

# **“Lost in the Funhouse”**

## **A Translation of Metafiction**



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## Abstract

This thesis deals with translating John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse". This short story is a piece of metafiction and postmodernism in which the ideational function of style plays an important role. The source text is therefore analysed as a piece of metafiction following Victoria Orłowski's list of metafictional features and how these features may pose problems for the translator. These problems are then linked to the more general problem of translating style, with a special focus on the fact that this story has an unreliable narrator as there is no clear distinction between the implied author, narrator and protagonist. Certain linguistic choices may reveal which of these personas is speaking and therefore an analysis of style is necessary in order to make a sound translation that fits the distinct voice of each. This thesis will then present several translation strategies that may be used to translate "Lost in the Funhouse", after which an annotated translation will be presented that puts these strategies to use.

*Key words:* literary translation, Lost in the Funhouse, John Barth, metafiction, postmodernism, style, ideational, unreliable narrator

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## Introduction

This thesis is concerned with translating John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse", a work of metafiction in which the ideational function of style plays an important role. It is important that the translator gets a good understanding of the source text before he or she begins translating it, since this text is very ambiguous because of its unreliable narrator. While metafiction has already been discussed thoroughly by scholars such as Patricia Waugh and Victoria Orlowski, little has been said about translated metafiction. Consequently, this thesis will offer new insights into the subject of metafiction in translation.

"Lost in the Funhouse" is a metafictional text and metafiction belongs, as a tradition, to postmodernism. Therefore, the first part of this thesis deals with a short summary of the source text and how it may be regarded as both a postmodern and a metafictional text. A description of both postmodernism and metafiction is given, after which the text's own metafictional features are examined.

The second part of this thesis is mainly concerned with the translation of style. I will demonstrate how the ideational function is essential to analysing this story and how the style in this short story may be linked to the metafictional features of intertextuality, the violation of narrative levels and other experimental techniques. Subsequently, I will present different stylistic and metafictional translation problems and discuss some strategies that may be used to deal with them.

The third part of this thesis consists of an annotated translation of a selection of the source text, in which the strategies discussed earlier will be implemented.

## Context

The short story “Lost in the Funhouse” by John Barth was first published as part of the short story collection of the same name in 1968. These stories are all noted for their postmodern and metafictional qualities, sometimes praised and sometimes heavily criticized for being too “self-conscious, self-indulgent, and self-referential” or “fake and immoral because they depict life as absurd” (cf. Kurtzleben 49).

“Lost in the Funhouse” is a narrative that mostly deals with general reflections on life and literature. These reflections on what is, what could be and what might be, are scattered throughout the story so that there is not much in the way of an actual plot. The plot itself is quite simple. “Lost in the Funhouse” is, in a nutshell, about a thirteen-year-old boy named Ambrose. On Independence Day, he visits Ocean City with his parents, his older brother Peter, his uncle Karl and the fourteen-year-old Magda, a girl both Peter and Ambrose are attracted to. The story is set during the Second World War, which is made clear through subtle remarks about the setting from the narrator and the characters. Uncle Karl, for instance, wonders whether “they were going to have fireworks that night, what with the shortages” (Barth 81). When they arrive in Ocean City, the family plans to go swimming in the sea. However, they cannot go into the water since “the surf was spoiled with crude oil from tankers” (Barth 79). Instead, Ambrose suggests he and Magda go into the funhouse, not knowing that the funhouse is associated with sexuality, something which Ambrose is not ready for yet: “Ambrose understands now, but didn’t then, that his father was wondering whether he knew what the funhouse was *for* — especially since he didn’t object, as he should have, when Peter decided to come along too” (92). Consequently, the funhouse may be seen as a symbol for, among other things, adolescence and the things adolescents learn to deal with while still growing up (such as developing sexually) (cf. Matos). In any case, while Peter and Magda eventually find their way out of the funhouse, Ambrose takes a wrong turn and gets

lost. However, the text mainly seems to revolve around the aforementioned general reflections. These reflections not only deal with life, but also with the literary techniques that are used in this story specifically and Ambrose's inability to escape from the funhouse.

"Lost in the Funhouse" belongs, in a way, to the coming-of-age genre, because it deals with the perceived stereotypes of what adolescents are capable of understanding: "Is it likely, does it violate the principle of verisimilitude, that a thirteen-year-old boy could make such a sophisticated observation?" (Barth 73). Moreover, it also deals with the universal themes of growth, development, sexuality and fitting in (cf. Matos 2013). As for the plot, "Lost in the Funhouse" may seem rather short and perhaps even incomplete. However, as many others have noted, the narrative is mainly noteworthy because of its self-reflexive and metafictional elements. Indeed, it is "often touted as the definitive metafictional text" (Darke), in which both the distinction between author, narrator and protagonist and the distinction between reality and illusion often become blurred and in which "truth, linearity, and structure" are actively destabilized. As such, "it is an ideal text to study when engaging in the frustrating exercise of defining postmodernity" (Matos).

### **Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is often defined as a "celebration of the irrational" (Bennett and Royle 281). This, however, is an oversimplification. It mainly asserts itself against modernism and its "quest for meaning in a chaotic world" (Sharma and Chaudhary 189). While both modernism and postmodernism deal with subjectivism and a fragmented nature, in modernism these are often seen as problems that must be solved. Postmodernists, on the contrary, believe that this chaos is inescapable and that a certain playfulness is needed to be able to deal with it (190). That said, this chaos is generally seen as something that must be enjoyed, revered or

celebrated. The seemingly chaotic structure of “Lost in the Funhouse” must therefore be maintained as much as possible when translating it.

Postmodernism is also occupied with the opposition between nature and artifice and challenges the distinction between them (Bennett and Royle 283, 286). Therefore, postmodern texts also contest their own features of representation because on the one hand, postmodern elements “create the illusion of reality as we know it” and on the other hand it contains elements that go against such an illusion and which “tell us that we are not dealing with authentic reality at all” (Bertens 146). It is not surprising, then, that postmodern texts are often ambiguous (cf. Hossain and Karim 176), and the same goes for “Lost in the Funhouse”.

Postmodernist texts may also be characterized by multiple literary devices. These are most commonly intertextuality, pastiche, multiplicity, irony, temporal distortion, magic realism and metafiction (cf. Sharma and Chaudhary 193-197; Bertens 144-146; Bennett and Royle 285-286). While “Lost in the Funhouse” contains several of these devices, it mainly establishes itself as a work of metafiction, since it is “peppered with moments of self-reflexivity” (Matos). It is therefore an ultimately postmodern text, since metafiction has been considered by some to be the “hallmark of postmodernism” (Neuman and Nünning par. 6).

### **Metafiction**

According to Patricia Waugh, “metafiction” is “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). This is similar to how postmodern texts themselves question the opposition between nature and artifice. Victoria Orlowski proposes a distinct list of the characteristics of metafiction. According to her, metafictional texts distinguish themselves by three basic traits, which may occur in combination or singularly. These aspects are: intertextuality, the violation of narrative levels

and the use of unconventional or experimental techniques. These characteristics will be discussed below in order to demonstrate in what ways “Lost in the Funhouse” may be considered a work of metafiction.

### Intertextuality

The first aspect of metafiction is that its texts are often intertextual. They may, for example, “[examine] fictional systems; [incorporate] aspects of both theory and criticism; [create] biographies of imaginary writers; [present and discuss] fictional works of an imaginary character” (Orlowski). Barth’s story, too, often contains intertextual references, such as “*The 42nd Parallel* by John Dos Passos” (73) and the allusion to James Joyce: “The Irish author James Joyce, in his unusual novel titled *Ulysses*, now available in this country uses the adjectives *snot-green* and *scrotum-tightening* to describe the sea” (74). Freitag’s Triangle is also discussed, a diagram in which “the action of conventional dramatic narrative may be represented” (95). This is an example of intertextuality, in that the text looks at (its own) fictional system and consequently includes theoretical and critical aspects pertaining to this Triangle:

While there is no reason to regard this pattern as an absolute necessity, like many other conventions it became conventional because great numbers of people over many years learned by trial and error that it was effective; one ought not to forsake it, therefore, unless one wishes to forsake as well the effect of drama or has clear cause to feel that deliberate violation of the “normal” pattern can better effect that effect. This can’t go on much longer; it can go on forever. (Barth 95)

While Barth does not touch upon the fictional works of an imaginary character, it is quite clear that Ambrose has aspirations to become an author himself and this particular story, whether it is supposedly written by Ambrose or not, does reflect on Ambrose’s writing skills:



“I’ll never be an author” (86) and “Was it Assawoman Bay or Sinepuxent? Are there other errors of fact in this fiction?” (88). Finally, “Lost in the Funhouse” may also be regarded as a biography of an imaginary writer, since Ambrose’s childhood memories are often described: “Once three years previously the young people *aforementioned* played Niggers and Masters in the backyard; when it was Ambrose’s turn to be Master and theirs to be Niggers [...]” (77).

### Violation of narrative levels

Orlowski’s second characteristic of metafiction concerns the way authors “violate narrative levels.” They may violate the narrative by “intruding to comment on [the] writing; involving [himself] with fictional characters; directly addressing the reader; openly questioning how narrative [...] conventions transform [...] reality, trying to ultimately prove that no singular truths or meanings exist” (Orlowski). All of these elements feature in “Lost in the Funhouse.” In combination with some of the intertextual aspects, Barth often comments on the writing by referring to general literary writing techniques and subsequently not adhering to them:

A single straight underline is the manuscript mark for italic type, *which in turn* is the printed equivalent to oral emphasis of words and phrases as well as the customary type for titles of complete works, not to mention. Italics are also employed, in fiction stories especially, for “outside,” intrusive, or artificial voices, such as radio announcements, the texts of telegrams and newspaper articles, et cetera. They should be used *sparingly*. If passages originally in roman type are italicized by someone repeating them, it’s customary to acknowledge the fact. *Italics mine*. (72)

It is clear that the author does not use italics “*sparingly*,” which creates an ironic effect.

Contrary to commenting on the literary techniques and conventions that Ambrose supposedly employs, Barth also comments on the writing because it does not conform to certain literary conventions and, while he sometimes goes against these norms on purpose, here he seems to

lament the fact that “We should be much farther along than we are; something has gone wrong; not much of the preliminary rambling seems relevant” (79).

While the narrator brings the reader closer to himself by using the word ‘we’, the reader is not often directly addressed. In fact, he is usually discussed as if he were not present at all: “To say that Ambrose’s and Peter’s mother was *pretty* is to accomplish nothing; the reader may acknowledge the proposition, but his imagination is not engaged” (75). The narrator thus associates himself with the reader on the one hand and distances himself from him on the other. This seems to refer to the fact that Ambrose himself does not really know how to connect with others, which relates to the coming-of-age theme of fitting in. Ambrose certainly wants to, but at the same time he is aware that he is ultimately different from the people around him: “His father should have taken him aside and said: ‘[...] You and I are different. Not surprisingly, you’ve often wished you weren’t’” (91). As for the trait of the narrator involving himself with imaginary characters (Orlowski), this is also apparent in “Lost in the Funhouse” since the author, the narrator and the protagonist are frequently mixed up in such a way that it is unclear whether these three exist as separate entities within the text or whether they are one and the same: “The more closely an author identifies with the narrator, literally or metaphorically, the less advisable it is, as a rule, to use the first-person narrative viewpoint” (Barth 77). It is rather ironic, then, that the first-person narrative viewpoint is not used in this story. This way, Barth seems to hint at the fact that he represents the author, the narrator and Ambrose himself.

Lastly, on a narrative level, this text also questions in what way narrative conventions affect reality: “Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. [...]. Interestingly, as with other aspects of realism, it is an *illusion* that is being enhanced” (Barth 73). Narratives are generally used to represent a certain kind of reality, but they can, according to Barth, only convey an illusion.

### Unconventional and experimental techniques

Orlowski's third metafictional feature consists of "unconventional and experimental techniques." The author may reject conventions, such as adhering to a linear plot; refuse to make his text seem "real" or "enhance the illusion of reality" (cf. Barth 1); exaggerate aspects of the text's instability; display overall self-reflexivity (Orlowski). It is quite clear that "Lost in the Funhouse" does not have a conventional plot structure. On the one hand, the narrator often abandons the plot (development) in favour of discussing language, the act of writing itself and literary techniques (cf. Matos). Moreover, the narrator often tells the reader "how stories *should* be structured", but constantly deviates from this so that "details of the plot's so-called climax, introduction and conclusion are [...] scrambled throughout the text, and are not found within the expected locations" (idem.). Consequently, this story is interspersed with moments of irony, which is also an important feature of postmodernist texts (cf. Sharma and Chaudhary 193).

Quite early on in the story, for example, the reader already finds out that Ambrose will enter the funhouse with Magda and Peter and that he will get lost through Barth's exposition of how this story "should" be structured:

Actually, if one imagines a story called "The Funhouse," or "Lost in the Funhouse," the details of the drive to Ocean City don't seem especially relevant. The *beginning* should recount the events between Ambrose's first sight of the funhouse [...] and his entering it with Magda and Peter in the evening. [...]. Then the *ending* would tell what Ambrose does while he's lost. (77)

These types of plot deviations are stylistically important as well. They all reflect on the fact that a linear narrative is not a suitable device to describe the various and fragmented aspects of certain issues that adolescents have to deal with when they are growing up (Matos), thus again demonstrating that this text's metafictional elements are related to the coming-of-age

genre. The citation above also highlights the text's fictionality, by making it seem that the text is still in progress. What is more, it focuses on the text's "instability." However, the text's instability especially comes forward when the narrator openly criticises the text's plot and how it was written, even suggesting to abandon the entire project of writing it: "There's no point in going farther; this isn't getting anybody anywhere; they haven't even come to the funhouse yet" (83).

As shown above, "Lost in the Funhouse" may be considered a metafictional text, mainly because of the unclear distinction between author, narrator and protagonist, the "temporal distortion" of the plot and the non-linearity of the narrative (cf. Sharma and Chaudhary 196), its plot deviations in which the author and/or the narrator reflect on literary techniques and conventions and the way in which the text itself does or does not adhere to them, and because of both its enhancement of the illusion of reality and at the same time its refusal of enhancing it. Taking all of this into consideration, John Barth may indeed be called "the pre-eminent American metafictionist of the contemporary period" (Stirling 80). Consequently, his work leads to some considerable translation problems, which will be discussed in the following section.

## **Lost in Translation: Metafictional Style**

The metafictional qualities of “Lost in the Funhouse” all come forward through the writing and the structure of this short story and therefore, style is an important concept for the translator when examining this short story. The unclear distinction between author, narrator and protagonist seems to suggest something mainly about the protagonist on an ideational level. In order to be able to distinguish between the different voices, when they are used and how to deal with them when translating this text, a stylistic analysis of this short story that pays close attention to the ideational function seems especially relevant. In this analysis, the different stylistic and metafictional translation problems will also be discussed in closer detail.

### **Style as a translation problem**

Style is a broad concept which functions on multiple levels and consequently, it may be regarded as a translation problem. According to Leech and Short, the most tenable definition of style is that it concerns “the linguistic characteristics of a particular text” (11). Leech and Short are proponents of what they call stylistic pluralism. In this view, “language performs a number of different functions, and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on different functional levels” (24). The functions they list are ideational (language conveys something about “the world of experience”), interpersonal (language must be suitable to a specific speech situation) and textual (language must be well-constructed in order “to serve the decoding needs of the hearer”) (109). According to Cees Koster, Leech and Short’s notion of style is mainly concerned with the ideational function, in which language says something about an author’s or character’s cognitive abilities, thus creating a certain literary or aesthetic effect. He maintains that a concrete translation problem occurs when the TL does not have the same means as the SL to produce a certain (ideational) stylistic effect. It is the translator’s job to find alternative means in order to achieve a similar effect on the target

readers. Like Koster, Jean Boase-Beier believes that creating similar stylistic effects is central to literary translation (73). Style functions as a translation problem not only when the means to achieve a certain stylistic effect are absent in the target language (cf. Koster), but also when the effects of the style of a specific text are so important to the interpretation of it that they must, in any case, be conveyed in the target language, as impossible as this might seem at first.

As stated earlier, Leech, Short and Koster all focus mainly on the ideational function of style. This function is also of special importance when analysing and translating “Lost in the Funhouse”, because Ambrose’s identity and aspirations seem to come forward in the writing itself through the use of different registers. As Boase-Beier claims, an author uses style not merely to give information but also “to convey a particular cognitive state” (278). Another important concept here is that of “mind style”, which may reveal something about a specific character and be regarded as the “realisation of a narrative point of view” (Leech and Short 151). Although mind style mainly revolves around semantics, it can only be analysed by looking at grammar and lexis (idem.). Stylistic variables may be connected to the author, a narrator or the protagonist (153), but in “Lost in the Funhouse”, the mind style is concerned with all three of these, since there is no clear distinction between them. Below I will argue how style contributes to characterising these three entities (but especially Ambrose, since he seems to play a central role on the ideational level) and how a translator should deal with this “technical translation problem” (cf. Koster). The distinction between implied author, narrator and protagonist is important to the translator because they have different voices that create different aesthetic effects. For instance, the implied author sounds especially formal when he inserts general information about the way a text should be written, whereas the protagonist sounds informal when he reflects on his family and childhood. However, it also seems Ambrose *is* the author (or at least the implied author) since he constantly refers to the fact that

he wants to be a writer. The distinction between the three entities is important on an ideational level since it reveals something about the content, but it is also essential to the superficial structure in which the voices collapse into each other, seemingly as one focalisor.

