

## CHAPTER 4: A-HA'S "TAKE ON ME" AND POSTMODERN METAMORPHOSES

Historically there has been a great deal of confusion between metafiction and postmodernism. Metafiction, or fiction that is about fiction, is not at all a new development in literature. Authors have been using metafiction for centuries. In other words, postmodernists' use of metafiction is a "continuation of an already existing narcissistic trend in the novel as it began parodically in *Don Quijote* and was handed on, through eighteenth-century critical self-awareness to nineteenth-century self-mirroring" (Hutcheon, 1980, 153). Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* are other examples of metafictional works that are by no means postmodern. They predate postmodernism. Hence, the simple presence of metafiction in a text does not make the text postmodern. Postmodernists distinguish themselves from their predecessors not by using metafiction per se but by the way in which they use metafiction. Postmodernists use metafiction to explore ontological issues.

Each of the five novels I consider in this project is indisputably metafictional. What is more noteworthy, however, is the repeated pattern of metamorphosis that consistently emerges through the authors' use of metafiction. In this chapter I will show that postmodernist metamorphosis reliably breaks down into four characteristic features: the description of two ontologically distinct worlds, frequent transgressions of the membrane between the two worlds, resistance to permeating the membrane between the two worlds, and a major instance of metalepsis in which a character or narrator permanently transcends the membrane. Conveniently, the Norwegian band A-ha's 1985 video "Take on Me" demonstrates precisely these same four features of postmodern metamorphosis. And what more postmodern approach to literary theory could there be than an early MTV video? Readers can view the video at <http://www.mtv.com> and follow along with this discussion, whether or not they have read each of the specific novels I discuss.

### POSTMODERN ~~METAFICTION~~ METAMORPHOSIS

In 1980, Linda Hutcheon, one of literary theory's foremost scholars on postmodernism and historiographic metafiction, explained

...several years ago I explicitly rejected the term 'postmodernism' and opted instead for the more descriptive one of metafiction. Although I would stand behind my objections to the label, it seems to have stuck, and it would be foolish to deny that metafiction is today recognized as a manifestation of postmodernism. (Hutcheon, 1980, p. xii-xiii)

Hutcheon is not alone in having struggled with the difference between postmodernism and metafiction. This is one of the most commonly misunderstood aspects of postmodernism in literary theory. The presence of metafiction in a text is by no means a sure sign that the text is postmodern, and metafiction is by no means synonymous with postmodernism. On the other hand, if a text is highly metafictional, it should prompt the reader to consider the possibility that the text is postmodern.

In postmodernist literature, metafiction is often a byproduct of another factor, the factor that McHale names as the general thesis of postmodernist fiction, that its dominant is *ontological* rather than *epistemological* (9–10). Postmodernists typically create multiple zones or worlds, each on an ontologically distinct plane of reality, which

they then set in juxtaposition to each other as a means of exploring questions of ontology. One of the most common ways authors create two worlds is to use metafiction to demarcate the world of the fictional text from the world of the purportedly real author who is writing the fictional text or reader who is reading the fictional text. Authors then blend the two worlds in various ways to explore ontological issues such as: What defines a world?; What kinds of worlds are there?; How are worlds constituted?; How do worlds differ?; “What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on” (McHale 10). In these cases, metafiction can be best viewed as a means of exploring ontology, not as a goal unto itself.

Postmodernists’ use of metafiction has caused so much confusion and discussion in recent decades that no one seems to have addressed the far more interesting underlying issue of metamorphosis. To be sure, postmodernists frequently use metafiction as a device as authors have done for centuries. However, postmodernists do not use metafiction for the sole purpose of parodying another genre or highlighting questions of the artist’s role in creating literature as so many of their forebears did. Postmodernists use metafiction to create a second ontological zone in their texts, which they use to explore the ontology of individuals who cross the membrane that divides these two zones. Postmodernist literature is replete with characters who become real and authors who become fictional. Postmodernists are interested in this transformation from one ontological plane to the next, this ontological metamorphosis.

