

In Palamedes' Shadow: Game and Play Concepts Today

The figure of the hero Palamedes looms over anyone who invents, plays or discusses games. Within the compass of his shadow, elongated and dark, stand all the human activities that can be called a game or gamelike. (For the Western mind, all human activities may be seen, as metaphor or archetypal resonance, to stand within the shadow of some Classical figure: Hermes casts his shadow over theft and literary interpretation, Dionysus casts his over freedom and carnival as well as drunkenness.) Consider the following anecdote.

A few years ago a Canadian scholar returning from a conference in Australia found himself stranded indefinitely in Fiji. The plane in which he had been travelling had lost an engine and, after a relatively smooth landing, was forced to wait on the tarmac at Nadi until a new engine could be flown in from Sydney. The passengers were lodged in a hotel near the airport but, since they were given no information concerning how long they might expect to be detained, they were confronted with the problem of how to occupy themselves. Restless, filled with anxiety, knowing that at any moment they may be hastened off to the plane, how should stranded passengers pass their time? One of the passengers observed that they were in the situation of sailors aboard a becalmed sailing ship waiting for the wind to blow. The scholar reflected that, odd as it might seem, passengers aboard a 747 and sailors of a former time can have quite a bit in common (and, as well, that a lost engine and an absence of wind can share something): the common point is simply the need to occupy oneself in time when all activities are subject to instant truncation.

The scholar realized that there is a class of games which seems especially suited for stranded passengers and becalmed sailors: simple games that, demanding some skill and some concentration (but only *some*), are played with pebbles, sticks, holes and words. Since he knew a few of these games (relics of previous becalmed conditions), the scholar found himself, almost inadvertently, teaching these games to his fellow passengers. A group of passengers sat around the bar of the Dominion International Hotel and played, following his instructions, games of

acrostics, anagrams, charades, mancala, nim, palindromes, puzzles, riddles and several varieties of simple wordplay. When, more than a day after they had been forced to land, they received a brusque summons to leave for the airport, one of the passengers remarked to the scholarly gamewright that he had been as resourceful as Palamedes.

With his simplistic games, the scholar had done for some stranded passengers on Fiji (filled time, cut through restlessness, busied them all towards a fresh wind) much the same as Palamedes had done for the Achaeans when their war fleet was becalmed at Aulis. Palamedes seems a fittingly elusive figure to have lent his shadow to a minor gamewright: he is said to have invented lighthouses, measures, the discus and dice games and to have added four letters to the Greek alphabet. He possesses a reputation for cleverness (an important qualification for any gamewright) but he is destroyed by the greater cleverness of another hero, Odysseus. Like play and game concepts themselves, Palamedes eludes a fully exhaustive account.

In his study of Attic Black-figure vases, J.D. Beazley comments on a vase by Exekias that shows the heroes Achilles and Ajax playing a kind of backgammon (a game of both skill and chance): The ingenious hero Palamedes ... invented various games to while away the long hours at Aulis; one day at Troy the two chief champions of the Greeks, Achilles and Ajax, became so absorbed in their board-game that they did not hear the alarm, and before they looked up the Trojans were in the Achaean camp.¹ This anecdote points directly towards two ideas that must play prominent parts in thoughtful discussions of play and game concepts. First, games may be invented by one person but played by others; that is, a structure in the mind of one person can be absorbed, digested, and become the temporary structure of another's mind. (Hence, as logically primitive modes of textuality, games pose the problem of intertextuality with paradigmatic clarity: each game exists in a field of other games of which some, like those of Ur, are forgotten but each move, every roll of dice, every strategy and tactic calls to mind others, replicates them, and defines itself in terms of a containing realm of echoes and resonances.) Second, games are, or can be, absorbing; that is, they pull the minds of the players into them and function pre-emptively and exclusively. In the scene depicted upon Exekias' vase, Achilles and Ajax are locked into a 'lusory attitude' (to borrow Bernard Suits's exemplary phrase): they have accepted the rules of backgammon in an exclusionary manner. It might

1 *The Development of Attic Black-Figure* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1951) 65

be said, playing somewhat loosely with Suits's definition, that the lusory attitude of players 'formulates the playfulness of game-playing ... it is the player's state of mind that makes the rules of a given game acceptable and allows him to engage in an activity that has been made, by the rules that have established it, a purposefully inefficient manner of obtaining certain ends. When a lusory attitude has taken over, the mind might be said to have shaped itself parasitically upon the body of the rules.'²

Not only must a considered discussion of game and play concepts take into account the problems of structure (either the pattern of play itself or the generative system of rules) and the self-absorption of players (the attitudes of gamewright, players and kibitzers alike in so far as they concentrate upon the play), but it must note the paradoxical relationship of Palamedes to the two greater heroes whom he serves: he serves others but he also masters them. Achilles and Ajax have taken into their minds an aspect of his, something of his making, and they have abandoned something of their ordinary poise, their habitual alertness to reality. (As Huizinga remarks, 'The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e., forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain.'³) Games constitute blocks of conceptual space within which skills, and hence mastery, are exercised and tested. Palamedes, as a gamewright, may claim a dominant, if merely contingent, superiority over the players whom his invention serves. Structure, self-absorption and mastery are among the recursive problems around which any discussion of game and play concepts must thread itself.

Palamedes is not only clever, an inventor and a gamewright, he is also a trickster. In the *Republic*, Plato has Socrates comment upon Palamedes: 'Palamedes, whenever he appears in tragedy, proves Agamemnon ridiculously unfit to be a general. Did you never remark how he declares that he had invented number, and had numbered the ships and set in array the ranks of the army at Troy; which implies that they had never been numbered before, and Agamemnon must be sup-

2 Robert R. Wilson, 'Godgames and Labyrinths,' *Mosaic* 14, No. 4 (December 1982) 6. See, Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Game, Life and Utopia* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press 1978). The account of a 'lusory attitude' in 'Godgames and Labyrinths' exceeds that which Suits provides: a formal description of the mental condition required in order to make the voluntary acceptance of inefficient rules explicable.

