

INSULATION VS. DISSOLUTION?

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC KRAFT —

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FOR the scholar of literature who is interested in American fiction, the issue of ordering or "labelling" the different trends existing in this very moment has become a very hard one indeed. Many critics think that the forms of radical experimentation operative in the 1960s and 1970s —that gave a substantial impulse to postmodernism— are definitely over or have been replaced by a "postmodern realism" of sorts, where metafiction has effectively hidden —although not completely— its presence. To the list of postmodern realists — Kennedy, DeLillo, Morrison, Doctorow...—, there could also be added that of the practitioners of a type of more "realistic" prose, inheritors of new journalistic practices and/or in need to stand for the rights of minority groups —Tama Janowitz, Gloria Naylor, Chris Offut... But, is there any place left for a writer who seems to put forward again a particular combination of realistic writing with the best metaphysical and metafictional arguments defended by authors like Borges and Nabokov? It seems there is: such is the case of fiction producer Eric Kraft, a writer who, in these times, happens to be white, male and a New Yorker!

Kraft has a very good friend called Peter Leroy. Supposedly, Peter is "fictional" and acts as narrator –and frequently as protagonist– in all the works Kraft has written up to date: a collection of earlier novellas recently compiled under the title of *Little Follies: The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences & Observations of Peter Leroy (so far)* (1992); and four novels, *Herb 'n' Lorna* (1988), *Reservations Recommended* (1990), *Where Do You Stop? The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences & Observations of Peter Leroy (continued)* (1992), and *What a Piece of Work I Am* (1994), all of them published by Crown (New York). According to the creator of Peter Leroy, the frontiers between fiction and reality seem to be very clearly cut in his narrative, but Kraft's interviewer does not see the boundaries so clear. He received me in his house in Long Island in April 1994. By the end of the interview, I was not so sure we were still in Long Island. Perhaps it was only daydreaming but I thought we could as well be in Small's Island, in the residence of a funny fellow called Peter Leroy that one day, dozing off in the College library –that's what libraries are for, isn't it?– had a dream that eventually led him to the beginning of his career as a *writer*...

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QUESTION.- Kraft's favorite character, alter ego, and narrator is Peter Leroy, whose adventures are quite often the product of the author's remembrances. However, Peter seems to dissolve at times in a metafictional haze. Very recently I also had the opportunity to interview novelist Russell Banks and he seemed convinced that the days of radical metafiction are over and that we are coming back to a type of realism that tries to reflect the new conditions of the contemporary human being. Do you also think that radical experimentation in the American novel is over?

KRAFT.- I think that I may agree with that opinion. At least, I've found for myself that what has happened to me is that I have become increasingly interested in my characters and their lives, and less interested in the narrative about narratives, that is to say, in formal experimentation. I don't say that I am no longer interested in these aspects. I think that I may object to the term realism applied to my writing, but I have become as attached to my characters as I am to many people in my life and, to quickly answer this question, I have begun to have what I think is quite an old-fashioned

novelist's relationship with his characters: that is, I have certain responsibilities for them, an interest in their stories, their motivations, their passions. That is stronger than my interest in the structural elements of a novel.

However, this also surprises me to a certain degree because I think that my characters were nearly manifestations of certain ideas and they could have been objects as easily as people. I suppose that I wanted to write a sort of Flaubertian book about nothing, sometimes, a book called *Book*: "this is my Preface, this is my first sentence..." this sort of thing. But that has now receded from me, and it surprises me.

QUESTION.- However, your characters, Peter in particular, are frequently crossing narrative levels, your novels are also metafictional...

KRAFT.- Right, they are, and here is my objection to realism. I don't imagine myself ever writing anything that I would think as simply *realist*. There are even ways where I, quite deliberately, close doors to a kind of realism: such as never describing a character's appearance. That is something that I reject, something that I would like to have the reader do. And this has become more and more deliberate for me, an invitation to the reader to come into a space that I have made, where we can imagine together, where our imagination can work together to make the book.

