Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol.3, No.1, pp.1-18, March 2015
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

CONFLICTING SCRIPTS: IDEOLOGY, STATISM, AND RHETORIC IN E. L. DOCTOROW'S *THE BOOK OF DANIEL*

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ABSTRACT: *Ideology, statism and rhetoric all have roots in acting. They all play a crucial role in shaping the individual through language and make assertions concerning reality for purposes of persuading an audience. Like the state, which through ideology exploits its immense power over the citizens to have a prosperous country, the playwright through the manuscript precisely outlines the actors' lines to produce a consistent, booming act. And both the citizen and the actor are willing to abide the conventions imposed by the state or the playwright. Likewise, the structuralists' approach guides the reader towards a firm and unified "truth" or "reality" dictated by language. Rhetoric, however, concentrates on the free ability of the individual, whether he is a citizen, a playwright-actor, or reader to use language effectively and freely to bring about a change in the audience's positions. Doctrines, roles and texts are open to a polarity of interpretations. These propositions are particularly ancillary to understanding Doctorow's The Book of Daniel. In this paper, I will discuss a few major issues: what Doctorow tries to discover through the medium of acting; how it is reflected in his treatment of the main themes and characters; and how it affects the narrative point of view.*

KEYWORDS: Ideology; statism; rhetoric; acting; structuralism; reader-oriented theories and narration.

INTRODUCTION

Ideology ("the body of doctrine, myth, belief, etc., that guides an individual, social movement, institution, class, or large group,") statism ("the principle or policy of concentrating extensive economic, political, and related controls in the state at the cost of individual liberty,") and rhetoric, the art of using fine language, all have roots in acting (*Dictionary.com.*). They all play a crucial role in shaping the individual through language and make assertions concerning reality for purposes of persuading an audience.

Like the state, which through ideology exploits its immense power over the citizens to have a prosperous country, the playwright through the manuscript precisely outlines the actors' lines to produce a consistent, booming act. And vice versa, both the citizen and the actor follow the roles assigned to them. Still, they believe they freely choose their roles when in fact they function under the impositions of well-observed guidelines.

Likewise, the structuralists' approach reconfirms the solid ties between signifier and signified in a dictatorial manner forcing all discourse into one meaning dictated by language, which precedes every single utterance. Hence, the writer's or the reader's experience do not influence the meaning and the moment of the text's production or its reception are not important.

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Rhetoric, however, concentrates on the free ability of the individual, i. e. playwright-actor to use language effectively to bring about a change in the audience's positions. This notion is similar to the philosophy directing reader-oriented theories, which gives the readers the freedom to take their pleasure of a text with disregard for the author's "intention" or a signified "meaning." Rhetoric then allows the modern state citizen to interpret the doctrines as he wishes and even to write new ones. Similarly, the actor can choose his roles freely and be a playwright who directs and writes his own script as he goes, according to the emerging need in exactly the same manner as improvisation in the theater.

These propositions are particularly ancillary to understanding *The Book of Daniel*, Doctorow's first novel, which is pregnant with acting imagery. In this paper, I will discuss a few major issues: what Doctorow tries to discover through the medium of acting; how it is reflected in his treatment of the main themes and characters; and how it affects the narrative point of view.

The life of Daniel Isaacson, which is structured in explicit theatrical terms, can be classified into two phases. In the first, Daniel is depicted as a cynical actor, acting roles patterned by the directorship of his parents and then by the agents of the American authorities. Daniel's play-acting leads to the emergence of a new type of more refined acting. In starting the process of his private and intricate investigation, Daniel assumes the director's role and seeks to contrive a scene that enables him to discover the vital secrets behind others' roles and to shape his reputation and public image by writing a script allowing a plurality of roles.

Indications that Daniel has always been aware of acting, its disadvantages and benefits, go back to his early childhood even before his parents face the charge of espionage. During that period, Daniel, the narrator, points out that he has been merely an actor in his parents' show, to quote Lionel Abel's description of parents-children relationships (Abel 1963, 47). According to Daniel, the way the Isaacsons arrange their life is comparable to a theatrical performance. Daniel notices that his father has "a way of being conspicuous" (*Daniel*, 1971 44) and when the humor takes him, he plays to his friends who are amused by his performances. As a result, Dr. Mindish treats him "with his clumsy humor like a ridiculous child" (263).

Yet, their performances do not consist of scattered light roles. Daniel says that his parents set a "plan" and manipulate themselves in a way that will achieve their desired goal of "perfection" in the best way possible (41). Being an important actor in his parents' would-be-script, Daniel is trained by his father to grow up right. So, in spite of all the elements of burlesque in his character, his presence, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, opposes the realm of falsehood set out by the American Government. It emphasizes the inevitability of truth and justice and indicates a superior evaluation of the theatrical profession. In effect, both inveigh against one type of acting associated with hypocrisy, deceit and crime only to offer a better type of acting based on moral attitudes. Just as Hamlet's father teaches his son to discover the vital secrets behind the others' roles, so Paul loses no opportunity to coach his child how to counteract all the negative influences of American culture, its institutions as well AS apparatuses represented by the commercials, T.V., radio programs and the press. Significantly, Daniel's father starts from the same position as Catharine Belsey, who also believes that the ideology of capitalism regards "the educational system" as the dominant apparatus through which youngsters are coached to act in consistence with the existing social morals, beliefs and myths. It instills these children with the principal versions of proper conduct along with disciplines like history, social studies and literature (1985 in Davis ed., 1998 379). The goal of ideology is to establish "people as subjects," and to make them experience their LIVES as independent and distinctive entities

capable of freely choosing what to do (379-380). Ironically, Belsey adds, people do not realize that language rules them. Believing he understands the harmful practices of this ideology, Daniel’s father seeks to eradicate its traces and replace it with an opposing ideology and hence scriptwriter, i. e. communism. For him his directorship is a necessary step towards freeing his son, but Daniel’s father endorses a script, which imposes strict roles on the child/actor and hence gives him little freedom. Oddly, Paul Isaacson plans to enact his script expecting to get fair treatment from a conflicting scriptwriter. Thus, he falls victim to the slogans of freedom launched by the ideology of capitalism and against which he warns his child.