### **Unreliable narrator**

“Lost in the Funhouse” has an unreliable narrator in the sense that, as mentioned earlier, it is sometimes unclear who is speaking exactly. The distinctions between author, narrator and protagonist are often blurred, which is highlighted when Barth states that “[t]he more closely an author identifies with the narrator, literally or metaphorically, the less advisable it is, as a rule, to use the first-person narrative viewpoint” (77). Ironically, “Lost in the Funhouse” is mostly written from a third-person viewpoint. This is stylistically important as well, since Ambrose seems to want to distance himself from his own person, which is reminiscent of a pubescent struggling with his own identity. Here, the discursial point of view is also a relevant concept. According to Leech and Short, it is “the relationship, expressed through discourse structure, between the implied author or some other addresser, and the fiction” (218). In “Lost in the Funhouse”, this is apparent as the implied author often comments on the story itself: “We should be much farther along than we are; something has gone wrong; not much of the preliminary rambling seems relevant” (Barth 79). Leech and Short argue that a text’s discourse structure can consist of the following levels (216):

<u>Addresser</u>	→	<u>Addressee</u>
Author		Reader
Implied author		Implied reader
Narrator		Interlocutor
Character		Character

These different discourse levels may collapse into each other, thus resulting in different “discourse architectures” which is “helpful in characterizing discursial viewpoint” (300). In

“Lost in the Funhouse”, the levels of the implied author, narrator and character (protagonist) all collapse, resulting in a sort of meta-awareness on the reader’s (and translator’s) part, since the different addressee levels also seem to collapse into each other, thus creating the need for the reader to make a sincere effort in reading the story. While the first person narrative viewpoint is often used “to establish an identification with that character, and an alignment with his value picture” (221), the collapsing of the different discourse levels also results in a sense of identification with Ambrose. In the discourse structure, a certain model of reality is transferred from addresser to addressee, which may be conveyed in literature as “the value picture of a novel” (220). This concerns the way a character is presented and how the reader may interpret and connect to this value picture. The value picture (and sense of identification with Ambrose) seems to be emphasised because of the lack of distinction between the different addresser roles.

The point of view of this story thus does not seem that clear-cut, but since all levels of addresser roles are involved, it may be presumed that the value picture of the novel is essentially created through the deepest layer of the discourse structure, namely that of the character. Momentarily disregarding the actual author, the character of Ambrose constitutes all different discourse levels, which is also exemplified semantically by him wanting to be an author himself: “I’ll never be an author” (Barth 86). As such, the style of the piece seems to reflect on Ambrose’s cognitive state, thereby emphasizing the ideational function of language. This is also something the translator should pay special attention to. On the one hand, the style makes clear that Ambrose is most of all an adolescent and this can be seen through the use of a low register and the chaotic structure of the story. On the other hand, the style strongly reminds the reader of the fact that Ambrose is an aspiring author, since a high register is also used from time to time when judgements on the writing itself are inserted.



### **Ambrose as an adolescent**

Leech and Short argue that mind style is mainly concerned with semantics, but that it can only be analysed by looking at grammar and lexis (151). Grammar and lexis certainly play an important role in establishing an aesthetic effect on the ideational level (the language adheres to Ambrose's characterisation as an adolescent), but semantically and structurally, the text also suggests that it is written by an adolescent.

For one, the implied author/narrator often changes the subject within a specific paragraph and sometimes switches from the regular narrative to a metafictional reflection:

The boys' mother made a little scene out of distributing the bills; she pretended that her sons and Magda were small children and cautioned them not to spend the sum too quickly or in one place. Magda promised with a merry laugh and, having both hands free, took the bill with her left. Peter laughed also and pledged in a falsetto to be a good boy. His imitation of a child was not clever. | The boys' father was tall and thin, balding, fair-complexioned. | Assertions of that sort are not effective; the reader may acknowledge the proposition, but. | We should be much farther along than we are; something has gone wrong; not much of the preliminary rambling seems relevant. | Yet everyone begins in the same place; how is it that most go along without difficulty but a few lose their way? (79; where | indicates changes in subject or narrative technique)

In this case, the translator should not rectify the paragraph structure, since they illustrate how Ambrose is a "rambling" adolescent. This also goes for grammatical mistakes such as "correctest English" (84); agrammatical sentences (by starting over halfway through): "Is it likely, does it violate the principle of versimilitude, that a thirteen-year-old boy could make such a sophisticated observation" (73); and for unfinished sentences: "The brown hair on

Ambrose's mother's forearms gleamed in the sun like" (74). Long sentences should, for that matter, not be split up either if it can be helped:

Count a generation as thirty years: in approximately the year when Lord Baltimore was granted charter to the province of Maryland by Charles I, five hundred twelve women – English, Welsh, Bavarian, Swiss – of every class and character, received into themselves the penises the intromittent organs of five hundred twelve men, ditto, in every circumstance and posture, to conceive the five hundred twelve ancestors and the two hundred fifty-six ancestors of the et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera of the author, of the narrator, of this story, *Lost in the Funhouse*. (80)

Long sentences such as these also reflect on the symbolic theme of being “lost in the funhouse”. At this point, Ambrose feels rather lost in life and similarly, the reader may feel lost while reading such a long sentence. The stylistic effect that is created here also establishes a sense of identification between the reader and the addresser.

### **Ambrose as an author**

The stylistic translation problems that are by nature also metafictional, mainly occur when Ambrose asserts himself as an author. While Ambrose's writing seems rather underdeveloped because of the chaotic structure, the grammatical mistakes and the rambling sequences, it also seems that he already possesses certain writing skills that point to the fact that he is an aspiring author, such as him using certain literary techniques. The explanation of these techniques and the literary jargon that is used to describe them may be considered a metafictional translation problem: “Description of physical appearance and mannerisms is one of several standard methods of characterization used by writers of fiction” (Barth 73-4); and

The function of the beginning of a story is to introduce the principle characters, establish their initial relationships, set the scene for the main action, expose the background of the situation of necessary, plant motifs and foreshadowings where appropriate, and initiate the first complication of whatever of the 'rising action. (77)

The translator must look up this jargon in Dutch textbooks on literary criticism, but the *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren* is also an adequate source. Additionally, Ambrose uses some difficult words that belong to a rather high register, such as "verisimilitude" (73) and "prolixity" (94). Words such as these reflect Ambrose's ambitions to become a writer with a broad vocabulary. However, he also uses simpler words or colloquial speech, such as "breakers" (74) for waves, "wisecracks" (83) and "Anybody know where the heck we are?" (90). These changes in register should be adhered to as much as possible, since they enhance the sense that Ambrose himself is no longer a child, though not yet an adult and has difficulty at this point establishing his own voice and identity.

### Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a distinct feature of metafiction and while it says something stylistically and ideationally about Ambrose's ambitions to become an author, it also poses a distinct translation problem on its own. According to Lawrence Venuti, "[e]very text is fundamentally an intertext" (157). This intertextuality may be overtly present in the form of quotations and allusions, or it can be more subtle, such as when a statement refers "to previous patterns of linguistic use and a literary work to previous works written in the same genre" (ibid.).

Intertextuality may also be regarded as a specific feature of metafiction (Orlowski) and as such, it also occurs in "Lost in the Funhouse". Barth makes use of a great number of allusions and there are several translation strategies that may be applied to translating them. In her discussion of the translation of allusions, Ritva Leppihalme makes a distinction between

proper-name allusions and key-phrase allusions.<sup>1</sup> Both of these occur in “Lost in the Funhouse”. Mieke Desmet also maintains that it is important to consider the role of intertextuality in a given text when attempting to translate it. In doing this, “a balance must be found as the target text also needs to function in the target culture environment” (36). Barth refers, for instance, to James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* (74). The titles of novels are perhaps a mixture of PN and KP allusions (cf. Leppihalme), since titles are similar to names and more or less fixed, but they also often contain key phrases of some kind. *Ulysses* itself is a proper name, so this title may be treated as such. Leppihalme proposes the following set of strategies for PN allusions:

1) Retention of name (either unchanged or in its conventional TL form [...]):

(1a) use the name as such;

(1b) use the name, adding some guidance [...];

(1c) use the name, adding a detailed explanation, for example a footnote.

2) Replacement of name by another (beyond the changes required by convention)

[...]:

(2a) replace the name by another SL name;

(2b) replace the name by a TL name.

3) Omission of name [...]:

(3a) omit the name but transfer the sense by other means, for example by a common noun;

(3b) omit the name and the allusion altogether. (79)

*Ulysses* is thematically relevant since Ambrose supposedly gets lost in the funhouse and starts wandering around, rather similar to Homer’s *Ulysses*. Moreover, *Ulysses* is known for its experimental prose and its “radical withdrawal from conventional sense” (Melnick 46), which

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<sup>1</sup> From now on, proper-name allusions will be referred to as PN allusions and key-phrase allusions as KP allusions.

is reminiscent of “Lost in the Funhouse”. The target reader is likely to have heard of *Ulysses* because of its controversy. Moreover, this novel has been translated into Dutch several times, the most recent translation being *Ulixes* by Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes, which was published in 2012. When Barth refers to Joyce’s words “snot-green” and “scrotum-tightening” (74), the translator may easily take them from Bindervoet and Henkes’s translation. This resembles Leppihalme’s strategy of replacement by a TL name (79). While a translation is an independent text, it does refer to the original which functions in the source culture. In this case, however, the title has been changed according to Dutch phonological rules, so it may still be regarded as a replacement by a TL name.

This strategy cannot be adopted, however, when Barth refers to John Dos Passos’s *The 42nd Parallel* (73), since this novel has not been translated into Dutch. Moreover, it concerns a key phrase rather than a proper name. *The 42nd Parallel* is the first part in Dos Passos’s *U. S. A.* trilogy, which is considered “a frightening index of the radical instability and incoherence of American life” and in which “movement is frequently used as a powerful metaphor of renewal, freedom, and independence” (Butler 83). Instability is a key notion of metafiction and of “Lost in the Funhouse” itself. Moreover, the theme of travelling or movement is also reflected in the short story, since Ambrose is literally and metaphorically lost and in transition from being a child to being an adult. It may seem inadequate to simply retain “*The 42nd Parallel*”, since the target reader probably does not “possess [...] the literary or cultural knowledge to recognize [...] the significance of the intertextual relation” (cf. Venuti 157-8). However, since this is not a PN allusion but a KP allusion, a different kind of strategy is needed here. In addition to the strategies for translating PN allusions, Leppihalme suggests the following for KP allusions:

- A use of a standard translation;

- B minimum change, [...] a literal translation, without regard to connotative or contextual meaning [...];
- C extra-allusive guidance added in the text, where the translator follows his/her assessment of the needs of TT readers by adding information (on sources etc.) which the author, with his/her SL viewpoint, did not think necessary [...];
- D the use of footnotes, endnotes, translator's prefaces and other explicit explanations not slipped into the text but overtly given as additional information;
- E simulated familiarity or internal marking, that is, the addition of intra-allusive allusion-signalling features (marked wording or syntax) that depart from the style of the context, thus signalling the presence of borrowed words;
- F replacement by a preformed TL item;
- G reduction of the allusion to sense by rephrasal, in other words, making its meaning overt and dispensing with the allusive KP itself;
- H re-creation, using a fusion of techniques: creative construction of a passage which hints at the connotations of the allusion or other special effects created by it;
- I omission of the allusion. (84)

Strategy B is not adequate, since a literal translation would lead to an allusion that does not exist, either in the source culture or the target culture. Strategy D is also not appropriate, since readers generally prefer not to be reminded of the fact that they are reading a translation (Grit 194). Although it would add a "metatranslational" dimension which seems to correspond to the metafictional qualities of the source text, it is important to realise that it concerns a metafiction and not a metatranslation. Ambrose is, after all, an aspiring author and not an aspiring translator. Strategy E seems out of context, since "Lost in the Funhouse" already

contains marked wording and syntax and adding more in a case where the author did not implement this himself seems inappropriate. Strategy F cannot be used either, since there is nothing similar to Dos Passos's novel in the target culture (either as a translation or as an original piece). Strategies G and H would be too generalizing, since it concerns a very specific allusion. Omitting the allusion entirely would be too much of an interference on the translator's part. The best strategy, then, seems to be strategy C, by adding a bit more context without necessarily disrupting the reading process of the target audience. However, this would not be a consistent choice with regard to the focalisor. Ambrose has probably read *The 42nd Parallel* and he seems to expect his implied readers to know about it too since the text is very specifically located in the U. S. during the Second World War. With regard to the focalisor, strategy A (in combination with strategy B) is to be preferred over strategy C, since Ambrose does not often clarify what he really means. It seems best to simply retain "*The 42nd Parallel*". However, there are some culturally specific items for which strategy C does seem to be the best fit, such as a "Baby Ruth" (Barth 76). Using a generalization (by simply referring to the product itself rather than its brand name), the translator can make clear that it concerns a specific brand of chocolate bars without disrupting either the reading process or the temporal and cultural dimensions of the story. While it may seem odd to use different strategies for these two KP allusions, the target reader will probably realise that *The 42nd Parallel* is a novel, whereas he/she is not likely to know that a Baby Ruth is a chocolate bar.

#### Self-reflexivity: literary conventions

In "Lost in the Funhouse", certain linguistic or writing conventions are mentioned in order to sustain the illusion of metafictional self-reflexivity. Barth (or Ambrose) states that "[a] single straight underline is the manuscript mark for italic type, which in turn is the printed equivalent to oral emphasis of words and phrases as well as the customary type for titles of complete

works, not to mention” (72). While this is a typically English language convention, it creates a serious problem for the translator since italics are used in different situations in Dutch. Italics are mainly used to indicate titles of publications, foreign words and expressions, words that have to stand out (as subheadings for example) and to point out the use-mention distinction (Renkema 516). To emphasise certain words, acute accents are used rather than italics (415).

When Barth states that italics are used for the “oral emphasis of words”, a discrepancy occurs between the SL and the TL and the aesthetic effect of this utterance is lost. In order to reproduce it, different means have to be found in the TL (cf. Koster; Boase-Beier 73). The paragraph cannot be rewritten to deal with acute accents, since it seems italics have a much broader use (“A single straight underline is the manuscript mark for italic type [...]. Italics are also employed, in fiction stories especially, for “outside,” intrusive, or artificial voices [...]” (Barth 72)) and it seems a waste to omit most of the paragraph. The particular instance when Barth claims that italics are used for “oral emphasis” may indeed have to be left out, since using TL means to accomplish the same effect would mean to change the entire paragraph and adding explanation through footnotes is detrimental to the reading process of the target audience, since readers generally do not like to be reminded of the fact that they are reading a translated text (Grit 194). However, the text is interspersed with italics, mostly for the purpose of emphasis. In order to be consistent, the italics should not be replaced by acute accents, or the translator risks losing the ironic effect of Barth stating that italics “should be used *sparingly*” (72), which also goes for the Dutch language (Renkema 516). Another option would be, then, to add some information about the fact that it concerns English language conventions, such as writing “In English, [...]” at the beginning of the sentence, but again, this may stress the fact that it concerns a translation. On the other hand, it does add another metafictional layer or presence to the story which is less intruding than adding footnotes. This



is not necessarily detrimental, but it rather seems to enhance the text's "performative function" (Lewis 272).

Barth also mentions some conventions with regard to English literary history:

*En route* to Ocean City he sat in the back seat of the family car with his brother Peter, age fifteen, and Magda G— age fourteen, a pretty girl and exquisite young lady, who lived not far from them on B— Street in the town of D—, Maryland. Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. (Barth 72-3)

This practice, however, was also used in Dutch literature, so drastic changes are not necessary. When, for instance, Multatuli's now classic novel *Max Havelaar* was first published, the publishing house demanded Multatuli to make it less pamphlet-like and more literary by leaving out real place names and years (*Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren*).

#### Self-reflexivity: violation of narrative levels

Metafiction is ultimately self-reflecting in that narrative levels are often violated. Although an aspiring author such as Ambrose is likely to imitate other authors and adhere to traditional literary structures, he rejects them here. While this might be seen as an instance of adolescent rebellion, these intrusions may still be regarded as belonging to the author's voice, since the writing is explicitly commented on: "Actually, if one imagines a story called 'The Funhouse,' or 'Lost in the Funhouse,' the details of the drive to Ocean City don't seem especially relevant" (77). The tone in this sentence is rather nonchalant and therefore creates an ironic effect since the author actually provided the reader with a great deal of "details of the drive to Ocean City". In order to maintain this effect, the translator should aim for a similar tone. In self-reflecting comments such as these, the author also makes use of literary jargon: "There is

no *texture of rendered sensory detail, for one thing*” (89). Again, a valid source for equivalent terms in Dutch is the *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren*, but writings on the act of writing itself may also come in useful, such as articles in *Schrijven Magazine*.