3 *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press 1955) 10

posed literally to have been incapable of counting his own feet — how could he if he was ignorant of number.⁴ Such arrogance bodes an abrupt end. And, indeed, Palamedes' end, brutal and unfair, stems directly from one of the triumphs of his cleverness. The story is told in two of the fables of the late Roman fabulist, Caius Julius Hyginus.⁵ In the first, Hyginus recounts how Agamemnon and Menelaus travelled to Ithaca in order to persuade Odysseus to join the Achaeans in the war against Troy. Odysseus has been warned by an oracle that (as did occur) he would return home only after twenty years, alone, needy, and having lost all of his comrades. Hence to avoid joining the Achaean host he pretends madness. He yokes a horse and an ox to a plough and pretends to work a field before the visiting heroes. However, Palamedes guesses that Odysseus is feigning madness and, to demonstrate this, takes Telemachus from his cradle and throws him in front of the plough. Of course, Odysseus swerves aside and, as a consequence, is constrained to join the other Achaeans in the conquest of Troy. From that time, Hyginus observes, Odysseus was hostile to Palamedes. In the second fable, Hyginus shows Odysseus besting Palamedes through his superior cleverness. He tricks Agamemnon into moving the Greek camp for one day, uses the interval to bury gold under the floor of Palamedes' tent, and then arranges for a Phrygian captive to be killed while carrying a forged letter purporting to be from Priam to Palamedes and offering, if Palamedes will betray his comrades, the exact sum of gold that had been secretly buried beneath his the tent. Cunningly entrapped, Palamedes is accused of treason, the damning gold is discovered, and he is put to death by the entire army.

The rather sparse indications of Palamedes' accomplishments and end tell a plain tale. Inventiveness can be out-invented; every player can be out-played. The typical arrogance of gamewrights and players (who have achieved, and suppose that they command, mastery) is viewed ironically: anyone can be beaten for, in the world of games, invincibility is impossible. Palamedes is beaten by a superior trickster, himself a gamewright (who creates, for example, the game of 'no one' for Polyphemus to play) who constructs, simply to bring about his downfall, a godgame of deep strategy. In Odysseus' godgame Palamedes becomes a mere player and a losing one as well.⁶ The shadow that

4 *The Republic*, vii, 522, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House 1937) 781

5 *The Myths of Hyginus*, trans. Mary Grant (Lawrence: University of Kansas 1960) 84, 92

6 'Godgame' is John Fowles's term for the literary situation in which one character,

Palamedes casts forward upon all subsequent games, their players and theorists, contains some obscurities that are darker than others. The subject is both illusive and elusive: it opens to many different modes of analysis, towards countless subordinate problems, after mares' nests, up *faux-fuyants*, occasionally into genuine discovery.

The concepts of play and game (separable in English but always twinned) have come to play an extraordinarily important role in contemporary critical discourse. For a number of different reasons, often quite contradictory ones, these concepts seem indispensable. Few critics would wish to do entirely without them. It sometimes seems, indeed, as if George Steiner's dictum, 'All literature is play,'⁷ has been widely (if not universally) accepted and all that remains for criticism to do is to derive, extract or wring out, the consequences. The problem of critical discourse might be seen as a series of questions about play asked on the empirical level of particular texts: who is playing? with what? by what (or whose) rules? to what ends? with what degree of skill? Alternatively, the critical questions may be transformed into queries concerning games: what game is this? where did the author find it? did he invent it? who else plays this game? what is its goal? what are its constitutive rules? what patterns, modes of order and disorder, does it manifest? in what does winning consist? must someone always win? Questions about play and game (applications, definitions, analyses, models: an entire alternative discourse in its own right) may even come to occupy the whole area of criticism as if there were nothing else. In some critical discourse play and game concepts do seem to behave like magic motifs in traditional folk literature in that, like an endless sausage, an unstinting goose or a unemptiable bowl, they not only dominate the other elements in the scene but they are ontologically inexhaustible. (As Peter Steele puts it, play can become a 'black hole' that eats up everything else.) Once one has the concepts of play and game firmly in hand it may appear unnecessary to talk about anything else and, for that matter, anything else can be talked of in

of superior intelligence and cunning, creates a situation of contrived bamboozlement that forces another character to struggle, as within a complex cognitive trap, in order to discover the godlike gamewright's hidden rules (that is, to think his way out or 'to play through'). See, 'Forward,' *The Magus*, rev. ed. (London 1977); Fowles discusses the concept of the godgame in *The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas* (Boston 1970) 19. For a discussion of the concept of godgame, see Wilson, 'Godgames and Labyrinths' and 'Spooking Oedipa: On Godgames,' *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* iv, 2 (Spring 1977) 186-204.

7 'Introduction' to Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London 1970) 12

precisely those terms. Play and game fill the conceptual horizon.

Although taxonomies of play and game concepts have been constructed (mostly significantly, perhaps, the one that Caillois provides⁸), the history of these concepts has not been written. Such a history, if written, would prove to be virtually co-terminous with Western thought. At least since Heraclitus philosophers have brought play and game concepts into their discourse. If play has normally been underesteemed as a human activity (devalued by the doubtful antithesis between it and seriousness and by the narrow assumption that it is, at best, 'merely' play), it has been overesteemed in the past two centuries. The unwritten history of play and game concepts would probably reveal that, since Kant, nearly every thinker who has thought seriously about human life and its institutions has made some contribution to the current complexity of the subject. Individually or in its historical collectivity, as a cultural or as a psychological phenomenon, as an irrational motion from the Unconscious or as an abstract expression of consciousness, there does not seem to be any aspect of human existence untouched by play and game. The current interest in play and game concepts (an interest that cuts across the boundaries of separate disciplines) can be viewed as a confluence of distinct lines of analysis and of dissimilar preoccupations. In any contemporary discussion, a number of ways of formulating the problems of play and game are likely to have run (or flowed) together.

