Literature as Phenomenon: Attribution Theory and the Act of Performance (Oral, Interpretation, Pre-Formance, Newcomb, Bakhtin).

John Walthall Creagh III
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/4123

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a manuscript sent to us for publication and microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted. Pages in any manuscript may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. Manuscripts may not always be complete. When it is not possible to obtain missing pages, a note appears to indicate this.

2. When copyrighted materials are removed from the manuscript, a note appears to indicate this.

3. Oversize materials (maps, drawings, and charts) are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each oversize page is also filmed as one exposure and is available, for an additional charge, as a standard 35mm slide or in black and white paper format.*

4. Most photographs reproduce acceptably on positive microfilm or microfiche but lack clarity on xerographic copies made from the microfilm. For an additional charge, all photographs are available in black and white standard 35mm slide format.*

*For more information about black and white slides or enlarged paper reproductions, please contact the Dissertations Customer Services Department.
Creagh, John Walthall, Ill

LITERATURE AS PHENOMENON: ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND THE ACT OF PERFORMANCE

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col. PH.D. 1985

University Microfilms International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106
LITERATURE AS PHENOMENON:
ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND THE ACT OF PERFORMANCE

A dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication, Theatre,
and Communication Disorders

by

John Creagh
B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973
M.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1982
December 1985
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have been instrumental in the completion of this project. However, my first thanks must go to Martha Nell Hardy who jerked me out of complacency and into the Ph.D program at Louisiana State University. Dr. Mary Frances HopKins is also deserving of gratitude; as an exemplar of all that an interpretation scholar can be, she is a role model for everyone in the field.

I also wish to thank Dr. J. Donald Ragsdale for introducing me to attribution theory and encouraging me in the risky business of synthesizing communication theory and interpretation. This openness of perspective, coupled with the gentle firmness of Dr. Fabian Gudas and the deep sensibilities of Dr. Billy Harbin, have had much to do with the success of this study.

Special thanks must be reserved for my advisor Dr. Barbara Becker—a woman of patience, sensitivity, and honesty—whose refusal to accept less than my best will leave me eternally in her debt.

Finally, I am grateful to my wife Sara, whose drive, determination, and encouragement during a time when she had her own best work to produce motivated me to those same ends. And to my daughter Rachel, I owe the passionate rebirth of any imaginative and creative spirit that I might possess.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Literature as Phenomenon: Attribution Theory and the Act of Performance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution Theory and the Act of Performance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Phenomenological Approach to Attribution Theory</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism as Support for the Phenomenological Perspective</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Phenomenological Reduction</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature as Phenomenon</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Phenomenology of Attribution</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution as Symbolic Action</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for this Study</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Function of Attribution in the Performer’s Experience of a Narrator</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Assumptions of Attribution Theory</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Very Brief History of Attribution Theory</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution and Person Perception</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor’s Versus Observer’s Attributions: The Performance Situation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festinger and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruity Theory</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Versus Content in Attribution</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributional Theories: The Effects of Attribution</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary: Patterns of Attribution in Literary Response</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward an Attributional Model of the Pre-Formative Experience</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Text as Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Many Voices of Prose Fiction</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Phenomenology of Pre-Formance</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution in the Experience of Reading</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Development of the Interpersonal Metaphor in Literary Criticism</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Balance in the Pre-Formative Constitution of Textual Voices</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Many Voices of Prose Fiction</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heteroglossia as a Rehearsal Method</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Figural Voice</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Function of Attribution in a Pre-Formative Reading of &quot;A Rose For Emily&quot;</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purposes of the Model</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Phenomenological Experience of the Text-as-Utterance</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance or the Strain toward Symmetry as the Principal Dynamic of the Response to a Text</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fundamental Attribution Error</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Common Narrative Behavior</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attribution theory seeks to explain the ways in which humans ascribe causes to everyday events, especially the observed behavior of other human beings. This study seeks to apply the basic patterns of social attribution to the act of "pre-formance"—the aesthetic act in which a performer engages the voice of a literary text and, through rehearsals involving attribution, embodies that voice for some audience.

Theodore Newcomb's "symmetry theory," a model that contains the essential features of human attribution, is discussed within the philosophical perspective of phenomenology, and the transformed model is used as the basis for a new theory of the act of performance. Three essential patterns of attribution are defined (consistency, consensus, and distinctiveness) and applied to the author's "pre-formance" of William Faulkner's story "A Rose For Emily." Also, the fundamental attribution error is defined as "the tendency to overattribute other's behaviors to disposition rather than to environment or context," and this tendency of human perception is revealed to be the cause of much literary (and social) misinterpretation.

Finally, the theories of M. M. Bakhtin are appropriated to the model, to allow the engagement of the performer/reader and the literary other (e.g. narrators or characters) to be described as the complex experiential phenomenon that it is. The finished model, which replaces the "textual other" with the concept of "figural voice," describes attribution as the most important principle in the psychological construction of a response to a literary text.
Chapter One

LITERATURE AS PHENOMENON:

ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND THE ACT OF PERFORMANCE

Introduction

A professional actor is assigned the role of Hamlet. He picks up the text of the play and begins the first of a long series of encounters with it. The clergyman experiences a familiar biblical text in a new way when he decides, for the first time, to use it as a eulogy. The poem that meant nothing in adolescence now gains a rich new layer of meaning each time it is encountered by the maturing consciousness of a reader. A performer preparing Faulkner's story "A Rose For Emily" for the public decides that the narrator of the story is sexist. All of these cases illustrate the transactional nature of our experiences with literary texts. When we read a text critically and sensitively, we are engaging the voiced language of the text in much the same way that we encounter other people in the social world. Nowhere is this relationship more crucial than in the human embodiment of a text through performance and the response to that performance by an audience.

This study is based on the thesis that the experience of a text, whether printed or performed, is analogous to one's human experience of an "other." That is to say, we encounter new texts in much the same way that we encounter potential friends or acquaintances. This analogy is especially apt if we intend to perform the work because, in such cases, we focus on the text not as an object, a thing-out-there, but rather as an act of telling—a disclosing by a narrator,
character, or an implied author. Therefore, the methods of studying interaction between two human beings are appropriate for studying interaction between performers and texts.

Perhaps the best possible description of the act of performance then, is a phenomenological description. Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that seeks complete and essential descriptions of human experience rather than a testing of empirical laws. The goal of such descriptions is to fully describe the activity of the human consciousness as it experiences and responds to the world. As Sir William Hamilton defined it in 1866, phenomenology is a "purely descriptive study of mind."¹ A phenomenological description of the act of performance, then, would count as data only the experiential records of the performer, her subjective but rigorous examination of her own mental activity as she performed or rehearsed, rather than employing any empirical tests. Only a full and complete description of the experience of performing could be counted as phenomenological data. When people perform literary texts, they are communicating to others the results of their intellectual and visceral encounters with a unique "instance" of the text as it is mediated by a particular consciousness at a particular time. The study of the consciousness of performers, then, is of great importance to the understanding of the act of performing. For this reason phenomenology is an appropriate methodology for the study of the performer's experience of the "others" contained in a literary work.