“Lost in the Funhouse” also has a non-linear narrative as it rejects traditional plot conventions. It provides flashbacks and (imaginary) flashforwards, while constantly deviating to comment on the narrative itself or to return to the regular events of Ambrose and his family visiting Ocean City. While this does not concern a translation problem as such, it is important that the translator is aware of these metafictional devices in order to obtain a valid interpretation and to deliver a sound translation.

### Stylistic devices

The short story also contains several puns and other stylistic devices. While these are not necessarily metafictional, they do reflect on Ambrose’s (developing) writing skills. For the translation of puns, Dirk Delabastita suggests the following nine strategies:

- (1) Pun to pun; in which the ST pun is transferred into a TT pun, which may or may not share the same properties of the ST pun.
- (2) Pun to non-pun, in which the original pun is transferred into a TT word or phrase, which may preserve one or more senses of the original pun.
  - (i) Nonselective non-pun. Both of the original meanings are rendered - hence the term non-selective - but in a nonpunning conjunction.
  - (ii) Selective non-pun. One of the two linguistic meanings of the ST pun has been selected and translated more or less equivalently.
  - (iii) Diffuse paraphrase. The original meanings have been translated 'beyond recognition due to the rather free treatment of the entire punning passage.

- (3) Pun to punoid, in which the translator tries to recreate its effect by using some other wordplay-related rhetorical devices, such as repetition, assonance, irony allusion, and etc.
- (4) Zero translation: the pun is simply omitted
- (5) Direct copy: in which the translator reproduces the ST pun in its original form, i.e. without actually “translating” it.
- (6) Transference, is similar to strategy 5 (direct copy). The difference is that it imposes source language signified on a target language text, while the method of direct copy brings the original signifiers into the TT without any necessary concern about the semantic consequences of it.
- (7) Addition: non-pun to pun. The TT contains wordplay which the ST does not have. Its purpose is to compensate the loss of those puns that the translator is unable to render appropriately in their original position.
- (8) Addition (new textual material): zero to pun. The translator added a new pun without a counterpart in the ST.
- (9) Editorial technique, including [...] footnotes and endnotes; parentheses within the primary text [...]. (191-218)

In deciding which strategy to use, the translator is highly dependent on the context (Giorgadze 271). The context, with regard to the puns in this story, may be confined to the text itself or it may concern references to American culture, although the puns usually deal with the context of the text itself. An example of a pun that functions within the text itself is when Magda reprimands Peter for taking so much popcorn: “Your brother and father aren’t getting any” (81). This not only refers to the actual popcorn, but also to the fact that both Ambrose and his father are (presumably) not getting any sex, thus creating a humorous effect. In Dutch, this double meaning cannot be conveyed. The best solution would be to keep the surface meaning

intact, but in order to maintain the text's performative dimension, the translator can make use of either strategy 3 or strategy 7. An example of a pun in "Lost in the Funhouse" that has more to do with the culture that the text is situated in is "Nowadays (that is, in 19--, the year of our story" (73). This is a pun with regard to the saying "the year of our lord". Fortunately, there is a similar saying in Dutch ("in het jaar des/onzes Heren") which may be used in translating this pun, so strategy 1 (pun to pun) suffices here.

The ST also contains several instances of alliteration, assonance, rhyme and onomatopoeias. These, like puns, cannot always be retained if the TL simply does not have similar semantic and/or phonological means. However, the translator has to make a conscious decision of when to leave these devices out and when to compensate for them elsewhere (Onic 250). He or she can determine whether a stylistic device is of paramount importance if, for instance, they are longer or if they occur frequently. Similar to the translation of puns, strategy 3 may be used by employing, for example, alliteration instead of rhyme if the context allows it.

On a general note, the overall translation strategy that will be adopted is that which Lawrence Venuti calls "foreignization". This strategy "values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (20). The opposite strategy, that of "domestication", is inappropriate for translating "Lost in the Funhouse", since this text is too deeply imbedded in a specific time frame (i.e. the Second World War) and the source culture itself (i.e. American).

## Annotated Translation

“Verdwaald in het lachpaleis”

John Barth

Wie vindt het lachpaleis<sup>2</sup> lachen? Geliefden misschien. Voor Ambrose is het een *plek van angst en verwarring*. Ze zijn met het gezin naar de kust gekomen vanwege de nationale feestdag,<sup>3</sup> *de aanleiding van hun bezoek is Independence Day*,<sup>4</sup> *de belangrijkste feestdag van de Verenigde Staten van Amerika*. Met het eenmalig onderstrepen van woorden wordt in manuscripten het equivalent van cursiefschrift aangeduid, dat *in het Engels* het gedrukte equivalent is van de orale nadruk op woorden en zinsdelen<sup>5</sup> als wel de gebruikelijke manier om titels van volledige werken aan te duiden, om nog niets te zeggen over. Cursiefschrift wordt ook gebruikt, met name in fictie, om externe,<sup>6</sup> ingrijpende, of kunstmatige stemmen aan te geven, zoals bij radioberichten, telegramteksten en krantenartikelen, et cetera. Het moet *met*

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<sup>2</sup> In Dutch, “cakewalk” is the most common term for the kind of attraction that is known as a “funhouse”. However, this term does not enable the translator to maintain the pun in the first sentence of “Lost in the Funhouse”. The pun exists in that Barth repeats the first half of the word (or compound) “funhouse” and uses its separate semantic meaning. By using the Dutch “cakewalk”, this pun is lost. However, *Van Dale* gives three other options for “Fun house”: lachpaleis, spiegel-doolhof and automatenhal. The first option allows the translator to implement Delabastita’s first translation strategy for puns (“pun to pun”, 191), by taking the first part of the compound and using it as part of the idiom/vernacular “dat is lachen”. Moreover, it also suggests that Ambrose is being laughed at (“wordt uitgelachen”), similar to how Ambrose is being made fun of (“funhouse”) in the ST by his family and possibly life itself.

<sup>3</sup> It is more logical and more grammatical to use a full stop here. In the ST, however, there is also a comma splice, which may refer, ideationally, to Ambrose’s inexperience as a writer as well as his incoherent thoughts. The grammatical mistake has therefore been maintained.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 9 for a more detailed explanation as to why I have not translated this holiday as “Onafhankelijkheidsdag”.

<sup>5</sup> In English, italics are used to indicate “the oral emphasis of words and phrases” (Barth 72). In Dutch, the acute accent is used for emphasis rather than italics (Renkema 415). To write that italics are “het gedrukte equivalent van de orale nadruk op woorden en zinsdelen”, is therefore entirely wrong. Adding something about the acute accent instead would lead to a distinct incoherence with regard to this paragraph’s main subject matter. Unfortunately, Barth later uses italics for the purposes of emphasis and irony: “They should be used *sparingly*” (72) and “[...] it is an *illusion* that is being enhanced” (73). Since the overt use of italics comes back again and again throughout this story (with regard to emphasis and any of the other functions that Barth lists), it may be better if the translator adds a footnote explaining the difference in emphasising words in Dutch and English. However, this may be too intrusive. This text is, after all, metafictional and not metatranslational. Instead, I have opted for some “extra-allusive guidance” (cf. Leppihalme 84) within the text: “[...] *in English* [...]” I have chosen to use italics here for a somewhat ironic effect that seems fitting for this text.

<sup>6</sup> For “outside”, a valid translation would be “buiten-”. However, the hyphen here may disturb the reading process and it is not very eloquent. For this reason, a different adjective was used that does not function as part of a compound. However, there is nothing odd about “externe” as regards register, so the quotation marks from the ST have been deleted.

*mate* worden gebruikt. Als passages die oorspronkelijk in het romein staan worden gecursiveerd door iemand die ze herhaalt, is het gebruikelijk om dat gegeven te erkennen.

*Mijn cursivering.*

Ambrose had ‘die ongemakkelijke leeftijd.’ Als hij zichzelf liet meeslepen, kwam zijn stem er net zo schril uit als dat van een kind; voor de zekerheid bewoog en sprak hij daarom met een *bewuste kalmte* en *volwassen ernst*. Nuchter praten over onbelangrijke of irrelevante zaken en bewust luisteren naar het geluid van je eigen stem, zijn handige gewoonten om de controle te behouden tijdens deze moeilijke periode. *En route* naar Ocean City zat hij achterin de gezinsauto naast zijn broer Peter, vijftien jaar oud, en Magda G–, veertien jaar oud, een mooi meisje en verfijnde jongedame, die niet ver van hen af woonde in de B–straat in het stadje D–, Maryland. In negentiende-eeuwse fictie werden initialen, blanco’s of beide vaak gebruikt om eigennamen te vervangen en de illusie van werkelijkheid te vergroten.<sup>7</sup> Alsof de auteur het noodzakelijk achtte om namen te verwijderen om redenen van tact of wettelijke aansprakelijkheid. Interessant genoeg, zoals met andere aspecten van het realisme, wordt er hier een *illusie* vergroot door middel van puur kunstmatige middelen. Is het waarschijnlijk, wordt het principe van aannemelijkheid geschonden, als een dertienjarige jongen een dergelijke geraffineerde observatie kan maken? Een meisje van veertien is *de psychologische leeftijdsgenoot* van een jongen van vijftien of zestien. Een dertienjarige jongen, zelfs een die op sommige gebieden nogal voorlijk<sup>8</sup> is, kan *op emotioneel gebied* drie jaar jonger zijn dan zij.

Drie keer per jaar – op Memorial Day, Independence Day en Labor Day<sup>9</sup> – gaat het

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<sup>7</sup> Fortunately, this was also done in Dutch nineteenth-century literature (*Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren*), so the translator does not need to alter anything or add an explaining footnote.

<sup>8</sup> “precocious” is a rather difficult word, adding to the high register that is used here. It may be translated as “vroegrijp”, but I think “voorlijk” (cf. *Van Dale*) adheres better to the high register of “precocious”.

<sup>9</sup> I have opted to leave the names of these holidays intact in order to adhere to the foreignizing strategy and to avoid any inconsistencies within the text. Translating the names of these holidays would lead to holidays that do not exist or that do but which have entirely different connotations. For instance, Memorial Day could be translated as “Herdenkingsdag”. However, this is not a national holiday in the Netherlands and it is a rather sad day that (mainly!) revolves around the Second World War, which is still being fought during/in this story.

gezin een dagje naar Ocean City. Toen de vader van Peter en Ambrose zo oud was als zij, werd het uitstapje per trein gemaakt, zoals ook wordt beschreven in de roman *The 42nd Parallel*<sup>10</sup> van John Dos Passos. Vaak reisden gezinnen uit dezelfde buurt samen met afhankelijke familieleden en zwarte bedienden. Schoolbusladingen kinderen zwermde door de coupés. Iedereen deelde iedereen gefrituurde kip uit Maryland, ham uit Virginia, gevulde eieren, aardappelsalade, koekjes en zelfgemaakte ijsthee. Tegenwoordig (dat wil zeggen, in 19--, het jaar onzes verhaal)<sup>11</sup> wordt de reis per auto gemaakt. Dat is comfortabeler en sneller maar zonder het extra plezier maar zonder het *kameraadschap* dat een algemeen uitstapje met zich meebrengt. Het maakt allemaal onderdeel uit van de achteruitgang van het Amerikaanse leven, zei hun vader. Oom Karl denkt dat wanneer de jongens met *hun* gezinnen naar Ocean City gaan op feestdagen, dat ze dan in autogiro's zullen vliegen. Alleen hun moeder, die in het midden van de voorbank zat zoals Magda op de achterbank en die haar armen op de rugleuning achter de schouders van de mannen liet rusten, hoefde die goede oude tijd niet terug, met de stoomtreinen en de mufte, lange jurken. Aan de andere kant had ze ook geen behoefte aan autogiro's als ze grootmoeder moest worden om erin te kunnen vliegen.

Het beschrijven van het fysieke uiterlijk en gedrag is een van de verschillende

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Moreover, it seems unlikely that any family would visit the seaside on this day because of the reason that it is supposedly a holiday or a day of festivities. The day after “Herdenkingsdag” is a day of festivities and, should the weather permit it, it seems perfectly natural for a family to go to the seaside on this day. However, this day is based on the fact that the Netherlands was liberated on 5 May at the end of the Second World War and, as stated earlier, this war is still going in the story. What is more, this text is so deeply imbedded in American culture, that the Dutch “Herdenkingsdag” and “Bevrijdingsdag” are simply inadequate to use as translations. As for Labor Day, this may be translated as “Dag van de Arbeid”, but this is not really celebrated in the Netherlands and has entirely different connotations from Labor Day. As for “Independence Day”, it seems more permissible to translate this as “Onafhankelijkheidsdag”, since no such thing exists in the Netherlands really, but the reader does get a good sense of what it stands for in an American context. However, as the other two days must be maintained in their English form, so must “Independence Day” for reasons of consistency. While it may be annoying to the reader to come across English words in a Dutch text, the arguments of foreignization, connotations and consistency seem to be more important than disturbing the reading process.

<sup>10</sup> As stated earlier, I have implemented Leppihalme's first and second strategy for translating KP allusions, but which may, after all, best be classified as retention of the name, which is a strategy for PN allusions. This choice has been made with regard to the focalisor, i.e. what Ambrose is likely to expect from his audience, and the fact that a Dutch translation of this novel does not exist.

<sup>11</sup> The year of our lord may translated as “het jaar onzes He(e)ren”, “het jaar des Heren” or “het jaar van onze Heer”. I initially opted for the latter, but this seems too conventional and I feared the pun might be lost. While “onzes” is archaic, it does make it more evident that it concerns a pun.

methoden die fictieschrijvers doorgaans gebruiken<sup>12</sup> om het personagebeeld te vormen. Het is ook belangrijk om ‘de zintuigen scherp te houden’. Dat wil zeggen, wanneer een van de vijf zintuigen wordt gebruikt in een beschrijving, bijvoorbeeld visueel, en dat zintuig wordt ‘gekruid’ met een andere, bijvoorbeeld auditief, dan wordt de verbeelding van de lezer gericht op de scène, misschien zelfs onbewust. Dit proces kan worden vergeleken met de manier waarop landmeters en navigators hun positie bepalen door middel van twee of meer kompasrichtingen, een methode die bekend staat als triangulatie. Het bruine haar op de arm van de moeder van Ambrose glinsterde in de zon als. Hoewel ze rechtshandig was, haalde ze haar linkerarm van de leuning<sup>13</sup> om de aansteker op het dashboard in te drukken voor Oom Karl. Toen het glazen bolletje in het handvat rood gloeide, was de aansteker klaar voor gebruik. De geur van Oom Karls sigaar deed denken aan. De geur van de oceaan overspoelde het veld waar ze altijd gingen lunchen, twee kilometer<sup>14</sup> landinwaards vanaf Ocean City. Dat ze een heel uur moesten pauzeren op geluidsafstand van de golven was moeilijk voor Peter en Ambrose toen ze jonger waren. Zelfs nu was het niet gemakkelijk om te zorgen dat hun opwinding niet in een driftbui veranderde *terwijl ze werden gestimuleerd*<sup>15</sup> door het zilte *schuim*. De Ierse auteur James Joyce gebruikt in zijn ongebruikelijke roman genaamd *Ulixes*, reeds beschikbaar in dit land,<sup>16</sup> de bijvoeglijke naamwoorden *snotgroen* en

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<sup>12</sup> I have changed the passive verb form (“used by writers of fiction”) to an active one, since “personagebeeld” needs a verb in order to make this sentence grammatically sound (rather than writing “methoden van personagebeelden”).

<sup>13</sup> There appears to be an inconsistency in the ST which is of no particular importance to any of the metafictional dimensions or to Ambrose’s writing style. In the ST it says “seat”, but I have opted for “leuning” (i.e. the backside of a chair) because Ambrose’s mother had her arms on the “seat-back” and not on the seat itself earlier.

<sup>14</sup> Here, miles have been converted to kilometres since it concerns a convention rather than a CSI. Even though the story is clearly set in the United States (where miles are used to indicate distance), using kilometres here does not pose a problem for the general exoticising strategy.

<sup>15</sup> In the ST, the sub clause is a participle clause, using the past participle “stimulated”. In Dutch, the past participle (“voltooid deelwoord”) can also be used to begin a sub clause. However, it is more fluent to add a conjunction, which has been done here. The comma is not needed anymore either. As a side note, “*stimulated by the briny spume*” is not a specific allusion to, for example, a novel by James Joyce, even though it is in italics.

<sup>16</sup> In my view, this sentence may also refer to the fact that several Dutch translations exist, but also that one was published as recently as 2012. This is why the different strategies that have been implemented for the translation of the allusions to novels is justified, especially since Ambrose deals with *Ulysses* with regard to content as well, rather than just naming it.



