

# READING THE SHORT FICTION OF RICHARD FORD

*Los relatos cortos de Richard Ford*

Juan A. TARANCÓN<sup>1</sup>  
Universidad de Zaragoza

## **Abstract**

This paper attempts to explore the style and narrative strategies developed by Richard Ford in a number of his short stories. Stories like «Great Falls», «Children», «Optimists» and «Communist», all included in *Great Falls*, his first collection of short fiction, disclosed a particular imagery and narrative technique that can already be regarded as «vintage Ford»: diegetic narrators plunge into a dreary story about their past, an autobiographical episode that seems to relentlessly haunt these character-bound storytellers. It will be argued here that Ford's dislocated narrators turn to plotting as a means of making sense of their lives. Deprived of incontestable certitudes and washed away by life's circumstances, they look back on a momentous event in their past in search of collective and individual meanings. Furthermore, the aim of this paper is to establish a link between Ford's style and more substantial developments in contemporary US literature and society. All the stories mentioned above stress storytelling. Ford's narrators refuse to let their existence be meaningless and seek that meaning through the ordered significances of a narrative of the self. Although narratives and the self have both lost much of their credit, Richard Ford's stories contain the possibility of a realistic and a deconstructive reading, they seem to reconcile the only too human lust for narratives with the wrecking rhetoric of postmodernism.

*Key words:* Richard Ford, short story, United States fiction, narratology, postmodernism, deconstructivism, identity, masculinity.

---

1. Área de Filología Inglesa, Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, Universidad de Zaragoza. Correo electrónico: juantar@unizar.es

Fecha de recepción del artículo: 27 de octubre de 2006. Fecha de aceptación: 22 de noviembre de 2006. Versión final: enero de 2007.

## Resumen

Con este artículo se pretende analizar el estilo y las estrategias narrativas desarrolladas por Richard Ford en muchos de sus relatos cortos. Historias como «Great Falls», «Children», «Optimists» o «Communist», todas incluidas en *Great Falls*, su primera colección de relatos, revelan una imaginería y una técnica narrativa que ya puede ser considerada como «genuino Ford»: narradores diegéticos se sumergen en un momento sombrío del pasado y nos ofrecen un episodio autobiográfico que parece obsesionarles implacablemente. Estos narradores recurren a las historias autobiográficas como una forma de encontrar sentido a sus vidas. Una vez privados de verdades incontestables y vapuleados por la vida, miran hacia atrás en busca de ese momento determinante del pasado que confiera sentido individual y social a su existencia. Asimismo, el objetivo de este artículo es establecer una conexión entre el estilo de Ford y cambios fundamentales en la literatura contemporánea de Estados Unidos. Todas las historias mencionadas anteriormente enfatizan el acto de la narración. Los protagonistas-narradores de Richard Ford se niegan a permitir que su existencia carezca de sentido y buscan ese sentido en una narrativa convencional del yo. A pesar de que en las últimas décadas tanto la narrativa como el yo han perdido mucho de su crédito, los relatos de Richard Ford encierran la posibilidad de una lectura realista y una lectura deconstructivista; estos relatos parecen conciliar la imperiosa necesidad humana de historias y la retórica destructiva del posmodernismo.

*Palabras clave:* Richard Ford, relato corto, narrativa estadounidense, narratología, posmodernismo, deconstructivismo, identidad, masculinidad.

Richard Ford's first novel, *A Piece of My Heart*, was published back in 1976, but it was the colourless adventures of contemporary suburbanite Frank Bascombe, first with *The Sportswriter* in 1986 and nine years later with *Independence Day*, that gained him both critical acclaim (including the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction) and widespread recognition. Meanwhile Frank Bascombe has become one of the most memorable characters of contemporary US fiction, and is certain to develop into the incarnation of the quintessential US middle-age middle-class man of the 1990s for future generations –not unlike Harry «Rabbit» Angstrom in previous decades. Since his first novel hit the libraries, Richard Ford has maintained a limited but steady production of novels and short fiction and has been involved in diverse literary activities, which should suffice to secure him a place in the canon of US literature. Apart from the

forementioned books, he has published *The Ultimate Good Luck* (1981), *Wildlife* (1990), and several volumes of short (and no-so-short) stories, *Rock Springs* (1987), *Women with Men* (1997) and *A Multitude of Sins* (2002). Besides, the third volume of Bascombe's adventures, *The Lay of the Land*, is scheduled to be published in the United States in October.