The act of performing literature is a phenomenon that involves our encounter with an other—the text. Furthermore, it involves our conscious

reflection on that encounter, including pre-reflective or visceral responses of which we may be only dimly aware. If I must embody Hamlet on stage, I must intuit certain of his qualities; I discover other aspects of the character by analyzing in my mind the critical thinking that was involved in the creation of my performance. That is to say (phenomenologically) that I literally present my consciousness to my consciousness in order to think about how I have arrived at a characterization of Hamlet.

Phenomenology also assumes that nothing is a true phenomenon unless it is presented to the human senses for analysis. When we read a text, it exists only as it is presented to us—that is, as we experience it. The dyadic relationship between a reader and a text can be described phenomenologically; moreover, a phenomenological description of a performer's act of "taking on the textual voice," can reveal unexpected relationships between seemingly incompatible fields of inquiry. In attempting to fully describe a performer's experience of a literary other, this study will highlight some of these surprising consistencies in the communication theories of dramatism, symbolic interactionism, and particularly attribution theory.

I will focus on the latter theory, an increasingly important psychological paradigm called attribution. Attribution theory deals with the ways in which humans assign or attribute causes to the behavior of others in the social world. Because it is a theory of perception, because it seeks to describe the often pre-reflective dynamics of our perceptions of others, because it focuses on experiential records of those perceptions, attribution theory is firmly rooted in the phenomenological perspective. This study will outline attribution theory's essentially phenomenological underpinnings and will then describe how
attribution functions in a performer's experience of the various "speaking" voices of a literary text. Highlighting the essential structures of attribution, as revealed in studies of social communication will help to produce a model that reveals how attribution functions in the critical response to a work of literature.

Attribution theory can prove to be particularly helpful in describing the act of performance—the human embodiment of a literary text—especially when it is coupled with the perspective of symbolic interactionism; this latter perspective will be introduced briefly, in order to limit our application of attributional principles to the linguistic channel of communication. This linguistic parameter is necessary because the communication of literature to a reader, the type of communication that occurs when a performer "studies" a text she intends to perform, is almost exclusively verbal. When I read a soliloquy of Hamlet's, I am denied the nonverbal channel, and must depend solely on my perceptions of Hamlet's words, his "linguistic behavior," if I am to get to know him well enough to recreate him on the stage or platform.

The subject of this inquiry is specific, although the implications are far reaching. My subject is the performative act: that is, the human activity of "conversing" critically with a text in order to create a performance of it for some audience. The act of performance can be divided into two distinct phenomenal phases: (1) "pre-forming," the formation of the performance by the performer during which aesthetic and critical choices are made and acted upon, a phrase commonly called "rehearsal," and (2) "performing," the physical embodiment of the text by the performer for an audience.

The purpose of this study is to develop a model that will describe how attribution functions in the act of performance. I will concentrate on the pre-
formative phase and the "interpersonal" relationship between the "voice" of the text and the performer. I will trace the development of the phenomenological theory of attribution and will apply it to this reader/text relationship. Several significant attribution patterns will be identified in the current literature of the social sciences. These patterns will also be revealed in selected student responses to literary texts. However, since this study seeks a phenomenological description of performance, I will rely heavily on my own response to exemplary texts, particularly the opening passages of William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily."

At the core of the proposed model is Theodore Newcomb's widely known "symmetry model," an attributional paradigm. This model will be placed in the context of the performer's lived experience of a text, forming a completed paradigm that will provide both a philosophical description of the act of performance as well as some practical prescriptions for the performer.

Attribution Theory and the Act of Performance

The performative act is a complicated process. Performance studies seek an understanding not only of the text being performed, but also of the act of performance. One behavioral theory that is particularly fruitful when applied to the performative act is attribution theory.

Briefly, this family of psychological theories is concerned with how human beings arrive at determinations of the causes of everyday events—particularly the causes of the behaviors of other humans. It is a basic human trait to perceive that our own actions and the actions of others are the result of either some external force or some human disposition. Attribution theory posits that
people insist upon attributing causes to the effects they observe in the world. Often, the assumption of cause is pre-reflective. I would add that performers and readers often attribute "causes" to the "behavior" of the speaking voice inherent in a work of literature.

The particular attribution paradigm used in this study is Theodore Newcomb's symmetry theory, which seeks to explain the essential ways in which humans achieve feelings of "balance," "symmetry," or "cognitive consistency" with an object or another person. Newcomb uses the term symmetry to mean a general understanding of where a communication partner stands in relation to (a) oneself, and (b) to whatever happens to be the subject of the discourse at any given moment. When discussing a Republican governor with a democrat, I might attribute qualities to the democrat based on (a) how she feels about me personally, and (b) how she stands in relationship to this particular Republican governor. This feeling of "symmetry" is not unlike the feeling that phenomenologist Martin Heidegger refers to as "unconcealedness,"² in that it suggests that the motives of the other's behavior "stand forth" to me, unconcealed. Such feelings of consistency are crucial in our understanding of literary others as well.

Newcomb's symmetry model, when applied to the transaction between performer and text, would suggest that ambiguities in the text, such as gaps in the plot or multiple word meanings, or even ambiguities in a character's motives for "linguistic behavior," create a dissonance or feeling of psychological imbalance. Often, the attribution of causes or motivations for these ambiguities is a common method of resolving such imbalances between perception and

understanding. For example, I might wonder why my prospective employer is explaining the company's retirement policy in such detail during the employment interview. During the employer's discourse I might attribute the cause of her details to the fact that she has already made up her mind to hire me. Likewise, in my reflections on Faulkner's story "A Rose For Emily," I might wonder why the narrator is so careful to conceal the shocking ending of the story until the final line. In both cases I am seeking a cause for the behavior of an other with whom I am engaged.

The Phenomenological Approach to Attribution Theory

Phenomenology provides an excellent method for describing critical and behavioral responses to texts. Attribution theory, in its focus on interpersonal perception, is a phenomenological theory that can illuminate the relationship between a performer and the fictional persona he embodies. As stated previously, the essential description of literary response that is the core of this study will be limited to "pre-formance," concentrating on the performer's perception of the text as that text is prepared for performance.

Attribution, like many other theories of communication, while often tested empirically, is concerned with human perception—including the perception and evaluation of literary personae. In an effort to introduce attribution theory here, it might be helpful to clarify its philosophical underpinnings in phenomenology. Stephen Littlejohn has summarized what might be called some phenomenological principles of humanistic communication theories:

(1) What is happening to an individual or a group is best understood subjectively in terms of the individual's perceptions and feelings. (This suggests the use of subjective, paper-and-pencil responses
that describe a subject's experiences rather than scientifically controlled experiments.)