*scrotumspannend*<sup>17</sup> om de zee te beschrijven. Visueel, auditief, voelbaar, olfactorisch, smaakgevoelig. Terwijl de vader van Peter en Ambrose hun zwarte LaSalle sedan uit 1936 met één hand bestuurde, kon hij met de andere de eerste sigaret uit een wit pakje Lucky Strikes trekken en, nog opmerkelijker, hem aansteken met een lucifer die hij met zijn wijsvinger uit het boekje peuterde en met zijn duim tegen het strijkvlak<sup>18</sup> hield zonder los te laten. Op de voorkant van het boekje werden simpelweg Amerikaanse oorlogsobligaties en postzegels geadverteerd. Als men erbij stilstaat, kan men in een goede metafoor, vergelijking of andere stijlfiguur, naast de overduidelijke ‘primaire’ betekenis van het ding dat het beschrijft, ook een secundaire betekenis ontdekken: die kan bijvoorbeeld worden afgeleid uit het *milieu* van de actie, specifiek passen bij de gevoeligheid van de verteller of de lezer zelfs hints geven over dingen waarvan de verteller zelf niet bewust is. Of het kan juist een subtieler licht laten schijnen op de dingen die het beschrijft, waardoor het soms, ironisch genoeg, de duidelijkere kant van de vergelijking benadrukt.

Je bereikt er niets mee als je zegt dat de moeder van Ambrose en Peter *mooi* is. De lezer kan deze suggestie erkennen, maar er wordt dan niet tot zijn verbeelding gesproken. Bovendien was Magda ook mooi, maar op een compleet andere manier. Hoewel ze in de B–straat woonde, had ze erg goede manieren en haalde ze bovengemiddelde cijfers op school. Haar lichaam was goed ontwikkeld voor haar leeftijd. Haar rechterhand lag nonchalant op de pluche bekleding van de stoel, erg dicht bij het linkerbeen van Ambrose, waar zijn eigen hand op rustte. Als er iemand aan de andere kant van Magda zat, kon diegene de ruimte tussen hun benen, tussen haar rechter- en zijn linkerbeen, niet zien, net als iemand die een blik in de achteruitkijkspiegel wierp. Het gezicht van Oom Karl leek op dat van Peter – of eerder

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<sup>17</sup> The translation for Joyce’s words “snot-green” and “scrotum-tightening” have been taken from the Dutch translation of *Ulysses (Ulixes)* by Erik Bindervoet and Robbert-Jan Henkes (9).

<sup>18</sup> “flint paper” may make the reader think of rolling paper, but it concerns a matchbook here and refers to the “igniting” part of a matchbook, which may be translated as “strijkvlak”. It seems illogical that Ambrose’s father would light his match by simply holding it against the flint paper, but Ambrose does add that this is rather “remarkable”. “Matchbook” may be translated as either “luciferboekje” or “lucifermapje”, but “luciferboekje” is more common. Moreover, it resembles the word in the ST better, since both words refer to a “book” or “boek”.

andersom. Ze hadden beiden donker haar en donkere ogen, korte, ineengebogen posturen, diepe stemmen. De vader van de jongens was moeilijk te beschrijven. Niets aan zijn uiterlijk of manier van doen viel op. Hij droeg een bril en was de directeur van een basisschool in Tuscarawas County.<sup>19</sup> Oom Karl was aannemer.

Ook al moet Peter net als Ambrose geweten hebben dat Ambrose, vanwege zijn positie in de auto, de eerste zou zijn die de elektrische torens van de centrale in V- zou zien, die zich halverwege hun reisje bevond, leunde hij naar voren en enigszins naar het midden van de auto en deed hij alsof hij ze zocht door het vlakke dennenbos en over de kreekjes heen langs de snelweg. Zolang de jongens zich konden herinneren, had ‘Het zoeken naar de Torens’ onderdeel uitgemaakt van de eerste helft van hun uitstapjes naar Ocean City. ‘Het zoeken naar de standpijp’ hoorde bij de tweede. Hoewel het spel kinderachtig was, onderhield hun moeder de traditie waarin ze de eerste die de Torens zag beloonde met een chocoladereep of een stuk fruit. Ze stond er nu op dat Magda ook meedeed. De prijs, zei ze, was ‘iets dat tegenwoordig moeilijk te krijgen was.’ Ambrose besloot niet mee te doen. Hij ging dieper in zijn stoel zitten. Magda leunde, net als Peter, naar voren. Bij haar schouders schenen twee bandjes door haar zomerjurk heen. De rechterbinnenste, een behabandje, was vastgemaakt of korter gemaakt met een klein veiligheidsspeldje. Waar haar rechteroksel zat, en waarschijnlijk ook aan de linkerkant, was haar jurk vochtig van de perspiratie. De meest voor de hand liggende manier om als eerste de Torens te zien, wat Ambrose al had begrepen toen hij vier was, was om aan de rechterkant van de auto te gaan zitten. Wie daar ook zat, moest echter ook het ergste van de zon zien te verdragen en dus koos Ambrose, zonder erover te mopperen, soms de ene en soms de andere kant. Niet onmogelijk had Peter dit allemaal nooit doorgehad, of hij dacht dat zijn broer het niet doorhad omdat Ambrose soms gewoon de voorkeur gaf aan de

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<sup>19</sup> T County refers to Tuscarawas County. The target audience is unlikely to be aware of this, so it has been explicated rather than translated literally. This follows Leppihalme’s third strategy for translating KP allusions: adding extra-allusive guidance (84).

schaduw en niet aan een chocoladereep<sup>20</sup> of een mandarijn.

De zon-schaduw-situatie was niet van toepassing op de voorstoel vanwege de voorruit. De chauffeur kreeg zelfs meer zon, aangezien de persoon op de passagiersstoel niet alleen van onder in de schaduw zat door de deur en het dashboard, maar ook doordat hij zijn zonnescerm helemaal naar beneden kon doen.

‘Zijn dat ze?’ vroeg Magda. De moeder van Ambrose plaagde de jongens ermee dat ze Magda lieten winnen, waarmee ze insinueerde dat ‘iemand een vriendinnetje had.’ De vader van Peter en Ambrose strekte een lange, dunne arm uit voorlangs hun moeder om zijn sigaret uit te drukken in de asbak van het dashboard, net onder de aansteker. Als je de eerste was die de Torens zag, kon je deze keer een banaan winnen. Hun moeder reikte hem uit nadat ze hun vader had berispt omdat hij een half opgerookte sigaret verspilde in deze tijden van schaarste. Om de prijs in ontvangst te nemen, verplaatste Magda haar hand, die zo dicht bij die van Ambrose lag dat hij hem had kunnen aanraken zonder dat het expres leek. Ze bood aan haar prijs te delen, zulke dingen waren moeilijk om aan te komen; maar iedereen stond erop dat hij alleen van haar was. De moeder van Ambrose zong een couplet van een populair liedje met mannelijk rijm in iambische pentameter:

‘Als ik van boord kom, ga ‘k meteen

Terstond naar die lantaren heen,

met jou Lili Marleen, met jou Lili Marleen!’<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Baby Ruth” is an American brand of chocolate bars (Zeldes). The target audience is probably not familiar with this brand, so it has been generalized (which adheres more or less to Leppihalme’s third translation strategy for KP allusions (84)). “Een chocoladereep van Baby Ruth” seems a bit too lengthy and intrusive here, especially because Ambrose generally does not explain his allusions.

<sup>21</sup> The song that occurs in the ST is called “They’re Either Too Young or Too Old”. This song was written by Frank Loesser and Arthur Schwartz in 1943 and was performed by Bette Davis. The song describes “the plight of a woman whose beau is in the army” (Stine 153). Unfortunately, this song has never been translated into Dutch and the target audience will probably not recognize a translated version, despite it being “popular”. Consequently, I have replaced it by another popular song from the Second World War, “Lili Marlene” (Dutch: “Lili Marleen”). Originally a German song from the First World War, “Lili Marlene” became popular during the Second World War among both the German troops and the Allied Forces and was translated into over 40

Oom Karl tipte de as van zijn sigaar uit het ventilatieraampje. Sommige deeltjes werden door de slipstroom terug in de auto gezogen via het achterraam aan de passagierskant. Magda liet zien hoe ze een banaan in één hand vast kon houden en hem dan met haar tanden kon pellen. Ze zat nog steeds voorover gebogen. Ambrose duwde zijn bril terug op zijn neus met zijn linkerhand, die hij daarna achteloos op het kussen achter haar liet vallen. Hij stond de enkele, gouden haar op het tweede gewricht van zijn duim zelfs toe om langs het stof van haar rok te strijken. Als ze op dat moment weer met haar rug tegen de leuning was gaan zitten, had zijn hand onder haar vastgezet.

In de zomerhitte<sup>22</sup> voelde hij de oncomfortabele<sup>23</sup> pluche bekleding door zijn gabardinebroek heen prikken. Het doel van het *begin* van een verhaal is om de hoofdpersonages te introduceren, hun relaties met elkaar vast te stellen zoals ze zijn in de beginsituatie, de scène te schetsen voor de hoofdactie, de achtergrond van de situatie zo nodig uiteen te zetten, waar gepast motieven en hints<sup>24</sup> te plaatsen, en te beginnen met de eerste

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languages (Noordzij). It was translated into Dutch by Herre de Vos in 1940 (idem.). While it does not explicitly refer to war, it does resemble “They’re Either Too Old or Too Young” in that it is about a soldier who is reminiscing about his love Lili Marlene (back at home or at some sort of military encampment). This song, however, contains masculine rhyme rather than feminine rhyme (cf. Abrams and Harpham 349). Moreover, while the song is still iambic in Dutch, it is not in trimeter, but (mostly) in pentameter. I had originally opted for the part in which the singer sings: “Onder de lantaren, werd een sein gehoord, / Dat kwam van de baren en riep mij weer aan boord!”, since this part suggests a sort of sadness. However, the second line is in hexameter rather than pentameter, so this would create an inconsistency within the text. I have therefore chosen two other lines that are both in pentameter. The third line was added as it is still part of this couplet.

<sup>22</sup> The reference to the specific month July is lost, but here it concerns the fact that it is summer and that it is stiflingly hot which is also suggested by “zomerhitte”. A possible translation for “July sun” is “julizon”. However, this sounds rather off, while “zomerhitte” is a word that Dutch people are likely to come across more often.

<sup>23</sup> ST: “Plush upholstery prickles uncomfortably through gabardine slacks in the July sun.” The adverb “uncomfortably” says something about an action that is carried out by “plush upholstery” in a personification. Notwithstanding the fact that personifications are generally avoided in Dutch (cf. Claes 37), it seems that *something* cannot *do* something *uncomfortably* in Dutch; something can only *feel* uncomfortable. What Barth suggests, in any case, is that the plush upholstery makes Ambrose feel physically uncomfortable, ergo the plush upholstery may be regarded as uncomfortable itself. Since “oncomfortabel” cannot function as an adverb in Dutch, or at least not in this case, I have changed it to an adjective that says something about the subject of the original sentence instead of an adverb that says something about the action that is being performed by this subject.

<sup>24</sup> “Foreshadowing” is a key term in the field of literary techniques. When using foreshadowing, an author gives the reader information. However, this information is rather subtle and may not be apparent to the reader during a first reading. Its purpose is to make the reader curious about what may happen in the future or it may hint at what is going to happen (Stuart 295). Unfortunately, there is no equivalent term in Dutch, so I have chosen a more

complicatie of een willekeurig moment van de ‘stijgende actie’.<sup>25</sup> Als men zich een verhaal voorstelt dat ‘Het lachpaleis’ of ‘Verdwaald in het lachpaleis’ heet, lijken de bijzonderheden van de autorit naar Ocean City niet bijzonder relevant. In het *beginstuk* moeten alle gebeurtenissen worden onthuld tussen het moment dat Ambrose in de vroege middag het lachpaleis voor het eerst zag en het moment dat hij er ’s avonds inging met Magda en Peter. In het *middenstuk* zouden alle relevante gebeurtenissen worden beschreven vanaf het moment dat hij naar binnengaat tot het moment waarop hij verdwaalt. Middenstukken hebben de dubbelzinnige en tegenstrijdige functie van het vertragen van de climax, terwijl ze de lezer er juist ook op voorbereiden en hem ernaar toe leiden. In het *eindstuk* zou dan verteld worden wat Ambrose doet terwijl hij verdwaald is, hoe hij dan eindelijk de uitgang weet te vinden en wat iedereen van die ervaring vindt. Tot dan toe zijn er nog geen echte dialogen<sup>26</sup> geweest, weinig sensorische details en vrijwel niets dat met een bepaald *thema* te maken heeft. Er is al veel tijd verstreken zonder dat er echt iets is gebeurd. Dat geeft stof tot nadenken. We zijn nog niet eens bij Ocean City aangekomen. We zullen nooit uit het lachpaleis ontsnappen.

Hoe meer een auteur zich vereenzelvigd met de verteller, letterlijk of figuurlijk, hoe minder raadzaam het is, in de regel, om in de eerste persoon enkelvoud te schrijven. Drie jaar geleden speelden de *eerdergenoemde* jongeren een keer Negers en Meesters in de achtertuin; toen Ambrose aan de beurt was om Meester te zijn en de rest Negers, moest Peter de avondkrant gaan bezorgen. Ambrose durfde Magda niet in zijn eentje te straffen, maar zij bracht hem naar de witgeverfde Martelkamer tussen de houtopslag en het toilet in het Slavenkwartier. Daar knielde ze zwetend tussen de harken van bamboe en de stoffige Mason-potten; smekend omarmde ze zijn knieën en terwijl de bijen in het rooster zoemden alsof het

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general word (“hints”), by which I hope the reader understands what is meant since the context deals with literary writing techniques.

<sup>25</sup> “Rising action” is a concept in literature that was devised by Gustav Freitag. According to him, plot consists of five actions: exposition, complication (or the rising action), crisis (or climax), falling action (or anti-climax), resolution (or dénouement) (Burroway et al. 257). These terms may be translated as “introdunctie”, “stijgende actie”, “climax”, “dalende actie” and “ontknoping”, respectively (cf. Van de Wiel).

<sup>26</sup> I have changed this word from singular to plural, so that the main verb of this sentence still corresponds with the other objects (as “sensorische details” is also in plural).

een doodgewone zomermiddag was, kocht ze zijn genade af tegen een verrassende prijs. Een prijs<sup>27</sup> die ze zelf aanbood. Zij herinnerde zich ongetwijfeld niets van deze gebeurtenis. Ambrose leek daarentegen niet in staat te zijn ook maar het kleinste detail van zijn leven te vergeten. Hij kon zich zelfs herinneren hoe, terwijl hij als het ware buiten zichzelf stond in die stinkende hitte, hij ondertussen met een ontzagwekkende onverschilligheid keek naar een leeg sigarenkistje waar Oom Karl zijn steenbeitels in bewaarde: onder de woorden *El Producto* keek een gelauwerde dame in een losse toga uit over de zee vanaf een marmeren bankje; naast haar, vergeten of nog niet opgemerkt, lag een vijfsnarige lier. Haar kin lag op de rug van haar rechterhand; haar linkerhand hing achteloos over de armleuning. De onderste helft van de afbeelding en dame was eraf gebladderd. De woorden GECONTROLEERD DOOR – waren in het hout gekerfd. Tegenwoordig werden sigarenkistjes van karton gemaakt. Ambrose vroeg zich af wat Magda had gedaan, Ambrose vroeg zich af wat Magda zou doen als ze terug op zijn hand ging zitten zoals hij net had besloten dat ze moest doen. Boos zijn. Een plagerig grapje ervan maken. Geen enkel teken van erkenning geven. Ze leunde een hele poos naar voren, speelde een kaartspelletje met Peter tegen Oom Karl en Moeder en zocht naar het eerste teken van Ocean City. Op bijna hetzelfde moment schoven het picknickterrein en de standpijp van Ocean City in zicht; een Amoco-benzinestation aan hun kant van de weg kostte Moeder en Oom Karl vijftig koeien waardoor ze het spelletje verloren; Magda veerde terug en haar rechterhand klapte op de rechterarm van Moeder; Ambrose kon zijn hand ‘op het nippertje’ wegtrekken.

Als we zo doorgaan zal onze held, als we zo doorgaan zal onze protagonist voor eeuwig in het lachpaleis blijven. Verhalen bestaan doorgaans uit het afwisselen van dramatisering en samenvatting. Een symptoom van nervositeit wordt, paradoxaal genoeg, herhaald en hevige

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<sup>27</sup> By adding “a price” a second time, a fluency and immediacy is added that is more present in the ST than would have been in the TT, should I have left the original structure intact.

gaap.<sup>28</sup> Noch Peter noch Magda noch Oom Karl noch Moeder reageerde op deze manier.