First, there is a philosophical tradition, dating back to classical times, that treats play as an important, or as an exclusive, mode of education, as *paideia*. Games, in particular, can be seen as educative in effect. Children learn the values of their culture through games. The constitutive rules of children's games transpose the goals and norms of culture. Children may be said to rehearse the social roles that, outside of games, they will someday play. Roles, toys, the patterns of games themselves can all be regarded as practice for adult life or as stages in the indoctrination of cultural values. Eric Erikson, for example, observes that if 'childhood play seems extraterritorial to the verifiable facts and responsible acts of adult reality, it is only that playing and learning are the child's business.'⁹ Similarly, George Herbert Mead argues that in

8 Caillois's taxonomy of games, influential and widely applied, divides games into four distinct categories: conflict or *agon*, chance or *alea*, simulation or mimicry and vertigo or *ilinx*. Caillois also introduces a definition of 'game' that expands upon Huizinga: games, for Caillois, are always free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, rule-governed and make believe. See, Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (London 1961). [*Les Jeux et les hommes* 1958]

9 *Toys and Reason: Stages in the Ritualization of Experience* (New York 1977) 63.

games children learn social responsibility (that is their 'business'), how to relate to others and to integrate themselves within social collectives. The child who plays in a game, Mead writes, 'must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game.' Mead goes on to remark that in games there are sets of responses among players 'so organized that the attitude of one calls out the appropriate attitudes of the other,' the child-player's non-self.¹⁰ (Mead's model of educative play has not, clearly, appealed to everyone: Christopher Lasch remarks that games 'quickly lose their charm when forced into the service of education, character development, or social improvement.'¹¹) Not only is it possible to see play and game concepts within the perspective of education, socialization and cultural indoctrination but, as a simple converse function, it is also possible to judge social institutions, or particular cultures, by the kind and degree of play that they permit. Thus Spengler insists that 'genuine play' is no longer possible in a worldcity (of whatever civilization) but only degenerate games that 'strain' after pleasure.¹² Lasch follows a Spenglerian line of analysis both in claiming the importance of games and sports as indices of a culture's wellbeing and in finding contemporary North American play trivialized by 'a breakdown in the conventions surrounding' sports and other public games.¹³ Play, in this perspective, is inherently serious.

Second, another philosophical tradition, reaching back at least as far as Schiller, holds that play is both central and fundamental to human experience since it is in play that human beings manage to realize themselves or, put somewhat differently, to make real their highest ideals. This is what Schiller means when he argues, in *Über die aesthet-*

Cf. Erikson's *Childhood and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1965) 204: 'Play, then, is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize the bodily and the social processes with the self. ... the emphasis, I think, should be on the ego's need to master the various areas of life, and especially those in which the individual finds his self, his body, and his social roles wanting and trailing.'

- 10 *The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead*, ed., Anselm Strauss (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1956) 228.
- 11 *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1979) 100
- 12 *The Decline of The West*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1932) II, 103
- 13 In *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch includes a chapter on 'The Degradation of Sport' which follows Spengler in employing games, sports and other play activities as a basis for the examination of culture. Cf. Lasch's 'The Degradation of Work and The Apotheosis of Art,' *Harper's* (February 1984) 43-5.

ische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen (1973) that only in play is man fully himself (15th Letter).¹⁴ Schiller's insistence upon the centrality of play, or the play drive (*Speiltrieb*), has had a continuous line of succession: psychologists, philosophers and historians, like Huizinga, all have argued that play is fundamental, or that it represents the zenith of human potential, or that human culture rises upon a basis of play (where play is conceived of as spontaneous, constructive, exploratory and creative). 'Man's playing,' Kurt Riezler observes, 'is his greatest victory over his dependence and finiteness, his servitude to things.'¹⁵

Third, the concepts of play and game have always appealed to writers and students of literature who see literary texts as both self-referential and self-contained, governed by their own distinctive rules. In this sense, works of literature may be considered as games since they follow from certain assumptions (which, with more or less precision, one may call 'rules' or 'axioms') that are not necessarily those of the outside-the-text world. The axioms of a fictional, or 'possible,' world may be said to correspond to those of a game (or: literary conventions 'equal' the rules of a game) in that they restrict what may happen, delimit action, and make certain other things (characters, events or moves) possible with a disregard for what may be the case outside the fiction. The assumptions of literature being granted, then it may be argued that, as rigorously as the theorems of a non-Euclidian geometry or the conclusions of any axiomatic system, a number of consequences are made possible. The worlds of fantasy (of legends, romances or science fiction, say) may be called games, or gamelike, simply because they begin with specific assumptions concerning what is possible (a flying horse, say, or a faster-than-light spaceship) and then draw out the narrative consequences. These assumptions may be counter-factual, counter-intuitive, unsupported by any body of knowledge extrinsic to the text, but nonetheless they will function adequately to establish the 'world' of the fiction in which, as in a game, anything conceivable becomes possible. Fictional worlds are, as Félix Martínez-Bonati succinctly puts it, the 'sphere of imaginary representation'¹⁶ and, as such, limited by, and constructed

14 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, trans. E.M. Wilkindson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford 1967). [*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1793)]

15 'Play and Seriousness,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 38, No. 19 (September 1941) 513

16 *Fictive Discourse and The Structures of Literature: A Phenomenological Approach* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1981) 92

within, the assumptions that imagination admits and grasps. (Though one may call these worlds 'possible,' in deference to the lexicon of semiotics, it seems evident that many, if not most, are inherently impossible, unenactable, except in imagination.) Moreover, if it is true that fantasy is a game, then it will not be difficult to show that *all* literature (because all literature will depend upon its assumptions, and these will be both specific and selective, however ordinary, commonsensical or 'realistic' they may appear to be) is, in this sense, either a game or gamelike. The Golden World of Renaissance literary theory and the playworld of Schillerian philosophy merge.

Fourth, psychoanalysis has deepened, and complicated, all literary criticism, but it has had its greatest impact in making available a generalized psychic model that makes the Unconscious a powerful (even scheming and cunning) agent that influences, and may even control totally, all conscious, surface manifestations. In this sense, the Unconscious plays through the surface manifestations or, in a somewhat stronger formulation, it makes a game out of the conscious mind. In a post-Psychoanalytic context, critics have taken the obscurity of motivations for granted as well as the authentic intelligibility of apparently (on the surface) non-motivated behaviour, such as dreams, laughter, hysteria or madness. If, in general, human language is the playground of the Unconscious, it will be the case that each literary text is particularly so. Surface wordplay, for example, will reveal unconscious connections, displacements and condensations of meaning that are invisible from the opaque surface of consciousness. Thus Freud seeks the origins of art itself in the artist's daydreams and private fantasies. These are, he remarks, 'the raw material of poetic production, for the creative writer uses his day-dreams, with certain remodellings, disguises and omissions, to construct the situation which he introduces into his short stories, his novels or his plays. The hero of the day-dream is always the subject himself, either directly or by an obvious identification with someone else.'¹⁷ One may take other psycho-analytic positions, or replay Freud through reinterpretations (Lacan's, for instance) but the chief point will remain: the surface is a gamelike, rule-derived manifestation of the Unconscious (a visible game constituted by invisible rules), the evident results of exploratory and creative and activity played out in the dark latency of the hidden mind.¹⁸