I long for the day when instead of mistakenly saying “postmodernisme er like gammel som Cervantes” [postmodernism is as old as Cervantes] (Kjærstad, personal correspondence), people will say, “postmodernism is as old as Ovid.” Kjærstad himself has hinted at the importance of metamorphoses in postmodernist literature. He describes Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* as “smekkfull av metamorfoser” [smack full of metamorphoses], pointing out that Rusdhie “fører dekonstruksjonen—kall det gjerne postmodernisme—til sin ytterste konsekvens” [takes deconstruction—call it postmodernism—to its ultimate consequence] (1997, 86, 85). Kjærstad further describes *Satanic Verses* as “en roman der alle gamle sannheter trekkes i tvil, der metamorfosen er satt i høysetet” [a novel where all the old truths are cast into doubt, where metamorphosis is placed in the seat of honor] (1997, 232). Just as Rushdie’s novel prominently features metamorphosis, so too do other postmodern novels such as Kjærstad’s own *Homo falsus*, as well as the novels by Hoem, Lie, Jäntti, and Tapio that I consider here.

#### *THE FOUR FEATURES OF POSTMODERN METAMORPHOSIS: A-HA’S “TAKE ON ME”*

As I described above, postmodern metamorphosis feature four distinct traits: the portrayal of two ontologically distinct worlds, frequent permeations of the membrane between these worlds, resistance to crossing the membrane between the worlds, and finally an instance of metalepsis in which someone undergoes a metamorphosis, transcending their own ontological world to become part of the other. These four traits are unmistakably evident in each of the postmodern texts I consider—Edvard Hoem’s *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*, Sissel Lie’s *Løvens hjerte*, Jan Kjærstad’s *Homo falsus*, Mariaana Jäntti’s *Amorfiaana*, and Juha K. Tapio’s *Frankensteinin muistikirja*. Before looking at the ways in which each of these authors has implemented postmodern metamorphosis

in their texts, I will demonstrate these four features in the music video for Norwegian pop music group A-ha's award-winning "Take on Me" video, directed by Steve Barron and featuring animation by Michael Patterson. Not only is the video Norway's most globally recognized postmodern artifact, it is also an exceedingly clear visual representation of the features I am discussing.

In the A-ha video, the first characteristic of postmodern metamorphosis, the juxtaposition of two ontologically distinct worlds, takes the form of a real world, featuring live actors and band members, and a comic book world, featuring black and white animated versions of the characters and band members. Both worlds, the live action world and the animated world, consistently exist throughout the overall narrative of the story on separate but equally real ontological levels. In other words, the comic book scenes are not presented as any less real than the live action scenes. The mutual attraction between the live-action actress and the animated version of Morten Harket, A-ha's lead singer, is equally real in both worlds. The ominous danger from the wrench-wielding mechanics in the animated world threatens both animated characters and live-action characters equally, and so forth.

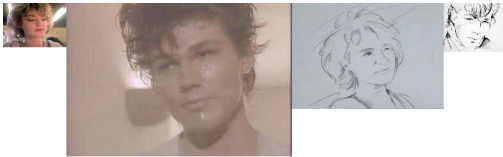


Figure 1. Real-world and animated versions

The two ontologically distinct worlds are postmodern in that they are coequal. "Take on Me" would be more modernist than postmodernist if the girl in the café had only dreamt her meeting with the animated Morten or if the meeting was all in her mind due to some other form of mental illness or hallucination, in short, if one world were subordinate to the other. The video is postmodern because it contains two ontologically distinct worlds, two incompatible realities, and refuses to make either one of them more real.

The video is also postmodern in that it self-consciously draws attention to the boundary between the two worlds. Although the video's narrative bounces back and forth between the live action world and the black and white animation world, the boundary between the two ontological worlds does not blur. In fact, Barron repeatedly and self-consciously draws the viewer's attention to the border between the two worlds, for example, when the cartoon version of Morten reaches his animated hand out of the comic book and invites the flesh and blood actress into the comic book world with him [see figure 2]. She then takes his hand and moves from the three-dimensional real world into the two-dimensional animated world. This is an example of a character transgressing the membrane between the two ontological worlds. Frequent transgressions of this sort are the second characteristic of postmodern metamorphosis.



Figure 2

This is perhaps most evident in the middle of the video when Morten serenades the woman through a frame in the comic book. Once both characters are inside the comic book world, Morten sings to the girl in front of a frame, the type of frame that would normally surround one cell on a page in a comic book. As the camera perspective moves back and forth around the frame of this cell, whatever the viewer sees through that frame appears not in black and white line animation, but in three-dimensional, full-color live action. In this case, the camera moves back and forth with the music, such that Morten and the woman are repeatedly shown alternating between three-dimensional color form and two-dimensional black and white animation form [see figure 3]. There are a number of similar frames in the comic book that translate similarly between the animated world and the live action world. Depending on the frame, the viewer sees the members of the band variously in animated form and variously in live action form. The boundary between the live action world and the comic book world remains clear, but the two worlds frequently interrupt each other. Not merely the fact of these interruptions, but their remarkable frequency is a standard trait of postmodern metamorphosis.