Hoewel ze geen kleine kinderen meer waren, kregen Peter en Ambrose allebei een dollar om te besteden aan de verschillende attracties op de promenade naast het geld dat ze zelf hadden meegebracht. Magda ook, al protesteerde ze dat ze genoeg zakgeld bijhad. De moeder van de jongens schopte een kleine scène bij het uitdelen van de briefjes. Ze deed alsof haar zoons en Magda kleine kinderen waren en waarschuwde ze om het bedrag niet te snel of aan maar één ding uit te geven. Magda beloofde het met een vrolijke lach en, met beide handen leeg, nam ze het briefje aan met haar linker. Peter lachte ook en zwoer in een falsetstem dat hij een brave jongen zou zijn. Zijn imitatie van een kind was niet goed. De vader van de jongens was lang en dun, kalend, blond. Dat soort beweringen is niet effectief. De lezer kan deze suggestie erkennen, maar. We moeten veel verder zijn dan dat we zijn. Er is iets fout gegaan, niet veel van het preliminaire gezwets lijkt relevant. Toch begint iedereen op dezelfde plek. Waarom is het nou zo dat de meesten zonder moeite verder komen maar sommigen de weg kwijtraken?

‘Blijf onder de promenade vandaan,’ gromde Oom Karl vanuit de zijkant van zijn mond. De moeder van de jongens gaf zijn schouder een duw *uit geveinsde irritatie*. Ze stonden allemaal voor Fat May, de Lachende Dame, die het lachpaleis adverteerde. Ze was enorm groot en schudde<sup>29</sup> mechanisch op en neer, schommelde op haar hielen, sloeg op haar dijen terwijl opgenomen gelach – joelend, vrouwelijk – versterkt uit een verborgen luidspreker kwam. Het grinnikte, piepte en weende; probeerde tevergeefs op adem te komen; giechelde, kreunde, ontplofte luidruchtig en daarna nog een keer. Je kon het niet aanhoren zonder zelf ook te lachen, maakt niet uit hoe je je voelde. Vader kwam terug na te hebben

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<sup>28</sup> At first I thought this was just a random grammatical error that adds to the fragmentariness of Ambrose’s writer as I interpreted the “yawning” as a verb. However, it seems to be a noun here, which refers to the fact that “violent yawning” occurs as a consequence of this supposedly tedious description. “Violent” does not refer to the damaging meaning of this word, I think, but rather implies that it concerns something intense (how can yawning be physically violent, after all?). Instead of “en gewelddadig gapen” which is completely agrammatical and simply does not make sense, I opted for the phrasing that is now in the TT.

<sup>29</sup> To imitate the ST’s sentence structure here, would render an agrammatical sentence in Dutch, since the “larger than life”-adjective would not necessarily be referring to Fat May. The way I have reorganised this sentence, makes it more grammatical and clear.

gepraat met een kustwachter en vermeldde dat de branding was verpest door de ruwe olie van tankers die recentelijk waren getorpedeerd vanaf de kust. Brokken ervan, moeilijk te verwijderen, zorgden voor teerachtige vloedlijnen op het strand en bleven aan zwemmers plakken. Veel mensen gingen alsnog in de branding baden en kwamen er bespikkeld uit; anders betaalden voor het openbare zwembad en gingen alleen naar het strand om te zonnebaden. Wij zouden dat laatste doen. Wij zouden dat laatste doen. Wij zouden dat laatste doen.

Onder de promenade, luciferboekjes, vieze andere dingen. Wat is het thema van het verhaal? Ambrose is ziek. Hij perspireert in de donkere gangen; gekarameliseerde appels die er heerlijk uitzien,<sup>30</sup> maar teleurstellend zijn om te eten. Om de zoveel meter moeten er in lachpaleizen mannen- en vrouwentoiletten zijn. Misschien hebben anderen ook nog eens gekotst in hoeken en gangen, hebben zich misschien zelfs van hun stoelgang ontdaan waar makkelijk op gestapt kan worden in het donker. Het woord *neuken*<sup>31</sup> doet denken aan zuigkracht en/of en/of winderigheid. Moeder en Vader, grootmoeders en grootvaders aan beide kanten, overgrootmoeders en overgrootvaders aan vier kanten, et cetera. Reken een generatie als dertig jaar: ongeveer in het jaar toen Lord Baltimore een contract werd aangeboden door Charles I met betrekking tot de provincie van Maryland, ontvingen vijfhonderdtwaalf vrouwen van elke klasse en persoonlijkheid – Engels, Welsh, Beiers, Zwitsers – in henzelf de penissen de geslachtsdelen van vijfhonderdtwaalf mannen, ditto, in elke omstandigheid en positie,<sup>32</sup> om de vijfhonderdtwaalf voorouders en de tweehonderdzesenvijftig voorouders van de et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et

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<sup>30</sup> The present participle (“delicious-looking”) may best be translated using the Dutch “onvoltooid deelwoord” (“er heerlijk uitzierend”). However, onvoltooid deelwoorden are hardly used since they often lack fluency in the written and spoken word. Instead, a conjunction may be added to change the participial clause into a finite clause in order to make the sentence more fluent and eloquent.

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Ambrose refers to the curse word (in which case “kut”, would be a more appropriate translation), but it seems more likely that he refers to the verb “fucking” itself since he goes on to describe his own conception by imagining his ancestors having sex.

<sup>32</sup> I have chosen for “position” rather than “houding”, because position may refer to sex as well as someone’s place in society.



cetera et cetera et cetera van de auteur, van de verteller, van dit verhaal, “Verdwaald in het lachpaleis,” te verwekken. In steegjes, greppels, hemelbedden, dennebossen, bruidssuites, scheepscabines, koetsen,<sup>33</sup> broeierige schuurtjes. Op het koude zand onder een promenade, bevuild met *El Producto* sigaarpeuken, bestrooid met Lucky Strike-sigarettenpeuken, Coca-Cola-dopjes, zanderige drollen, kartonnen lollystokjes, luciferboekjes waarop staat: van losse lippen lopen schepen op de klippen.<sup>34</sup> Het slurperige gefluister, onafgebroken zoals de zeestroom over de hele wereld, die getijde-achtig daalt en stijgt in het circuit van de ochtenden en avondschemer.<sup>35</sup>

Magda’s tanden. Ze was inderdaad links. Perspiratie. Ze zijn er helemaal doorheen gegaan, Magda en Peter, ze hebben uren staan wachten met Moeder en Oom Karl terwijl Vader naar zijn verloren zoon zoekt; ze trekken gefrituurde aardappels uit een papieren bakje en schudden hun hoofd. Ze hebben namen verzonnen voor de kinderen die ze ooit zullen hebben en die ze op feestdagen zullen meenemen naar Ocean City. Kan spermatozoa daadwerkelijk worden gezien als mannelijke protozoa aangezien vrouwelijke spermatozoa niet bestaat? Ze tasten door hete, donkere bochten, langs de angstaanjagende obstakels van de Liefdestunnel. Sommigen raken wellicht de weg kwijt.

Peter stelde ter plekke voor om het lachpaleis in te gaan. Hij was er al eerder doorheen

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<sup>33</sup> ST: “coach-and-fours, coaches-and-four.” A coach-and-four refers to a coach pulled by four horses. In Dutch, this may simply be translated as “koets” or “wagen”, without any reference to the horses pulling it. The wordplay with the plural can therefore not be maintained. I have chosen for “koets”, since “wagen” may also suggest a car, whereas here the author is describing the colonial past.

<sup>34</sup> “A Slip of the Lip (Can Sink a Ship)” is the name of a song by Duke Ellington (cf. Whitburn 185). It actually refers to the slogan “Loose lips (might) sink ships” (cf. Hadley Archives), which is what Ambrose probably refers to here. The slogan seems more likely to be figured on WWII matchbook covers than a song by Duke Ellington. The sub clause in “matchbook covers warning that A Slip of the Lip Can Sink a Ship” cannot be maintained here because in Dutch, the word order is different in sub clauses, so that the verb is placed at the end of the sentence. If this was done, the rhyme would be ultimately lost: “[...] dat van losse lippen schepen op de klippen lopen”. I have therefore made sure that this slogan/song title features as a more or less independent sentence. This way, the masculine rhyme is maintained. While some of the alliteration could be kept, the assonance could not. I have also searched for a similar Dutch poster or slogan that was used during WWII, but I could not find one. Moreover, using an actual Dutch slogan would be inappropriate since this story is specifically set in the U. S.

<sup>35</sup> The alliteration of “dawn and dusk” could not be maintained, as the equivalents for these words in Dutch simply do not have similar beginning letters/sounds. Elsewhere in the text, alliteration has been added where the ST had none, in order to compensate for the loss of the alliteration here. Whenever alliteration has been added, this has been indicated with a footnote.

gegaan, Magda ook, Ambrose niet en stelde daarom voor, met een krakende stem als gevolg van het gelach van Fat May, dat ze eerst gingen zwemmen. Ze grinnikten allemaal, konden het niet helpen. De vader van Ambrose, de vader van Ambrose en Peter, kwam grijnzend als een krankzinnige teruglopen met twee bakjes zoete popcorn, een voor Moeder, een voor Magda, de mannen konden zelf pakken. Ambrose liep aan de rechterkant van Magda; ze was linkshandig geboren, dus droeg ze het bakje in haar linkerhand. Vooraan was de situatie omgekeerd.

‘Waarom loop je mank?’ vroeg<sup>36</sup> Magda aan Ambrose. Hij zei in een diepe stem dat zijn voet was gaan slapen in de auto. Haar tanden flitsten. ‘Prikt het?’<sup>37</sup> De kamperfoelie op het raster van het toenmalige toilet had de bijen aangetrokken. Stel je voor dat je daar gestoken wordt. Hoe lang gaat dit nog duren?

De volwassenen besloten het zwembad aan zich voorbij te laten gaan, maar Oom Karl stond erop dat ze hun zwemkleden aantrokken en op het strand gingen liggen. ‘Hij wil naar de mooie meisjes kijken,’ plaagde Peter en hij dook achter Magda om te ontkomen aan de voorgewende toorn van Oom Karl. ‘Alle mooie meisjes die je ooit nodig hebt zijn gewoon hier, hoor,’ verkondigde Magda en Moeder zei: ‘Dat is de zuivere waarheid.’ Magda berispte Peter, die zich langs haar schouder strekte om wat popcorn te pikken. ‘Je broer en vader kunnen er niet bij.’<sup>38</sup> Oom Karl vroeg zich af of er die avond wel vuurwerk zou zijn door al die tekorten. Het lag niet aan de tekorten, antwoordde meneer M-. Ocean City had nog vuurwerk van voor de oorlog. Maar het was te gevaarlijk vanwege de vijandige onderzeeërs, volgens sommige mensen.

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<sup>36</sup> This is an example of the register being higher in the ST (“inquired”) than in the TT (“vroeg”), mainly because there are not fitting alternatives in this situation.

<sup>37</sup> “Pins and needles” is a possible reference to the erotic encounter between Magda and Ambrose, as he refers to bees right after she says this and bees were also present during their encounter. I do not believe a literal translation exists as an idiom in Dutch, so I changed it to something that refers to a similar feeling and that also has sexual connotations (cf. “prikt”). The sexual connotation is not that clear in the ST (and whether they are evident in the TT is also debatable), but in any case, it may serve as a compensation for the loss of the pun with regard to “getting any” later in this text.

<sup>38</sup> The original pun is lost. ‘Kunnen er niet bij’ may have sexual connotations though.

Oom Karl zei: ‘Lijkt niet echt op een feestdag<sup>39</sup> zo zonder vuurwerk.’ Dit soort dialooglabels<sup>40</sup> wordt nog steeds gedoogd bij het gebruik van eigennamen of bijnamen, maar klinkt ouderwets bij persoonlijke voornaamwoorden. ‘Zal er binnenkort wel weer zijn,’ voorspelde de vader van de jongens. Hun moeder gaf aan dat ze niet zoveel behoefte had aan vuurwerk; het deed haar teveel denken aan het echte werk. Hun vader zei juist daarom moesten ze zo nu en dan wat afvuren. Oom Karl stelde de *retorische* vraag wie er dan aan herinnerd moest worden, kijk gewoon naar mensen hun haar en huid.

‘Ja, de olie,’ zei mevrouw M—.

Ambrose had maagpijn en ging dus niet mee zwemmen, maar hij genoot ervan om naar de anderen te kijken. Hij en zijn vader verbrandden snel. Magda’s lichaam was enorm goed ontwikkeld voor haar leeftijd. Zij weigerde ook te gaan zwemmen en werd boos, en werd kwaad toen Peter haar het zwembad in probeerde te trekken. Ze ging altijd zwemmen, drong hij aan, hoezo zou ze nu niet zwemmen? Waarom komen mensen anders naar Ocean City?

‘Misschien wil ik wel hier liggen met Ambrose,’ plaagde Magda.

Niemand mag een wijsneus.

‘Aha,’ zei Moeder. Peter greep Magda’s ene enkel en beval Ambrose de andere te grijpen.<sup>41</sup> Ze gilte en rolde rond op het strandlaken. Ambrose deed alsof hij haar vasthield. Haar tint was zelfs donkerder dan die van Moeder en Peter. ‘Help eens, Oom Karl!’ riep Peter. Oom Karl pakte de andere enkel vast. Aan de binnenkant van haar bovenste zwemstuk

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<sup>39</sup> ST: “Fourth of July”. I am not entirely sure the target reader would realise that the American Independence Day is on the fourth of July. I think it’s better to use the name of this holiday, but I have generalised this name here because I have kept the name intact elsewhere in this story for several reasons. However, it seems odd to have a character now speaking in Dutch refer to something in English. As it concerns a day of festivities, I thought “feestdag” would be sufficient here.

<sup>40</sup> In Dutch, there is no such thing as an “inverted dialogue tag” because dialogue tags are always inverted. Dialogue tags seem to function as a subclause in which the syntax order changes, while English subclauses often have a VSO-structure. For this reason, I have used a dialogue tag at the beginning of the sentence, which is sometimes (but not often) done in Dutch texts. The Dutch terminology for “dialogue tag” was taken from an article by Marit van Ekelenburg and Leonardo Pisano in *Schrijven Magazine*.

<sup>41</sup> I have used the verb “grijpen” twice here, since the ST also uses “grab” twice. This is not especially eloquent, but while Ambrose generally uses difficult words or words in a high register, the text contains subtle hints on the ideational level of style about Ambrose not having found his own voice yet, such as here.

kon je echter de lijn zien waar haar verbrande huid ophield en, wanneer ze haar schouders boog en nog eens gilde, zag je de bruine rand van een tepel. Moeder zorgde ervoor dat ze zich gedroegen. ‘*Jij* zou beter moeten weten,’ zei ze tegen Oom Karl. Hooghartig. ‘Dat wanneer een dame zegt dat ze geen zin heeft om te gaan zwemmen, een heer geen vragen stelt.’ Oom Karl zei sorry *hoor*, Moeder knipoogde naar Magda, Ambrose bloosde, stomme Peter zei steeds ‘Poe-hé wat een aanstelster’ en trok aan Magda’s enkel. Daarna begreep zelfs hij de hint en maakte met een kreet een bommetje in het zwembad.

‘Echt hoor,’ zei Magda in sarcastische *in geveinsde* irritatie.

Het duiken zou een geschikt literair symbool zijn. Om van de duikplank af te springen, moest je in een rij langs het zwembad staan en daarna de ladder op. Gozers kietelden meisjes en namen elkaar in de maling en riepen naar degenen die erbovenop stonden dat ze moesten opschieten, of ze stoeiden met elkaar als ze buiklandingen hadden gemaakt. Eenmaal op de duikplank deden sommigen er heel lang over om te poseren of de clown uit te hangen of te besluiten wat voor soort duik ze gingen doen of moed te verzamelen, anderen sprongen er gelijk vanaf. Vooral van de jongere gozers werd verwacht dat ze de grappigste pose aannamen of de waanzinnigste stunts deden terwijl ze vielen, iets dat steeds moeilijker werd hoe verder ze naar beneden tuimelden. Maar of je nou *Hupsakee!*<sup>42</sup> of *Sieg heil!* riep, je neus dichtkneep of ‘ging fietsen,’ deed alsof je werd neergeschoten of een perfecte gehoekte sprong deed of dat je je halverwege je sprong bedacht en uiteindelijk helemaal niks had, het was allemaal voorbij binnen twee seconden, en dat na al dat wachten. Spring, poseer, plons. Spring, vet hoor, plons, Spring, balen man, plons.

De volwassenen waren doorgelopen; Ambrose wilde met Magda converseren; ze was

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<sup>42</sup> While I originally opted for “hatsekidee”, this word apparently stems from the work of Dutch children’s author Annie M. G. Schmidt (Schouten). Boys living in the 1940s are not likely to be familiar with this word (well, American children would not know this word at all), so I opted for a different interjection.

opvallend ver ontwikkeld<sup>43</sup> voor haar leeftijd; dat kwam schijnbaar door jezelf te wrijven met een Turkse handdoek, en er waren andere theorieën over. Ambrose wist niets anders te zeggen dan dat Peter zo'n goede duiker was, die aan het opscheppen was omdat zij erbij was. Aan hun badpakken en armspieren kon je vrij goed zien hoe ver de verschillende gozers ontwikkeld waren. Ambrose was blij dat hij niet was gaan zwemmen, door het koude water kromp je zo ineen. Magda deed alsof ze het duiken niet interessant vond. Ze woog waarschijnlijk net zoveel als hij. Als je de weg wist in het lachpaleis alsof het je eigen slaapkamer was, kon je wachten tot er een meisje langskwam en dan wegglippen zonder ooit te worden betrapt, zelfs als haar vriendje erbij was. Ze zou denken dat *hij* het had gedaan! Het zou nog beter zijn om het vriendje te zijn, doen alsof je verontwaardigd bent en het lachpaleis kort en klein slaan.