17 'Lecture 5' in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1973) 128

18 For example of this mode of analysis, see Edmond Radar, 'A Genealogy: Play,

Fifth, a great deal of the current fascination with play and game concepts centres around the idea of role-playing or role-simulation games. The 'actions that a man might play' turn out to be quite diverse. The most extended sense of role-playing, make-believe, is simply what Schiller had in mind when he described human beings as most fully realizing themselves in play. Play, in the Schillerian view, is a sublime form of sour grapes. Children (and adults, too) make believe in their play but for them the fictions they create and impose upon themselves really are the case. The play of make-believe (alternative, compelling, self-enclosed) takes the place of reality. And, in this view of play, it probably constitutes a more than fair exchange. Art, the most extreme development of make-believe, is also a believed, an accepted, a really-the-case, alternative to nature. Hence it is both idealistic in a technical sense and sour grapes as well. This idea is open to strong formulations. One needs cite only a single instance in order to illustrate the point: Eugen Fink writes that play 'can be experienced as a pinnacle of human sovereignty. Man enjoys here an almost limitless creativity, he is productive and uninhibited because he is not creating within the sphere of reality. The player experiences himself as the lord of the products of his imagination — because it is virtually unlimited, play is an eminent manifestation of human freedom.'¹⁹

Analogous, if less strongly put, versions of the Schillerian argument can be found throughout European Philosophy and Psychology. Even when the category of role-playing is assimilated to the category of *paideia*, of learning, directed or undirected, it retains Schillerian undertones. Piaget, for example, observes that 'Practically every form of psychological activity is initially enacted in play Cognitive activity thus initiates play, and play in turn reinforces cognitive activity.'²⁰ Piaget is still Schillerian (though rather Rumpelstiltskin in appearance) in the insistence upon the cognitive and constructive side of play and its really-the-case status. However, it is possible to separate the concept of role-

Folklore, and Art,' *Diogenes* 103 (1978) 78-99. Radar argues that 'the manifestations of play' unfold in the imagination, give form to time and space, and are governed by the pleasure principle (p. 79). Although the bibliography of works devoted to the analysis of the relationships between psychoanalysis (in all of its formulations) and literature is vast, Meredith Anne Skura's *The Literary Use of the Psychoanalytic Process* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1981) deserves to be singled out.

19 The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play,' trans. Ute and Thomas Saine, in *Yale French Studies* 41 (1968) 24-5

20 *Six Psychological Studies*, trans. Anita Tenzer (New York: Vintage Books 1968) 23

playing from Schillerian associations and to examine it essentially as a number of specific activities, carried on at all stages in human life, that are context-dependent. Thus social institutions (education, marriage, work, leisure and so forth) may be analyzed into the particular roles that constitute them. The role is not the actual person (who may be conceived of as either hiding behind the role or as being composed of many different roles that are brought into play in discrete contexts) but the mode of the person's social behaviour. It is even possible to create role-simulation games in which trained behavioural psychologists observe individual actions within artificial situations and draw practical conclusions. Role-playing may be both a mode of education and a vehicle for self-expression. Both models of role-playing can provide a basis for literary analysis but the latter, since one of the most typical situations of traditional realism has been to show characters struggling against the restrictions of society and socially-imposed roles towards greater self-realization and expression, seems to be the most common. Furthermore, role-playing often constitutes the secret advantage of master illusionists: characters who, like Shakespeare's villains, bamboozle their victims by the impenetrable roles that they gracefully assume. Role-playing is a necessary element in literary godgames.

In literary criticism, the concept of role-playing can lead to a global analysis of literary texts based entirely upon one or more of the (quite distinct) premises that characters play roles, that characterization is nothing but complexes of roles, that characters are latent aspects of the author's self now being played (indirectly but publically), or that characters are unfilled roles waiting upon the reader's initiative. The distinction between an apparent (but merely surface) identity and an inapparent (but real) Unconscious seeking its own (coded or disguised) manifestation can be reformulated as the active compulsion, driving up from unconscious depths, to try on roles, to hide behind pretense, to define and redefine oneself differently, or to expose more of the actual human reality than could be captured in any single role. This reformulation of the generalized Psychoanalytic model reflects the impact of Jungian Analytic Psychology upon literary characterization in modern literature. (Characters in novels by Herman Hesse, Patrick White, Doris Lessing, Robertson Davies and many others display this wholly positive, metamorphic play of the Unconscious in conscious life.²¹)

21 For a discussion of the influence of Jungian Analytic Psychology upon characterization in modern fiction, see F.L. Radford and R.R. Wilson, 'Some Phases of The Jungian Moon: Jung's Influence on Modern Literature,' *English*

Sixth, since Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), the significance of which it would be difficult to overestimate, there has been a widespread tendency to subject all human activity, including language, to an atomistic analysis in which the discrete parts may be called games. A game, in this sense, is a logically primitive activity that possesses its particular rule. Larger, more complex, activities may be considered as composites of primitive games or as being themselves games. (A sentence is a game in a particular context but presupposes the game of language itself.) What counts is that the activity can be isolated, that a rule can be identified which makes sense out of the activity (the absence of which would leave the activity either inexplicable or incoherent), and that some description, or formal account, of the activity can be given. A rule, then, would be particular and expressed by the activity it shapes. In this kind of atomistic analysis, rules derive their significance from the particular games in which they function. (As, in general, meaning must be taken as a function of use.) It is easy to see why this conception of game and rule should have proved so attractive to literary critics: atomistic analysis is close to the heart of literary formalism, it allows textual examination on the level of specific linguistic exchanges between characters, and it assimilates the discourse of the literary text to that of ordinary language (thus both fulfilling the desire for mimesis that appears so often in literary criticism and also tugging a forelock towards those academic philosophers who have, for the purposes of *their* discourse, privileged the mythical entity known as 'ordinary language'.)²² This limited, if fruit-

Studies in Canada 8, No. 3 (September 1982) 311-32. The Archetypes of the Unconscious may be said to 'play' through the conscious levels of the psyche and to find their expression in roles that are played on the conscious, or surface, level. Role-playing is a distinctive aspect of characterization in all fiction influenced by the Jungian psychological model. (This is, for example, overwhelmingly the case in the fiction of Patrick White.) For a recent example of criticism that examines literary role-playing, see Eileen Jorge Allman, *Player-King and Adversary: Two Faces of Play in Shakespeare* (Baton Rouge 1981).