Figure 3

In the A-ha video, the third characteristic of postmodern metamorphosis, an emphasis on resistance to crossing the membrane between two ontologically distinct worlds, takes a particularly virile form. As the villainous wrench-wielding mechanics chase the protagonists in the video's rising action, the animated Morten is able to open

a hole in the animated wall for the animated heroine to crawl through. She does so, escaping into the live-action world where she is apparently safe from the evil mechanics, who by contrast are unable to cross into the live action world. Meanwhile Morten's character demonstrates the postmodern emphasis of resistance to crossing the membrane between the two worlds. While Morten is eventually able to move from the animated world into the live-action world, he first meets with severe resistance. He gets stuck in between worlds and the viewer watches as he flickers back and forth between ontological states, flinging himself against the walls in an attempt to break out of the cartoon world into the real world. In the animated realm, the walls are the borders of the picture cell that contain his animation. In the real world, the walls are the walls of the hallway in the back of the café. Morten's pronounced struggle to move from one ontological state to the other is an extremely clear visual representation of a standard aspect of postmodern metafiction, resistance to crossing the membrane between two ontologically distinct worlds.

The fourth and final characteristic of postmodern metamorphosis is metalepsis, or the violation of narrative levels (cf. Genette 234–237). In postmodernism this can take two forms. The first is a break in the narrative hierarchy, where two distinct narrative levels become intermingled. This occurs in the "Take on Me" video in the scenes showing real A-ha band members playing animated instruments. These scenes depict a hierarchical break, a commingling of the live action and animation worlds. The other form of metalepsis involves a character transcending from one level of the narrative to another, moving across the membrane from one ontological world into another, often to stay permanently on the other side. This occurs in A-ha's video when the animated Morten, after bouncing around in the hallway flickering between worlds as discussed above, finally makes it out of the animated world at the end of the video. Morten's ontological transformation from an animated character to a living human being is an example of the ultimate culmination of a postmodern metamorphosis.

Although a music video may be an unconventional choice for demonstrating the phases of postmodern metamorphoses in literature, the following discussion will demonstrate that each of the five novels I consider exhibits the same four basic features. Intriguingly, I have yet to encounter another scholar who has identified this trend. Perhaps as readers consider my work, it will become more commonplace to confuse Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with postmodernism than clichéd Cervantes's *Don Quijote*.

## *TWO ONTOLOGICALLY DISTINCT WORLDS*

Just as double coding is one of postmodernist architecture's principal traits, it is also one of postmodernist literature's principle traits. Postmodernist literature typically contains at least two distinct ontological realms. Often one is explicitly fictional and the other is more realistic, frequently featured as the level of reality in which the author composes the aforementioned fictional world. The presence of two distinct ontological worlds is a common feature in postmodernist literature. McHale describes this plurality of worlds as one of the ways postmodernists emphasize ontological issues:

Another symptom of ontological stress is anarchism, the refusal either to accept or to reject any of a plurality of available ontological orders. This, I would maintain, is precisely the postmodernist condition: an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural. (1987, 37)

In other words, in postmodernist fiction, authors not only compose multiple ontological worlds, they refuse to take a stance on which realm is the more real. Multiple realms in postmodernism tend to be portrayed as coequal.

Hoem's *Kjærleikens ferjereiser* exemplifies this. The text contains two realms, the real world of Oslo and the fictional world of Ramvik and Eikøy. However, it is not possible to establish a firm hierarchy in which one of the worlds is subordinate to the other. At times "han som skriv" clearly controls the events in the fictional world of Ramvik/Eikøy that he creates. At other times, he has no more control over the world he has authored, the fictional world of Ramvik/Eikøy, than he does over the real world of Oslo he finds himself in at the beginning of the text. In many ways, the world of Ramvik and Eikøy is more real than the world of Oslo. Both worlds exist on distinct ontological levels, and Hoem leaves the hierarchical relationship between the two up in the air.