In the annotations that Mark Dorset [one of Kraft's fictional characters] is preparing for the electronic version of my writings, one of the essays in his topical guide is called "The Mighty Reader," and it is about the role of the readers not merely interpreting, but also participating in the book. Of course, this also means, at times, *misinterpretation* from the point of view of the author, but not being able to predict the reader's response is part of the pleasure, too. Well, I suppose I wish the reader would respond in ways that are more narrowly predictable for me.

QUESTION.- Talking about the reader: your words now and also some notions that you put in your books remind me of some ideas particularly popular among many contemporary critics. I am thinking about poststructuralist theories, and more specifically about Derrida and the extreme attention he has paid to the role of the reader. Do you think that you have been influenced by Derridean theories?

KRAFT.- I don't think so. I have made no special efforts to read Derrida or other thinkers of that field. I think I did in my work what was in the air. I did read one of Derrida's books on truth and painting [*Truth in Painting*] and I think that it is an *oddly* written book. It gives you almost a headache with all those terms that I thought were a little preposterous; but still I was sympathetic towards some of the ideas in the book, for example, the ideas about framing... But they did not seem terribly new to me, although he is still provocative. His notion that the text may disappear under the influence of the reader, I want to believe that it does not happen to my books. I think it does not even happen when *I* am reading them. The books still stand, they define the boundaries within which the imagination works. One of the reasons why I enjoyed books most as a child is that they always have gaps, places where the mind could wander. And that is what I try to provide in my writings. But, if there are those places for the mind to wander, then of necessity there must also be something that defines the creator's space.

QUESTION.- *I suppose that, in a sense, we may apply the term "deconstructive" to many contemporary authors even if they have not read Derrida or do not share his main ideas. However, your works are clearly metafictional for a time in which metafiction is not so popular any longer. Which are your main literary sources?*

KRAFT.- Of my metafictional style or mood? Well, certainly Nabokov. I think that *Pale Fire* was the first book in which I saw that metafictional structure and I quickly became attracted to it. John Barth, also. I have read all his works with the exception of *Letters*, and I have to say something here about reading the works of contemporary writers: for the last few years I have almost deliberately avoided it. I'm starting now to drift back to reading contemporary fiction. I recall picking up *Letters* and flipping through it a little bit and then I said to myself: "I don't want to read this book because I can see there are things that I am going to hear in my own work, things that I will know I have acquired here." And for a period of time, really for the period since I've been pushing my work more widely, I've heard at times the *sound* of another writer's writing or I've heard echoes of another writer's ideas, and I find that it takes me a long time to eradicate those ideas from my own work. Now, I don't mean a deliberate reference or a little homage to someone, I mean the sort of thing that clips in insidiously and isn't welcome. So I've been very conscious about that. There was even a period when I was

very worried about writing in larger form, and there were moments when I might not be able to control my voice over such a kind of influence...

QUESTION.- Your voice or Peter's voice?

KRAFT.- Or Peter's voice... Whichever voice! [Laughing]. I believe that I am now in command of that, especially after having finished *What a Piece of Work I Am* [1994]. In this book I had to work with three voices: I had Peter the narrator, Peter the interlocutor on stage with Ariane, and then Ariane herself who, since she's a figment of Peter's imagination, has to sound like Peter but she has still also to be herself. So having finished that, I think I am in control, and I want to come back and read some contemporary fiction again.

QUESTION.- However, even if you have not read much contemporary fiction later, your characters, especially Peter, share many interesting features with some fictional figures created by other contemporary novelists. Peter, despite what you may think of him, still seems to me a very unstable personage, characteristic of a kind of fiction that has already been classified by critics as "postmodern realism." Are you sure you would not like to comment a little longer on some other aspects of contemporary fiction?

