even before the reading of the full text as due in part to the events of September 11, which "changed the subject's appeal and its potential audience," as well as to "enthusiastic reviews and Nafisi's popularity as a commentator on the US invasion of Iraq" (Salamon 2004, E1). This whole new level of the original-replica is even accentuated in the last detail about citing Nafisi as a political reference and commentator: "Another, more recent, layer of framing must also be noted in the increasing number of references to Nafisi's memoir or to Nafisi herself in mainstream political and cultural contexts. The conservative

columnist George Will, for example, quoted liberally from Nafisi's memoir when he argued in September 2004 that Iran is 'moving towards development of nuclear weapons'. Like many earlier reviewers, he cites Nafisi's passages about illegal dreams, blind censors", etc. (Burwell 294). Nafisi has been regarded as an authority on Iranian politics, Islam, women, the Middle East, etc. Textual evidence is taken from her novel. A case in point is the note of Amireh and Majaj (6) as regards "the extent to which marketing pressures exploit the 'Third World difference', emphasizing Third World women's 'exoticism' and 'difference' in the interest not of transcultural communication, but of profit" (Burwell 289).

The academy novel certainly lends itself to intertextuality that endows it with a multiplicity of planes. The depth of the archival layers further accentuates the simulacrum-original binarism. Nafisi's portrayal of professors and university life is extremely negative; she herself is the "outsider like Claire in James" (169). Her expulsion from the university is a natural outcome of her actions as the rebel-intellectual figure she portrays herself as. If her book club is the best act of defiance, then her literary allusions are all significant. It is certainly a calculated choice of Anna Karenina, the rebel in a patriarchal society (51), and Hester, in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, who defied a whole self-righteous society (12, 14). Claire, Anna and Hester are all revolutionary figures. Indeed, there is another similarity between Hester and all the female characters in Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* (26). It is the use of daring colour and handicraft or art as acts of defiance. All are feminist portrayals of independent women. As Celie and her women friends in Walker choose 'pants' as the main production of their factory, Nafisi and her students embrace jeans, make up, sometimes pork and liquor simply as resistance to hegemony (318, 330).

Another clue to the same effect is the deliberate selection of authors against the grain like Virginia Woolf (12, 342), Simone de Beauvoir (323), Muriel Spark (339), Flaubert (51, 32, 343) and Baudelaire, who calls the reader "*hypocrite lecteur*" (44). Even the choice of Salman Rushdie (50), who has been persecuted for blasphemy by the Iranian Islamists, and Orhan Pamuk (341), the Turkish Nobel

Laureate tried by his country for irreverence, is deliberate. Langston Hughes (173) is a clear allusion to the African American resistance techniques forms and movements such as jazz rhythms, Beat generation, blues and rap. Similarly, Zola Neale Hurston (341) is all about reviving African-American folklore patterns and including them into the literary canon. Against all this liberal literature stands the Iranian university under the Islamist regime. It is sexist, chauvinist, and patriarchal; girls enter from a side door into a dark room to be humiliated and checked, while male students enter from the main open gate and their integrity is certainly preserved (29, 30).

To complement the negative horrifying image of university life, the academics are portrayed as ignorant (185). They confuse a Victorian iconic writer like Charles Dickens with a world-known modern writer like Joseph Conrad, which indicates that they do not even have an idea about literary ages and figures.

She would tell me in that ironic tone of hers how we should mount a united front to save literature from the clutches of ignorance in the faculty who had no knowledge of literature. Did you know that the woman who taught the twentieth-century novel before you assigned only Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and one Persian novel? Or that a professor at Alzahrah University thought that *Great Expectations* was written by Joseph Conrad? (185).

Borrowing William Blake and Nathaniel Hawthorne's dichotomy of 'innocence versus experience', Nafisi stresses the utilitarian and aesthetic function of literature to make their 'unreal' existence 'real'. Alice in Wonderland, looking through the glass, is the closest literary parallel; she evokes the connotations of the works' novelty and the readers' unquenched eagerness and innocence. The Forbidden Knowledge is soon accentuated through the detailed explanation of the difficulty of attaining these books since they are banned by the censors and the government (39). It reminds us of the fear of the rulers of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* to give literary access to people, in case they question anything. The *status quo* has to remain so. Again, this is contrasted with the morbid academic life. It is a very

clear reference not only to the simulacrum or the replica becoming the original but also to the motive for keeping them alive:

The novels were an escape from reality in the sense that we could marvel at their beauty and perfection, and leave aside our stories about the *deans and the university* and the morality squads in the streets. There was a certain *innocence* with which we read these stories; we read them apart from our history and expectations, like *Alice* running after the White Rabbit and jumping into the hole. This innocence paid off: I do not think that without it, we could have understood our own *inarticulateness*. Curiously, the novels we *escaped* into led us finally to question and prod our own *realities*, about which we felt so helplessly speechless (38-9, italics mine).