Richard Ford's laconic fiction articulates like no other men's isolation and lack of direction in modern post-industrial western societies. Women fare better, though. Ford's male characters are weighted down by their experiences; yet, these are characters that do not relentlessly struggle to find alibis to distance themselves from the world, as it has been the tendency in some postmodern writing. The outside world matters to Ford's characters, not from a moral perspective —as a matter of fact Ford has often been censured for the amorality of his work— but as a way out of their hopelessness and isolation. Social bonds are feeble, families disintegrate, and characters are prone to outbursts of violence. At times life seems meaningless, but the main characters in Ford's fiction do not detach from the world. On the contrary, they make an effort to cope and acclimatize themselves to the ill-fated episodes of their existence. It is in a hollow world, in its transient pleasures, and in the solace of small things, that they find the strength to carry on.

In Richard Ford's dull and mundane scenarios, his characters try hard to make sense to their lives. They become the narrators of their experiences as a way out of the prevalent meaninglessness that encircles them. The stories they tell become a way of self discovery and a way of negotiating the world. My contention is that Ford's narrative technique reflects the characters' anxieties, their worries, and their reactions. This brief article attempts to explore the style and narrative strategies developed by Richard Ford in a number of short stories. Stories like «Great Falls», «Children», «Optimists», or «Communist», all included in *Rock Springs*, his first collection of short fiction, disclosed a particular imagery and narrative technique that can already be regarded as «vintage Ford»: diegetic narrators plunge into a dreary story about their past, an autobiographical episode that seems to relentlessly haunt these character-bound storytellers. It will be argued here that Ford's dislocated narrators turn to plotting as a means of making sense of their lives. Deprived of incontestable certitudes and washed away by life's circumstances, they look back on a momentous event in their pasts and trace the story of their lives in search of collective and individual meanings; they seem to draw attention to what they find intriguing and significant and therefore in need of an explanation.

Furthermore, the aim of this article is to establish a link between Ford's style and more substantial developments in contemporary US literature and society. All the stories mentioned above stress storytelling. Ford's narrators refuse to let their existence be meaningless and seek that meaning through the ordered significances of a narrative of the self. The match between fiction and the self (or rather between fiction and the conceptualization of the self) is not a new-fashioned one, as one of the effects of fiction has been to reinforce and, to a certain degree, create the idea of one autonomous and fixed self. Although narratives and the self have both lost much of their credit, Richard Ford's stories contain the possibility of a realistic and a deconstructive reading, they seem to reconcile the only too human lust for narratives with the wrecking rhetoric of postmodernism. The characters approach their mythed stories or recollections as the linguistic funds from which identity and social discourse derive but the poetic genesis of these stories nourish the reader's distrust. It seems that these characters will always be there, talking, speculating, and assembling their past, but my analysis of Ford's style will show how we are compelled to doubt any conclusion. In short, with this essay I would like to sidestep the fascination stories such as «Great Falls», «Optimists», «Children», or «Communist» have always held for me and examine instead the narrative strategies employed by Richard Ford—in fact, these techniques turn up in a considerable number of other short stories and have also spread into his novels.