KRAFT.- Well, OK. There is a tendency in contemporary American fiction that I have come to deplore: it is a kind of flat effectless depiction of the lives of characters who appear to be overwhelmed by insignificant details. This type of fiction really annoys me. Is the father of this, I wonder, Alain Robbe-Grillet? The interior scenery in these novels is frequently so cluttered with precisely depicted details that there is no room for their human occupants or for any action that they might undertake. This kind of writing seems to me either an abandonment or the surrender of the authorial function –I think that it is almost a duty for me to expose myself, to dare to go into the narrative and to have myself visible here and there and making statements, showing my hand, announcing my intentions, letting my feelings for the characters show because, otherwise, what good is the writer? Is the writer only a set decorator or someone who delivers the plots to the scene and then vanishes and lets the reader walk around in some sort of empty virtual reality? No, that's not interesting for me to do. It's too easy and it's not daring, not open enough.

QUESTION.- But, that's Peter, the one who does all these things in your novels...

KRAFT.- Right, that's Peter! Well, I've said often that I couldn't do all that without Peter being here. At least, I was too careful of myself and I still am very careful of myself. However, I think that I no longer can hide that it is easier to see me standing behind Peter, not Peter standing before me. It is easy for anyone now to see how the strings go from my hands to Peter's limbs. I am on display now: there I am and I have to take the comments of the critics, there is no turning back. In fact, this is one of the themes in *What a Piece of Work I Am*. It is part of the risk but it also leads to one of the rewards of writing: the response of the reader, even if the reader reacts in a way that you had not intended. However, it also may lead to the disappointment of having someone who doesn't care for what you've done.

QUESTION.- In your new novel we again have a multiplicity of voices, there is even more technical complexity, but we can still see that sense of fragmentation in your text and in your characters. Why fragmentation?

KRAFT.- Well, the fragmentation began for me almost as a way of shocking myself out of taking one thread too far, to a tedious point. Each day, when I was starting to write, I made myself to begin in at a new point. The result was that, when I was working at a narrative, it would become deliberately disjointed so that I would look at it anew each day, and I really thought that all I was doing there was trying to give myself a fresher view of what I was working on. It was just a kind of motivational trick to keep myself going on. But it became intriguing and surprising to me.

However, I think that although the text is apparently disjointed, I hope I have achieved an assembly of these parts. One of the things I pride myself on now is that, when I read through the book as it is coming to completion, I find there a number of parts that fit together to make a structure. So, although perhaps it seems too disruptive the first time, I hope that on subsequent readings that is not the impression, but one of unity.

QUESTION.- Parts and unity. They seem to be among your favorite literary motifs, and fragmentation is also one of the most recurrent topics in postmodern fiction.

KRAFT.- Yes, you can say that it is almost a favorite theme of mine: making something out of some parts and pieces. I think that we are coming to a *junk* experience of life. Maybe I even let the workings of this tendency to show a little too much. In fact, it is a tendency of mine that I am beginning to deplore [laughing].

There is a pair of famous magicians in this country. They are comic magicians and one of the main points in their performance is that they often give the tricks away. They tell the audience how a trick is done and then they perform it so brilliantly that you cannot believe that you know how it is done because it still looks impossible. Sometimes I think that they use that telling actually to mislead their audience into seeing things the way they want the audience to see them. I think that there is also in me a tendency to explain how the trick is done in my writings.

QUESTION.- Yes. However, you are not usually a very overt metafictional writer such as John Barth, for instance, proves to be in some of his works.

KRAFT.- No, I am not. And I have to say that when metafiction becomes so overt it is a little tedious. In my case, I think that metafiction is part of my recognizing how strong my interest in the characters is.

QUESTION.- Together with metafiction there is also in your books a reiterative topic centered on very specific scientific notions that refer to a diffuse interpretation of life: Peter Leroy, for instance, is frequently using the term "fuzzy"; and there are also many occasions in which the notion of unpredictability appears. You seem to have very clear scientific sources for providing in your books this notion of life...