The remaining ignorant academics might be a reference to the exile of all the liberal intellectuals who have become alienated and estranged as non-conformist outcasts or outsiders. The sexist terms qualifying women professors and the reference to them as fictional characters further accentuate their surreal existence and virtual reality. "He said later that when friends asked him after our first meeting, What is the lady professor like?, he had said, . . . She's very American \_ like an American version of *Alice in Wonderland*" (175-6). Similarly, Nafisi's parallelism with Claire in Henry James's *The American* sums it all up, since all her 'real' academic activities are clandestine; she is equally 'invisible'. The only solution of intellectuals is "escape inwardly and like Claire in *The American*, turn their small corner into a sanctuary: the essential part of their life goes underground" (169). It is very similar to the secret book club that Nafisi holds at home with the word 'sanctuary' symbolizing interchangeably literature and freedom. The unfinished business of the restless spirit that has not managed to cross to the light might refer to the intellectuals in exile who willingly defy everything and go back, trying to fix not only the academic life but also the political and social one.

"You ask me what it means to be *irrelevant*": the feeling is akin to visiting your old house as a

wandering *ghost* with unfinished business. . . You are no longer relevant to this house, to its walls and doors and floors; you are *not seen*.

My growing *irrelevance, this void* I felt within me, made me resent my husband's peace and happiness, his apparent disregard for what I, as a woman and an academic, was going through (169, italics mine).

Significantly enough, many literary allusions are especially selected to highlight the narrow-minded censorship (40-44). Ophelia is deleted from *Hamlet* (50), while "Child Harolde" and "The Ancient Mariner" are banned. One wonders why Coleridge's poem is banned when it could be interpreted as a religious one, apart from the aesthetic merits that are simply overlooked. As a counterrevolutionary movement comes the act of reading itself: "It was as if the sheer act of recounting these stories gave us some control over them; the deprecating tone we used, our gestures, even our hysterical laughter seemed to reduce their hold over our lives" (30-1).

Therefore, in *Nice Work*, David Lodge's pastiche of Victorian novels and contemporary critical and literary theory, is closely linked to a biting satire of a pragmatic industrial England. In a way, the novel's pastiche evokes a binary opposition between the original and the replica. The reader cannot even tell whose world (Robyn's or Vic's) is really the simulacrum. The novel thereby seems to seek a happy medium between ivory tower intellectuals and positivistic, utilitarian industrialism. Paratextuality from prominent Victorian industrial novels, together with literary and critical theory jargon, reinforce the idea of hyperreality of the academy novel and campus life. Nevertheless, the work environment of Vic and the others cannot be said to be relegated to the background as stale reality. There is calculated ambivalence, however. No terms of dismissal are used. The reader is left to decide for himself and define the meaning of need and functionality, idealism and realism, as embodied by the university professor and literary theorist or the capitalist entrepreneur and industrialist. Neither Robyn nor Vic is privileged. Similarly, in a Pygmalion-like fashion, in *Galatea 2.2*, Richard Powers (author-protagonist) seems to question the integrity of the Frankenstein-like

### Intertextuality, the Simulacrum and the Academy Novel

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authorial-manufacturer intention towards his created entity. Powers undermines the lengths digital, neurological manipulation and hi-tech cognitive hegemony might reach to prove their hypotheses. The quest turns sordid in Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, which exhibits three levels of reality and hyperreality. Nafisi seems to decide for the reader which world is the real and which is the fake replica. Oddly enough, the copy seems to be more realistic and original. Indeed, we have two levels of the imaginary world of literature: one is that of her own book club in Iran, while the hyper-reality that has recently surfaced is the critique of the novelist catering for real-life book clubs, publishers, as well as historical and political conditions before writing his creative work. Of the three spheres, the book club held at Nafisi's home, as emblematic of the world of literature in general but not the academy or life on campus, seems to be foregrounded as the original while repressive Islamist Iran seems to be relegated to the background as the fake replica, virtual or nightmarish reality. The copy that seems to be thrice removed from reality is the paratextuality of publishing conditions, the book clubs and the critique that followed the novel publication.

To conclude, intertextuality is the main technique used in David Lodge's *Nice Work*, Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2.*, and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* to foreground the academy life and literature, in other words, hyperreality and the simulacrum, evident in the academy novel as a genre and in campus life as a whole.

Notes

1. Ingeborg Hoesterey, in *Pastiche*, sees pastiche \_ the imitation, dialogical engagement, critical distance, and parody \_ as a postmodern ‘homage deconstructed’ paid to a person or a tradition (95, 85).
2. Jean Baudrillard, inspired by Plato’s Theory of Forms, believes that the replica deconstructs the real and murders the original (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 72, 73). He defines three orders of simulacra, out of “infinite chains of simulation”. “We are in the third order” of the simulacrum, the hyperreal; revolutions are “buttressed by a nostalgia for the resurrection of the real in all its forms, that is, as second-order simulacra” (3).
3. *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), *Nice Work* (1988) are known as the Rummidge trilogy.
4. Baudrillard, in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, states that “*today reality is itself hyperrealist*”, and that “reality has already incorporated the hyperrealist dimension of simulation so that we are now living entirely within the ‘aesthetic’ hallucination of reality” (74). In *Passwords*, virtual reality coincides with hyperreality. It is so “perfectly homogenized, digitized and operationalized” that it is more real than “what we have established as simulacrum” (41).
5. Julia Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, defines intertextuality, a term coined by her, as “the transposition of one (or several) sign systems into another”, better known and used as the “study of sources” (59, 60). This includes allusions and revisiting or rewriting the work.
6. See Linda Hutcheon’s chapter on ‘historiographic metafiction’ and magic realism.
7. See Bishnupria Ghosh on the Nasreen Affair. Since it is the name of one of the students, this could be regarded as an element of paratextuality.

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