Despite the great efforts Paul Isaacson exerts, he does not seem to be successful in recruiting his son to his script, though Daniel agrees to take part in it. Daniel pretends to accept his parents' coaching. He states that he complies with his father's instruction to obtain his satisfaction: "I bought it all. Why shouldn't I?" (41). Afterwards, he again says, "But I was a smart-ass kid, I wasn't that innocent. I took what he gave to have him" (47). Apparently, acting emerges as an act of treachery, deception and artificiality but by a strange paradox it enables the actor to become the scriptwriter while the scriptwriter becomes an actor. Still, Daniel’s deceptive type of acting leaves him with a powerful sense of discomfort and guilt, and paradoxically he finds a solution for acting in acting.

Moreover, even as a child, Daniel has the chance to occupy a Space among the audience. When his parents are involved in trouble, Daniel exploits his place among the audience to shelter himself from undesirable situations and painful conditions. On one occasion, his parents take him to Lake Land Picnic Grounds in Peekskill, where Paul Robeson is scheduled to hold a concert for the second time. On the concert grounds, Daniel feels uncomfortable, but his father's acting ability attracts him. He notices how his father plays to his friends, making everyone laugh. A long time passes without any concert. Men standing on the road to protest the concert start attacking the celebrating crowds and their buses, thereby moving from their place in the audience to the stage. Daniel is partly an actor and partly a spectator of the chaos around him. Struck with astonishment, Daniel sees that while trying to seek the help of the police, his father is trapped between the doors of the bus and is fiercely attacked by a group of fascists. Dumbfounded, Daniel withdraws from the action and regards it as a "show that had nothing to do with us" and as a "comic sight," with his father playing "Samson" as his comrades play "dominoes" (61, 63, 62, 81).

But the scene is developed both structurally and thematically and needs further comment. Daniel's position as a spectator watching the crowd’s violence IN the street provides a literal outdoor theater here, making it likely that we must consider the whole world as a stage. Furthermore, the scene indicates the doubleness of role played by each character: each is potentially both A spectator of the actions played by others and an actor on a wider stage. To be more specific, many people in the looking crowds and even inside the buses (the readers included) are an audience watching the scene of stone throwing and actors. They, however, are watched by another double audience—Daniel, first as a passenger on the bus, and later as a first-person narrator watching/remembering the events and telling them to the readers long after they happen. More importantly, the scene signals that Doctorow's notion of acting and audience alternates between two levels: the spuriousness of acted performances compared to the actuality of real human suffering, and the danger inherent in the role of detached spectators compared to the significance of involved audiences. What is meant here is that the crowds (Daniel and the readers included), who watch the suffering of the victims of the stoning, especially Daniel’s father, for their own amusement, lose much of their humanity because they regard the scene as an acted performance. In addition, the elements of burlesque and comedy

with which Daniel treats the scene marks his attempts to save himself from the world of brutality he lives in. He tries to avoid it by focusing on its comedy and by withdrawing from it to the indifferent audience. Yet, despite this trace of comedy and burlesque, Daniel manages to assert the reality of the suffering and achieves a deeper insight into the performance going on before him and, consequently, initiates a change within himself; he develops a moral standpoint, so to speak. Thanks to the first person narration, HE presents himself in such a way as to have a profound effect upon the audience/readers. Daniel manages to become an actor-audience who, in Goffman's terms (1959, 211), treats himself as a part of the audience/reader team and the readers/audience are made to treat themselves as a part of Daniel's team. This represents a great advance for Daniel, as he can eventually get into what Goffman calls "collusive intimacies" with team mates if he seeks successful performance and "back-stage relaxation" (206).

Daniel's appeal to the sphere of drama, that helps him ease his burden, keep distance from hostile surroundings, and strengthen his imagination, accompanies him during the period recording his parents' arrest, trial and death. When the Isaacsons receive the news of Dr. Mindish's arrest, for example, Daniel sees a rare element of heavy sorrow on their faces, which reminds him of a "blue television light" (117). Soon the Isaacsons have to cope with the frequent visits of the FBI AGENTS. Having never seen a real FBI AGENT, Daniel searches their faces for a clue to their real nature but to no avail: "They look neither as handsome as in the movies nor as ugly as my parents' revulsion makes them" (120). After his parents' arrest, Daniel and his sister are taken to a protest and are placed on a platform where they become the center of attention. When Ascher, their parents' lawyer, takes them to Aunt Frieda, the children's attention is engrossed by a TV set: "If they could get inside the television they would be better off," says Ascher (256) and upon meeting his father, Daniel compares him to "a magician on a stage" (163).

However, as a child who sees his own parents arrested and executed, without being able to be of help, Daniel lives perpetually under the threat of being exterminated. To forestall the danger, he often struggles with the thorny question of why he is spared and, worse, with the irrational guilt of having narrowly avoided death. (Tokarczyk, 1987 6-7). This phenomenon was studied by R. D. Laing, who claims that when an individual is constantly afraid of being depersonalized, he seeks to affirm his existence by turning himself into "a cork" or "a stone" to rob the other person of his power to crush him. According to Laing, this kind of behavior is pretended and false (1969, 46-48). Laing's description indeed sheds a light on Daniel's false and theatrical behavior. He repeatedly refers to himself as a "betrayer," "a criminal of perception" and considers himself and Linda Mindish as "flawless forged criminals of perception" (291). The word "forged" points to Daniel's theatrical falsity, which typifies his launched feelings.

After his father's arrest, Daniel again constructs a scene to manipulate his mother's emotions and to cope with self-guilt. He says:

I took to my mother my blue tin of pennies and gave them to her: there was about eighty cents. She cried and hugged me as I had known she would. I wanted to see her cry. I wanted her to hug me. I wanted her to experience the poignancy of the moment I had planned. (134)

But behind his clear theatrical scheme and manipulation of his mother's passion, Daniel expresses his need for sympathy and tenderness and tries to overcome his guilt in the wake of his failure to help his captured father by busying himself with make-believe games.

This feeling accompanies him most of the time. When he is within the confines of his room, for instance, Daniel makes up scenes in which he makes use of available tools and convinces himself that he has invented a radio station to contact his father in jail to rescue him.