KRAFT.- Yes, there are many things referred to this type of scientific concepts. In fact, one of the notions I am also using in the electronic version of my work is the idea of fiction like an object with fine tinges radiating from it, a *fuzz* reaching out, little "hairs" of allusions that attach the fiction to the ambient reality. Pure fiction is at greater remove from reality because its allusions are planted in other fiction, and so we come to this fuzziness: Peter, I think, is for me the purest fiction, and the border between him and things that are real has to be maintained by a shell of other fictions. That is like insulation, or a fuzziness, or a haze, or something like that. That is the reason why Peter lives in an island, isolated from reality, and that is why I have tried to reinvent the trappings of life around him. There are a few things that are

real objects and references, like Studebakers and clams. When I use real things, I try to exaggerate them so that they lose some of their reality; and so everyone drives a Studebaker in Babbington or clamming becomes the entire basis of the economic success in Peter's community. On the other hand, I don't particularly like to use real brands of things because they often carry with them all the guilt and associations that we have from our dealings with them in real life, and that's not what I try to make in my fiction: I'm making an alternative to real life, and so I need alternative objects and... anyway, I wouldn't have used the term *fuzziness*. I think *insulation* is something I'm using for that phenomenon.

QUESTION.- However, borders are transgressed in your work. Insulation does not seem to be very effective in Peter's case at the end of Where Do you Stop, does it? He may go on, expanding his self forever...

KRAFT.- Yes, you are right there. But my concept of insulation would refer to something different. The Universe within which Peter is going to radiate that way can't be ours since he doesn't exist in ours except as a character in a book.

QUESTION.- Perhaps that is so, but the arguments that you give in the novel are purely scientific, aren't they?

KRAFT.- Yes, it seems as if the same science holds in Peter's Universe as holds in ours, that is true; but it is paradoxical. The place where Peter lives can't be reached from here except through the imagination. So I think that both opinions may be right: what you say about the dispersal, the continuum, the crossing of borders, the radiation of the reflected light in the work of the imagination, all that is there. And I believe all that also with regards to ourselves, to our world. I would like to think that by writing my books I'm extending my self in the same way that Peter says at the end of *Where Do You Stop?*

QUESTION.- I can also notice the influence of chaos theory in some of the arguments you use in your books, am I right?

KRAFT.- Yes, definitely. Unpredictable effects that go on and on: that is one of my motives for writing. In fact, I just remembered something that Cocteau

said: he was asked "why do you write?," and his response was, "I suppose it is so that I scatter my seed as far as I can."

QUESTION.- Then you put a little of everything in your novels: you take Einstein, Heisenberg, chaos theory, together with metafiction, and the result is paradoxical: there is insulation but also dispersal and fuzziness. In earlier novels we were guided by Peter Leroy, both narrator and protagonist of his own stories. Now in What a Piece of Work I Am we also have Ariane... Is there also a thread to escape this labyrinth?

KRAFT.- Yes, there is a thread that allows you to go from one world to the other. This thread is within my books all the time. One of the things I hope I've paid very close attention to is how well those separate characters and their separate roles are insulated, so that when Peter the narrator is moving small Peter –the one who is recalling one of his tales– the reader is aware of which is which. Talking to some students two weeks ago I wanted to know whether they could recognize the times when Peter had wrapped his older self in the skin of his younger self, deliberately trying to reexperience something in his head: I was referring to those occasions when there are the perceptions and interpretations of an adult in the child who is there. And the students could see that; they did understand what I was doing there, which was very comforting because I was afraid that for an adult who is now removed from his childhood, the separation between his older and his younger self would not be clear, the result might just seem precocious and impossible. So, I hope that each of my characters is just distinct from the others.