In very general terms, in the abovementioned stories (not unlike in some of the novels at one point or another) we find a narrator who is a character in the story he tells, and this narrator is always a he. The story is usually an autobiographical episode from the past. That is to say, a male narrator, from the perspective of the present, looks back on some important event in his past and then turns to storytelling as a way of making sense of his life. Jackie in «Great Falls», Frank in «Optimists», or Les in «Communist», all get tangled up in a story that they assume will tell them who they are. These events usually have to do with becoming an adult and finding an identity of their own. They look back in search of clues that might throw new light on their lives and help them understand who they are in the present. They pursue their identity as they assemble and narrate an incident from their past—paraphrasing Frank Bascombe in *The Sportswriter* ([1986] 1987: 13), they try to get a perspective on things. Yet, fictional autobiography shows narrators to be consciously selective: they tell what they think has contributed to their present situation, but the importance of these events is stated in retrospect as they

try to understand the forces that made them what they are in the present. We hardly know anything about the present condition of these characters. They don't seem to have a purpose other than understanding how they got there. Hopefully, the story they construct will tell them who they are and what they are made of.

The episodes these characters tell usually chronicle the transition from youth into maturity. The onset of manhood is the key event that seems to dominate each narrative. And this beginning of manhood is marked by the breakdown of their families, the divorce of their parents, and the separation from the mother. «Moreover, the mother seems to be at the heart of these boys' identity; she is the real "incident" that dominates the narrators' recollections». As Les, the narrator of «Communist» says, they chronicle how they are «pushed into the world, into the real life» (1987: 233). In «Great Falls», for instance, Jackie relates how his father found his mother with another man and how they went their separate ways. Frank, in «Optimists», remembers how his parents got divorced after his father killed a man and how everything went downhill from there. These characters enter the world of adulthood and a new kind of life abruptly and unexpectedly, and deprived of any certitude or roots. After that, they turn to plotting so as to trace a coherent story of loss, a story that explains how they came to inhabit a different world as adults, a more real world as opposed to the secure almost magical world of the family. As usual, Ford said it best. In *Independence Day* (1995: 95), he wrote: «Most people, once they reach a certain age, troop through their days struggling like hell with the concept of completeness, keeping up with all the things that were ever part of them, as a way of maintaining the illusion that they bring themselves fully to life». It is through recollections of the past that these characters represent themselves to themselves and to others and that they sustain the illusion of «completeness» and of belonging.

The past determines the present of these characters, but not in a naturalistic sense. On the contrary, in the aforementioned stories, the past consists of a selection of memories and experiences organized into a narrative. With their accounts, these characters go through a period of drastic and painful changes for the family over and over again, as if they thought that these episodes from the past will bring them to a better understanding of their present life. In their book on chaos, John Briggs and F. David Peat observe how literature «is full of descriptions of that magical moment when the flux of the creator's perception shifts and the chaos begins to self-organize» ([1999] 2000: 25). Similarly, Ford's character-bound

narrators summon up and render in literary form their past experiences in search for a moment of truth or a moment of insight that sets in motion the magic organization of what, otherwise, appears chaotic and meaningless. Not unlike the mystic experiences of religions or the spiritual quest of Native Americans, the stories Jackie, Frank or Les tell are an attempt at finding meaning and truth in their lives. Yet, while religions seek to loosen the grip of the conventional structures we use to organize our lives and hope for a purer self-organization to emerge, Ford's characters fall back on the snare of standardization; their efforts hinge on narrative structures and conventions that repeatedly intrude on their experience and condition and abort their attempts at finding some kind of truth.