Niet doen alsof; *zijn*.

'Hij is een geweldige duiker,' zei Ambrose. In geveinste bewondering. 'Je moet echt hard werken om zo goed te worden.' Wat zou het eigenlijk<sup>44</sup> uitmaken als hij haar nu vroeg of ze zich het nog herinnerde, haar er zelfs mee plaagde zoals Peter zou doen?

Het heeft geen zin om verder te gaan, niemand bereikt hier iets mee, ze zijn nog niet eens bij het lachpaleis aangekomen. Ambrose is van het pad gegaan en is beland in een of ander nieuw of oud deel van die plek die niet gebruikt mocht worden. Hij was erin afgedwaald met een kans van één op een miljoen, zoals toen het achtbaankarretje tegen alle wetten van de natuurkunde in ontspoorde in de jaren tien en in het donker over de promenade

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<sup>43</sup> I have used "ontwikkeld" elsewhere in this text and it needs to come back here too because Ambrose/Barth often repeats this word (and phrasing). To say she (rather than her body) was "goed ontwikkeld", however, sounds a bit off. Ambrose seems to refer to her body, but I have opted for the more idiomatic "ver ontwikkeld". This refers more to someone's state of mind or intelligence, but it creates a certain irony when immediately afterwards the reason for her "developedness" is explained as being the rubbing of her body with Turkish towels.

<sup>44</sup> I had initially translated "anyhow" as "überhaupt". However, "anyhow" is a rather informal and colloquial word. It seems this is an "adolescent" reflection made by Ambrose, rather than it being an intrusive authorial comment. The register needs to stay low with regard to the ideational level of style here, which most probably concerns the deepest layer of the discourse structure (i.e. Ambrose), so I chose "eigenlijk" instead. Moreover, "überhaupt" is a German word and considering the fact that this piece is set during the Second World War, this would not seem appropriate.

heen zeilde. En ze kunnen hem niet vinden omdat ze niet weten waar ze moeten zoeken. Zelfs de ontwerper en de bediener zijn dit andere deel vergeten, dat steeds in zichzelf terugdraait als een kinkhoorn. Dat om het rechte deel heendraait zoals de slangen op de caduceus van Mercurius. Het is mogelijk dat sommige mensen ‘niet op hun best zijn’ tot hun twintigste, wanneer het opgroeiegebeuren voorbij is en vrouwen andere dingen kunnen waarderen naast geïmpresarie en geplaag en gepronk.<sup>45</sup> Peter had nog geen tiende van de verbeelding die *hij* had, nog geen tiende. Peter deed dat hun-kinderen-namen-geven-gedoe als grap door namen te verzinnen als Aloysius en Murgatroyd, maar Ambrose wist *precies* hoe het zou voelen om getrouwd te zijn en zelf kinderen te hebben, een liefhebbende echtgenoot en vader te zijn, om ’s ochtends op je gemak naar je werk te gaan en ’s avonds met je vrouw naar bed en om daar weer naast haar wakker te worden. Met een briesje dat door het raam waait en de vogels en spotvogels die zingen in de Chinese trompetbomen. Zijn ogen traanden, er zijn niet genoeg manieren om dat te zeggen. Hij zou redelijk beroemd zijn binnen zijn vakgebied. Of Magda nou zijn vrouw was of niet, op een avond wanneer hij rimpels van wijsheid en grijs haar bij zijn slapen had, zou hij melancholiek glimlachen tijdens een modieus etentje en haar herinneren aan zijn jeugdige passie. Die keer dat ze met het gezin naar Ocean City gingen; de *erotische fantasieën* die hij over haar had. Hoe lang geleden dat nu wel leek, en kinderachtig! Maar ook teder, *n’est-ce pas?* Kon ze zich toen ooit hebben voorgesteld dat de wereldberoemde wat-dan-ook zich nog herinnerde hoeveel snaren er zaten op de lier op het bankje naast het meisje op de voorkant van het sigarenkistje waar hij naar had gekeken in het schuurtje op tienjarige leeftijd, en zij, elfjarig. Zelfs toen had hij zich *volwassen voor zijn leeftijd* gevoeld; hij had haar over haar bol geaaid<sup>46</sup> en in zijn diepste stem en correctste Engels gezegd, als tegen een lief kind: ‘Dit moment zal ik nooit vergeten.’

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<sup>45</sup> I have added alliteration here in order to compensate for the loss of alliteration with “dawn and dusk” earlier.

<sup>46</sup> “Over zijn/haar bol aaien” does not have any sexual connotations, but is rather used when a parent has a tender moment with his/her child. The expression is still appropriate here, since Ambrose says this “as to a dear child” (Barth 84).

## Conclusion

All in all, style appeared to be the greatest translation problem since the translator had to keep in mind the different voices of the implied author and the protagonist and treat the switches in register accordingly. The register consisted mainly of lexical choices (for instance, the use of “converse” rather than “talk”), but it also concerned grammatical and structural choices.

Whenever the sentences seemed disorganised and agrammatical, for example, the protagonist came across as an inexperienced writer on the ideational level of the story.

Most of the metafictional characteristics of this text did not pose a problem as such, but it was important that the translator got a sense of these metafictional qualities as they also contribute to the ability to make a distinction between the author, narrator and protagonist and consequently to get a better grip on the ideational level, which mainly has to do with the reflections of the protagonist (i.e. the focalisor).

A general strategy of foreignization has been adopted while translating this text. Although the target reader may not understand some of the allusions, any types of simplification or explication have been avoided as much as possible since this text demands an active involvement on the reader’s part and giving explanations does not correspond to the ideational level or the discourse structure. It may be noticed, for instance, that Ambrose (or the focalisor, or the narrator, or the implied author) does not explain anything. He merely reflects on what he feels and experiences. Whenever an element occurred that the target audience could not have been familiar with, it was, at the most, generalized, but never explicated.

# Appendix

## Source Text<sup>47</sup>

“Lost in the Funhouse”  
John Barth

For whom is the funhouse fun? Perhaps for lovers. For Ambrose it is a *place of fear and confusion*. He has come to the seashore with his family for the holiday, *the occasion of their visit is Independence Day, the most important secular holiday of the United States of America*. A single straight underline is the manuscript mark for italic type, *which in turn* is the printed equivalent to oral emphasis of words and phrases as well as the customary type for titles of complete works, not to mention. Italics are also employed, in fiction stories especially, for “outside,” intrusive, or artificial voices, such as radio announcements, the texts of telegrams and newspaper articles, et cetera. They should be used *sparingly*. If passages originally in roman type are italicized by someone repeating them, it’s customary to acknowledge the fact. *Italics mine*.

Ambrose was “at that awkward age.” His voice came out high-pitched as a child’s if he let himself get carried away; to be on the safe side, therefore, he moved and spoke with *deliberate calm* and *adult gravity*. Talking soberly of unimportant or irrelevant matters and listening consciously to the sound of your own voice are useful habits for maintaining control in this difficult interval. *En route* to Ocean City he sat in the back seat of the family car with his brother Peter, age fifteen, and Magda G —, age fourteen, a pretty girl and exquisite young lady, [72] who lived not far from them on B — Street in the town of D —, Maryland. Initials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. It is as if the author felt it necessary to delete the names for reasons of tact or legal liability. Interestingly, as with other aspects of realism, it is an *illusion* that is being enhanced, by purely artificial means. Is it likely, does it violate the principle of verisimilitude, that a thirteen-year-old boy could make such a sophisticated observation? A girl of fourteen is *the psychological coeval* of a boy of fifteen or sixteen; a thirteen-year-old boy, therefore, even one precocious in some other respects, might be three years *her emotional junior*.

Thrice a year — on Memorial, Independence, and Labor Days — the family visits Ocean City for the afternoon and evening. When Ambrose and Peter’s father was their age, the excursion was made by train, as mentioned in the novel *The 42nd Parallel* by John Dos Passos. Many families from the same neighborhood used to travel together, with dependent relatives and often with Negro servants; schoolfuls of children swarmed through the railway cars; everyone shared everyone else’s Maryland fried chicken, Virginia ham, deviled eggs, potato salad, beaten biscuits, iced tea. Nowadays (that is, in 19-- , the year of our story) the journey is made by automobile — more comfortably and quickly though without the extra fun though without the *camaraderie* of a general excursion. It’s all part of the deterioration of American life, their father declares; Uncle Karl supposes that when the boys take *their* families to Ocean City for the holidays they’ll fly in Autogiros. Their mother, sitting in the middle of the front seat like Magda in the second, only with her arms on the seat-back behind the men’s shoulders, wouldn’t want the good old days back again, the steaming trains and stuffy long dresses; on the other hand she can do without Autogiros, too, if she has to become a grandmother to fly in them.

Description of physical appearance and mannerisms is one of several standard methods of characterization used by writers [73] of fiction. It is also important to “keep the senses operating”; when a detail from one of the five senses, say visual, is “crossed” with a

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<sup>47</sup> The numbers in red indicate the page numbers in the original format.



detail from another, say auditory, the reader's imagination is oriented to the scene, perhaps unconsciously. This procedure may be compared to the way surveyors and navigators determine their positions by two or more compass bearings, a process known as triangulation. The brown hair on Ambrose's mother's forearms gleamed in the sun like. Though right-handed, she took her left arm from the seat back to press the dashboard cigar lighter for Uncle Karl. When the glass bead in its handle glowed red, the lighter was ready for use. The smell of Uncle Karl's cigar smoke reminded one of. The fragrance of the ocean came strong to the picnic ground where they always stopped for lunch, two miles inland from Ocean City. Having to pause for a full hour almost within sound of the breakers was difficult for Peter and Ambrose when they were younger; even at their present age it was not easy to keep their anticipation, *stimulated by the briny spume*, from turning into short temper. The Irish author James Joyce, in his unusual novel entitled *Ulysses*, now available in this country uses the adjectives *snot-green* and *scrotum-tightening* to describe the sea. Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory. Peter and Ambrose's father, while steering their black 1936 LaSalle sedan with one hand, could with the other remove the first cigarette from a white pack of Lucky Strikes and, more remarkably, light it with a match forefingered from its book and thumbed against the flint paper without being detached. The matchbook cover merely advertised U.S. War Bonds and Stamps. A fine metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech, in addition to its obvious "first-order" relevance to the thing it describes, will be seen upon reflection to have a second order of significance: it may be drawn from the *milieu* of the action, for example, or be particularly appropriate to the sensibility of the narrator, even hinting to the reader things of which the narrator is unaware; or it may cast further and subtler lights upon the things it describes, sometimes ironically qualifying the more evident sense of the comparison. [74]

To say that Ambrose's and Peter's mother was *pretty* is to accomplish nothing; the reader may acknowledge the proposition, but his imagination is not engaged. Besides, Magda was also pretty, yet in an altogether different way. Although she lived on B — Street she had very good manners and did better than average in school. Her figure was very well developed for her age. Her right hand lay casually on the plush upholstery of the seat, very near Ambrose's left leg, on which his own hand rested. The space between their legs, between her right and his left leg, was out of the line of sight of anyone sitting on the other side of Magda, as well as anyone glancing into the rear-view mirror. Uncle Karl's face resembled Peter's — rather, vice versa. Both had dark hair and eyes, short husky statures, deep voices. Magda's left hand was probably in a similar position on her left side. The boys' father is difficult to describe; no particular feature of his appearance or manner stood out. He wore glasses and was principal of a T County grade school. Uncle Karl was a masonry contractor.

Although Peter must have known as well as Ambrose that the latter, because of his position in the car, would be first to see the electrical towers of the power plant at V —, the halfway point of their trip, he leaned forward and slightly toward the center of the car and pretended to be looking for them through the flat pinewoods and tuckahoe creeks along the highway. For as long as the boys could remember, "Looking for the Towers" had been a feature of the first half of their excursions to Ocean City, "looking for the standpipe" of the second. Though the game was childish, their mother preserved the tradition of rewarding the first to see the Towers with a candy-bar or piece of fruit. She insisted now that Magda play the game; the prize, she said, was "something hard to get nowadays." Ambrose decided not to join in; he sat far back in his seat. Magda, like Peter, leaned forward. Two sets of straps were discernible through the shoulders of her sun dress; the inside right one, a brassiere-strap, was fastened or shortened with a small safety pin. The right armpit of her dress, presumably the [75] left as well, was damp with perspiration. The simple strategy for being first to spy the Towers, which Ambrose had understood by the age of four, was to sit on the right-hand side of the car. Whoever sat there, however, had also to put up with the worst of the sun, and so Ambrose, without mentioning the matter, chose sometimes the one and sometimes the other.

Not impossibly Peter had never caught on to the trick, or thought that his brother hadn't simply because Ambrose on occasion preferred shade to a Baby Ruth or tangerine.

The shade-sun situation didn't apply to the front seat, owing to the windshield; if anything the driver got more sun, since the person on the passenger side not only was shadowed below by the door and dashboard but might swing down his sun visor all the way too.

"Is that them?" Magda asked. Ambrose's mother teased the boys for letting Magda win, insinuating that "somebody [had] a girlfriend." Peter and Ambrose's father reached a long thin arm across their mother to butt his cigarette in the dashboard ashtray, under the lighter. The prize this time for seeing the Towers first was a banana. Their mother bestowed it after chiding their father for wasting a half-smoked cigarette when everything was so scarce. Magda, to take the prize, moved her hand from so near Ambrose's that he could have touched it as though accidentally. She offered to share the prize, things like that were so hard to find; but everyone insisted it was hers alone. Ambrose's mother sang an iambic trimeter couplet from a popular song, femininely rhymed:

"What's good is in the Army;  
What's left will never harm me.

Uncle Karl tapped his cigar ash out the ventilator window; some particles were sucked by the slipstream back into the car through the rear window on the passenger side. Magda demonstrated her ability to hold a banana in one hand and peel it with her teeth. She still sat forward; Ambrose pushed his glasses back onto the bridge of his nose with his left hand, which he [76] then negligently let fall to the seat cushion immediately behind her. He even permitted the single hair, gold, on the second joint of his thumb to brush the fabric of her skirt. Should she have sat back at that instant, his hand would have been caught under her.

Plush upholstery prickles uncomfortably through gabardine slacks in the July sun. The function of the *beginning* of a story is to introduce the principal characters, establish their initial relationships, set the scene for the main action, expose the background of the situation if necessary, plant motifs and foreshadowings where appropriate, and initiate the first complication or whatever of the "rising action." Actually, if one imagines a story called "The Funhouse," or "Lost in the Funhouse," the details of the drive to Ocean City don't seem especially relevant. The *beginning* should recount the events between Ambrose's first sight of the funhouse early in the afternoon and his entering it with Magda and Peter in the evening. The *middle* would narrate all relevant events from the time he goes in to the time he loses his way; middles have the double and contradictory function of delaying the climax while at the same time preparing the reader for it and fetching him to it. Then the *ending* would tell what Ambrose does while he's lost, how he finally finds his way out, and what everybody makes of the experience. So far there's been no real dialogue, very little sensory detail, and nothing in the way of a *theme*. And a long time has gone by already without anything happening; it makes a person wonder. We haven't even reached Ocean City yet: we will never get out of the funhouse.

The more closely an author identifies with the narrator, literally or metaphorically, the less advisable it is, as a rule, to use the first-person narrative viewpoint. Once three years previously the young people *aforementioned* played Niggers and Masters in the backyard; when it was Ambrose's turn to be Master and theirs to be Niggers Peter had to go serve his evening papers; Ambrose was afraid to punish Magda alone, but she led him to the whitewashed Torture Chamber between the [77] woodshed and the privy in the Slaves Quarters; there she knelt sweating among bamboo rakes and dusty Mason jars, pleadingly embraced his knees, and while bees droned in the lattice as if on an ordinary summer afternoon, purchased clemency at a surprising price set by herself. Doubtless she remembered nothing of this event; Ambrose on the other hand seemed unable to forget the least detail of

his life. He even recalled how, standing beside himself with awed impersonality in the reeky heat, he'd stared the while at an empty cigar box in which Uncle Karl kept stone-cutting chisels: beneath the words *El Producto*, a laureled, loose-toga'd lady regarded the sea from a marble bench; beside her, forgotten or not yet turned to, was a five-stringed lyre. Her chin reposed on the back of her right hand; her left depended negligently from the bench-arm. The lower half of scene and lady was peeled away; the words EXAMINED BY — were inked there into the wood. Nowadays cigar boxes are made of pasteboard. Ambrose wondered what Magda would have done, Ambrose wondered what Magda would do when she sat back on his hand as he resolved she should. Be angry. Make a teasing joke of it. Give no sign at all. For a long time she leaned forward, playing cow-poker with Peter against Uncle Karl and Mother and watching for the first sign of Ocean City. At nearly the same instant, picnic ground and Ocean City standpipe hove into view; an Amoco filling station on their side of the road cost Mother and Uncle Karl fifty cows and the game; Magda bounced back, clapping her right hand on Mother's right arm; Ambrose moved clear "in the nick of time."