(2) Principles governing communication behavior should be discovered inductively by examining personal experience rather than by applying abstractions deductively. (That is, we begin with the raw data of experience, and construct theories to explain them without reducing the varieties and complexities of the experiences.)

(3) Communication behavior is best understood in its complexity rather than rigid simplicity.

Attribution theory seeks to describe the ways in which we ascribe causes to observed behaviors of others. This study applies such descriptions to the communicative transaction which can be shown to exist between performer and text (as well as between performer and audience). The proposed essential description of the experience of a text, by a single reader or by an audience, will be based on a modified model of attribution that will be derived according to the methods of phenomenology.

Of course, books and people do not communicate in exactly the same way. Language is the sole medium through which a text speaks its meanings. When we converse with flesh-and-blood others we at least have one other primary medium—the nonverbal channel. For this reason, the relationship between a text and a reader is essentially linguistic. If we are seeking an understanding of a narrator in a piece of prose fiction, our experience of that narrator is primarily an experience of her or his linguistic behavior. Texts "act" via language. And even when we think about a text, when we contemplate it critically, we use language to do so. Therefore, the perspective of symbolic interaction, another

---

phenomenological communication theory, provides helpful support for an attributional theory of literary response.

Symbolic Interactionism as Support for the Phenomenological Perspective

The theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism reinforces the phenomenological dynamic of the experience of another person (in this case a textual persona) or object (the text). This perspective, widely credited in the social sciences, posits human interaction as being conducted primarily through shared meanings conveyed by way of language. This interaction is dynamic and processual. Symbolic interactionism assumes a dialectic structure as an essential feature of communication; it is my thesis that such a structure also exists in a person/text dyad or in the performer/audience "partnership."

Stephen Littlejohn describes the goals of the researcher in symbolic interactionism as requiring him or her to "empathize with the subject, to enter the subject's realm of experience, and to attempt to understand the value of the person as an individual." The aesthetic goals of the performer are no different in that they too rely on empathic understanding and what Wallace Bacon has called "a sense of the other."

This project rests on the argument of four claims. The first two are related:

(1) Attribution (a phenomenological theory of how humans ascribe causes to the behaviors of others) in the imaginative and critical act of forming the performance of a text is a phenomenon in the phenomenological sense.

4Littlejohn, p. 45.

5Littlejohn, p. 45.
(2) Attribution, specifically that described by Newcomb's "symmetry model," is an important part of the phenomenon of responding to the performance of a text.

(3) Symbolic interactionism (particularly the Burkean paradigm) helps to clarify the phenomenological term "intentionality." This term is important in describing which literary persona we are attending to or focusing on at any given moment of the reading process.

(4) Theodore Newcomb's symmetry model, a model that contains all of the essential features of attribution, can be modified so as to make it specifically applicable to the act of pre-formance and to justify its description as a phenomenological model.

Phenomenology posits four essential criteria for a phenomenon to exist. First, phenomena are essences. They are constituted by those very qualities that make them the objects they are instead of some other, essentially different object. That is to say, humans recognize phenomena; we know that our experience of a flower is essentially unlike our experience of a novel; likewise, we may sense that our experience of the death of King Lear is not unlike our experience of the death of a flesh-and-blood leader such as Dr. Martin Luther King. Such experiences (such essences) are not discovered empirically, but by "a scrutiny of particular cases by seeing, intuition, or intuition of essences" (Wesensschau). The importance of intuition lies in its ability to free truth from the necessity of empirical proof. According to Richard Schmitt:

The point of introducing intuition is not psychological but epistemological. To appeal to intuition is not to make a psychological statement about the causal origins of certain statements but an epistemological one about the sort of evidence that will be relevant to them. To say we know essences by

---


7 Schmitt, p. 140.
intuition is to say, negatively, that the truth or falsity of statements about essences is not dependent on the truth about empirical statements.\(^8\)

This is not to say that empirical statements are not true or not self-validating. But the self-validation of the phenomenological description is that its goal is inherent in its object; one can search for the ontological essence (eidos) of an object only within the object itself.

The reader who prepares a short story, say "A Rose For Emily," for public performance, must be able to fully respond to the work as a separate entity, a thing-out-there that is presented to his/her consciousness. The intuitive description of the essential qualities of the work might contain many levels: it is a short story; it is in the inimitable style\(^9\) of Faulkner; it is a story of the American South; it is Southern Gothic; and, it is a mystery story. Anytime that we place a work into a category we are beginning to intuit something about its formal essence. We know that "A Rose For Emily" is not a sonnet, a novel, a play, or a fantasy; it is not a comic story—or in Hemingway's style. From generic essences, we move on to attempt to realize in performance, those qualities which exist only in this particular story. What qualities, we ask, make this story unique.

\(^{8}\text{Schmitt, p. 140.}\)

\(^{9}\text{M. M. Bakhtin, a theorist whose ideas will figure prominently in my proposed model, suggests that prose style is largely a function of an author's particular way of combining different voices (social, literary, professional, character voices, etc.) within a text. What Bakhtin says about the style of the English comic novel, might be applied, to a lesser degree perhaps, to all prose fiction: "It is precisely the diversity of speech, and not the unity of a normative shared language, that is the ground of style." Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981). p. 308.}\)
Much of the answer to this seminal question lies in the attributions we make about the behavior of the teller of the story. We might constitute this teller as the implied author\textsuperscript{10} or as a more or less defined narrator who exists in the context of the epic situation. The richest understanding of the work would likely come from investigating our attributions about both narrator and implied author. In order to focus this study, however, I will limit it to the performer's attributions concerning the narrator, mainly because performers embody narrators, whether they are fictional characters, whether they are interested or objective, whether they are neutral entities or implied authors. The style of the narrator, the "manner" of the telling, is the crucial determinant of the essential phenomenon of our experience of a specific text, and therefore, a focus on the narrative voice, a voice constituted as a communicating other, is appropriate and of paramount importance.

The Phenomenological Reduction

The particular phenomenon under consideration then, is the performer's experience of the narrator of "A Rose For Emily." We begin by constituting that narrator as an other who is communicating with us through the shared system of language. We focus on the text as the voiced behavior of that narrator. In phenomenological terms, when a performer holds any aspect of a text, say a narrator, in the mind, that performer is said to be "intentionally focused." The

\textsuperscript{10}I am grateful to Wayne C. Booth for his illumination of the idea of dyadic encounters between texts and readers. His approach to the metaphor of "engagements" with a text, however, posits the implied author as the other in the dyad. This is true, perhaps, when we read our favorite authors, but I would suggest that in a "pre-formative" reading, the relationship between the reader and the narrator's voice is more crucial. To embody a text we must embody the narrator; only indirectly do we engage the implied author, at least in many cases.
principle object of consciousness then, the narrator, is formed in the performer's mind, constituted in part by the language of the text, and in another part by the lived experience of the performer. The performer in this case would concentrate on the voice of the narrator, allowing that voice and all that it suggests of that physical narrator, to become the figure in the field of his or her immediate experience. Conversely, other elements of the text, such as typography, authorial intention, formal qualities, would remain in the performer's consciousness but would form the background against which the performer constitutes the figure of the narrator.