Now, the thread: enter Mark Dorset, the annotator of the books in the electronic version. When I was doing the annotations, I got the notion that Mark should be able to speak to me and to Peter, he should be an intermediary. In this way he's able to talk about or, at least, to consider my motives in the annotations, and also Peter's. And when he discusses our relationship he talks about us as collaborators.

QUESTION.- And we have an author, Peter the narrator, a character also called Peter Leroy, and now an editor who happens to talk to both fictional Peter and the real author... and you insist on talking about isolation? But let us move to a different topic now. You have mentioned the electronic version of your works. Even if they are going to be edited by fictional Mark Dorset,

how do you think this type of "interactive literature" is going to affect your writing and your readers?

KRAFT.- I think that the electronic version of my work is only an actualization of a way of thinking about my books that I've been exercising all along for at least a decade. I have always thought of the various interpreters of my work: Peter has his view, his story, but there are so many others who do, including myself. I have a slight fear that this electronic experience may make me to focus on reinterpreting what I've already done, rather than adding to it. At one point, Peter uses the image of overpainting on a canvas, and I don't want to start devoting myself to overpainting when there is still a lot to be added. The electronic book is an elegant game for me now, it is the equivalent of a computer game. However, what is boring about computer games is that you are only playing in the structure that somebody else has created. So, here I am, in effect, playing a game with my own work. I hope that I'm not just amusing myself and no one else by doing this. There are many other things for me to do.

QUESTION.- We have already talked about this issue but still it seems to me that the impression the contemporary reader may have of experiencing reality is already very fragmented. In the case of the reader of the electronic version of your works, don't you think that your books may become further fragmented?

KRAFT.- Right, that's true. The way in which a book is going to be read seems now so unpredictable to me after having the experience of readers responding to my books printed in paper: that was the first time that I really had my eyes open to the variety of ways in which people read. I was a little naive at the start; when I began writing my books I imagined that they would be read, in effect, as I had written them. As I wrote a book, I was also predicting the way in which it would be read, then I was astonished because they were almost never read that way! They were read in the ways readers chose to read them; often it has been said that "readers read their own book," not the writer's. So here comes the electronic book, a new way to read. I think that as a way of first reading a book, it does enormous violence to the structure of the book itself; it is so far removed from the way the writer intended the novel to be read that it does not do justice to the work you made to write the book.

Perhaps a new form of book comes along that deliberately caters to that kind of reading: I would imagine a collection of discreet texts from which the reader makes some sort of assembly. I'm not really interested in writing that kind of book; well, now that I've said that I realize that I'm interested in writing it! I have always wanted to write Mark Dorset's topical autobiography, which is going to be an encyclopedically arranged work, alphabetically ordered: it might just be a random access of topics about Mark's life; he would write discreet essays and reminiscences and the reader would wander among them as he chose.

However, what I'm doing now is an interactive book for the re-reader. I mean, the violence I'm now doing to my own books is addressed to the person who has already read my books in a manner close to the way I imagine they would be read. This type of person comes to the diskette version and says, "well, another way to read them." There might be only two dozen people interested in doing that, I expect to have a small audience for this work.

QUESTION.- I have recently attended the Second Oxford Conference for the Book (Oxford, Mississippi), and some booksellers there expressed their concern about how easy it becomes to illegally reproduce an electronic book. Are you also concerned about that possibility?

KRAFT.- No, not really. I think booksellers should be concerned more about the death of reading as a past-time among young people. That's certainly more important than how books are to be delivered. I can give you a firsthand example of it: recently I went to Harvard University and to a private secondary school nearby and at both institutions instructors told me that their students don't read books, it is not a pursuit of theirs, they don't talk about literature any more. When we were at this secondary school, every student there had read *Where Do You Stop?* because it was the Spring break book, and they had been assigned essays on my novel. One little fellow was handing in his essay, late. We were sitting in the Faculty room when he knocked at the door and asked one of the Faculty members to deposit his essay in his instructor's mail box. When the Faculty member saw that it was an essay on *Where Do You Stop?* he brought it over to me and said, "you might like to take a look at this." Well, this little student's thesis was that Peter Leroy was an unusual fellow, and one of the pieces of evidence that he used to prove that Peter was unusual was that he was always reading books! He said –I'm misquoting him, but not by much–, "Today a kid would have to