Another objective of this presentation is to establish a link between Ford's style and recent developments in the literature of the United States. It is more illuminating to see these stories in the literary context in which they were written, a context, I will contend, that is marked by a revival (or rather a revitalization) of realism. These stories were first published between 1979 and 1987, the complete volume *Rock Springs* appearing in 1987. Critics from different academic spheres such as Robert Rebein and Brian Richardson have noted how, before the 1980s, studies of fiction all shared a «pristine academic logic» (Rebein 2001: 1) «dominated by [...] three exclusionary paradigms» (Richardson 1997: 87) in which humanism is succeeded by formalism and formalism by poststructuralism. In the United States, Richardson points out (ibid.), naturalism was followed by modernism and social realism, and these by postmodernism. And, as Robert Rebein notes with undisguised irony (2001: 2), «anything after or beyond postmodernism was by definition impossible». Both Rebein and Richardson hurry on to illustrate the fallacy of these arguments and the routes fiction followed in recent years. For instance, critic Larry McCaffery, an advocate of experimental fiction, carried a number of interviews between 1978 and 1982 with writers of the day, only to conclude that reflexive fiction and the «nonreferential» works of postmodernism were not as important to writers in the early 1980s as they had been a decade before. Finally, the critical works published in the 1990s point in that same direction. As the editors of the volume *Postmodern American Fiction* (1998) reveal, postmodernism is regarded now more as a cultural sensibility that seeks to embrace writers as dissimilar as Truman Capote and William Gass than as a revolutionary clear-cut agenda. Postmodernism has been expanded to include not only a set of stylistic traits but also a cultural response to a new society on any grounds, form, or content —call it postindustrial or information society. No question here about the past

and present importance of postmodernity as it emanates, for instance, from the writings of John Barth and the High Sixties in the United States. But, among the lessons learned in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some are worth mentioning: (1) the end of innocence with regard to language and mimesis; (2) the rejection of the idea that a denial of radical postmodernism amounts to artistic and cultural conservatism; (3) the revitalization of realism, or rather of some realist assumptions; and (4) the renewed importance of the concept of place.

Realism, on the other hand, has taken a number of beatings over the last forty years. Some of the principles behind these attacks are obvious and difficult to deny: (1) as Todorov said, a work of art conforms to its laws, not to reality; (2) if reality cannot be recorded, noted Robert Scholes, realism is dead, all writing is construction, and there is no mimesis, only poesis; and finally, (3) what we take for reality is, as Jonathan Culler observed, only a set of socially agreed conventions (all cited in Richardson 1997: 1). Nothing to say about these finely-honed observations either. Except that realism is not dead. What has changed is the way writers regard realism, that is, not as tyrannical, rigid and unambitious, but as an adaptable form open to new techniques and capable of carrying forward any social and political agenda.

Two of the critics mentioned above, Rebein and Richardson, coincide in the use of the term «paradoxical» to describe this revival of realism. Realism has proved, paradoxically, more flexible and adaptable and open to experimentation than any other form. In their introduction to the anthology *Postmodern American Fiction*, the editors of the volume (Paula Geyh, Fred G. Leebron, and Andrew Levy) also call attention to this change in the literature of the United States: the new generation of writers, they note, reject the cultural legacy of modernism, but they also reject experimentation for its own sake, these new writers «create forms of fiction that sometimes feel old but read new» (1998: xix). It seems clear now that realism does not subscribe to a single philosophical view. It is accepted that there is a difference between realism as a means of representation and realism as a philosophy, which opens up the diversity of the realist form (see Demastes 1996: xiii). Self-conscious narration has not been abandoned, and there is not a return to the days of unproblematic mimesis. Yet, some sort of revitalization of realism has taken place.

Ford's short stories reveal this revitalization of realism. This is not a triumph of old ideas about mimesis but rather a renegotiation of realism. The postmodern reaction of the 1960s was a sign of the times, but among

its lasting consequences was the acceptance of the limitations of realism. As Tom Wolfe wrote, the new realism is seen as «another formal device, not a permanent method of dealing with reality» (in Rebein 2001: 17). So, what are Richard Ford's stories like? In general terms, the plots of the stories mentioned above are consistent and there is a realistic logic of time and space. The beginning of «Great Falls», with its meticulous and neat images, is an illustrative example:

This is not a happy story. I warn you.

My father was a man named Jack Russell, and when I was a young boy in my early teens, we lived with my mother in a house to the east of Great Falls, Montana, near the small town of Highwood and the Highwood Mountains and the Missouri River. It is a flat, treeless benchland there, all of it used for wheat farming, though my father was never a farmer, but was brought up near Tacoma, Washington, in a family that worked for Boeing.