What we have done in such an act of intentionality is to bracket, or suspend for the moment, all critical perspectives other than dramatism, in order to fully experience the text as the utterance (the linguistic behavior) of a narrator. This step allows our intuition of the essential qualities of Faulkner's story. We are now interested in the essential qualities of this type of literary experience, what we know of the narrator from the text, and what we attribute (often by intuition) about that narrator as we attempt to fully constitute him in our mind. Our experience of the story-teller as a story-teller is the phenomenon to be described.

Accepting that phenomena are essences and intuited, that they have necessary elements which we can recognize, leads us to a self-reflexive, essential (eidetic) description of the phenomena of literary response. This description is derived by performing an operation called the phenomenological reduction (or epokhe). The crucial step in this method is "bracketing" or the "suspension of existence."

Phenomena, says Husserl, can only be described when we have suspended our belief in the existence of objects. To describe our experience of a table, for
example, we might suspend all previous experience of tables and begin our description of the object naively. In such a way its essential features would be revealed to us without any experiential interference. In a sense, performers of literature bracket or suspend the physical text, the book, as an entity when they perform that text from memory. Perhaps such an act is easier when performing prose than when performing poetry; in the former case the physical image of the words on the page is less important; in the case of poetry however, the physical image of the text is more essential to the ontology of the work of literature and is therefore much harder to bracket. To use a more specific example, we would probably be unlikely to look at a page of Thomas Wolf's Look Homeward Angel and call it poetry. We have been trained to call paragraphs prose. However, if we had never read the book, and heard a descriptive passage performed well, we might easily experience its sounds, rhythms, and perceived "shape" for poetry. Reflecting on such an experience might provide us with many clues as to what we intuit the essential qualities of "poetry" to be.

We do not doubt the existence of things when we bracket, we simply put all presuppositions about existence "out of action" so that they do not enter into our eidetic description of the object of our intention.

"Bracketing" in this sense means that I become aware of the possibility that something which I believed to exist does not exist as I thought it did, that a statement which I considered true is not, or that some act which I considered right when I did it might have been wrong. Once I have become aware of that possibility, I am ready to reflect.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\)Schmitt, p. 143.
Certainly, no performer completely forgets the sense of the complete work of literature when he or she performs it. However, while the performer is embodying the narrative voice, the "act of telling," he must, of necessity, concentrate to an extreme degree on the unfolding words of the text, as they issue from his mouth. The constantly shifting present moment of the "telling" is the focus of the performing consciousness while it performs the text. The objectivist perspective to the literature is therefore not possible in the unfolding embodiment of the text. It is this sense of the work as a complete whole, then, that the performer "brackets" or suspends when he performs. In rehearsal, the performer can stop and ask himself or herself about the causes about the linguistic behavior of the narrator he or she is embodying. This is where the reflection occurs in the act of pre-formance.

This reflection is the next step in the phenomenological method. We reflect about the essence of an object, and in bracketing the presuppositions of the world-as-we-know-it (Husserl's term is "natural standpoint"), we are able to discover those features without which the object would cease to be what it is. Husserl describes this reflection as an "attempt to doubt." The cognitive activity involved in attempting to doubt he called "free fancy" or "free variation," a kind of "counter-example" in which we describe an example and then transform the description by adding or deleting one of the predicates contained in the description. With each addition or deletion we ask whether the amended description can still be said to describe an example of the same kind of object as that which the example originally described was said to exemplify.\(^\text{12}\)

Bracketing has a more specific and relevant application to the performance method I hope to describe in the fourth chapter of this study. If we posit a transactional flow of communication between text and reader, or, more specifically between narrator and reader, we are arguing that the performer's encounter with a narrator is governed by the same attributional behavior as encounters between flesh-and-blood beings. If we concentrate on the narrator and attend to that narrator as the sole source of the discourse, then we are in effect bracketing the implied author (along with formal qualities, typography, and other conventions of writing). In order to embody the narrator of "A Rose for Emily," it is not required that we know anything about Faulkner himself. Faulkner's life and other works, particularly the intertextual history of Yoknapatawpha, might illuminate and inform a performance, but they would be likely to remain on the periphery of the performer's (or audience's) experience of the narrator. When I rehearse a narrator's voice I am playing out a dialogue between myself and the narrator. In the rarefied solitude of solo rehearsals, Faulkner ceases to exist as I imaginatively enter the narrator's consciousness and his world. This is, at least, one possibility of the performance.

The third step in the phenomenological reduction is the free variation of ideas. Once the bracketing step of the reduction has been performed, free fancy takes over. Husserl's concept of free fancy is simply the procedure of positing counter-examples to the phenomenon under inquiry. It is, incidentally, by this Nietzschean reversal in subject and predicate that the post-structuralist critic seeks to deconstruct the language of texts, offering various different readings by the sheer force of logical, free, cognitive variation. A similar deconstruction occurs in the current trend of "reader-response" criticism, in which the a priori
privilege of the text is suspended in order to fully concentrate on readers' experiences of that text. The phenomenological suspension of the natural standpoint leaves us with a world-out-there that can only be described as "correlates of consciousness," as something not separate from, but presented to consciousness. The cognitive act of bracketing forces us to direct our attention to the acts of consciousness (cogitationes) which become the experience of consciousness involving objects (in the present case, a narrator). We are now only interested in this object as an intentional act of consciousness.

After determining the essential qualities of a phenomena, and suspending the world as we know it in order to allow for the free variation of ideas, we must focus on the narrator's behavior. In phenomenological terms we must attend to the narrator's linguistic behavior. The fourth and final phenomenological requirement for a phenomenon is intentionality. Pure reflective consciousness (cogito) means that "which is capable of intentional action." According to Husserl, we are always conscious of something. The performer in the process of building the performance is conscious of the details of the text (the images, sounds, allusions, forms, etc.). Consider for a moment the individual performer who prepares a public reading from Hamlet. The performer chooses the second scene of the play, in which Hamlet listens to Claudius' address to the court at Elsinore. The performer is conscious of the fact that Hamlet is conscious of his uncle's insincerity in the scene. During the actual performance, the performer must "live through" or embody Hamlet's intentional act at this particular moment in the drama.