be out of his mind to read a book," but Peter is doing it all the time. So, I would be much more concerned about how to show kids that there is a lot of pleasure, beyond what they can get from watching TV, in books, than whether books are going to be delivered in paper or diskette. Something has been lost along the way and I think that here in the United States there is a real problem with the overteaching of a kind of subliterate at the elementary and secondary levels. I think that reading is turning to drudgery in the school. As a result, even if you point out to kids how much pleasure there is to be taken from reading, I think they will *suspect* your motives, they will think, "you are really trying to make my life miserable by giving me more of this drudgery!"

It does not happen so much in high school, because the literary selections there have improved over the years. In the anthologies they now use there has been a much greater attempt to really pick up works that satisfy two things: first, that they have real literary matter, and secondly that they appeal to young readers to a certain degree; schools do not introduce difficult works like *Hamlet* too soon, which used to be the kind of literature they had to read some years ago. My complaint is not so much with high school but with elementary school, when I think the child's attitude towards reading is formed, and there you find a lot of silly books with talking animals and things like that. I don't mean classic children's fantasy, mind you, but that sort of dribble that is made up for those anthologies that kids read. Even when they use something that is worthwhile, the teaching technique is not any good: kids will come in and read a little story one day, and for the next week or two they will be reading this same story again, and again, and again. You can imagine how sick they are of this by the time they've left this particular story, and how annoying the act of reading becomes. Very rarely do they have time when the teacher would simply sit and read them a story they could just enjoy. That is one of our main problems now, I think; I am worried about where the next generation of readers is coming from.

QUESTION.- Your comments remind me of some of your own stories within Peter Leroy's story, that also seem to be rooted in traditional story-telling. I am thinking of "The Fox and the Clam" and the reiterative notion of interpretation: each reader may have his or her interpretation and they may even modify your own views in the case of the electronic book. However, despite the textual insistence on interpretation and on scientific theories and technology that back your work, I have the impression that there is an

underpinning layer of myth and integration, that you are also looking for a superior kind of structure, whatever it is...

KRAFT.- Yes, *integration*; I would have said exactly that. I think that is what I seek and what my work is tending to. One of the reasons that I bring in other disciplines like science, mathematics, and other ways of looking at human experience and analyzing it, is that I am looking for a grand unifying theory, or a grand unifying understanding, and I think that writing is my way of doing it. There used to be a joke, a sexist joke about a fellow who, before going to a party, told his wife, "now, will you please think before you open your mouth"; she stopped for a moment and then replied, "But, how do I know what I think till I see what I say?" And, that's the way I work! I find that I think through my writing. I turn out to be a man made of words, as much as Peter is, and I'm looking for an understanding of *IT* all, and my way of finding that is through writing of all of this work: it's the ultimate purpose of what I'm doing. Peter will probably find out before I do, but just that much soon! [laughing]

QUESTION .- *Looking backwards to your own literary sources one may have the impression that, contrary to what happens to some of the works written by Nabokov or Borges, you try to address your novels to a more ample audience: you may be using metafiction and advancing complex scientific and metaphysical theories in your writing, but still your novels can be read, enjoyed and understood by many readers...*

KRAFT .- Yes, and I pride myself on that! When I began writing –even before I was writing full novels– I don't know how consciously I had in mind a readership that included people who would approach the books and appreciate them on different levels. But certainly at some point I knew that I had a diverse cluster of readers. Since then I have thought about it, because some of my actual readers were people I knew. In fact, I had first in mind a readership of people I knew. They were all people that I enjoyed talking with because they were clever and they were interested in very diverse things: some of them had more technical interests in computer programming, for example, others in social action... and what this diverse group of people shared would be my work.