At this rate our hero, at this rate our protagonist will remain in the funhouse forever. Narrative ordinarily consists of alternating dramatization and summarization. One symptom of nervous tension, paradoxically, is repeated and violent yawning; neither Peter nor Magda nor Uncle Karl nor Mother reacted in this manner. Although they were no longer small children, Peter and Ambrose were each given a dollar to spend on boardwalk amusements in addition to what money of their own they'd brought along. Magda too, though she protested she had ample [78] spending money. The boys' mother made a little scene out of distributing the bills; she pretended that her sons and Magda were small children and cautioned them not to spend the sum too quickly or in one place. Magda promised with a merry laugh and, having both hands free, took the bill with her left. Peter laughed also and pledged in a falsetto to be a good boy. His imitation of a child was not clever. The boys' father was tall and thin, balding, fair-complexioned. Assertions of that sort are not effective; the reader may acknowledge the proposition, but. We should be much farther along than we are; something has gone wrong; not much of the preliminary rambling seems relevant. Yet everyone begins in the same place; how is it that most go along without difficulty but a few lose their way?

"Stay out from under the boardwalk," Uncle Karl growled from the side of his mouth. The boys' mother pushed his shoulder *in mock annoyance*. They were all standing before Fat May the Laughing Lady who advertised the funhouse. Larger than life, Fat May mechanically shook, rocked on her heels, slapped her thighs while recorded laughter — uproarious, female — came amplified from a hidden loudspeaker. It chuckled, wheezed, wept; tried in vain to catch its breath; tittered, groaned, exploded raucous and anew. You couldn't hear it without laughing yourself, no matter how you felt. Father came back from talking to a Coast-Guardsman on duty and reported that the surf was spoiled with crude oil from tankers recently torpedoed offshore. Lumps of it, difficult to remove, made tarry tidelines on the beach and stuck on swimmers. Many bathed in the surf nevertheless and came out speckled; others paid to use a municipal pool and only sunbathed on the beach. We would do the latter. We would do the latter. We would do the latter.

Under the boardwalk, matchbook covers, grainy other things. What is the story's theme? Ambrose is ill. He perspires in the dark passages; candied apples-on-a-stick, delicious-looking, disappointing to eat. Funhouses need men's and ladies' rooms at intervals. Others perhaps have also vomited in corners and corridors; may even have had bowel movements liable to be [79] stepped in in the dark. The word *fuck* suggests suction and/or and/or flatulence. Mother and Father; grandmothers and grandfathers on both sides; great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers on four sides, et cetera. Count a generation as thirty years: in approximately the year when Lord Baltimore was granted charter to the province of Maryland by Charles I, five hundred twelve women — English, Welsh, Bavarian, Swiss — of every class and character, received into themselves the penises the intromittent organs of five hundred twelve men, ditto, in every circumstance and posture, to conceive the five hundred

twelve ancestors and the two hundred fifty-six ancestors of the et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera of the author, of the narrator, of this story, *Lost in the Funhouse*. In alleyways, ditches, canopy beds, pinewoods, bridal suites, ship's cabins, coach-and-fours, coaches-and-four, sultry toolsheds; on the cold sand under boardwalks, littered with *El Producto* cigar butts, treasured with Lucky Strike cigarette stubs, Coca-Cola caps, gritty turds, cardboard lollipop sticks, matchbook covers warning that A Slip of the Lip Can Sink a Ship. The shluppish whisper, continuous as seawash round the globe, tidelike falls and rises with the circuit of dawn and dusk.

Magda's teeth. She *was* left-handed. Perspiration. They've gone all the way, through, Magda and Peter, they've been waiting for hours with Mother and Uncle Karl while Father searches for his lost son; they draw french-fried potatoes from a paper cup and shake their heads. They've named the children they'll one day have and bring to Ocean City on holidays. Can spermatozoa properly be thought of as male animalcules when there are no female spermatozoa? They grope through hot, dark windings, past Love's Tunnel's fearsome obstacles. Some perhaps lose their way.

Peter suggested then and there that they do the funhouse; he had been through it before, so had Magda, Ambrose hadn't and suggested, his voice cracking on account of Fat May's laughter, that they swim first. All were chuckling, couldn't help [80] it; Ambrose's father, Ambrose's and Peter's father came up grinning like a lunatic with two boxes of syrup-coated popcorn, one for Mother, one for Magda; the men were to help themselves. Ambrose walked on Magda's right; being by nature left-handed, she carried the box in her left hand. Up front the situation was reversed.

"What are you limping for?" Magda inquired of Ambrose. He supposed in a husky tone that his foot had gone to sleep in the car. Her teeth flashed. "Pins and needles?" It was the honeysuckle on the lattice of the former privy that drew the bees. Imagine being stung there. How long is this going to take?

The adults decided to forgo the pool; but Uncle Karl insisted they change into swimsuits and do the beach. "He wants to watch the pretty girls," Peter teased, and ducked behind Magda from Uncle Karl's pretended wrath. "You've got all the pretty girls you need right here," Magda declared, and Mother said: "Now that's the gospel truth." Magda scolded Peter, who reached over her shoulder to sneak some popcorn. "Your brother and father aren't getting any." Uncle Karl wondered if they were going to have fireworks that night, what with the shortages. It wasn't the shortages, Mr. M -- replied; Ocean City had fireworks from pre-war. But it was too risky on account of the enemy submarines, some people thought.

"Don't seem like Fourth of July without fireworks," said Uncle Karl. The inverted tag in dialogue writing is still considered permissible with proper names or epithets, but sounds old-fashioned with personal pronouns. "We'll have 'em again soon enough," predicted the boys' father. Their mother declared she could do without fireworks: they reminded her too much of the real thing. Their father said all the more reason to shoot off a few now and again. Uncle Karl asked *rhetorically* who needed reminding, just look at people's hair and skin.

"The oil, yes," said Mrs. M--.

Ambrose had a pain in his stomach and so didn't swim but enjoyed watching the others. He and his father burned red easily. Magda's figure was exceedingly well developed for her age. [81] She too declined to swim, and got mad, and became angry when Peter attempted to drag her into the pool. She always swam, he insisted; what did she mean not swim? Why did a person come to Ocean City?

"Maybe I want to lay here with Ambrose," Magda teased.

Nobody likes a pedant.

"Aha," said Mother. Peter grabbed Magda by one ankle and ordered Ambrose to grab the other. She squealed and rolled over on the beach blanket. Ambrose pretended to help hold her back. Her tan was darker than even Mother's and Peter's. "Help out, Uncle Karl!" Peter cried. Uncle Karl went to seize the other ankle. Inside the top of her swimsuit, however, you



could see the line where the sunburn ended and, when she hunched her shoulders and squealed again, one nipple's auburn edge. Mother made them behave themselves. "You should certainly know," she said to Uncle Karl. Archly. "That when a lady says she doesn't feel like swimming, a gentleman doesn't ask questions." Uncle Karl said excuse *him*; Mother winked at Magda; Ambrose blushed; stupid Peter kept saying "Phooey on *feel like!*" and tugging at Magda's ankle; then even he got the point, and cannonballed with a holler into the pool.

"I swear," Magda said, in mock *in feigned* exasperation.

The diving would make a suitable literary symbol. To go off the high board you had to wait in a line along the poolside and up the ladder. Fellows tickled girls and goosed one another and shouted to the ones at the top to hurry up, or razzed them for bellyflopers. Once on the springboard some took a great while posing or clowning or deciding on a dive or getting up their nerve; others ran right off. Especially among the younger fellows the idea was to strike the funniest pose or do the craziest stunt as you fell, a thing that got harder to do as you kept on and kept on. But whether you hollered *Geronimo!* or *Sieg heil!*, held your nose or "rode a bicycle," pretended to be shot or did a perfect jackknife or changed your mind halfway down and ended up with nothing, it was over in two [82] seconds, after all that wait. Spring, pose, splash. Spring, neat-o, splash, Spring, aw foey, splash.

The grown-ups had gone on; Ambrose wanted to converse with Magda; she was remarkably well developed for her age; it was said that that came from rubbing with a turkish towel, and there were other theories. Ambrose could think of nothing to say except how good a diver Peter was, who was showing off for her benefit. You could pretty well tell by looking at their bathing suits and arm muscles how far along the different fellows were. Ambrose was glad he hadn't gone in swimming, the cold water shrank you up so. Magda pretended to be uninterested in the diving; she probably weighed as much as he did. If you knew your way around in the funhouse like your own bedroom, you could wait until a girl came along and then slip away without ever getting caught, even if her boyfriend was right with her. She'd think *he* did it! It would be better to be the boyfriend, and act outraged, and tear the funhouse apart.

Not act; *be*.

"He's a master diver," Ambrose said. In feigned admiration. "You really have to slave away at it to get that good." What would it matter anyhow if he asked her right out whether she remembered, even teased her with it as Peter would have?

There's no point in going farther; this isn't getting anybody anywhere; they haven't even come to the funhouse yet. Ambrose is off the track, in some new or old part of the place that's not supposed to be used; he strayed into it by some one-in-a-million chance, like the time the roller-coaster car left the tracks in the nineteen-teens against all the laws of physics and sailed over the boardwalk in the dark. And they can't locate him because they don't know where to look. Even the designer and operator have forgotten this other part, that winds around on itself like a whelk shell. That winds around the right part like the snakes on Mercury's caduceus. Some people, perhaps, don't "hit their stride" until their twenties, when the growing-up business is over and women appreciate other things besides wisecracks and teasing and strutting. Peter didn't have one [83]-tenth the imagination *he* had, not one-tenth. Peter did this naming-their-children thing as a joke, making up names like Aloysius and Murgatroyd, but Ambrose knew *exactly* how it would feel to be married and have children of your own, and be a loving husband and father, and go comfortably to work in the mornings and to bed with your wife at night, and wake up with her there. With a breeze coming through the sash and birds and mockingbirds singing in the Chinese-cigar trees. His eyes watered, there aren't enough ways to say that. He would be quite famous in his line of work. Whether Magda was his wife or not, one evening when he was wise-lined and gray at the temples he'd smile gravely, at a fashionable dinner party and remind her of his youthful passion. The time they went with his family to Ocean City; the *erotic fantasies* he used to have about her. How

long ago it seemed, and childish! Yet tender, too, *n'est-ce pas?* Would she have imagined that the world-famous whatever remembered how many strings were on the lyre on the bench beside the girl on the label of the cigar box he'd stared at in the tool shed at age ten while, she, age eleven. Even then he had felt *wise beyond his years*; he'd stroked her hair and said in his deepest voice and correctest English, as to a dear child: "I shall never forget this moment."<sup>48</sup>

But though he had breathed heavily, groaned as if ecstatic, what he'd really felt throughout was an odd detachment, as though someone else were Master. Strive as he might to be transported, he heard his mind take notes upon the scene: *This is what they call passion. I am experiencing it.* Many of the digger machines were out of order in the penny arcades and could not be repaired or replaced for the duration. Moreover the prizes, made now in USA, were less interesting than formerly, pasteboard items for the most part, and some of the machines wouldn't work on white pennies. The gypsy fortuneteller machine might have provided a foreshadowing of the climax of this story if Ambrose had operated it. It was even dilapidateder than most: the silver coating was worn off the brown metal handles, the glass windows around the dummy [84] were cracked and taped, her kerchiefs and silks long faded. If a man lived by himself, he could take a department-store mannequin with flexible joints and modify her in certain ways. *However:* by the time he was that old he'd have a real woman. There was a machine that stamped your name around a white-metal coin with a star in the middle: A . His son would be the second, and when the lad reached thirteen or so he would put a strong arm around his shoulder and tell him calmly: "It is perfectly normal. We have all been through it. It will not last forever." Nobody knew how to be what they were right. He'd smoke a pipe, teach his son how to fish and softcrab, assure him he needn't worry about himself. Magda would certainly give, Magda would certainly yield a great deal of milk, although guilty of occasional solecisms. It don't taste so bad. Suppose the lights came on now!

*The day wore on.* You think you're yourself, but there are other persons in you. Ambrose gets hard when Ambrose doesn't want to, *and obversely.* Ambrose watches them disagree; Ambrose watches him watch. In the fun-house mirror room you can't see yourself go on forever, because no matter how you stand, your head gets in the way. Even if you had a glass periscope, the image of your eye would cover up the thing you really wanted to see. The police will come; there'll be a story in the papers. That must be where it happened. Unless he can find a surprise exit, an unofficial backdoor or escape hatch opening on an alley, say, and then stroll up to the family in front of the funhouse and ask where everybody's been; *he's* been out of the place for ages. That's just where it happened, in that last lighted room: Peter and Magda found the right exit; he found one that you weren't supposed to find and strayed off into the works somewhere. In a perfect funhouse you'd be able to go only one way, like the divers off the high board; getting lost would be impossible; the doors and halls would work like minnow traps on the valves in veins.

On account of German U-boats, Ocean City was "brownd out": streetlights were shaded on the seaward side; shop-[85]windows and boardwalk amusement places were kept dim, not to silhouette tankers and Liberty ships for torpedoing. In a short story about Ocean City, Maryland, during World War II, the author could make use of the image of sailors on leave in the penny arcades and shooting galleries, sighting through the crosshairs of toy machine guns at swastika'd subs, while out in the black Atlantic a U-boat skipper squints through his periscope at real ships outlined by the glow of penny arcades. After dinner the family strolled back to the amusement end of the boardwalk. The boys' father had burnt red as always and was masked with Noxzema, a minstrel in reverse. The grownups stood at the end of the boardwalk where the Hurricane of '33 had cut an inlet from the ocean to Assawoman Bay.

"Pronounced with a long o," Uncle Karl reminded Magda with a wink. His shirt

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<sup>48</sup> The passage that was translated for this thesis ends here.

sleeves were rolled up; Mother punched his brown biceps with the arrowed heart on it and said his mind was naughty. Fat May's laugh came suddenly from the funhouse, as if she'd just got the joke; the family laughed too at the coincidence. Ambrose went under the boardwalk to search for out-of-town matchbook covers with the aid of his pocket flashlight; he looked out from the edge of the North American continent and wondered how far their laughter carried over the water. Spies in rubber rafts; survivors in lifeboats. If the joke had been beyond his understanding, he could have said:

*"The laughter was over his head."* And let the reader see the serious wordplay on second reading.

He turned the flashlight on and then off at once even before the woman whooped. He sprang away, heart a thud, dropping the light. What had the man grunted? Perspiration drenched and chilled him by the time he scrambled up to the family. "See anything?" his father asked. His voice wouldn't come; he shrugged and violently brushed sand from his pants legs.

"Let's ride the old flying horses!" Magda cried. I'll never be an author. It's been forever already, everybody's gone home, Ocean City's deserted, the ghost-crabs are tickling across the beach and down the littered cold streets. And the empty [86] halls of clapboard hotels and abandoned funhouses. A tidal wave; an enemy air raid; a monster-crab swelling like an island from the sea. *The inhabitants fled in terror.* Magda clung to his trouser leg; he alone knew the maze's secret. "He gave his life that we might live," said Uncle Karl with a scowl of pain, as he. The fellow's hands had been tattooed; the woman's legs, the woman's fat white legs had. *An astonishing coincidence.* He yearned to tell Peter. He wanted to throw up for excitement. They hadn't even chased him. He wished he were dead.

One possible ending would be to have Ambrose come across another lost person in the dark. They'd match their wits together against the funhouse, struggle like Ulysses past obstacle after obstacle, help and encourage each other. Or a girl. By the time they found the exit they'd be closest friends, sweethearts if it were a girl; they'd know each other's inmost souls, be bound together *by the cement of shared adventure*; then they'd emerge into the light and it would turn out that his friend was a Negro. A blind girl. President Roosevelt's son. Ambrose's former archenemy

Shortly after the mirror room he'd groped along a musty corridor, his heart already misgiving him at the absence of phosphorescent arrows and other signs. He'd found a crack of light — not a door, it turned out, but a seam between the ply board wall panels — and squinting up to it, espied a small old man, *in appearance not unlike* the photographs at home of Ambrose's late grandfather, nodding upon a stool beneath a bare, speckled bulb. A crude panel of toggle- and knife-switches hung beside the open fuse box near his head; elsewhere in the little room were wooden levers and ropes belayed to boat cleats. At the time, Ambrose wasn't lost enough to rap or call; later he couldn't find that crack. Now it seemed to him that he'd possibly dozed off for a few minutes somewhere along the way; certainly he was exhausted from the afternoon's sunshine and the evening's problems; he couldn't be sure he hadn't dreamed part or all of the sight. Had an old black wall fan droned like bees and shimmied two flypaper streamers? Had the funhouse [87] operator — gentle, somewhat sad and tired-appearing, in expression not unlike the photographs at home of Ambrose's late Uncle Konrad — murmured in his sleep? Is there really such a person as Ambrose, or is he a figment of the author's imagination? Was it Assawoman Bay or Sinepuxent? Are there other errors of fact in this fiction? Was there another sound besides the little slap slap of thigh on ham, like water sucking at the chine-boards of a skiff?