- 22 The 'game analogy' appears in two ways in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1968). First, discrete activities are called games; for example, the 'reporting on slabs' game (p. 10e, para. 21). Second, it is precisely games that Wittgenstein singles out as an instance of separate activities that possess a 'family resemblance' but not a definition (p. 31e-32e, para. 66). The availability of 'family' resemblances is opposed to the futility of definitions in Wittgenstein; however, the term has taken on constructive functions in contemporary discussion in order to express close relationship between specific concepts. See, Renford Bambrough's 'Universals and Family Resemblances,' in *Proceedings of The Aristotelean Society* 63 (1960-61) 207-22; reprinted in George Pit-

ful, model of 'game' has reached its current apotheosis in various applications of Speech Act Theory (the close analysis of linguistic exchanges, casual or not, between persons or, by analogy, characters) in literary criticism.²³

Seventh, the invention of mathematical Game Theory has prompted a diverse application of its specialized terminology to a variety of activities. To the extent that literary criticism merely borrows the terminology of Game Theory (which is, in sum, the logico-mathematical analysis of rational strategies for decision-making in certain restricted contexts) little seems to be gained other than a highly abstract jargon where, for example 'zero/sum conflict' may replace a traditionally formulated 'antagonism' as a descriptive phrase.²⁴ The availability of Game Theory, however, does seem to have alerted critics to the possibilities of viewing literature as, in itself, a game to be played between an Author and a Reader. If it is thought of as a cooperative game (not, that is, a 'zero/sum conflict'), or a 'mixed motive' game, then a certain line of

cher, ed., *Wittgenstein: The 'Philosophical Investigations'* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books 1966) 186-204. The second usage is, perhaps, the most famous instance of the 'game analogy' in Wittgenstein, but it is the first that has prompted a line of subsidiary analysis. See, Gabriel Jospovici, *The World and the Book* (London: The McMillan Press 1971).

- 23 Although the relationship between Speech Act Theory and Wittgenstein could be contested, the importance of the 'game analogy' does not seem to be in doubt. See, J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed., J.O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press 1965); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969) and *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979). The 'game analogy' (especially with regard to how 'rules' work) runs through *Speech Acts* (cf. pp. 33-42, 63-4). A number of attempts have been made to apply Speech Act Theory to the study of literature (it has been called everything from 'the most sophisticated theory of literature available' to a 'banal system of taxonomy'): see, for example, Wolfgang Iser, 'The reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature', *New Literary History* 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1975) 7-35. The most fully developed examination of Speech Act Theory in relation to literature is Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward A Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press 1977) The emphasis upon isolatable, discrete activities, each possessing its constitutive rule (hence making a separate 'game') seem to appeal to those who prefer atomistic (empirical and particularizing) modes of analysis.
- 24 For example, see George de Forest Lord, *Heroic Mockery: Variations on Epic Themes from Homer to Joyce* (Newark: University of Delaware Press 1977) 17-18, 40. For an analysis of Lord's use of Game Theory terms, see Robert R. Wilson, 'Three Prolusions: Toward a Game Model in Literary Theory,' *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* viii, 1 (Winter 1981) 79-92.

analysis is opened on the side of reader theory. It is certainly possible, as Elizabeth Bruss argues, to see literature as a form of game played, for the stakes of meaning, between author and reader on either a co-operative, mixed motive or competitive order.²⁵ Many authors (Nabokov, say, or Joyce or Sterne) seem characteristically playful in the creation of word-play, allusiveness, parody and the metafictional foregrounding of literary and rhetorical conventions: the essence of their seriousness, as Robert Alter remarks of Sterne, is playfulness.²⁶ For this reason their writing does seem to challenge the reader, for the 'stakes of meaning,' within a gamelike situation of some kind more or less as Bruss argues. Nonetheless, it does not seem possible to predict either the author's or the reader's moves (that is, the rational strategy behind their 'moves') but this, precisely, is the rationale for Game Theory: its central purpose is to provide the basis for predictive models. Perhaps one might say that Game Theory has given literary criticism a certain amount of jargon (of narrow utility) and a few suggestive metaphors.²⁷

Eighth, it could be argued that the single most significant conception of play has been formulated within post-Structural analysis and, in particular, within Deconstruction. Here the central play-concept is Derrida's sweeping formulation of *jeu libre*: both indefinitely capacious and a tool for clearing discourse, as neatly as a table-top, of enclosing, restrictive concepts. Paradoxically, it may be said that *jeu libre* is so wide a concept that it may not be a concept at all. If it is ontologically unbound²⁸ or as general as being itself (which it effectively replaces in Derrida's discourse), then it may, indeed, be impossible adequately to formulate it. In reviewing *De la grammatologie* James S. Hans observes that the con-

25 See, 'The Game of Literature and Some Literary Games,' *New Literary History* (1977) 153-72

26 *Motives for Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1984) 92

27 See, Oskar Morgenstern and John von Neumann, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1944). There exists an extensive bibliography of expositions of Game Theory and applications to specific situations. See, Anatol Rapoport, *Fights, Games and Debates* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1960) and Anatol Rapoport, ed., *Game Theory as a Theory of Conflict Resolution* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel 1974). For a discussion of Game Theory from a philosopher's point of view, see Richard B. Braithwaite, *Theory of Games as a Tool for the Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1955).

28 Derrida's 'version of play ... wants to do without ontological anchors.' Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1980) 168

cept (or non-concept) of freeplay resists formulation: it is 'precisely the continual working out of the relationship between various "non-centres" and complete randomness.'²⁹ Nonetheless, even if one were limited to the *via negativa* of absence in discussing *jeu libre*, it should still be possible to describe how the term functions in Derrida's writings, what claims are made for it in deconstructionist arguments, how the model of textuality behind criticism undergoes transformations given the assumption of *jeu libre*.