QUESTION .- *Following this trend: are your characters actually based on real people?*

KRAFT .- I've been giving squirrely answers to this question many times but let's cut away all this nonsense. I'll give you the straight answer: many of the characters have *begun* with some elements of a person in my life. The most obvious cases of this device are Peter's grandparents, both the maternal and the paternal ones. That is where I started: but then the characters go elsewhere, they drift away. A certain insulation, a fuzz [laughing] grows somehow, and they begin to move away from their real models. That is a very satisfying shift for me. What remains, the aspects that make them still identifiable for me, turns out to be not details of their depiction, such as the way they look or the way they talk: it sometimes is just my attitude towards them, so that all the affection that Peter feels for his grandparents, for example, is identical to the affection that I felt for my grandparents, and here the resemblance ends.

And then there are other characters: the odd thing is that Peter's good friend, his imaginary friend Raskol, is not based on any of my close friends. However, he began with parts of several friends that I had as a boy. I had very good friends when I was a kid, so Peter would also have to have a good friend. I made Peter his imaginary friend so that I would have more freedom to develop him but also thinking that I didn't want any of my own friends to say, "Oh, you gave Peter this other real friend instead of me," and now they are all convinced that they are Raskol's real model!

QUESTION .- *And nobody is convinced that he is Matthew Barber's model, I guess...*

KRAFT .- No, no. That's not the role anyone wants. Matthew Barber is not derived from a friend; he came into the books with just a momentary flash of memory of one unhappy fat boy that I remembered from high school, and then I realized that I also took my younger fat unhappy self when I was in the sixth or seventh grade. For a while I was a fat lonely kid myself, and later in high school there was this other boy whom I did not really know, but even then I saw that he was what I might have become if I hadn't changed. So, those two people, what I could have been and somebody else, became the beginnings of Matthew Barber, but there again, he began moving off in some unexpected ways.

QUESTION .- *Finally, a question about forthcoming projects. What are your plans for the future?*

KRAFT .- Well, first of all, I have very specific plans for the Glynn twins; I am writing now about Peter's associations with the Glynn family. After that I have two projects that I've been working on but I don't know yet which of them is coming to the forth: one is "Captain Clam," the authorized biography of Porky White, the owner of the clam restaurant. This would take the form of one of those commissioned corporate biographies and Peter would be the hack paid to write it! Secondly, when the reader gets to the end of *What a Piece of Work I am* he finds out that Ariane also writes a book: it goes through several editions and many printings. Ariane's book is a transcendental work in the form of a cook book called *Making Your Self ... and an Easy, Nourishing One-Pot Meal*, where she gives a number of recipes for clam chowder – what else! Each of the recipes is accompanied by an essay on the philosophical and –if I may say it without making it sound religious– *spiritual* implications of the making of this dish, and each of them is coupled with attaching reminiscences of her mother, who taught Ariane to cook. So this would be a work of philosophy, story-telling, mythologizing... and cooking. All in one, this should be a best-seller [laughing].

Also, for a long time I've wanted Peter to write one of the children's books that he writes in my fiction, one of those Larry Peter's books. You may recall from "Call Me Larry" that what interested Peter most was not Larry Peter's *adventures* but what happened between the adventures, when the family gathered back at the island where they lived. I would like to have Peter write a book, the title of which I haven't decided yet, but the *subtitle* of which I already know: "An Interstitial Episode from the Adventures of Larry Peters," and this would appear over Peter's name [!!!], as a book written by Peter Leroy.

QUESTION .- So, here you are again, confusing the limits between fiction and reality: Peter is bound to appear in this world.

KRAFT .- Yes, in the *real* world. I'll tell you, there are holes in that insulation I was talking about earlier. I think these are the postulated wormholes that allow us to travel from one dimension to another, little wrinkles in the fabric of reality... a

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