Intentionality can be clarified by reflecting on Richard Schmitt's comments on the intentional act in terms of our specific subject. Consider the
actor or reader who is trying to determine the object of Hamlet's intentional focus when he first enters his uncle's presence in the aforementioned scene. Is he "self-conscious?" Is his mother the focus of his attention or is it Claudius or Ophelia perhaps? What is the figure and what constitutes the background or context of his lived experience at this moment? In this case there are many intentional choices that can be made in the performer's encounter with the character, many of which would involve the embodiment of Hamlet's attributitional behavior. In fact, we can read Schmitt's theoretical description of the intentional act in light of these different "pre-formative" choices:

Of some performances I can say: This time I did it right; last time I did it badly. Therefore, I possess criteria for proper performance. If asked what these criteria are, I may not be able to put them into words, but I know them in the sense that I use them and, in many cases, I can, upon reflection, state what they are. I have then, by means of reflection, produced knowledge that _________ corresponding to the knowledge how ________ which I possessed all along. This is what happens when I vary an example freely in imagination: I am always able to discriminate between the thing that I would recognize as a certain object and the thing that I would either take as a different kind of object or about which I would not know what to say. But only upon reflection can I verbalize the criteria implicit in such a recognition by stating the essential features of any given kind of object.\(^{13}\)

This description of phenomenological intentionality reads very much like an ideal description of what the performer does when she or he tries out different interpretations and performance choices during the rehearsal period.

Contrary to popular belief, Husserl did not think that a person is always conscious of some thing, but that a **focal object** is always present to consciousness. The mental act of constituting this focal object is what Husserl refers to as intentionality. A person is conscious of a peripheral "ground" as

\(^{13}\) Schmitt, p. 142.
well, or what Husserl called a "co-present margin." This margin can be
transcendent such as the performer's awareness of his own clenched hand as he
performs his opening scene as Hamlet or, it may be immanent, as in the
performer's marginal awareness of Hamlet's memory of his father when he first
addresses Claudius. Put simply, Husserl is saying that we are always conscious
of a ground as well as a figure, of the whole field of consciousness as well as the
intentional focus, just as this young prince in scene two must be aware of
Elisnore as well as of Ophelia, of God as well as of Gertrude.

Literature as Phenomenon

As we read a text, as it unfolds in our consciousness, we attend to it, word
by word, image by image, device by device, one experiential moment at a time.
As we prepare a text for performance, we attend to different nuances in each
critical re-reading of the text. Let us illustrate this by describing the
imaginative creation of a performance of a specific text, say Hamlet. The
essential features of the text, those features that define and characterize it, are
intuited by the performer who can bracket any presuppositions about himself and
in doing so can "experience" the text through the use of choices derived from
free fancy. Intentionality is the key to the essential description of such a
method. The reader is "intending" the text as a blueprint of choices; but, in an
experiential sense, the text is intending the reader as well. They enter into a
unique transactional relationship in which they constitute each other. They do
this by way of mutual attributions, as I will show later. The reader seeks to
discover the essential features of the text in order to communicate them to an
audience; the "gaze" of the reader, to use a Husserlian image, is returned by the
text which is constituted, not as a thing-in-itself, but as the reader's intentional experience of it.

In phenomenological terms, what we intend is present to us. The text is a presence to the reader, and presence is the beginning of clarity. David Michael Levin has stated succinctly the relation of the phenomenological presence of text to its apprehended clarity: as is often the case with the performer, Levin sees the presence of the text as visceral and pre-reflective.

Presence is not discursive; it is an unspeakable lucidity, a disclosing so close to the truth that the mediation of language, of concepts, could only be an intervention, hiding the truth forever. Obviously then, presence cannot be represented; nor can it represent, unless what it represents is mere absence. Presence is therefore an event; or, more specifically, it is a performance: for it in-stances and reveals an essence, being so close to the essence of what it instances that it suffices, and is there instead.¹⁴

In all fairness it must be pointed out that Levin is here discussing the embodied presence of the theatrical performance of avant garde dance, but his description of presence applied to a textual presence as well. Only the text can fully present itself; the totality of any text cannot be captured by a performance (as any actor of Hamlet can appreciate). But an individual instance of an encounter with the text of Hamlet does indeed possess essential features unique to that performer with that text at that particular moment. By bracketing the world, in this case critical presuppositions about Hamlet, performing techniques, and so forth, the performer can "attend to" or reflect on his or her experiential relationship to the text through free fancy. This method of deriving a

performance strategy contains all the necessary features of a phenomenon and of the creative, individualized act of forming a performance. A performer's reflection on his relationship to the character he will embody involves attribution in a fundamental way.

Roman Ingarden has developed a detailed and interesting perspective of the structure of a pre-formative encounter with a text. Fictional objects, he maintains, possess a unique kind of ontological incompleteness. Of course, all objects, even concrete ones, cannot be considered ontologically or epistemologically complete.\textsuperscript{15} Husserl, Heidegger and others constantly remind us that the back of the object of our gaze, that is, what is behind what we see, is cognitively assumed rather than constituted in sensual reality. But, as Ingarden says, the text contains "spots of indeterminacy"\textsuperscript{16} due to the nature of the limitations of literary form. The author carefully selects and arranges images, plot elements, time sequences, etc. The reader fills in (or simply accepts) these gaps according to his or her experiential intention. Pre-formance of a text then, is a phenomenon involving an intuiting of textual essences in conjunction with the conscious reflection on the discrete details (such as events, characters, objects) of the text as the intended objects of that reflection.

The Phenomenology of Attribution

My second claim is that attribution, or more specifically the "symmetry" model of Theodore Newcomb, describes an essential element in the experience of


\textsuperscript{16}Smith, p. 96.
a text. Given Levin's description of the text itself as a "performance" and Ingarden's description of its "ontological incompleteness," we might assume that a given reader fills in those gaps of indeterminacy and thereby performs an act which is intentional and dialogically related to the act of telling that is represented by the words on the page.

Another way of describing this phenomenon is to see the encounter with the text as a series of effects. Effects are perceived to be related to causes in the human mind; and, the causes given to explain critical choices in a performance are never simply assumed; rather, they are correctly or incorrectly attributed by the reader or the audience member. These attributional choices may involve intrinsic matters ("Why does Hamlet insult Ophelia?") or extrinsic matters ("Why don't I, as performer, like Laertes' behavior at his sister's funeral?"). On a more mundane level, many an audience member has attributed a staged fall to the accidental clumsiness of an actor instead of to the craft of a good fight director. Attribution theory seeks to define the structure of human attributional behaviors such as those involved in critical or performance responses.

Newcomb's symmetry model is an attempt at a diagram of an intersubjective human experience. Its focus on the structure of the experiential phenomenon of social encounters renders it legitimately phenomenological. There are only three essential elements in the model: a person (P), and other (O), and an object (X). The model can function without the other (O), in which case it is a simple schematic of the Husserlian paradigm with P focusing intentionally on the object (X) and X returning the gaze of P. The double arrows between P and X connect the object experientially to P, so that they cannot
exist independently of each other and retain their "is-ness." X is X only as it is presented to P's consciousness.\footnote{Newcomb actually labels his dyad A and B rather than P and O as his predecessor Fritz Heider labelled them. For our purpose the latter designation will be retained in order to emphasize the experience over the theory.}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (X) at (0,0) {X};
  \node (P) at (-2,0) {P};
  \draw[->] (P) -- (X);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The model is complicated yet made more relevant and generalizable by the addition of another person (O) to the experience. The model now diagrams an interpersonal encounter, a particular type of phenomenon in which two people (or one person and a text) "discuss" or encounter some other object. This object can be either transcendental or immanent. For example, two critics discussing the performance they are watching are mutually encountering a transcendental object; they can both see and hear the object of their discussion. On the other hand, an actor who "questions" the text for clues to Hamlet's "problem" is attending to an immanent object—Hamlet's disposition. That is, the character Hamlet exists only in the performer's imagination as it is mediated by the physical text, the words on the page.