Similarly, in Kjærstad's *Homo falsus*, there is the world in which the salad-eating man writes his detective story and the world of Greta's text in which men vanish into thin air. Kjærstad does not resolve the question of which of the two worlds is superior. Rather, like the M. C. Escher lithograph *Drawing Hands*, in which a right and left hand simultaneously draw each other, Kjærstad's *Homo falsus* exemplifies what Brian McHale calls a heterarchy, "a multi-level structure in which there is no single 'highest level'" (120).

Both Lie's *Løvens hjerte* and Jäntti's *Amorfiaana* also describe dual, co-equal worlds. Lie divides her text between the world of contemporary Norway and the world of Renaissance France. Both are equally real in the world of the text. Jäntti divides her novel between the world outside an apartment building and the world inside an apartment building. Each author carefully describes two ontological realms and portrays them as equally real and yet distinctly separate from each other in the world of the text.

Finally, Tapio also does this in *Frankensteinin muistikirja*, where there is the world of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the world of Tapio's Frank Stein. Once again, both are equally real in the world of the text. Tapio claims that Shelley just wrote down Frank's story as he had told it to her, and the monster that Shelley describes in her text runs throughout Tapio's text. And yet, although they are one and the same creature, Shelley's monster is quite monstrous and Tapio's is remarkably civilized and gentlemanly. Meanwhile, Tapio's novel is alternately told through Gertrud Stein's journal entries and Frank Stein's own journal entries. And although Gertrude Stein was a historically real individual and the monster Frank Stein is a historically fictional individual, both of their journals are presented as equally real in the world of Tapio's text.

This is the first feature of postmodern metamorphosis, texts that contain two worlds that are inherently ontologically different but neither is elevated to a more prominent hierarchical level. Each of these authors sets up two distinct worlds that should be mutually exclusive, with the possible exception of Jäntti's text. Certainly authentic Norway and fictional Norway (Hoem), a male narrator's detective novel and a female narrator's postmodern *Bildungsroman* (Kjærstad), contemporary Norway and Renaissance France (Lie), and a Gothic horror story about a brutal monster and a self-taught postmodern renaissance gentleman's diary (Tapio) ought to be mutually exclusive, either/or tales. In each case, however, the authors flicker back and forth between the dual ontological orders their texts contain. Their texts are double coded.

#### *MEMBRANE EMPHASIZED THROUGH FREQUENT TRANSGRESSIONS*

Narratives throughout history have included multiple narrative levels. The story of the *Arabian Nights* is one of the most famous examples. For 1001 nights, Scheherazade tells stories literally to save her own life.

Scheherazade's world comprises the primary diegetic, or narrative, level in this case. Any story she tells is one level removed from her own diegetic level, thus comprising a hypodiegetic or metadiegetic world, a story within the story. Scheherazade exists on a separate ontological level from the world of the characters in the stories she tells. And if the presence of multiple diegetic levels occurs in stories dating as far back as the *Arabian Nights*, then the presence of two distinct diegetic worlds absolutely does not make a text postmodern. What does make a text postmodern is the way in which authors use multiple diegetic worlds. Whereas many realist and modernist authors use the interplay between various narrative levels to emphasize *epistemological* aspects of their stories, such as narrative authority, reliability and unreliability, how knowledge is transmitted, and so forth (cf. McHale 113), postmodernists emphasize the *ontological* aspects of the two narrative worlds.

One way that all of the authors I have chosen to discuss emphasize the ontological dimension is through frequent transgressions of the boundary between the two diegetic realms. As McHale explains:

...if recursive structure is to function in a postmodernist poetics of ontology, strategies must be brought to bear on it which foreground its ontological dimension. One such strategy, the simplest of all, involves *frequency*: interrupting the primary diegesis not once or twice but *often* with secondary, hypodiegetic worlds, representations within representations (1987, 113).

In other words, postmodernists emphasize the boundary between ontologically distinct worlds by frequently transgressing that boundary between them. Hutcheon seconds this, adding that in postmodernism there "...is not really a blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction, but more a hybridizing mix, where the borders are kept clear, even if they are frequently crossed" (1989, 37). Examples of this type of frequent interruption can be seen in each of the five books I discuss.

In *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*, Hoem constantly interrupts the hypodiegetic world of Ramvik and Eikøy with discussions of "han som skriv" and the diegetic world he inhabits. Hoem frequently interrupts the fictional realm with reminders of the real Norway, with letters written to various authorities, phone calls to governmental offices, official documents such as newspapers and atlases that do not mention the fictional realm of Ramvik and Eikøy. So, whereas Scheherazade might have launched into a story, told it, and then addressed the audience again herself, Hoem's diegetic world constantly interrupts the metadiegetic story he is telling.