Although inclusive and recalcitrant to all formulation, freeplay has played a persistent, if anamorphic, role in Derrida's writings and in those of other Deconstructionists. In 'La Structure, le signe et le jeu,' Derrida argues that the field of *jeu libre* excludes totalization: 'ce champ est en effet celui d'un jeu, c'est-à-dire de substitutions infinies dans la clôture d'un ensemble fini. Ce champ ne permet ces substitutions infinies que parce qu'il est fini, c'est-à-dire qu'au lieu d'être un champ inépuisable, comme dans l'hypothèse classique, au lieu d'être trop grand, il lui manque quelque chose, à savoir un centre qui arrête et fonde le jeu des substitutions.'³⁰ In *De la grammatologie* he writes that 'on pourrait appeler *jeu* l'absence du signifié transcendantal comme illimitation du jeu, c'est-à-dire comme ébranlement de l'onto-théologie et de la métaphysique de la présence.'³¹ Thus, though it may not be possible adequately to define the concept, Derrida seems to make it clear that freeplay is limitless, unlimited by any irreducible signified (or any transcendental concept that cannot be further decomposed), and that it manifests itself in the process of indefinite substitution. Play, considered as *jeu libre*, lies beyond stable, centred structures, makes them untenable, decentres them and deprivileges them. (To say that it 'lies beyond' falsely spatializes the problem. Even to say that *jeu libre* precedes, or is logically prior to, must also falsify what does appear to be an incompletely conceivable relationship.) It is only as a condition of its being that all signification (each signifier, every chain of signifiers, any supposable complex of signifiers, in whatever shifting relation to whatever signifieds) decentres.

That signifiers exist in a field of substitution (an unbounded metonymy) is an idea that recurs persistently in Derrida: in his interview with Julia Kristeva, in *Positions*, he observes with great emphasis, in attempting to clarify the concept of *différence*, that 'il n'y a, de part en part,

29 'Derrida and Freeplay,' *Modern Language Notes* 94 (1979) 809, 823

30 *L'Écriture et la Différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1967) 423

31 *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1967) 73

que des différences et des traces de traces.³² This 'open play of signification'³³ must be seen as both a universal condition of language and as a universal effect: it is both an endless semiological linkage, a fabric of traces entailing other traces, and that which makes signification possible. In Deconstruction a writer (*scriptor ludens*, let us say) may be said to play only because the game (of writing) plays through him. He plays because the system of language, which he seems to manipulate (and perhaps actually believes that he controls) plays through him, both inevitably and as a matter of course. It seems much like saying that chess (or any game) plays through the players who play: the play-system precedes the play and only manifests itself in play.

The attractiveness of Derridean freeplay as a conceptual tool for literary analysis can scarcely be overstated. It has tended towards displacing all other play-concepts in literary discussion, *as if* all play were freeplay and there were no other analytic task than to trace the play of substitutions from one signifier, or chain of signifiers, to another. The attractiveness of the concept lies in its protean applicability (*ex vi termini*, all texts must manifest freeplay and respond to a Deconstructive analysis), in the awareness of mastery, of power over the text, that it gives the critic, and the way in which it corresponds to the postmodern sensibility that views literary texts as highly artificial constructs always, in themselves, verging upon dissolution and which, in their self-referentiality, mock, parody and *play with* their own conventions. (In his essay on John Barth and Italo Calvino, Brian Edwards explores this correspondence between the Deconstructionist concept of free play and the post modernist commitment to reflexive self-parody.) Nonetheless,

32 *Positions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1972) 38. Cf. 'Living On: Border Lines,' in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, eds. Harold Bloom *et al* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation 1979), where Derrida observes that there is no 'shore' or 'edge' to discourse but only continuous deferral (p. 82) and that hence a text must be taken as a 'differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces' (p. 84). Clearly, within in Derridean Deconstruction, this constitutes some kind of basic (though not, of course, 'central') proposition.

33 Vicki Mistacco, with unmistakable echoes of Roland Barthes, provides the following definition of *ludisme* which seems to capture the textual possibilities of freeplay: 'the open play of signification, as the free and productive interaction of forms, of signifiers and signifieds, without regard for an original or an ultimate meaning.' See, 'The Theory and Practice of Reading Nouveaux Romans: Robbe-Grillet's *Topologie d'une cité fantôme*,' in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds., Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1980) 375, fn. 16.

despite the charisma of *jeu libre* and its tendency to drive all other play-concepts from the scene, it must be clear that Derrida's writings invoke at least three concepts of play, of which freeplay is merely one.

Derrida actually discusses play as it has been understood in philosophical discourse.³⁴ In *La Dissémination*, for instance, he discusses Plato's understanding of play, its relation to the more generally diffused concept of the *pharmakon*, and, in particular, the way in which, in Plato's discourse, 'la singularité du jeu,' becomes neutralized by its assumption into the concept of game ('Le jeu se perd toujours en se sauvant dans les jeux').³⁵ On the other hand, Derrida is often playful in a fairly ordinary sense of the term. Wordplay, bewildering textual strategies, a funhouse of verbal recursiveness (a Carrollesque delight in the possibilities of combination and permutation) compile an anthology, or perhaps a pharmacy, of scribal moves that suggest writers such as Joyce, Nabokov, Barth or Calvino or many practitioners of *le nouveau roman*. Geoffrey Hartman has suggested that *Glas* is, in its 'beautiful strangeness,' something like a philosophical *Finnegans Wake*.³⁶ And Hartman, though the line of his argument is to make freeplay the controlling concept of Derrida's writing (but, of course, the unacknowledged control of all writing), observes that 'to call [Derrida's systematic play, his *serio ludere*] "freeplay" seems understated.'³⁷ Even within Derrida's own *œuvre* there are more versions of play than freeplay. And even if one grants the infinite field of textuality which *jeu libre* constitutes, it must still be possible to perceive, on the plane of local textual manifestation, other kinds of play: games, and structured playfulness, that, in themselves not *jeu libre*, play through, and within, some texts but not all.

Derrida (or his laughing absence) is felt in all the essays gathered together here except for Bernard Suits's tightly analytic examination of the formal requirements for a work of literature to be an actual game.

34 Play is a philosophically charged term. Propositions concerning play within Western Philosophy date as far back, at least, as Heraclitus. For an informed discussion of play concepts in philosophical discussion, see David L. Miller, 'The Kingdom of Play: Some Old Theological Light from Recent Literature,' *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 25, No. 3 (Spring 1970) 343-60.

35 *La Dissémination* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1972) 181, 182

36 'Monsieur Texte: On Jacques Derrida, His *Glas*,' *Georgia Review* 29 (1975) 760-1; cf. 'Monsieur Texte II: Epiphony in Echoland,' *Georgia Review* 30 (1976), where Hartman notes that in *Glas* the reader seems 'to skirt Joyce's words within words, his "echoland" ' (p. 174).