The situation in which a performer reads a poem to an audience is another excellent example of the interpersonal encounter involving an immanent object. The performer encounters the audience and the mutual intentional subject of that encounter might be, for example, the textual images of Hamlet's father's funeral. In the theatrical situation, a performer (P) engages an audience (O)
concerning a text (X). In these circumstances, the text becomes an immanent object, or rather a series of immanent objects, which are subject to the valid or invalid attributions of performer and/or audience. The P and the O must intuit the essence of X as they imaginatively focus their attention on it. An eidetic description of the pre-formative act or the performative act must privilege the terms, text, performer, and audience.

Because the symmetry model is phenomenological, it allows us to probe the "interpersonal" experience of performing. It requires that we focus on the arrows that represent the structure of the "lived" encounter—the encounter of the actor with the character of Hamlet, or the encounter of a performer with the narrator of a short story.

Newcomb's symmetry theory asserts that "we attempt to influence one another to bring about symmetry (balance or equilibrium)." Newcomb argues that the attempts to influence another person are a function of the attraction one person has for another. Newcomb is in no way referring to physical attraction only here, but the feeling of psychological comfort and consubstantiation (or lack of these qualities) that the perceiver experiences in regard to the other consciousness with whom he or she is engaged. If we fail to achieve symmetry through communication with another person about an object important to both of us we may then change our attitude toward either the other person or the object in question in order to establish symmetry.

18Littlejohn, p. 203.
performer who rehearses Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily" seeks to achieve a feeling of symmetry if not only between himself and the narrator, but also between the narrator and the objects and events of the narration (for example, Miss Emily's house). The performer must be able to embody these relationships for an audience. To accomplish this, the performer completes the symmetry model by "coming to an understanding" of his own relation to objects immanently present in the text. To realize the narrator's ambivalent feelings towards Miss Emily's house, the performer must go beyond empathy. Not only must the narrator's relation to the house be embodied, but it must be balanced by the relationship between the listener/performer and that very house. How the performer feels about the narrator (or the implied author), and how that narrator feels about the house, will determine how the performer feels about the house.

According to most theories of attribution, a person perceives and collates information about an other's behaviour from three sources: consistency information ("How often has the actor done this in the past?" or "What is the proper 'behavior' of a sonnet?"); distinctiveness information ("How often has the actor or the text done this sort of thing in different circumstances?" or "Does the text remain the same when assuming different modes of given-ness such as individual versus group performance?"); and consensus information ("How many other people or texts have done that sort of thing in those sorts of circumstances?"). All of these three bear on one question: "Did the behavior covary equally with the actor?" 20 Stated phenomenologically, people use the

three aforementioned attribution patterns to direct their intentions of other people or objects.

**Attribution as Symbolic Action**

My third claim is proposed primarily to provide support for my first two and to remind us that literature is primarily a linguistic construct. I will appropriate the theoretical presuppositions of symbolic interactionism to reveal that movement's phenomenological analysis of intentionality. As stated earlier, symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective that sees interpersonal encounters as a humanizing social process in which people become active in shaping their own behavior through the medium of symbols and their meanings.  

Kenneth Burke's particular form of symbolic interaction is called "dramatism" because it is based on a theatrical metaphor. People, says Burke, perform for each other in everyday communication. He sees humans alone as possessing what he calls "action" and which he differentiates from animalistic "motion." "Action consists of purposeful, voluntary behaviors of individuals. Dramatism is the study of action in this sense. Burke believes that a dramatistic (teleological) view of people is needed in all of the human disciplines, for human behavior cannot possibly be understood without it."  

Burke's theory contains several key parallels with attribution theory and phenomenology. Burke sees human communication as "a direct function of . . . consubstantiality," or shared meaning of signs and symbols. The attempt to achieve consubstantiality is similar to Newcomb's "strain toward  

---

21 Littlejohn, p. 45.
22 Littlejohn, p. 56.
23 Littlejohn, p. 56.
symmetry" and the attributional behaviors we employ to reach this state of balance (i.e. consistency, consensus, and distinctiveness) have been shown to be analogous to phenomenological intentionality. Burke uses a "pentad" to analyze communication. It consists of five elements: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. The essential structure of the act of encountering a text is our subject of inquiry. The scene of this encounter, whether immanent or transcendent, whether pre-formance or performance, is analogous to the phenomenological concept of the horizon or situatedness. Once again we are reminded that context is crucial in encounters. Burke's third component, the agent, is the P of our attribution model, the consciousness that engages the text. Burke uses the term agency to designate the means by which the agent carries out the act. In the pre-formative act, the agency is no less than the transcendental ego as it makes reflective critical choices based on the information presented to it by the text. In an actual performance, the agent also would include the physical body of the actor or performer as it mediates between text and audience. Burke's fifth and final element is the reason for the act itself, the purpose, or the goal of the communication. An actor preparing the role of Hamlet intends it as a full performative embodiment of textual material and the audience watching such a performance often intends it in the same way. Misattribution can occur when spectators intend the textual Hamlet as heroic and are present with an actor's anti-heroic intention of the same text.

Burke's theory of dramatism is, therefore, a context-oriented theory of communication that privileges the shared system of language. These qualities allow us to view symbolic interactionism as another phenomenological
perspective on the performance of literature. Richard Schmitt, in defining the "intentional act" of consciousness makes obvious some of the parallels:

The intentional act, having four elements, is a tetradic relation. So, for instance is the relation described in the sentence "I placed the book on the table." Here also there are four elements: the subject or agent (myself), my action (placing, what I place (the book), and the table on which I place it.  

Likewise when I, as the performer of Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily," attend to the narrator of that story as a communication other, I listen (act) to the language (agency) of the narrator (agent). In another sense, the narrator is performing the principle act (the act of "telling"). In the transactional flow between narrator and performer, it may often be difficult to tell whether the listening performer or the speaking narrator is the principal actor at a given moment. Here we will concentrate on the narrator as the primary agent, for it is the act of telling that the performer must eventually embody and "live through" in performance.