While staying at Aunt Frieda's, Daniel feels he is really in prison, and the motif of cinema and TV still hovers in the air. He says:

The apartment was dark and airless. I was finding it more difficult to sleep. I had seen a 1930's prison movie on television: the man was shaking the bars of his cell shouting I'm innocent…! breaking down in sobs because no one is there to hear him and he slides to the floor in a heap, still holding onto the bars of the cell door. All night my parents rose and fell on the bars, like the horses in a merry-go-round, pulling themselves up and sliding down with their hands attached to the bars. (174)

In playing at being in prison with his sister, Daniel not only identifies with his parents, comparing his situation at Aunt Frieda's dark and airless apartment with his parents' condition in prison, he also analogizes their life to that of the man in the prison movie. In effect, for Daniel, life becomes a prison movie and man is a tragic actor victimized by his country. To protest against his condition, Daniel takes advantage of his misery to torture his aunt. He finds himself "manically active" by pretending that he cannot breathe well, makes "a game of spying on" aunt Frieda and uses tricks to steal candy from her counter (175).

And exhibiting the image of two good, fine children, Daniel and Susan play to their parents' friends to extract privileges:

We blackmailed anyone who made the mistake of befriending us. We were always a threat. By not cooperating, we could ruin the best plans. Our public appearances were heartstoppers. The image was of two good, fine children. Those who were close to us knew better. (310)

When Daniel is taken to the shelter, his role-playing is given an additional element. Although it takes the form of "clowning," it becomes a conscious act to reassert his intellect and prove himself in the "Kid society":

So it was a challenge. I'm trying to account for the reasoning, if there was reasoning, that led me to do my imitation of the Inertia Kid. Maybe the ultimate extension of intellect is clowning … I did all these routines, becoming in one moment popular for them, a new thing in the society, a wit, a mime of affliction, a priest. (186)

Despite his remarkable success in playing the Inertia Kid, Daniel realizes that his manner of acting endangers his life, for his repetitive imitation of the Kid in the absence of AN audience reduces him to parts and disconnects him from his body. Still Daniel's role-playing, his constant engagement in make-believe games and HIS appeal to imaginative situations mark the existence of a productive inner reality and, in Neta Alexander's words, "the perception of human subjectivity as a dynamic entity." In her review of Tzachi Zamir's *Acts Theater, Philosophy, and the Performing Self,* Alexander asserts Zamir's notion that acting, even if imagined, magnifies the actor's "existential experience" (*Haaretz,* 2014 8) which will eventually carry him toward real action. This is perhaps what Hamlet also means when he says that the performer enjoys the chance to try on many "forms, moods, shapes," to define his inner reality and to match it to his outward appearance (*Hamlet*, I, ii, 82-85).

2

As Daniel grows up, his problems as well as sense of guilt are intensified. So is the theatrical imagery, which occasionally causes Daniel problems and at other times provides him with escape and relief. And again Daniel alternates between his position as an actor and his role among the audience or as an actor watched by crowds and, simultaneously, AN audience watching others playing scenes. During his visit to Susan at Worcester State Hospital, for example, Daniel fails to cope with her deteriorating situation and her negative image of him. Consequently, he is filled with a rising feeling of guilt. To escape the situation, he gives way to his spectatorial position. His attention is caught by two TV sets and by a staff attendant who "played with her hair and read Modern Screen. Does Dick really love Liz?" (17). Addressing himself to the question, Daniel believes that Dick is interested only in "the camera's attention" (18). When Susan refuses to acknowledge his presence in the room, Daniel's reaction increases and the sense of theatricality becomes its natural consequence. Like a movie-spectator, Daniel gazes out of the window, but "the view was cut off" (19), forcing Daniel to return to reality, where he is an actor acting out violent scenes founded on debased attitudes. Once Daniel proves unable to get his sister out of the hospital, he performs public theatrical scenes to conceal his anxiety and guilt. He scolds his foster parents and attacks Dr. Duberstein with full awareness of the theatricality of his behavior: "In the meantime there was drama, a sweet fatality" (25). On his way to the Lewins' residence, Daniel commits a sadistic sexual attack on his wife and burns her with an electric lighter while driving the car. The scene is a classical example of Tzachi Zamir's theater of pornography (Alexander, 2014, 8), where Daniel turns his body as well as his wife's into a stage where the play of bitter life is acted out. In order to express his opinion about life, Daniel practices violence towards himself, his wife and his surroundings, including the readers, who, functioning as direct audience, do not reward Daniel with agreeable remarks but do not allow themselves to be unfocussed. This explains Daniel's rage at the readers. The sense of acting surges up because the incident reminds Daniel of "a classic surrealist silent film" (72) in which a hefty and darkly handsome man slashes a semi-naked woman's face with a razor. Just as Daniel uses the film to avoid the obnoxiousness of a direct narration of his aggressiveness so the film cuts to show the night sky outside the window:

A thin, knifelike cloud is seen gliding across the bright orb of the moon. And just as you, the audience, have settled for this symbolic mutilation of the woman's eye, the camera cuts back to the scene, and in close-up, shows the razor slicing into the eyeball. (73)

Despite the extreme brutality, this type of acting benefits both the actor and the audience. To cite Zamir, it expands the space for fantasies and pleasure, creating a rebellious cosmos in which standards are crushed (Ibid).

Daniel's notion of play-acting is conveyed at the outset of the novel where he gives the readers a clear picture of its nature, its manifestation and function. Distancing himself from first to third person narration, Daniel says:

Daniel, a tall young man of twenty-five, wore his curly hair long. Steel-rimmed spectacles and a full mustache, brown, like his hair, made him look if not older than he was then more self-possessed and opinionated. Let's face it, he looked cool, deliberately cool. In fact nothing about his appearance was accidental. If he'd lived in the nineteen thirties and came on this way he would be a young commie. A cafeteria commie. He was dressed in a blue prison jacket and dungarees. (13-14)

On the superficial level, Daniel dresses himself in prison uniform to indicate his sense of isolation and imprisonment, and so his behavior is an act of protest against his own country. It also testifies to his inability to take decisive initiative and to his failure to define his own

character to himself. In other words, it is a lack of positive action and an absence of determined character. Absurdly, his deliberate coolness and his carefully studied appearance are merely a part he has staged and learned to play. By assuming the role of a prisoner with deliberate coolness, curly long hair, "steel-rimmed spectacles" and a "full mustache," Daniel moves into the territory of acting. Daniel's condition fits Laing's discussion of a similar case. According to Laing, when an individual feels threatened by the world he lives in, it becomes "a prison without bars, a concentration camp without barbed wires." Consequently, that individual, Laing adds, experiences the world as unreal. Everything that belongs to it grows false and futile while he becomes an actor who is constantly engaged in role-playing (79-80).