37 'Monsieur Texte,' p. 782

Considering the evidence of this collection of essays alone, it seems correct enough to claim that Derrida, and the bulking presence (!) of *jeu libre*, now dominate most discussions of play and game pushing other perspectives towards marginalia and gloss. It would probably not be possible to ignore Derridean Deconstruction in any discussion of play and game concepts but it is necessary to remember both that there are more kinds of play, even in Derrida's own writings, than *jeu libre* and that it is possible to have more than one view of this massive conceptual impact. Peter Steele, for example, observes that Derrida seems to be revolted by the concrete which, in other terms, makes part of Félix Martínez-Bonati's objection that Deconstructionist formulations of language, as the play of signification, leave out the actual human experience of language, the concrete 'full' and inexhaustible 'images of life' that precede, and make possible, all concrete language.³⁸ On the other hand, Brian Edwards takes the Derridean notion of freeplay as an analytic, exploratory and fruitful concept that matches, in a fairly exact parallel, the literary practices of postmodernist writers such as Barth and Calvino. Michael Holquist, in his discussion of Baxtin's concept of carnival, compares Derrida's notion of freeplay (his 'carnivalized metaphysics') to carnival and concludes that it adds up to little more than the '*nom de guerre* by which many have recently come to know the unsettling phenomenon Baxtin otherwise (and less notoriously) addresses as double-voicedness, quasi-reported speech, polyphony, heteroglossia and a number of other particularizing terms.'

(The relationships that Baxtin and Derrida bear to the history of play concepts exemplify some of the difficulties that such a history might en-

38 Félix Martínez-Bonati's comment upon freeplay and 'open signification' reminds one that Deconstruction builds upon a specific linguistic theory. Not everyone feels happy with Saussurian linguistics (still less with post-Saussurian extravaganzas) and it is important to remember that the central problem of Saussurian linguistics, signification, is quite distinct from, say, the problem of reference in Anglo-American linguistic theories. However lucidly Frege, Russell, Stawson, or Davidson may have written upon the distinction between 'meaning' and 'reference' it plays no part in Saussurian and post-Saussurian linguistics: their clarifications remain to one side of a literary field in which the important issues are signification, the play of signifiers, and the theoretical inconceivability of a terminal signified in any constructed chain of signifiers. It is interesting to note that Richard Rorty systematically transforms Derrida's view of language (and the linguistic theory that his discourse presupposes) into the usual Anglo-American view of language (words, things, and representation) in which, of course, reference *is* the fascinating problem. See, 'Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida,' in *The Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1982) 90-109.

counter. Baxtin's concept of carnival, an aspect of Dialogism, enters the history of play concepts at an angle quite different than that of freeplay. All play concepts exist between two extremes: between the position that play is a voluntary, intentional human action and the position that play is an impersonal, random movement. The first position, represented by Schiller, links play to freedom and creativity. The second position, represented by Deconstruction, sees play as involuntary energy, as one speaks of the play of waves, of light, of rain, of molecules, and of signification. If the appropriate metaphors for the first position are molding, shaping, forming or creating, the appropriate metaphor for the second position might be that of a kaleidoscope: an endless linear series of permutations, each spectacular in itself, each different, with no potential for correction, enhancement or culmination. The relationship between these two opposed views of play can be illustrated by invoking the familiar Structuralist opposition between synchrony and diachrony, between paradigm and syntagm, or, to employ Jakobson's formulation, between metaphor and metonymy. These oppositions are, of course, modes of the same opposition. In whichever formulation, they can be visualized as the diverging lines of intersecting vertical and horizontal axes. In this simple picture, the vertical axis represents the synchronic availability of options while the horizontal axis represents the diachronic possibilities of linear combination. When the extreme versions of play are projected upon this diagram, the first, or Schillerian, view of play points to the human potential to explore, to play up and through the possibilities of a given paradigm, to create metaphors. The second, or Deconstructionist, view of play points to the human potential to combine, to form endless chains of permutations, to create metonymies. The first might be seen as both the basis for, and the fullest expression of, metaphor; the second, as both the basis for, and the fullest expression of, metonymy. Now Baxtin's concept of carnival seems, in this analysis, to be closest to the Schillerian position of free, creative action. A kaleidoscope would be a stunningly inappropriate image for the dialogic, social concept of carnival: for which, of course, correction, enhancement and culmination are not merely relevant but wholly central. Carnival is, among other things, free, voluntary, creative, intentionally purposeful and, as a manifestation of the human double voice, whole-making. Yet, in being double, a discursive dance between at least two voices — or other semiotically coherent systems: fashion, manners, architecture, sports and so forth — carnival must also participate in the seriality of all metonymy. Baxtin might be said, in effect, to occupy the angle between the vertical, paradigmatic axis of metaphor and the horizontal, syntagmatic axis of metonymy. There *is* something on-going and metonymic

about carnival though it is limited by the finite boundaries of particular utterances. The metonymic on-goingness of freeplay is, evidently, unbounded.)

Not only do play and game concepts slip in and out of many distinct perspectives but, in their conceptual swirl, the perspectives themselves are focused by uncertain boundaries. Education and role-playing, for example, though clearly separable, must often become intermingled since so much educative play is actually role-playing (and in role-playing, furthermore, the Schillerian claim is most precisely visible). Beyond the attempt to distinguish the perspectives in which play and game have been considered, other complexities appear. The terms possess an inordinate diversity and range (not to say downright slipperiness) in ordinary language as well as a large number of technical meanings. And the twinning of the terms in English does nothing to ease the burden of complexity. Consider the word 'play.' We play musical instruments, odds, hunches, hands and roles as well as games. We habitually play not only with words but also with toys, fantasies, ideas, possibilities, signs, signification, other people and playmates. And (briefly to play a prepositional game) we play with, we play up, we play down, we play both beyond and within (the possibilities, the rules, what is permitted, the limits), we play on, we play back, we play through, we play over, we play under (the cover of, or simply the covers), we play at, we observe watchfully how 'things' will play, and (above all) we commonly, alas, play out. Any activity or thing can be playful, and anything, even a game, can be converted into a plaything (Frank Kermode speaks of the literary text itself as being 'playful')³⁹ and anything at all can be either the subject or object of play. What can so many diverse senses have in common? (No doubt there are those who would cry, 'plenty!' or 'everything!' or like benighted Cratylus in Plato's dialogue, they might answer quickly, 'Why, they have "play" in common!') Play is making and it is teasing: it is a constructive activity and a deconstructive activity, pointed in opposite ways yet interbound. *Labile* in its very nature (as Huizinga says), play is not easy to grasp.