Some purpose can usually be attributed to this narrator—a reason why he is telling the story in a particular way. Also, the telling usually takes place in some more or less highly defined context or environment (the scene, in Burkean terms). If the scene is not highly defined, it is often helpful for the performer to imaginatively flesh out and specify the real or psychological context of the telling. In any case, the perspective of symbolic interactionism simply reminds us that we are looking at the encounter between a performer and the fictional

---

24 Schmitt, p. 144.
personae as a transactional dialogue, meaning that both parties in the encounter, in the above case a narrator and a performer, mutually influence each other as the communication progresses. The structure of this transaction will be shown to be essentially the same in structure as those social encounters described by Theodore Newcomb's symmetry model of social communication. And, the strain toward symmetry diagrammed by the model, motivates the attributional patterns through which we determine the motives or causes of the fictional speaker.

By modifying Newcomb's symmetry, that is, by replacing the flesh-and-blood other (O) with a fictional speaker and adding to the model the figure/ground concept of intentional consciousness, we can render the model phenomenological and specific to the pre-formative experience of a text. This can be done with the simple addition of the phenomenological "ground," context, or horizon to the existing model.

First, and perhaps most important, is the communicative context, or what Husserl might call the "co-present margin" of the performer; this would include any past or present experience or knowledge that consciously or even subconsciously affects the performer's perception of the text.
As stated above, this attributitional theory of the act of performance, will privilege the performer's constitution of the text as the voiced utterance of an other consciousness (O). Newcomb's model also includes the subject of the discourse or the subject of the "conversation" between the two parties in the communication. This subject may be a concrete object (a house, an other person) or it may be an idea or a concept (such as love, honor, the South). Of course, this element of the model changes from moment to moment as the text is performed or read. Further, the speaking voice of the text, whether it is constituted as the voice of a narrator, a character, or an implied author, also exists in a communicative context, a field of fictional co-present experience that influences the communication of, say, a narrator, with a performer.

The dynamic and intersubjective nature of the pre-formance of literature is illustrated in the model by the two-way arrows that will be shown to represent
the flow of attributions between performer and, in this case, a narrator. The arrows remind us that the performer's encounter with a literary text is a transactional process. It is dynamic, ongoing, and ever-changing. Both parties in the "dyad" mutually constitute each other, primarily by attributing causes for each other's behavior. If we view a performative encounter as a "dialogue" between a narrator, say, and a performer, both partners—the narrator as well as the performer—are intentionally focused on the specific events, images, and ideas in the text. When the narrator of "A Rose For Emily" describes the Grierson house, that narrator could be said to be intentionally focused on that house, as is the "listening" reader. This experience may well be heightened when the performer has advanced sufficiently in the building of his or her performance to put away the tangible script. After this point the individual constituents of the text, its ideas, images, language, characters, and so forth, are immanent objects in the performer's mind. Likewise, in the recital hall, both audience and performer attend to the text as the temporal flux of word, image, symbol, and gesture.

Certainly, the individual constituents of a text are never the whole experience of that text; rather, they are figures in an experiential ground. The performer is also aware of his or her audience, of the stage, the lights, and his or her own distracting thoughts or lapses of attention during the performance. The audience often has similar distractions. Bert O. States has written cleverly and insightfully about the phenomenon of the theatrical performance. He cites the phenomenological example of how the sight of dogs, children, or fire on state often forces the audience to lose its intentional directedness to the text by
suddenly bringing into focus the "theatrical convention." In such cases the
text is replaced in intentional consciousness by the "production."

The arrows in our first model indicate all the complicated and numerous
relations that exist between performer, text and immanent objects of that text.
What must be added to complete the experiential picture in the model is the co­
present margin, the horizon or ground of the intentional experience. When the
parties in the communicative transaction of a performance, that is the reader
and the audience, focus their consciousnesses on the text, the "other" recedes
into the co-present margin. An audience member, for example, may have
watched Sarah Burnhart give dramatic readings from Hamlet. The spectator,
having in a sense bracketed the natural standpoint in order to achieve the
"willing suspension of disbelief," attends to the words of the text as Hamlet's
words, not the actor's. Burnhart becomes part of the ground in which the figure
of the text functions. For this reason, the co-present margin is situated in the
model so as to place the performer and the "other" (the text) in respective co­
present margins. The immanent content of the text, the text as it is constituted
in the consciousness during the pre-formative and the performative act, is the
aesthetic goal of the intentional gaze of each consciousness involved, the
performer's and the other's. Only when this intentionality remains on the
immanent text can the world of performance technique, theatricality, authorial
intention, and the like stay firmly within the brackets allowing the text to
present itself to be appropriated by performers and audience members.

25 Bert O. States, "The Dog on Stage: Theatre as Phenomena," New
It has been demonstrated that human beings attribute causes to the behavior of others. It has been suggested that such attributional behavior is a phenomenon manifested in the performer's response to a text or the audience's response to a performed text. The perspectives of phenomenology and symbolic interaction have been presented as viable descriptions of the structure of pre-formative and performative events. In these two aesthetic "situations" the text is mediated by human experience, particularly the experience of attribution in determining the causes of a text's "behavior." The text, as it is phenomenologically presented to the intentional consciousness, assumes the privileged position which enables it to become the subject of reflection, a reflection that justifies the original purpose of most performances: the mutual sharing and enrichment of literary encounters thorough human experience.

**Directions for this Study**

The following chapters will attempt a phenomenological description of how attribution functions in the performance of literature, concentrating on "pre-formance" encounters with a text. The second chapter will provide a more detailed analysis of attributional patterns described in current literature. Chapter three will explore the concept of the text-as-an-other, and introduce some helpful theories of M. M. Bakhtin and Martin Heidegger. Chapter four will place Newcomb's symmetry model into a phenomenological context, and produce a descriptive model of the "pre-formative" encounter with a literary work. A brief concluding chapter will review the new attribution-based theory and will adapt the model to the situation of the public performance of a text. It is the goal of this study to produce a model that will illuminate the experience of
performance, and also to suggest some rehearsal methods which will aid performers in fuller, richer interpersonal experiences with the narrators they meet in literature.
Chapter Two
THE FUNCTION OF ATTRIBUTION IN THE PERFORMER'S
EXPERIENCE OF A NARRATOR

An unemployed man is turned down for a prospective job. He comforts himself with the knowledge that the employer "must have been trying to fill a quota of women." A high school student with high math scores on standardized aptitude tests is failing algebra. When questioned by her guidance counselor about a possible explanation, her reply is that she "has just never been able to do math." The democrat-on-the-street decides that he "just doesn't like Republicans" and terminates his weekly racquetball game with a Republican friend. A performer preparing a public reading of William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily" decides that the story's narrator is sexist.

All of these individuals are exhibiting an extremely common psychological behavior called attribution. Attribution theories are concerned with how human beings arrive at determinations of the causes of everyday events, particularly the causes of the behavior of others. A person's attribution of cause may be in response to an event ("Why didn't I do well on that test?"), to an object ("Why can't I learn about cars?"), to the perception of some other person ("Why is she hiding the fact that she doesn't like me?"), or even to one's self-perception ("I just don't get along well with children").