Clearly, Daniel's acting is not concomitant with the realms of glamour, entertainment and burlesque, as one might expect. Rather, Daniel endorses roles to ensure the safety of his true identity, to protect him from undesirable contact with the outside world and to help him develop his understanding of his real role in life to the point where he can act in a more subtle way.

What magnifies Daniel's sense of danger is his recognition that man is forced to take part in a great stage play that considers the history of the world as a great drama governed by the providence of God and proceeding from the beginning of time to doomsday.

Contrary to the traditional concept which conceives of God as a Divine dramatist, whose drama is pregnant with meaning and justice and is respectful of human effort and freedom, as maintained by Sir Walter Raleigh and Henry More (quoted in Harold Fisch, 1971 165), Daniel denies any existence of such attributes in God's drama. He says:

It is interesting to note that God as a *character* in the Bible seems almost always concerned with the idea of His recognition by mankind. He is constantly declaring His Authority, with rewards for those who recognize it and punishment for those who don't. He performs fancy tricks….The drama in the Bible is always in the conflict of those who have learned with those who have not learned. (20)

God's sole interest in constructing His script is to assert "His Authority." Like a true dramatist, He takes over directorship, uses rewards, punishments, and fancy tricks and contrives dramatic encounters between the virtuous and the vicious to assert His existence. This means that God's show, which co-exists with historical time, is a meaningless cycle of repetition that has no room for human freedom and effort. In that sense life becomes truly a tragedy and man a tragic actor.

Within this cosmic play, Daniel recognizes the existence of other plays built on the same principle. He proposes that each country seeks to establish its authority by devising a show, which entails the use of coercive and intimidating measures: "The final existential condition is citizenship. Every man is the enemy of his own country. EVERY MAN IS THE ENEMY OF HIS OWN COUNTRY. Every country is the enemy of its own citizen" (85). To demonstrate his point, Daniel resorts to the sphere of cinematic acting. He relates the events of a French movie called "Paths of Glory" in which a French regiment is ordered to attack a German position during World War One. However, the French troops cannot bring themselves to act out the roles assigned to them as they are physically exhausted and cannot leap out of their ditches to commit mass suicide. In a rage, their General fires upon them with his artillery, then withdraws this regiment from the lines and shoots three enlisted men picked at random. By describing the events of this French movie, Daniel makes an analogy between the world and the French film, associating the French General and his victims with the state authority and modern man.

In line with this ongoing conflict between governments and their citizens, the American authorities enact a script, which mocks the time and draws a world empty of reality to assert its power. Such a show finds its true exemplification in Disneyland, whose five parts represent the American past, present and future. The most striking quality of Disneyland, according to Daniel, is its dependence on theatrical artificiality and simulations to attract its visitors. He notices that "while the machinery of the rides is impressively real—that is to say, technologically perfect and historically accurate—the simulated plant and animal and geological surroundings are unreal" (302). However, the line separating reality from illusion is often blurred and unclear for various figures of history, myth and legend are given proprietary relationship. "Most of these figures" Daniel maintains, "have passed through a previous process of film or film animation" (103). In the end, the Disneyland customers will know the cultural artifacts through the Disney film. This act will result in the separation of two ontological degrees between the Disneyland visitors and the offered cultural artifacts, since what Disneyland offers does not reflect "the resonance of the original work but is only a sentimental compression of something that is itself already a lie" (304). Worse, Daniel finds out that Disneyland jeopardizes our grasp of the nature of historical reality, first by replacing it with artificial reality, and second by compressing it to scenes and situations of the movies. Hence, Daniel concludes that Disneyland puts a distance between its visitors and the real world; it satisfies a desire for escape from any actual form of life into some artificial realm rather than mirroring real reality.

In so believing, Daniel echoes Peter Berger, who asserts that it is in the nature of all authorities not to tolerate public criticism and opposition (1963 41), and Anthony Giddens, who views all social systems as "power systems" concerned exclusively with the "institutional mediation of power" (Giddens 1985 9). Moreover, Daniel advocates that the American system frightfully abuses the fundamental liberties of its dissidents. Political trials and arrests become common; Hollywood writers are investigated; the Attorney General has a long list of subversive organizations; political discussions disappear from college campuses and professors are made to sign loyalty oaths. Amid this atmosphere of terror, Daniel learns, the Isaacsons are cast in the roles of traitors who are executed for conspiring to give the secrets of T.V to the Soviet Union:

As I work out the chronology I believe this period at Frieda's coincides with the first of the government's superseding indictments. There were a total of three as the U.S. Attorney and the FBI gradually perfected the scenario. First there were eight overt acts. Then there were nine Overt Acts. Then there were TEN OVERT ACTS. FRYING, a play in ten overt acts. (172)

Surprisingly, both Paul and Rochelle Isaacson also use theatrical terms to describe the government's impositions on them. Paul notices that the American government is employing a comprehensive script manifested and marketed by its apparatuses in the form of commercials, T.V., radio programs and the press. In his letters to Rochelle during their trial, Paul points out with deep scorn that the American system of justice has lost its true image for enacting a debased script. According to him, the American courtrooms are "designed to promote the illusion of solemn justice" (214); the guards at their doors remind him of banks, while the altars are like some kind of church: "Banks and churches and courtrooms all depend on the appurtenances of theatre. On illusion" (214). In addition, the jury picked from a depraved culture is equated with "Hollywood long since purged of its few humanitarian filmmakers [?]" (213). And finally, Paul claims that the judge and the prosecutor shamelessly work like a team to produce a "capitalist drama" whose actors are all Jewish: "We are putting on this little passion play for our Christian masters" (213). In response, he ironically offers to write "a

musical comedy" and suggests calling it "Foley Square" (214). The name is very important because Foley Square was an eyesore of a construction site that was turned into a great place in Manhattan.

However, Daniel realizes that his father's beliefs involve, self-deception as he cannot "make that violent connection" (43) between what he believes and how the state authority reacts. Obsessed with his dreamy idealism, he continues to look for evidence that "American democracy wasn't democratic enough" (51). In other words, he mis/recognizes himself, to adopt Belsey's terminology, in agreement with the ways in which ideology "interpellates" him. Instead of seeing himself as a "subjected being," with an already formed identity, he considers himself a free subject who can willingly choose his roles (381). Rochelle, on the other hand, is a pragmatist. If she had not been poor, Daniel thinks, she would never have become a Red. Yet she is in her way the more committed radical and is thus guilty of self-deception.