«Great Falls» (1987: 29)

[...]

We did not go straight out of the Geraldine Road to our house. Instead my father went down another mile and turned, went a mile and turned back again so that we came home from the other direction. «I want to stop and listen now,» he said. «The geese should be in the stubble». We stopped and he cut the lights and engine, and we opened the car windows and listened. It was eight o'clock at night and it was getting colder, though it was dry. But I could hear nothing, just the sound of air moving lightly through the cut field, and not a goose sound. Though I could smell the whiskey on my father's breath and on mine, could hear the motor ticking, could hear him breathe, hear the sound we made sitting side by side on the car seat, our clothes, our feet, almost our hearts beating. And I could see out in the night the yellow lights of our house, shining through the olive trees south of us like a ship on the sea. «I hear them by God,» my father said, his head stuck out the window. «But they're high up. They won't stop here now, Jackie. They're high flyers, those boys. Long gone geese».

There was a car parked off the road, down the line of wind-break trees, beside a steel thresher the farmer had left there to rust. You could see the moonlight off the taillight chrome. It was a Pontiac, a two-door hard-top.

«Great Falls» (1987: 35)

You can almost feel the cool Montana wind and see the moonlight reflected on the chrome of the two-door hard-top Pontiac. You can almost see Jack and Woody listening for geese in the dark of the night. You can smell the whiskey in their breaths. And yet, the richness and detailed precision of these descriptions are not entirely matched by the representation of the self. Any temptation to see these narrators as rounded characters in the Western



tradition, as post-Renaissance unitary individuals, is aborted by their foregrounded efforts (and their inability) to make sense of their lives through a narrative. There is a kind of haunting quality that pervades these short stories. What initially was just the vague intuition of the bookworm can be nevertheless explained by means of two recurring narrative devices that I will refer to with the uninspired terms of game of time perspectives and narrative framing.

As I said above, the stories Ford's narrators tell emerge as an effort to understand the past, or rather to make sense of and get the truth about their past from the perspective of the present. In their attempts to understand their lives and their current situation, the narrators' self-consciousness and their struggle to make sense of the past in the present time of narrating are brought to the foreground. The subject of the present time of narrating is only apprehensible in the act of narrating. And the strange quality I mentioned above is brought about by the narrators' self-consciousness, by their reflections and rumination upon their past condition and its weight in the present, and by intrusions such as the following (my emphasis):

And in any event, *I know now* that the whole truth of anything is an idea that stops existing finally.

«Great Falls» (1987: 47)

As I walked toward school I thought to myself that my life had turned suddenly, and *that I might not know exactly how or which way for a long time*. Maybe, in fact, *I might never know*.

«Great Falls» (1987: 49)

But when you are older, nothing you did when you were young matters at all. *I know that now, though I didn't know it then*. We were simply young.

«Children» (1987: 98)

And I have thought more than once about my mother saying that I had not been raised by crazy people, and *I don't know what that could mean*.

«Communist» (1987: 233)

The narrators try to understand their present circumstances but this understanding seems to escape them. It is as if these character-bound narrators had developed a romantic attachment to a realist mode of writing that seems to work at some narrative levels, and yet, it just won't work for the subject, not after the legacy of poststructuralism. Moreover, the comments by the narrators do not only create a web of time perspectives that betray their attempts to understand how they got to be what they are,

they also draw attention to the activity of writing and disrupt any «realist» contract previously established with the reader.