Similarly, Kjærstad bounces back and forth from the male narrator's perspective to the female narrator's perspective on an almost chapter by chapter basis in *Homo falsus*. In the beginning of the book, the male narrator exists at the diegetic level and Greta exists on the hypodiegetic level, as the character he creates and writes about in his story. By the end of the book, Kjærstad has flipped things. Greta asserts that she is the one writing the book, which would place her on the diegetic level and the male narrator on the hypodiegetic level, as a character in her text. Not only does Kjærstad carefully describe these two complementary worlds, keeping them distinct, but he interrupts the one with the other exceptionally frequently.

In *Løvens hjerte*, Lie also frequently interrupts the diegetic world of contemporary Norway with the hypodiegetic world of Renaissance France. Like Kjærstad's, Lie's interruptions come in almost every chapter. Nonetheless, the two worlds never become confused. They remain distinct. Similarly Jäntti interrupts the diegetic world of the story outside the apartment building, the story of the little girl on the tricycle, with the hypodiegetic world of the story inside the apartment building. In Jäntti's case, actually, the majority of the text is devoted to the

hypodiegetic story, which is frequently interrupted by self-conscious reminders that the diegetic story is not being told. Jäntti keeps the two worlds separate, but constantly interrupts the one with the other. And finally, Tapio also switches tirelessly back and forth between Frank's diary and Gertrud's diary as well as between depictions of monsters as monstrous and monsters as misunderstood outsiders.

This is the second trait of postmodernist metamorphosis, the frequent interruption of one ontological world by another. Each of the five novels I consider prominently features this type of incessant interruption. The borders between the world of the diegesis and the world of the hypodiegesis are kept clear, but are frequently transgressed.

#### *MEMBRANES EMPHASIZED THROUGH RESISTANCE*

In addition to extremely frequent reminders of the ontological double coding in these texts, postmodernists also highlight the boundary between the two ontological levels in their texts by foregrounding some sort of resistance as characters move across the boundary. McHale describes this tendency:

Postmodernist writing seeks to foreground the ontological *duality* of metaphor, its participation in two frames of reference with different ontological statuses... All metaphor *hesitates* between a literal function (in a secondary frame of reference) and a metaphorical function (in a 'real' frame of reference); postmodernist texts often *prolong* this hesitation as a means of foregrounding ontological structure (1987, 134).

This type of resistance is also a common feature in the novels I am considering in this project.

In *Kjarleikens ferjereiser*, "han som skriv" has a great deal of difficulty entering the fictional world he has created. He is forced to complete Årø airport ahead of schedule so that he can reach Ramvik more efficiently by plane from Oslo. Despite searching, he cannot find a bus schedule that includes Ramvik. Once he finally reaches Rutebilkaféen, he cannot physically see Ramvik because of the fog. In the end he is forced to bum a ride off one of his characters, Hans Kristiansson, in order to reach Ramvik. The difficulty he has in moving from the one ontological realm to the other highlights the boundary between the two.

In *Homo falsus*, the very thought that the male narrator's Greta character might have transcended the boundary between the hypodiegetic world and his own real world of Oslo causes him to panic. Kjørstad highlights the boundary between the two by turning the male narrator into the next victim on Greta's list. Having serially murdered the other three men in the story, she starts to repeat the pattern on him. And he is aware of this. He tries to modify her character and the events in the novel he is writing so as to make Greta less dangerous to him in the real world. He even invents a detective to try and track her down before she kills him. Ultimately, he is institutionalized, having lost his sanity as he became a character in Greta's book rather than the author of his own text. In other words he crossing the membrane between the diegetic world, where he is an author and Greta's murders are fictional, and the hypodiegetic world, where Greta and the murders are real, literally makes him lose his mind. This is a classic example of resistance in the text to a character transgressing the boundary between realms.

In Jäntti's *Amorfiaana*, the resistance is once again utterly unmistakable and surprising. In fact, in this text, characters get stuck inside the interface between the two realms, in the walls themselves. Jäntti highlights the boundaries between the diegetic and hypodiegetic realms by making them into physical walls. The two narrative worlds are literally separated by concrete boundaries, walls, and panes of glass.