Therefore, lost between dreamy idealism and grim idealism, the Isaacsons give a helping hand to their own destruction. Their behavior at their trial, as Sternlicht asserts, means:

They played it by *their* rules. The government's rules. You know what I mean? Instead of standing up and saying fuck you, do what you want, I can't get an honest trial anyway with you fuckers—they made notions, they pleaded innocent, they spoke only when spoken to, they played the game. All right? The whole frame of reference brought them down because they acted like defendants at a trial, you dig? (166-167)

Sternlicht's analysis of the way the Isaacsons behave meets with Belsey's notion of the way people live in a capitalist society. People find it easy to obey roles assigned to them by authority that gives them the feeling they are absolute subjects. Therefore, they really want to play the roles imposed on them despite the risks involved believing that they will eventually pick the right ones. Likewise, Max Weber Maintains that people agree to act upon orders given to them because they believe that authority is the legitimate use of power (1978, 215). However, Peter Berger adds that people can even refuse imposed roles or play them with cynicism (93).

Indeed, Susan and Daniel choose to reject the government's imposed "drama." Unlike her parents, Susan, to start with, seeks to employ an independent script which lets her choose her own role, but her choice proves deadly. With her part of the inheritance, she wishes to start the revolutionary foundation in commemoration of her parents' martyrdom and to promote the radical forces. But as Daniel observes, it turns out that her passion for her parents becomes an obsession with the past, while her response to the government's impositions makes her retreat from the world into herself, her starfish position.

A starfish ascendant suggested serenity and harmony with the universe, and therefore great happiness. The five points of the star lead not outward as is commonly believed, but inward toward the center. This symbolized the union of the various mental faculties and the co-ordination of the physical faculties…. For some reason astrologers today don't mention Starfish and there is a common superstition that it means bad luck. (256)

In so behaving, Susan takes us to the realm of Tzachi Zamir's "theater of anorexia" according to which, her "body begins to function as a mask, and thinness becomes a performance. At the same time, a continuing dialogue takes place between the performer and his mask. The body takes the lead and takes the anorexic into a near-death world" (Alexander, 2014, 8). Zamir's theater is complex but consistent: each element plays different roles simultaneously and

maintains a perfect coordination with the other factors involved in the act. Indeed, Susan's stage is her body whose different parts conduct "a continuing dialogue" among themselves, manifested by the state of total connection, perfect unity and self-sufficiency. Her act is so perfect that she reaches the point of death, conveying thus her message to herself and the attracted spectators. Susan was not crying for help. Rather, she was leaving her body and the world.

Her acting, nonetheless, suggests the end of acting because life or acting is impossible outside its limits: "There are not many degrees of life lower before there is no life" (323). Therefore, when Daniel learns about Susan's death he says that his sister "died of a failure of analysis." This means that Susan knows how to connect but cannot analyze, whereas her parents can analyze but are not able to connect. Proper acting requires both analysis and connection. The former means the ability to maintain one's role in life, to have the "private I" or, what Philip Wander calls, the "first persona" in discourse. As distinct from the "third persona," or "the 'it'" that is not present, that is objectified in a way that "I" and "you are not" (Wander, 1984 209), the "first persona" enjoys open channels of contact and free possibilities of links and expressions. The latter or the ability to make connection, on the other hand, requires a capacity to connect desires and reality, history and present followed by the ability to make compromises.

Being an Isaacson, Daniel expects to get the same treatment from his own country as his parents, to be treated as a first or a second persona. Daniel's understanding of the first persona, and hence Doctorow is different from the definition of Wander, who gives it a positive connotation only. In fact, Daniel sees the dynamic complexity inherent in the term and therefore refers to a situation where the American government abuses him and, in so doing, recognizes his existence and thus affords him the position of the first persona. In Daniel's opinion, the attainment of the first persona occurs not when the authorities treat him well or have open channels of communication with him. Rather, through treating him badly which is supposedly condemnable, the authorities, Daniel hopes, will give Daniel recognition as a citizen, albeit victimized. To his disappointment, Daniel is now totally ignored by the American authorities, thereby magnifying the fear of the loss of his identity:

I am totally deprived of the right to be dangerous…. There is nothing I can do, mild or extreme, that they cannot have planned for. In the meantime, they have only to make sure that I am in no way involved with the United Sates Government… (84).

Clearly, the United States Government has patterned a script, one which excludes Daniel. He is left with no part to play. To put it differently, Daniel is regarded as a third persona or a "non-person" and referred to as "someone who isn't there," to use Goffman's expressions (13). To achieve some measure of safety and assert his identity, Daniel once again rejects the third persona role imposed upon him in the American government's script and seeks to play a first persona role in his own script. to use Laing's model, HE will try to attract attention to himself by creating dramatic scenes (14). FOR example, HE exploits his visit to Washington D. C., to produce a dramatic public display:

Susan and I held candles in our hands and rested our foreheads on the White House fence. That is a famous news picture. It appears as if we're looking through prison bars. Washington was our town, I played Washington when I was a kid. (270)

The scene, pregnant with meaning, represents a drastic change in Daniel's attitudes. Their bearing the candles while leaning their foreheads on the fence of the White House, the key symbol of the American government, suggests that future hopes and promises of liberty and democracy are expected to come from that place. The world outside it is a prison. Knowing their gestures in that place "is a famous news picture," Daniel trusts that both the viewers and the readers recognize it was selected by George Washington, the first President of the United States, and the international icon for liberation and nationalism to be the residence of the president. Thus, Daniel is aware of the strong impact of the scene and reminds the readers that he played Washington once.