Works of literature may contain games as, for example, Pope's *The Rape of The Lock* contains a game of *ombre* or Carroll's *Through The Looking-Glass* or Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* and *The Defense* contain chess problems. Cortázar's *Rayuela* exemplifies, as well as metaphorizes, the children's game it encodes. Calvino's *Il castello dei destini incrociati* builds upon the signifying possibilities of the Tarot cards. Indeed, many

39 *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1979) 17

works of literature, in many languages, contain actual games, versions of games, invented games, or extend the ordinary sense of a particular game, as Cortázar does, towards metaphorical and metaphysical play without becoming that game. And, to the extent that literary works do, it becomes a simple requirement of literary history to understand certain games.⁴⁰ In a larger sense, works of literature may contain all kinds of wordplay (or even, to use Nabokov's term, mirrorplay), all of which needs to be, at some level, explicated. In what is, perhaps, the largest sense of all, 'any *playful*, self-conscious and extended means by which an author stimulates his reader to deduce or to speculate, by which he encourages him to see a relationship between different parts of the text, or between the text and something extraneous to it' may be called a 'literary game.'⁴¹ These empirical difficulties, all of which demand some understanding of games from the critic or literary historian, cut through the various perspectives in which game and play have been considered.

The mere fact that works of literature may contain games, or other instances of wordplay, does not, of course, imply that they are, in themselves, games. A work might be constructed entirely out of games and not in itself be a game: much as a Philosophy (or a Theology) might be built out of jokes and yet not be a joke. Much of the controversy in recent literary criticism has revolved around this point. The assertion that a work of literature (any or all) is a game, or is a certain kind of play, or represents playfulness, is a question, different in kind, from the explication of empirical games to be found in literary texts. (As Bernard Suits argues, there are a number of ways in which a work of literature might be a game and the fact that it is a game in one sense will not mean that it is in any other sense.) Hence all the problems inherent in the discussion of games and play return, distributed on several levels, hedged around by innumerable qualifications, and made more difficult by literature's particular elusiveness, when one asks, 'Is literature a game?' (Is it only, or more than, a language game? Under what conditions is it a game? Can it be created, or read, as a game without being itself, in formal terms, a game? Is it inevitably playful? Inevitably a game? Could it be one and not the other? and so forth.) Clearly, when Palamedes invented games at Aulis, he solved one problem (idleness) by creating a category of pro-

40 For a valuable bibliographical discussion of empirical games in literature, see Elisabeth Frenzel, 'Spieler,' in *Motive der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart: Kroner 1976) 633-43.

41 Peter Hutchinson, *Games Authors Play* (London: Methuen 1983) 14

blems that, tenaciously unyielding to solutions, continues to expand. His games (like concepts, like nets) have been widely flung.

The purpose of the essays collected here is to explore the uses, and the usefulness, of game and play concepts to the study of literature. Palamedes' fiefdom (or, perhaps, his playground) has been travelled before: since the watershed issue of the *Yale French Review* was published in 1968, the twinned concepts of play and game have been invoked in many ways and brought to the analysis of all literary forms. (One should note how many of the items cited in James Marino's bibliography have been written since 1968.) On the practical level, play and game often seem like incantations (or particularly bright feathers in the witch-doctor's professional outfit) and even on the levels of meta-criticism and literary theory a great deal of confusion between approaches is evident. Since 'Game, play, literature' was published new approaches to the use of the terms have been suggested and at least one striking reformulation of the concept of play, that of 'freeplay,' has been introduced. (Derrida had given his paper, 'La Structure, le signe et le jeu,' at John Hopkins in 1966 but the reverberations had not reached Jacques Ehrmann and the contributors to the *Yale French Review* in 1968.) For example, Michael Holquist contributed an informative essay on utopias considered as games to 'Game, play, literature' and here he writes on Baxtin's concept of carnival as a play-concept. (Baxtin's *Rabelais and His World* was translated into English in 1968: the current centrality of 'carnival' to any informed discussion of play marks, perhaps as much as anything, the transformations that have taken place.) Peter Steele and Brian Edwards both take up aspects of the discussion of play concepts (intertextuality and *jeu libre* considered as literary *ludisme*) that were outside the boundaries of discussion in 1968. Intertextuality, for instance, postulates a discursive space between literary works, or a space in which all works of literature exist, such that it is possible to discuss the complex paths of signification, cross-signification and intersignification between works on both the global and the segmental levels. This has become possible only because the concept of intertextuality follows upon, and reflects, the textual revolution in which literature has come to be seen as an indefinite body, related necessarily but invisibly, of systematic linguistic and rhetorical phenomena.⁴² It is possible to consider these complex intertextual relations as modes of play (as Peter

42 For a bibliography of books and articles that consider the concept of intertextuality, see Don Bruce, 'Bibliographie annotée: écrits sur l'intertextualité,' *Texte: revue critique et de théorie littéraire*, 2 (1983), 217-58.

Steele does when he analyzes the manifestation of Montaigne in Florio: the continuation of a 'forme maîtresse' in successive variations in different languages) or as being, in some inescapable manner, the 'game' of literature itself.

One of the most significant contributions to the discussion of play and game concepts since 1968 has been the publication of Bernard Suits's *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (1978) which argues for a simple, lucid and universal definition of 'game.' (Here Bernard Suits extends the argument of his book to examine the conditions under which a work of literature, in the tight language of his philosophical argument, legitimately might be called a game.) Perhaps one may say that, thanks to the efforts of Suits and many others (including the contributors to this collection), the history, taxonomies and definitions of play and game concepts have become both clearer and more available. Still, when the crafty gamewright, Palamedes, flung the concept of 'game' forward (and widely) into Western history, he created an area of (and for) ludic exploration that has not been exhausted yet. Indeed, reflection upon the roles played by Baxtin and Derrida in any current discussion of play and game concepts should indicate that 'contributions' only open the ludic area further. One can hope that the essays in this issue of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* play the game of ludic exploration as Palamedes might wish.

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