One last characteristic of Ford's narrative strategies that I'd like to describe and comment on is what I have previously called narrative framing. The stories these characters tell are presented as autobiographical episodes and, what is more, the narrators address the implied reader to warn him or her about what follows or just to make a commentary about the whole episode. «Great Falls», which begins with the spellbinding sentences «This is not a happy story. I warn you» (1987: 29), is the most intriguing one, but we find these remarks in all the short stories mentioned above (my emphasis):

Claude Phillips was a half-Backfeet Indian, and his father, Sherman, was a full-blood, and in 1961 our families rented out farm houses from the bank in Great Falls –the homes of wheat farmers gone bust on the prairies east of Sunburts, Montana. People were going broke even then, and leaving. Claude Phillips and I were seventeen, and *in a year from the day I am going to tell about, in May, I would be long gone from there myself, and so would Claude.*

Where all of this took place was in that remote part of Montana near the Canada border and west of the Sweetgrass Hills. That is a place called the Hiline, there, and it is an empty, lonely place if you are not a wheat farmer. *I make this point only because I have thought* possibly it was the place itself, as much as the time in our lives or our characters, that took part in the small things that happened and made them memorable.

«Children» (1987: 69)

*All of this I am about to tell happened* when I was only fifteen years old, in 1959, the year my parents were divorced, the year when my father killed a man and went to prison for it, the year I left home and school, told a lie about my age to fool the Army, and then did not come back. The year, in other words, when life changed for all of us and forever –ended, really, in a way none of us could ever have imagined in our most brilliant dreams of life.

«Optimists» (1987: 171)

Once more, the subject chooses to express himself in perspective. The identity of the different narrators is not circumscribed by these events from the past and their consequences in the past, but also by how they interpret these events under particular present conditions. As I have explained elsewhere (Tarancón 1999; 2000), these statements open and close the narrative about the past. They are anterior to the dramatization of the past (they usually introduce the narrative) but they are obviously subsequent to the story (they are a commentary on the story that presupposes

the story). They frame and confine the story. The narrative of the past is contained in the iterative present of these remarks. Ford manages to convey a process of repetition that deconstructs the Hegelian subject. These characters, unlike the subject of metaphysics, do not get to know themselves as the self-realization of an identity that has always been virtually present to themselves. The notion of an identity in terms of an interiorizing memory is questioned by inscribing the tense of the stories (the I-have-been of memory) in an inconclusive future (that of I-will-have-been). In «Great Falls», for example, Jackie does not tell the story of his past directly. The framing of his story about himself has a vital consequence: his identity is always elsewhere, and has yet to arrive. Ford addresses the problem of the subject and of its presence and we are tempted to conclude that, in his fiction, identity is always a process. The subject emerges in these stories always in the mode of being born (see Jean-Luc Nancy 1993). Its presence is a coming, not a having-come. Identity in these short stories is present in the mode of representation but, as Jean-Luc Nancy says (1993: 5), it is effaced by what representation would like to designate: «Presence does not come without effacing the Presence that representation would like to designate».

This short essay has been an attempt to show what it is about Richard Ford's short fiction that is so fascinating. My conclusion is that stories such as «Great Falls», «Optimists», «Communist», or «Children» are about identity and the failure to articulate it. As I have tried to explain, these stories foreground the relationship between life and language. The only activity these narrators engage in is that of storytelling. And yet, they reveal themselves as impotent in the act of understanding and representing the self. For all their efforts to render an illuminating narrative of the past and of the self, they don't seem to have any control over the experiences they tell and re-tell. The final effect of their stories is a denunciation of what Frank Bascombe, in *Independence Day*, calls the «commanding metaphor of continuity» (Ford 1995: 448), or, as we've seen, the «concept of completeness». But Ford gives fiction a definite function in the stories. The use of language retreats from the fictitious-ness and self-referentiality that characterized the heyday of postmodernism. Yet, the stories re-enact the postmodern loss of faith in imagination and language. The world appears chaotic and no order seems possible through the agency of these narrators/writers. The stories they tell, in spite of their realist consistency, offer no solace or moment of truth. There is a pull towards order in the act of narrating these characters submerge themselves into, but no meaning for the subject seems to be achieved.