In addition, he participates in a march from the basement of a church to the doors of the Justice Department. The demonstration reaches its point of "drama," as Daniel says, when hundreds of college boys and many other demonstrators drop draft cards in a pouch, which is delivered to the Justice Department. Daniel takes delight in this simulated act, in the shooting of "movie cameras' (268) and in the applause of demonstrators. Moved by an outburst of enthusiasm, he makes his way through the crowd, drops his card in the pouch and for the first time declares his name into the microphone: "Daniel Isaacson, although the card is in the name of Daniel Lewin" (269). He moves from audience to stage. The next day the demonstrators sit for hours in the grass at the Lincoln Memorial and listen to the speeches. Daniel is bored but as events culminate in violence, he begins to feel the imminence of satisfaction. He is engulfed by a strong sense of brotherhood with what he calls "the real people of now" as the boots of the police fiercely trample them. Busted and covered with blood all over, Daniel is taken to prison where he cries: "INNOCENT I'M INNOCENT I TELL YA" (274). Significantly, Daniel need not play the role of a prisoner, as he is a real one. The analogy between the man in the prison movie, who also cries, "I am innocent," and Daniel is complete. Now that he is put in prison, it would seem that at last the American Government recognizes his identity as an Isaacson. Daniel is no longer passive, isolated, and melancholic. Nor is he at a loss for a role. He has attained his first persona. He can operate in society, face the bitter reality, feel his identity and even enjoy life: "The next morning I paid my fine and was released. It was another lovely day" (274).

It is only after his encounter with Artie Sternlicht and his girlfriend that Daniel gets a clearer understanding of acting in relation to connection and analysis. At Artie's place Daniel is impressed by the great collage on the wall drawn from movies; the method of collage is derived from cinema and the presence of a reporter and a photographer amplifies the sense of acting. Daniel says:

The wall is interesting. It is completely covered with a collage of pictures, movie stills, posters, and real objects. Babe Ruth running around the bases, Marlon Brando on his bike, Shirley Temple in her dancing shoes, FDR, a bikini sprayed with gold paint, Marilyn Monroe on her calendar, Mickey Mouse, Gilbert Stuart's Washington with a mustache penciled on, a real American Legion cap, Fred Allen in front of a microphone, pinch-mouthed Susan B. Anthony, Paul Robeson, Sammy Baugh throwing a jump puss, Calvin Coolidge in Indian feathers…. (150)

Obviously, like Disneyland, these numerous and various images and pictures on the wall constitute the diversity of American culture, the American world of fantasy, its past as well as its present. But while Disneyland, as Daniel notices, creates passive citizens who are put at two ontological removes from the offered cultural artifacts, this collage of pictures evokes Daniel's ability to analyze and to connect, for it is based on the principle of post-structuralism. In his post-structuralist period, Roland Barthes rejected the traditional view that the author is the

origin of the text, the only authority for interpretation, that language is transparent, and that reading is natural. According to him, the author has control over a huge domain of language consisting of intersecting quotations, recurrences, allusions and resonances. The author's manuscript is made up of signifiers pointing to no fixed centers and, in consequence, the readers enter the text from any direction without being confined either by the author's meaning or by the hold of a signified interpretation. In other words, the reader can subject the text to an ongoing course of interpretations, thus placing himself in the realms of reader - response theories and rhetoric (1977, 142-148).

Asserting that "the text is no more a transcendent unity than the human subject" (387), Belsey also adopts an attitude which valorizes the multiplicity of meaning within the text. A plurality of readings allows the critic to rise above the restraints within which the text is devised and disentangle himself and the text from the authorial objective and the thesis (388).

Similarly, Roberts L. Scott, proposes that, "Man must consider truth not as something fixed and final but as something to be created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and with which he must cope" (1998, 138). Rhetoric then allows the modern state citizen to interpret the doctrines as he wishes and even to write new ones. Likewise, the actor can not only choose his roles freely but can be a playwright who directs and writes his own script as he goes, trying, throwing away, adding onto, conflicting and fabricating new roles and interpretations. These practices are reminiscent of the role of improvisation in the theater when an actor comprises, utters or adds anything without preparation, or impulsively.

These propositions are also reminiscent of some of the effects of collage. According to Keith Kennedy,

Collage makes "discoveries" through a random placing together of images. It is this randomness that is the essence of the activity. A collage may be understood to present the order or non-order that exists in the maker's life. By achieving a visual display of this flux of people, places, things and ideas it becomes possible to contemplate and search for what might exist but be hidden from the human consciousness in everyday life. In effect, the artist set out to explore the relativity of human events. (1972 80-83)

This collage of pictures on the wall teaches Daniel that the American reality, like a collage of film stills, is composed of images that can be connected and analyzed in numerous ways, each yielding a new meaning. Thus, by using this film technique as a basis for the narration of his book, he can decompose the governmental reality and explore the vital secrets behind its script. More important, he can recompose his own conception of reality in a way that reshapes the Isaacsons' reputation and gives him the ability to choose his own roles.

But in order to play his roles properly, Daniel must reread both his past and present with openness to a plurality of interpretations. He cannot remain haunted by one version of the story about his parents' execution. After his confrontation with the state police before the Department of Justice, Daniel, as we have seen, accepts his heritage by announcing his proper name in public. Soon he schemes to meet his old enemy, the reminder of his past, Dr. Mindish. In the meeting, which takes place in Disneyland, the representation of the governmental reality, Dr. Mindish gives Daniel a very warm kiss. Although Daniel gets no information from Dr. Mindish, the meeting indicates Daniel's acceptance of his history and reality free of the version that incriminates Dr. Mindish. Moreover, in the three successive endings, which Daniel provides for his book there is more evidence that Daniel has succeeded in providing a plurality of interpretations and is making steady and real progress (Paul Levine 1985 47-49 and Susan Lorsch, 1982 396-7).

In the first ending, "THE HOUSE" (315), Daniel returns to his childhood neighborhood in the Bronx, which has become a dirty slum. On the steps of his parents' house he sees two black kids playing casino as a black woman (presumably their mother) opens the front door and brings them in. "I would like," Daniel says "to turn and ask the woman if I can come in the house and look around" (315). But he gives up the idea for the house is theirs now. Unlike his first journey after his escape from the Shelter, Daniel is now free from anxieties and is equipped with a readiness to accept changes. He realizes that the process of history is unavoidable but its changes are not drastic, nor painful, since history has borne a witness to it in the present; I mean the two black kids and their mother (the present) are merely a new group of outcasts who come to replace the Isaacsons and their two children (the past), another group of outcasts. It would seem to follow that history is cyclical or repetitive as suggested by the name Sternlicht gives to his collage of pictures: "EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE IS ALL THE SAME" (151).