Finally, Tapio highlights the frequent transgressions of the membrane between a realistic world and a purely fictional world by having bits of the one world drag into the other. Frank Stein's murderous, monstrous past bleeds into his civilized coexistence with Gertrud(e) Stein and other historical figures such as Pablo Picasso and Ern(e)st Hemingway. This is perhaps most apparent when the golem of Jewish mythology chases him across Europe, dripping clay and leaving a trail of victims behind him. Tapio emphasizes the boundary between the two realms, by having bits of one ontological realm bleed self-consciously into the other.

Unlike the aforementioned novels, the narrator of Lie's *Løvens hjerte* generally moves back and forth with ease between contemporary Norway and Renaissance France. On the other hand, she occasionally finds herself booted out of the hypodiegetic world, thrust abruptly back to the diegetic world against her will. She experiences the opposite of resistance between the worlds, rather there is an ultimate lack of resistance, a sort of trap door that shuttles her uncontrollably from the one to the other. Lie writes, "linjen bryter" [the link breaks] (24) and the woman finds herself back in modern day Norway. This sudden, uncontrollable transition from the one realm to the other serves to foreground the ontological difference between the two.

Hence, as I have shown, each of these authors not only carefully lays out two separate ontological worlds in his or her text, but highlights this duality by flipping characters back and forth with astonishing frequency. They also draw attention to the boundary between realms by inscribing some type of resistance that the characters face when they move from one to the other. This resistance can vary, as I have shown, from bad weather, to being trapped in walls, from a clay beast that pursues Frankenstein's monster into civilized society to an author who loses his sanity and winds up a character in the book he was writing.

#### *METALEPSIS AND TRANSCENDENCE*

The fourth characteristic of postmodern metamorphosis is some sort of hierarchical break or metalepsis where the two levels somehow commingle. This can take two forms. At times, as when the A-ha band members were shown playing on animated musical instruments, the two levels can temporarily commingle. At other times, as when the animated version of Morten turns into the real Morten at the end of the "Take On Me" video, a character undergoes a more or less permanent metamorphosis, transforming from one level of ontological existence to another. This is the same type of transformation readers are familiar with from venerable stories such as Pygmalion. The difference here is that in postmodern texts not only gods but normal mortals as well can undergo these transformations easily. In postmodernism, as discussed above, characters often move back and forth between ontological worlds, flickering from one to the other. Their ultimate final metamorphosis is often the result of an educated consumer's decision to permanently move into the other ontological world.

Both of these types of metalepsis, the two worlds commingling and someone moving from one world into the other, occur in Hoem's *Kjærleikens ferjereiser*. "Han som skriv" journeys into the fictional world he himself has created. He and the character he concocts, Hans Kristianson, meet face to face in a café. The two men help each other light a cigarette and then proceed to share a ride into Ramvik. Not only does "han som skriv" spend time in the fictional world he writes, coexisting there on the same ontological level as the characters he has created, but one of his characters comes back to Oslo with him. The novel ends with "han som skriv" and Hans Kristianson sitting next

to each other on a flight back to Oslo. In doing this, Hans Kristianson undergoes a metamorphosis, moving from his ontological existence as a character in the novel of “han som skriv” to a flesh and blood existence in a real Norwegian city. In the text, “han som skriv” travels into his own fiction and Hans Kristianson travels from a fictional existence to a real one.

A similar situation occurs in Kjærstad’s *Homo falsus*. Over the course of the text, the male narrator undergoes a metamorphosis, transforming from the author of his own text to a character in Greta’s text. Greta undergoes the opposite metamorphosis, changing from a character in the male narrator’s text to the author of her own. The metaleptic situation becomes clear, both to the reader and to the male narrator, when he receives a letter from Greta, targeting him as her next victim. In order for Greta to send him a letter, the two must share an ontological level. This is clearly a break in the hierarchical structure of the novel, because regardless of which of the two is actually writing the text, one of them is the author and one of them is a character. The interaction between the two of them is evidence of metalepsis. In addition, both the male narrator and Greta undergo a metamorphosis over the course of the novel. Greta becomes real and the male narrator becomes fictional.

