

**Rupture/Rapture in the Funhouse:  
On John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse***

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**Abstract**

With verbal games, repetition, fragments, and *mise en abyme*, all being typical narrative devices of postmodern fiction or metafiction, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, a series of short stories, lays bare the writing process and deconstructs the narrative framework of realist novels. In the stories, blank and silence are deliberately exposed in order to show not only the author figure's anxiety about lacuna but also his eagerness to complete the story. What Barth reveals is not merely the impasse a writer experiences; it is the lack in being that Barth intends to unveil and highlight. Since the borderline between the narrative and the narrator becomes blur in the stories, the split imminent in language coincides with the split in the subject.

This paper argues that John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* is representative of what Roland Barthes calls "the text of bliss (*jouissance*)" and will demonstrate how the texts manifest Barthes's concept of textual *jouissance*, which corresponds with the idea of death drive and *jouissance* in Lacanian psychoanalysis. The first two parts of the paper will deal with Barth's experimental techniques and illustrate that the "funhouse" Barth constructs is a verbal or linguistic one. The ensuing part will discuss the concept of "schizo-text," or "schizoid text," in order to elaborate on the co-existence of split of the text with the lack of the subject. Finally, based on Roland Barthes's and Lacan's theoretical conception of *jouissance*, the fourth part will explore the essence and function of the rupture or lacuna and demonstrate that the narration is emblematic of the circulating drive in search of *jouissance*.

**Key words:**

Text of bliss (*jouissance*), schizo-text, rupture, rapture, death drive