The second ending, "THE FUNERAL," in which Daniel buries his sister while reliving his parents' funeral, records how Daniel manages to recompose a new reality by combining his parents' approach of analysis with Susan's notion of connection. Each leads to the denial of reality and death. Daniel is at peace with his present as well as HIS past, with the living and with the dead. His relations with his wife, child and foster parents are at their best. More important, free from pain, suffering and anxiety, Daniel returns to his Jewish heritage: he has *Kaddish* recited repeatedly for his dead parents and sisters and he is able to cry for them.

In the third ending, "THE LIBRARY" (318), Daniel is on the brink of a new era. Just as he finishes his book, students at Columbia University force him to leave the library, but not before they tell him that he is liberated and that a political struggle is taking place there.

In his book, Daniel, like his Biblical counterpart, delivers his own people and himself by an act, which symbolizes the continuity and cyclicality of history. He reconstructs a scene, which condemns the government's fantasized "capitalist drama," and makes it possible for himself to reinterpret his parents' roles and to adopt a role for himself, one that he can sustain within that scene. With this new role, Daniel is determined to return to the world: "I have to smile. It has not been unexpected. I will walk out to the Sundial and see what's going down" (318).

Although Daniel's book has an immediate influence on his own conduct, its promise for the public is neither immediate nor observable:

[A]nd there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation... and at that time the people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,…. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end... Go thy way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (319; italics in source)

The quotation has very strong religious connotations and reminds us of the Biblical Daniel. Both provide very promising prophecies. This suggests that Doctorow's stage is not limited to a certain place or a particular period. Nor is it directed by ordinary people. Rather, Daniel reaffirms his belief that the history of the world is a great drama governed by God's providence and unfolding in a Biblical dimension of time and space. But does he submit to totalitarian authorities? On the contrary, he provides a plan that can resist all dictatorial authorities or life's obscurity, which draws man as a tragic actor. So, Daniel, and hence Doctorow, does not assert

the futility of man's existence. Daniel's battle in life has not been lost. He manages to flee the governmental "capitalist drama" by writing a daring script which argues that all realities are composed and that against all odds WE can compose our own realities and choose our roles, not in isolation from society nor in absence of individual integrity. It is very likely, therefore, that Daniel is adopting Weber's version of the postmodern state which promotes inventiveness, self-rule, "flexibility (people have a range of different roles), multi-skilling (people have a range of different skills), decentralization" (Weber 1978, 215).

So Doctorow is not a writer of the "adversary culture," nor is his Politics "straight anti-" as Epstein proposes" (1977, 86, 88). He exploits the acting metaphor to indicate an advance in authenticity and to mark the entry of responsibility and truth. His hero is strongly opposed to the realms of falsehood, violence and crime set up by totalitarian scripts and seeks to expose the images of ugliness, horror and alienation which prevail in our modern culture and point to a mode of reality beyond acting.

In his article, "The Beliefs of Writers" Doctorow complains that contemporary fiction makes ideas of despair, distrust and withdrawal from society preponderate over others. To avoid these notions, he proposes that writers need to start retrieving the "past" using proper terminology. "In order to begin to rebuild our sense of ourselves," he writes, "we may have to go back to childhood, to the past and start again. In order to reclaim our society, we need the words to find it" (Doctorow, 1993, 48). Obviously, Doctorow implies that the connection between history and fiction is essential to our understanding of reality. Similarly, the historian C. Vann Woodward declares that both the novel and history "sprang from a common parentage of story-telling" and "competed with each other to satisfy the demand for historical understanding" (1969, 58). But Doctorow's proposal stems from his belief that each of us is constantly engaged in composing the world so as to make sense of it. He says, "Everyone all the time, is in the act of composition, our experience is an ongoing narrative within each of us" (1985, 347). This implies that imaginative and historical writing is the product of personal visions rather than a representation of objective reality. On another occasion, he again states,

The principle which interests me... is that reality isn't something outside. It's something we compose every moment. The presumption of the interpretation of fact and fiction is that it is what everybody does - lawyers, social scientists, policemen. So why should it be denied to novelists? (Navasky 1980)

Instead of aspiring to mirror reality, Doctorow affirms, history and fiction are concerned with presenting that which is possible.

Doctorow's blurring of fact and fiction intermingles with cinema. According to Christian Metz, the act of portraying what is possible and plausible constitutes the essence of the art of cinema. He says, "The arts of representations—and the cinema is one of them, which, whether 'realistic' or 'fantastic,' is always figurative and almost always fictional--do not represent all that is possible—all the possibles—but only the plausible possibles" (1974, 238). Being aware of this fact, Doctorow assumes that his abandonment of the conventions of realism allows "the rhythms of perception" in him to be "transformed immensely by films and television" (Richard Trenner, ed., 1983 40).

Thus, Doctorow enacts narrative techniques derived from cinema. In effect, *The Book of Daniel* emerges as a cinematic script both in content and in form. Like so many film adaptations, Doctorow's novel is based on the historical situation of the Rosenberg spy case. Despite minor changes, critics notice, all his characters parallel actual persons involved in the case (Cushing Strout, 1980 5, 425 and Levine, 1985 39). Yet Doctorow escapes the burden resulting from his

adaptation of an actual case by duplicating his story in a way that reflects his belief in the boundary between imaginative writing and factual events. Indeed Daniel's narrative does not attempt to confirm the Isaacsons' innocence or guilt. The novel ends without Daniel verifying his suspicions about the past. For the most part, Daniel is concerned with plausibility and imaginative writing. Instead of claiming to tell the truth, he assumes that reality is susceptible to any construction imposed upon it. Hence, he argues that the governmental reality is invented and as such, it is questionable and can be challenged. He shows that the governmental practices are arbitrary and unfair and that the case against the Isaacsons lacks legal evidence as it depends entirely on Dr. Mindish's testimony and on fabricated events composed by the FBI men: "First there were eight overt acts. Then there were nine Overt Acts. Then there were TEN OVERT ACTS. FRYING, a play in ten overt acts" (172).

On the other hand, Daniel tries to clear his parents' name by his own conception of retrieving the past events according to reality. He not only presents his parents as victims, but also develops an alternative hypothesis, which claims that both his parents and Dr. Mindish sacrificed themselves to cover for another couple who actually committed espionage. Their sacrificial role, as Doctorow has said, typifies the behavior of the American left in general (Trenner ed., 1983 61). This means that the Rosenberg case is transcended in favor of the story of American radicalism, which renders Daniel's narrative more plausible than the official version.