When you're lost, the smartest thing to do is stay put till you're found hollering if necessary. But to holler guarantees humiliation as well as rescue; keeping silent permits some saving of face — you can act surprised at the fuss when your rescuers find you and swear you weren't lost, if they do. What's more you might find your own way yet, *however belatedly.*

"Don't tell me your foot's still asleep!" Magda exclaimed as the three young people

walked from the inlet to the area set aside for ferris wheels, carrousel, and other carnival rides, they having decided in favor of the vast and ancient merry-go-round instead of the funhouse. What a sentence, everything was wrong from the outset. People don't know what to make of him, he doesn't know what to make of himself, he's only thirteen, *athletically and socially inept*, not astonishingly bright, but there are antennae; he has..., some sort of receivers in his head; things speak to him, he understands more than he should, the world winks at him through its objects, grabs grinning at his coat. Everybody else is in on some secret he doesn't know; they've forgotten to tell him. Through simple *procrastination* his mother put off his baptism until this year. Everyone else had it done as a baby; he'd assumed the same of himself, as had his mother, so she claimed, until it was time for him to join Grace Methodist-Protestant and the oversight came out. He was mortified, but pitched sleepless through his private catechizing, intimidated by the ancient mysteries, a thirteen year old would never say that, resolved to experience conversion like St. Augustine. When the water touched his brow and Adam's sin left him, he contrived by a strain like defecation to bring tears into his [88] eyes — but felt nothing. There was some simple, radical difference about him; he hoped it was genius, feared it was madness, devoted himself to amiability and inconspicuousness. Alone on the seawall near his house he was seized by the terrifying transports he'd thought to find in tool shed, in Communion-cup. The grass was alive! The town, the river, himself, were not imaginary; time roared in his ears like wind; the world was *going on!* This part ought to be dramatized. The Irish author James Joyce once wrote. Ambrose M — is going to scream.

There is no *texture of rendered sensory detail*, for one thing. The faded distorting mirrors beside Fat May; the impossibility of choosing a mount when one had but a single ride on the great carrousel; the *vertigo attendant on his recognition* that Ocean City was worn out, the place of fathers and grandfathers, straw-boated men and parasoled ladies survived by their amusements. Money spent, the three paused at Peter's insistence beside Fat May to watch the girls get their skirts blown up. The object was to tease Magda, who said: "I swear, Peter M —, you've got a one-track mind! Amby and me aren't *interested* in such things." In the tumbling-barrel, too, just inside the Devil's mouth enhance to the funhouse, the girls were upended and their boyfriends and others could see up their dresses if they cared to. Which was the whole point, Ambrose realized. Of the entire funhouse! If you looked around, you noticed that almost all the people on the boardwalk were paired off into Couples except the small children; in a way, that was the whole point of Ocean City! If you had X-ray eyes and could see everything going on at that instant under the boardwalk and in all the hotel rooms and cars and alleyways, you'd realize that all that normally *showed*, like restaurants and dance halls and clothing and test-your-strength machines, was merely preparation and intermission. Fat May screamed.

Because he watched the going-ons from the corner of his eye, it was Ambrose who spied the half-dollar on the boardwalk near the tumbling-barrel. Losers weepers. The first time he'd heard some people moving through a corridor not far away, [89] just after he'd lost sight of the crack of light, he'd decided not to call to them, for fear they'd guess he was scared and poke fun; it sounded like roughnecks; he'd hoped they'd come by and he could follow in the dark without their knowing. Another time he'd heard just one person, unless he imagined it, bumping along as if on the other side of the plywood; perhaps Peter coming back for him, or Father, or Magda lost too. Or the owner and operator of the funhouse. He'd called out once, as though merrily:

"Anybody know where the heck we are?" But the query was too stiff, his voice cracked, when the sounds stopped he was terrified: maybe it was a queer who waited for fellows to get lost, or a longhaired filthy monster that lived in some cranny of the funhouse. He stood rigid for hours it seemed like, scarcely respiring. His future was shockingly clear, in outline. He tried holding his breath to the point of unconsciousness. There ought to be a button you could push to end your life absolutely without pain; disappear in a flick, like turning out a light. He would push it instantly! He despised Uncle Karl. But he despised his father too, for not being what he was supposed to be. Perhaps his father hated *his* father, and



so on, and his son would hate him, and so on. Instantly!

Naturally he didn't have nerve enough to ask Magda to go through the funhouse with him. With incredible nerve and to everyone's surprise he invited Magda, quietly and politely, to go through the funhouse with him. "I warn you, I've never been through it before," he added, *laughing easily*; "but I reckon we can manage somehow. The important thing to remember, after all, is that it's meant to be a funhouse; that is, a place of amusement. If people really got lost or injured or too badly frightened in it, the owner'd go out of business. There'd even be lawsuits. No character in a work of fiction can make a speech this long without interruption or acknowledgment from the other characters."

Mother teased Uncle Karl: "Three's a crowd, I always heard." But actually Ambrose was relieved that Peter now had a quarter too. Nothing was what it looked like. Every instant, [90] under the surface of the Atlantic Ocean, millions of living animals devoured one another. Pilots were falling in flames over Europe; women were being forcibly raped in the South Pacific. His father should have taken him aside and said: "There is a simple secret to getting through the funhouse, as simple as being first to see the Towers. Here it is. Peter does not know it; neither does your Uncle Karl. You and I are different. Not surprisingly, you've often wished you weren't. Don't think I haven't noticed how unhappy your childhood has been! But you'll understand, when I tell you, why it had to be kept secret until now. And you won't regret not being like your brother and your uncle. *On the contrary!*" If you knew all the stories behind all the people on the boardwalk, you'd see that *nothing* was what it looked like. Husbands and wives often hated each other; parents didn't necessarily love their children; et cetera. A child took things for granted because he had nothing to compare his life to and everybody acted as if things were as they should be. Therefore each saw himself as the hero of the story, when the truth might turn out to be that he's the villain, or the coward. And there wasn't one thing you could do about it!

Hunchbacks, fat ladies, fools — that no one chose what he was was unbearable. In the movies he'd meet a beautiful young girl in the funhouse; they'd have hairs-breadth escapes from real dangers; he'd do and say the right things; she also; in the end they'd be lovers; their dialogue lines would match up; he'd be perfectly at ease; she'd not only like him well enough, she'd think he was *marvelous*; she'd lie awake thinking about *him*, instead of vice versa — the way *his* face looked in different lights and how he stood and exactly what he'd said — and yet that would be only one small episode in his wonderful life, among many many others. Not a *turning point* at all. What had happened in the tool shed was nothing. He hated, he loathed his parents! One reason for not writing a lost-in-the-funhouse story is that either everybody's felt what Ambrose feels, in which case it goes without saying, or else no normal person feels such things, in which case Ambrose is a freak. "Is anything more [91] tiresome, in fiction, than the problems of sensitive adolescents?" And it's all too long and rambling, as if the author. For all a person knows the first time through, the end could be just around any corner; perhaps, *not impossibly* it's been within reach any number of times. On the other hand he may be scarcely past the start, with everything yet to get through, an intolerable idea.

*Fill in:* His father's raised eyebrows when he announced his decision to do the funhouse with Magda. Ambrose understands now, but didn't then, that his father was wondering whether he knew what the funhouse was *for* — especially since he didn't object, as he should have, when Peter decided to come along too. The ticket-woman, witchlike, mortifying him when inadvertently he gave her his name-coin instead of the half-dollar, then unkindly calling Magda's attention to the birthmark on his temple: "Watch out for him, girlie, he's a marked man!" She wasn't even cruel, he understood, only vulgar and insensitive. Somewhere in the world there was a young woman with such splendid understanding that she'd see him entire, like a poem or story, and find his words so valuable after all that when he confessed his apprehensions she would explain why they were in fact the very things that made him precious to her . . . and to Western Civilization! There was no such girl, the simple truth being. Violent yawns as they approached the mouth. Whispered advice from an old-

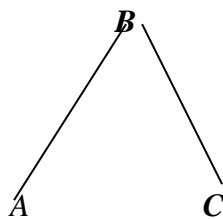
timer on a bench near the barrel: “Go crabwise and ye’ll get an eyeful without upsetting!” Composure vanished at the first pitch: Peter hollered joyously, Magda tumbled, shrieked, clutched her skirt; Ambrose scrambled crabwise, tight-lipped with terror, was soon out, watched his dropped name-coin slide among the couples. Shame-faced he saw that to get through expeditiously was not the point; Peter feigned assistance in order to trip Magda up, shouted “I see Christmas!” when her legs went flying. The old man, his latest betrayer, cackled approval. A dim hail then of black-thread cobwebs and recorded gibber: he took Magda’s elbow to stead~ her against revolving discs set in the slanted floor to throw your feet out from under, and explained to her [92] in a calm, deep voice his theory that each phase of the funhouse was triggered either automatically, by a series of photoelectric devices, or else manually by operators stationed at peepholes. But he lost his voice thrice as the discs unbalanced him; Magda was anyhow squealing; but at one point she clutched him about the waist to keep from falling, and her right cheek pressed for a moment against his belt-buckle. Heroically he drew her up, it was his chance to clutch her close as if for support and say: “I love you.” He even put an arm lightly about the small of her back before a sailor-and-girl pitched into them from behind, sorely treading his left big toe and knocking Magda asprawl with them. The sailor’s girl was a string-haired hussy with a loud laugh and light blue drawers; Ambrose realized that he wouldn’t have said “I love you” anyhow, and was smitten with self-contempt. How much better it would be to be that common sailor! A wiry little Seaman 3rd, the fellow squeezed a girl to each side and stumbled hilarious into the mirror room, closer to Magda in thirty seconds than Ambrose had got in thirteen years. She giggled at something the fellow said to Peter; she drew her hair from her eyes with a movement so womanly it struck Ambrose’s heart; Peter’s smacking her backside then seemed particularly coarse. But Magda made a pleased indignant face and cried, “All right for *you*, mister!” and pursued Peter into the maze without a backward glance. The sailor followed after, leisurely, drawing his girl against his hip; Ambrose understood not only that they were all so relieved to be rid of his burdensome company that they didn’t even notice his absence, but that he himself shared their relief. Stepping from the treacherous passage at last into the mirror-maze, he saw once again, more clearly than ever, how readily he deceived himself into supposing he was a person. He even foresaw, wincing at his dreadful self-knowledge, that he would repeat the deception, at ever-rarer intervals, all his wretched life, so fearful were the alternatives. Fame, madness, suicide; perhaps all three. It’s not believable that so young a boy could articulate that reflection, and in fiction the merely true must always yield to the plausible. [93] Moreover, the symbolism is in places heavy-footed. Yet Ambrose M —understood, as few adults do, that the famous loneliness of the great was no popular myth but a general truth — furthermore, that it was as much cause as effect.

All the preceding except the last few sentences is exposition that should’ve been done earlier or interspersed with the present action instead of lumped together. No reader would put up with so much with such *prolixity*. It’s interesting that Ambrose’s father, though presumably an intelligent man (as indicated by his role as grade-school principal), neither encouraged nor discouraged his sons at all in any way — as if he either didn’t care about them or cared all right but didn’t know how to act. If this fact should contribute to one of them’s becoming a celebrated but wretchedly unhappy scientist, was it a good thing or not? He too might someday face the question; it would be useful to know whether it had tortured his father for years, for example, or never once crossed his mind.

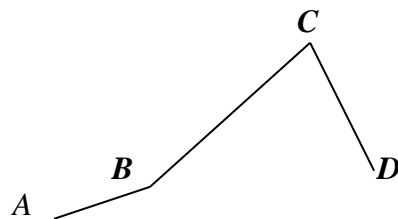
In the maze two important things happened. First, our hero found a name-coin someone else had lost or discarded: AMBROSE, suggestive of the famous lightship and of his late grandfather’s favorite dessert, which his mother used to prepare on special occasions out of coconut, oranges, grapes, and what else. Second, as he wondered at the endless replication of his image in the mirrors, second, as he *lost himself in the reflection* that the necessity for an observer makes perfect observation impossible, better make him eighteen at least, yet that would render other things unlikely, he heard Peter and Magda chuckling somewhere together

in the maze. “Here!” “No, here!” they shouted to each other; Peter said, “Where’s Amby?” Magda murmured “Amb?” Peter called. In a pleased, friendly voice. He didn’t reply. The truth was, his brother was a *happy-go-lucky youngster* who’d’ve been better off with a regular brother of his own, but who seldom complained of his lot and was generally cordial. Ambrose’s throat ached; there aren’t enough different ways to say that. He stood quietly while the two young people giggled and thumped through the glittering maze, hurrah’d their dis[94]covery of its exit, cried out in joyful alarm at what next beset them. Then he set his mouth and followed after, as he supposed, took a wrong turn, strayed into the pass *wherein he lingers yet*.

The action of conventional dramatic narrative may be represented by a diagram called Freitag’s Triangle:



or more accurately by a variant of that diagram:



in which *AB* represents the exposition, *B* the introduction of conflict, *BC* the “rising action,” complication, or development of the conflict, *C* the climax, or turn of the action, regard this pattern as an absolute necessity, like many other conventions it became conventional because great numbers of people over many years learned by trial and error that it was effective; one ought not to forsake it, therefore, unless one wishes to forsake as well the effect of drama or has clear cause to feel that deliberate violation of the “normal” pattern can better can better effect that effect. This can’t go on much longer; it can go on forever. He died telling stories to himself in the dark; years later, when that vast unsuspected area of the funhouse came to light, the first expedition found his skeleton in one of its labyrinthine corridors and mistook it for part of the entertainment. He died of starvation telling himself stories in the dark; but unbeknownst unbeknownst to him, an assistant operator of the funhouse, happening to overhear him, crouched just behind the ply board partition and wrote down his every word. The operator’s daughter, an exquisite young woman with a figure unusually well developed for her age, [95] crouched just behind the partition and transcribed his every word. Though she had never laid eyes on him, she recognized that here was one of Western Culture’s truly great imaginations, the eloquence of whose suffering would be an inspiration to unnumbered. And her heart was torn between her love for the unfortunate young man (yes, she loved him, though she had never laid though she knew him only — but how well! — through his words, and the deep, calm voice in which he spoke them) between her love et cetera and her womanly intuition that only in suffering and isolation could he give voice et cetera. Lone dark dying. Quietly she kissed the rough ply board, and a tear fell upon the page. Where she had written in shorthand *Where she had written in shorthand* Where she had written in shorthand *Where she* et cetera. A long time ago we should have passed the apex

of Freitag's Triangle and made brief work of the *dénouement*; the plot doesn't rise by meaningful steps but winds upon itself, digresses, retreats, hesitates, sighs, collapses, expires. The climax of the story must be its protagonist's discovery of a way to get through the funhouse. But he had found none, may have ceased to search.

What relevance does the war have to the story? Should there be fireworks outside or not?

Ambrose wandered, languished, dozed. Now and then he fell into his habit of rehearsing to himself the unadventurous story of his life, narrated from the third-person point of view, from his earliest memory parenthesis of maple leaves stirring in the summer breath of tidewater Maryland end of parenthesis to the present moment. Its principal events, on this telling, would appear to have been *A, B, C, and D.*

He imagined himself years hence, successful, married, at ease in the world, the trials of his adolescence far behind him. He has come to the seashore with his family for the holiday: how Ocean City has changed! But at one seldom at one ill-frequented end of the boardwalk a few derelict. amusements survive from times gone by: the great carrousel from the turn of! the century, with its monstrous griffins and mechanical concert band; the [96] roller coaster rumored since 1916 to have been condemned; the mechanical shooting gallery in which only the image of our enemies changed: His own son laughs with Fat May and wants to know what a funhouse is; Ambrose hugs the sturdy lad close and smiles around his pipe stem at his wife.

The family's going home. Mother sits between Father and Uncle Karl, who teases him good-naturedly who chuckles over the fact that the comrade with whom he'd fought his way shoulder to shoulder through the funhouse had turned out to be a blind Negro girl — to their mutual discomfort, as they'd opened their souls. But such are the walls of custom, which even. Whose arm is where? How must it feel. He dreams of a funhouse vaster by' far than any yet constructed; but by then they may be out of fashion, like~ steamboats and excursion trains. Already quaint and seedy: the draped ladies on the frieze of the carrousel are his father's father's mooncheeked dreams; if he thinks of it more he will vomit his apple-on-a-stick.

He wonders: will he become a regular person? Something has gone wrong; his vaccination didn't take; at the Boy-Scout initiation campfire he only pretended to be deeply moved, as he pretends to this hour that it is not so bad after all in the funhouse, and that he has a little limp. How long will it last? He envisions a truly astonishing funhouse, incredibly complex yet utterly controlled from a great central switchboard like the console of a pipe organ. Nobody had enough imagination. He could design such a place himself, wiring and all, and he's only thirteen years old. He would be its operator: panel lights would show what was up in every cranny of its cunning of its multivarious vastness; a switch-flick would ease this fellow's way, complicate that's, to balance things out; if anyone seemed lost or frightened, all the operator had to do was.

He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator — though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed. [97] (1968)

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