The situation is slightly different in Lie’s *Løvens hjerte*. Here, there are most certainly metaleptic moments. For example, the contemporary Norwegian woman ends up taking a bath with Louise Labé, a woman who died centuries before and therefore a woman who by definition cannot exist on the same ontological level as the Norwegian woman. And yet they do. The metamorphosis in Lie’s text is almost the opposite of Kjærstad’s. In *Løvens hjerte*, it is the contemporary Norwegian woman who becomes real. She begins the text as an ontologically real person, distinguished from Labé who is merely a fictional reconstruction of a historical figure who was once real. This Norwegian woman begins the text as an ontologically real woman, and undergoes a metamorphosis to become a much more powerful, authoritative real woman. In Lie’s text, this Norwegian woman is like an incarnation of women’s authorship and sexuality, and this incarnation undergoes a metamorphosis from timid to bold, from a tale told from other people’s points of view to one that can narrate its own story.

Jäntti’s *Amorfiaana* is much less clear cut in its metamorphosis. As the name of the novel suggests, the entire novel is about amorphousness. Characters in the text constantly undergo metamorphoses, transforming into text, merging into walls, breaking through glass to another level of narrative reality. Jäntti juxtaposes gritty, horrific reality with magical realism, shifting continuously and almost imperceptibly between the gruesome and the magical. She also tells and retells the story of the girl on the tricycle innumerable times, and yet it remains utterly unclear what actually happens. In one version, the girl is killed when she is hit by a truck. In another, she is transformed into a circus performer, taking a bow in the spotlights of the truck’s headlights.

Tapio’s Frank Stein undergoes a miraculous, and much more easily discernable, metamorphosis over the course of *Frankensteinin muistikirja*. He goes from being a character in Shelley’s text to the author of his own. He goes from a collection of dead body parts sewn together, to an integral whole person of his own. He goes from the monstrous killer depicted in Shelley’s text to an educated gentleman and active participant in Gertrud Stein’s community of artists. Frank undergoes a metamorphosis from a bestial mass of different parts, to a coordinated unified single subject. He is the embodiment of *e pluribus unum*.

## CONCLUSION: BECOMING REAL

In conclusion, these five authors and many other postmodernists use metafiction as a means of exploring ontological issues. They use metafiction to delineate two separate ontological realms within the text, one expressly created as a metadiegetic story within the diegetic story. In other words, they use metafiction specifically for the purpose of creating another level of reality within the text. This is a markedly different application of metafiction than one finds in, for example, Miguel de Cervantes, Laurence Sterne, Denis Diderot, or Gustave Flaubert. Instead, the way Hoem, Kjørstad, Lie, Jäntti, and Tapio use metafiction has far more in common with authors such as John Barth, John Fowles, Italo Calvino, and others frequently included under the rubric of postmodernism. It is not their use of metafiction that characterizes them as postmodernists; rather it is the way in which they use it.

Once these authors have set up dual ontological realms, they frequently flip back and forth between the two. Characters move back and forth through the membrane between the two worlds, and often encounter spectacular resistance. These authors draw attention to the boundary between the two realms both through the frequency of the transgressions and through the resistance characters face when they do cross over from one to the other.

Postmodernists use metafiction as a means of ontological exploration and often use it to facilitate an ontological metamorphosis. In each of the books I discuss, this takes the metaleptic form of a character becoming real. Just as at the end of the A-ha video the animated male hero breaks out into the real world, characters in each of these novels also break out of their hypodiegetic worlds into the diegetic world beyond. In *Kjarleikens ferjereiser* this takes the form of Hans Kristiansson catching a flight from the fictional world of Ramvik to make his way in the real world of Oslo. As the plane moves from the hypodiegetic fictional zone into the diegetic realm of real Norway, the book comes to an end. This confirms the completion of Hans Kristiansson's metamorphosis; he ceases to be a character in the book when the book ends. In *Homo falsus*, Greta undergoes a similar metamorphosis, going from being a character in the male narrator's text to eventually shutting off her computer and stepping out of the world of the text, off to live her own life as a real person as opposed to a character in a book. As in Hoem's text, when she walks out of the world of the novel and into the real world, the book comes to an end. In both *Løvens hjerte* and *Amorfiaana*, the metamorphoses are more metaphorical. In the former, the protagonist goes from being an unempowered character to an empowered agent, as if from a character in someone else's text to the author of her own. In the latter, the act of narrating brings the story to life. Finally, in *Frankensteinin muistikirja*, the fictional beast from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel matures and goes on to become a purportedly real, cultured gentleman, the embodiment of the new European Union. The aim of these authors' use of metafiction is not parody or contemplations on the nature of artistic creation. Rather, they use metafiction as a tool to explore ontology, and the result is a spectacular, postmodern take on the age old literary theme of metamorphosis.