However, Doctorow's novel is truly a film narrative, primarily in so far as he employs narrative techniques commonly used in cinema. Like so many film strategies, Daniel often breaks up his narrative by changing voice and scene. He speaks in both first and third person, shifting abruptly in voice, space and time and combining various scenes which lack chronological order and logical sequence. In the first paragraph of the book, to cite an example, Daniel speaks in third person; his tone is objective and the time is past; he uses "the time of the thing told" rather than "the time of the telling," to cite Metz (1974, 18). The last sentence, however, is interrupted by the first person narrator, which gives the false impression that Daniel and the narrator are two separate characters. The whole paragraph functions as a narrative since it introduces Daniel, his wife and their eight-month-old son on their way from New York to Worcester Massachusetts. In the second paragraph, there is a shift in voice, time and place:

This is a Thinline felt tip marker, black. This is Composition Notebook 79C made in U.S.A. by Long Island Paper Products, Inc. This is Daniel trying one of the dark coves of the Browsing Room. Books for browsing are on the shelves. I sit at a table with a floor lamp at my shoulder. Outside this paneled room with its book-lined alcoves, is the Periodical Room. The Periodical Room is filled with newspapers on sticks, magazines from round the world, and the droppings of learned societies. Down the hall is the Main Reading Room and the entrance to the stacks…. I feel encouraged to go on. (13)

Daniel speaks in the first person and seems to be addressing the readers directly; the time is present, "the time of telling." Thus, the whole scene becomes a "flash forward" while the first paragraph is a "flash backward" (Seymour Chatman, 1978 64). The scene takes Place in the library of Columbia University. Each statement functions like "a film image" (Metz, 26) which carefully describes Daniel's surroundings. Since these images are "partial and successive" they constitute "a description" (Metz, 18) rather than a narrative.

On the third page, story-time stops to present a quotation from the Bible. Such pauses are frequent in Daniel's narrative. On one occasion, he interpolates an essay on the unlovely Old Testament God and on another he writes about the nature of the Cold War (A Raga). Although

modern narratives tend to avoid such pauses in favor of a dramatic mode, they nonetheless can occur in the cinema (Chatman, 47-48; 71-75). Through these pauses, Doctorow conducts a dialogue with readers who learn about Daniel's range and depth of mind.

Then Daniel's narrative proceeds but time, events and voice are always fragmented. The use of such a strategy enables Daniel and, hence Doctorow, to treat time as a network rather than as a chronological sequence and to define various events in relation to each other, that is, according to their spatial meaning instead of their temporal meaning. Moreover, these events can be associated and separated in numerous ways, each yielding a new perception. This is a kind of narrative collage, which allows Daniel to decompose the governmental reality and recompose his own and gives him the power to affect the readers' beliefs. The readers are always required to exert constant attention, refocusing and readjusting perceptions without Daniel and hence Doctorow having to explain things. Commenting on his cinematic techniques, Doctorow says.

What we've learned from film is quite explicit. We've learned that we don't have to explain things. We don't have to explain how our man can be in the bedroom one moment and walking in the street the next. How he can be twenty years old one moment and eight years old a moment later. We've learned that if we can just make the book happen, the reader can take care of himself. (Trenner ed., 41)

Clearly, by trusting the reader's ability to fill the gaps of clarity and detail present in his book, Doctorow draws the reader into active participation in it and engages his imagination in the task of working things out to himself. The reader's presence is so strong that Daniel is constantly vexed and worried about his response. In the scene, which describes Daniel's sexual attack on his wife in the car, for example, Daniel stops the narrative abruptly to address the reader in a provocative manner:

Do you believe it? Shall I continue? Do you want to know the effect of three concentric circles of heating element glowing orange in a black night of rain upon the tender white girlflesh of my wife's ass? Who are you anyway? Who told you you could read this? Is nothing sacred? (72)

On another occasion, Daniel fears the reader's under-estimation of his narrative and therefore warningly reminds the reader that he is in the same boat and he, Daniel, can read the reader: “If it is that elementary, then reader, I am reading you. And together we may rend our clothes in mourning" (66). In so doing, Doctorow manages to set “his work in motion and give rise to its dynamic nature," to use Wolfgang Iser's terms in describing the reading process:

The unwritten aspects of apparently trivial scenes and the unspoken dialogue within the "turns and twists" not only draw the reader into the action but also lead him to shade in the many outlines suggested by the given situations, so that these take on a reality of their own. (Wolfgang Iser, in Davis ed., 1989, 47-48)

CONCLUSION

Does Daniel, and hence, Doctorow mean we should pay homage to rhetoric and cinema? Should we embrace rhetoric and acting imagery in our attempts to shape society, our environment and ourselves and in trying to understand them? Is rhetoric, and hence acting, to be judged positively?

It is very likely that we can find an answer in Donald N. McCloskey's suggestion, which in a profane manner appears parallel to the Catholic Church’s outlook and techniques. In

McCloskey's opinion, the readers or the audiences play the most crucial roles. Depending on the American judiciary system to demonstrate his point, he says, our responses should be founded on "not what persuades a majority of a badly chosen jury but what persuades well educated participants in the conversations of our civilization and of our field" (McCloskey 1985, 46). Does this mean we are back to the sphere of rhetoric, trapped in its labyrinth? Not quite so. In fact, we are taken back to the original meaning and target of rhetoric: asserting the truth and morality. In this context, "well educated" also means the attainment of ethical values, which are either acquired from others or independently attained. McCloskey's concept of "the well-educated participants" is identical to Fish's concept of "interpretive communities," whose maxims and axioms resonate those validated by Talmudic students. According to Fish, the adherents of these "communities" are members of diverse clusters of erudite readers who embrace certain types of interpretation (Fish 1980, 404-408).

Clearly, both Fish and McCloskey speak of learned readers and audiences of people who can apply definite reliable procedures to evaluate others' analyses, acts and conducts. This explains why Daniel and Doctorow focus heavily on the reader/audience. Speaking of the tough role he assigns his readers in, Doctorow says,

That gives me pleasure, and I think it might give pleasure to readers, too. Don't underestimate them. People are smart, and they are not strangers to discontinuity. There's an immense amount of energy attached to breaking up your narrative and leaping into different voices, times, skins, and making the book happen and then letting the reader take care of himself. It's a kind of narrative akin to television- discontinuous and mind-blowing." (Navasky, 1980)

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