Ford's character-bound narrators seem to believe that there are forces outside the individual that determine their identity. As I have pointed out above, they tell what they think has contributed to their present situation but its importance is stated in retrospect as they try to understand the forces that made them what they are in the present. The present serves as organizing principle and determines what is to be told. In fictional autobiography (as in Nietzsche's deconstruction of causality or Freud's «deferred action») the cause is imagined after the effect has taken place. The events from the past and how these events are interpreted retroactively are the equipment used to assemble identity in these short stories. And, from a Humanistic perspective, the subjects fail. Identity materializes as something they say and language invariably fails them. But, from these short stories, other different kind of identity emerges: identity as process. The subject does not appear as a presence to which his discourse might refer. The subject is present in the problematization of the subject by his discourse —to the extent that the subject is talked about, the subject is transformed into a problem. In the words of Jean-Luc Nancy (1993: 4), the subject is there «in the mode of being born». The existence of the subject is not questioned. In these stories, there is a subject, but, as I noted above, the subject appears to us in the representation, by this subject, of what cannot be represented.

The disproportion between the successful mesmerizing realistic descriptions of the events from the past and the failure to represent and understand the subject seems to suggest that the subject can be the basis for a number of discourses except for the discourse about the subject (see Umberto Eco 1997). The fascination with identity of Ford's narrators is itself a symptom of postmodernity; yet, they do not fall into language games, their narrative is linear and transparent and their own characters traditional and recognizable. Their presentation betrays their faith in language, but language fails them. They never achieve the coherent voice associated with modernism, nor do they render a definite totalizing view of the events they select and narrate. Ford's narrators are self-conscious about language and about the act of narrating. They call our attention to the fact that mimesis is not unproblematic. The narrators assert their subjectivity through narrative design at the cost of letting this subjectivity go through the gaps between the laws of the text and what they take for the real world. The whole project of understanding their present situation by resorting to the past (to understand the present by means of understanding the past) signals a return to the totality embodied by the realism and the linearity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel and the belief that events follow one another in a cause-effect chain and that where you start

determines where you end. However, the project is doomed; the causes are imagined in retrospect after the effects have taken place. There is a return to realism but realism cannot be definitely embodied and, as a result, the struggle over representation and the ensuing consequences for the understanding of the self come to the surface over and over again.

## WORKS CITED

- BRIGGS, John and F. David PEAT 2000 (1999). *Seven Life Lessons of Chaos: Spiritual Wisdom from the Science of Change*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- DEMASTES, William W. 1996. «Preface: American Dramatic Realisms, Viable Frames of Thought». In *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*, William W. Demastes, ed. Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, ix-xvii.
- ECO, Umberto 1997. *Kant y el ornitorrinco*. Barcelona: Lumen.
- FORD, Richard 1987 (1986). *The Sportswriter*. London: Flamingo.
- FORD, Richard 1987. *Rock Springs*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.
- FORD, Richard 1995. *Independence Day*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- GEYH, Paula, Fred G. Leebron and Andrew Levy, eds. 1998. *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- NANCY, Jean-Luc 1993. *The Birth to Presence*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- REBEIN, Robert 2001. *Hicks, Tribes, and Dirty Realists: American Fiction after Postmodernism*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.
- RICHARDSON, Brian 1996. «Introduction: The Struggle for the Real –Interpretive Conflict, Dramatic Method, and the Paradox of Realism». In *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*, William W. Demastes, ed. Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1-17.
- TARANCÓN, Juan A. 1999. «‘I am Still Here to Tell about It’: The Construction of the Subject in Fictional Autobiography». In *Actas del XXI Congreso Internacional AEDEAN*, Fernando Toda Iglesia et al., eds. Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla, 297-301.
- TARANCÓN, Juan A. 2000. «‘I would Like a Little Love Story’: Lies with a Pattern». In *Proceedings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of AEDEAN*, Pere Gallardo and Enric Llorca, eds. Lleida: Universitat de Lleida, 409-412.