Any one of these beliefs about causation is an example of one of the many varieties of attribution. In the last twenty years, research and inquiry concerning attribution has become increasingly important to such varied disciplines as psychology, sociology, communication, education, and even
philosophy. Kelley and Michela report that there have been approximately 900 pieces of work in attribution theory since its official beginning in 1958. Another recent text asserts that, "Based upon the sheer volume of empirical research, the attribution theory perspective can be regarded as the primary paradigm in contemporary social psychology." Most attribution studies concern either intrapersonal or interpersonal communication. Not surprisingly, attribution theory incorporates several important interpersonal theories into its field of inquiry, particularly the theories of cognitive dissonance, balance and congruence.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a brief history of the development of attribution theory in order to describe the concept of psychological imbalance (assymetry) which is central to this study. This short review of attribution literature will provide the basis for the summary list of attribution patterns that conclude the chapter. This list is prefatory to chapter three, which will describe how these attribution patterns work in the dyadic encounter between a performer and the narrator of a given text, William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily." At the end of this chapter, a basic model of attribution (Newcomb's Symmetry Model) will be proposed as the core of a model that will describe how attribution functions in the engagement between narrators and performers.

---


**Basic Assumptions of Attribution Theory**

Stephen Littlejohn reports that attribution theory "uses a phenomenological view of interpersonal perception, investigating the processes by which people make inferences about themselves and others."³ Unlike other psychological theories of communication, attribution theory assumes an experiential rather than an empirical world view. That is, its subject is experience rather than objective phenomena. At the risk of over-simplification, this world view may be described as subjective (as opposed to empirical) or inductive (as opposed to deductive). The attribution theorist assumes that "part of knowledge is a priori; that reality results from human interpretation. Reality is in flux and exists only in context. Most knowledge is implicit or tacit. Reality is in personal experience."⁴ The world view of such theorists then, sees human knowledge as a construct of the individual which results from the "symbolic interaction" between persons or, more generally, from "transactions between the knower and the known."⁵ It is crucial to the understanding of the attribution process to keep in mind this experiential view of the subject because it accounts not only for the broad range of attribution studies, but also for the difficulty researchers have had in measuring and quantifying results of the more empirically-styled experiments.

Bernard Weiner, one of the more empirical researchers, defines another

---


⁴Littlejohn, p. 264.

⁵Littlejohn, p. 264.
basic assumption of attribution. Weiner's field of inquiry, like that of the actor or performer, is human motivation, and in his description of attribution he echoes other theorists in aligning the mental process of attribution closely with logic:

A central assumption of attribution theory, which sets it apart from pleasure pain theories of motivation, is that the search for understanding is the (or a) basic "spring of action." This does not imply that human beings are not pleasure-seekers, or that they never bias information in the pursuit of hedonistic goals. Rather, information seeking and veridical processing are believed to be normative, may be manifested in spite of a conflicting pleasure principle, and, at the least, comprehension stands with hedonism among the primary sources of motivation.6

Weiner is referring to dyadic encounters between human beings here, but his description can also be applied to the experience a reader has with the narrator of a novel, short story, or poem. This observation is particularly true when the reader is planning to give a performance of the text. In such cases, the reader experiences the narrator many times during rehearsals and must consciously reflect on that narrator's verbal behavior if the performer is to successfully embody, or become, the narrator in performance.

When I seek a full understanding of a prose text, one that I wish to perform for an audience, I might do well to begin dramatistically. I might ask myself who this narrator is. I must also make inferences about who the narrator is addressing and about the situation or context in which the utterance occurs. Weiner implies strongly that logical cognitive processes have a great deal to do

with the attributions we make about an other's behavior. This "logic" is present even if the other's behavior causes us discomfort, sadness, pain, outrage, or any other emotion that is not pleasurable in the simplest sense of that word.

William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, is narrated in part by Benjy Compson, a retarded man in his thirties. As a performer, I experience Benjy primarily on a verbal level, since I must read rather than hear his discourse. His behavior may exasperate or shock me; but if I am going to fully know Benjy's experience, I must infer motives for his actions. In doing so, I will be using the quasi-logical process called attribution.

Other than the fact that attribution is experiential, phenomenological and closely related to logical cognition, there are widely differing perspectives on the attribution process which are perhaps most apparent in the descriptions of models of types of attribution. These models have evolved in the direction of increasing complexity, but have revealed a surprisingly small number of attributional "patterns." A brief chronological overview of the development of these models reveals the richness and diversity of this generic and comprehensive "mother-theory." Such a history will also reveal the degree to which intrapersonal experience depends on deep feelings of "balance," "congruence," or "symmetry" within the perceiver. Finally, this summary will introduce the seminal work of Fritz Heider and Theodore Newcomb, which is crucial to my proposed model.

A Very Brief History of Attribution Theory

The study of the causes of human behavior is at least as old as recorded history; Tragedy (arguably the oldest form of literary art) seeks to justify (i.e. to discover the causes of) "the ways of God to man." However, the contemporary
investigation into the process of attribution can be said to have had its genesis in the balance theories of Fritz Heider. In 1958, Heider, an early German Gestalt psychologist who emigrated to America in 1931, published his major statement on what was to become a primary theory of attribution. Heider's proposition was that "a major, if not the major job of the perceiver in understanding the world, social as well as physical, was to find the underlying causes of the things that he or she saw happening within it . . . ." Heider's work has channeled all subsequent research into two primary attribution patterns. What Heider did was to break down ordinary explanations into two sorts—personal and environmental causes. In other words, Heider believed that persons find the causes of things to be the product of either external environmental forces or internal behaviors of individuals. This breakdown has been a common element in most of the recent work in attribution.

Heider arrived at his theory in an interesting way. In his very first paper on attribution, published with Marianne Simmel in 1944, he describes an experiment in which deaf children were shown a film in which several abstract geometric figures (a circle and two triangles) moved about randomly. When questioned about their reactions to the film, nearly all of the children perceived the movement "in terms of some kind of give and take between persons." Heider reports that the subjects found it all but impossible to discuss the film without anthropomorphic descriptions of the interaction of the geometric shapes. This

---


study made Heider realize "the great importance that attribution places in person perception, attribution understood here as the connection between a perceived change (Geschehen) and a person conceived of as causing the change by some action."  

There is an abundance of more recent studies which similarly suggest our human tendency towards anthropomorphism and attributions of cause. Experiments such as those of Michotte reinforce the notion that our perceptions of real or fictional others, are quite similar.

The Belgian psychologist Michotte (1963) reports a number of simple experiments which show that people immediately perceive causality. A small object, A, glides along and touches a stationary object, B. A stops and B immediately begins moving in the direction A would have taken. In this situation subjects say that A pushed B or caused B to move. If, on the other hand, the movement of B is delayed for a brief time (more than 0.2 seconds) after A strikes it, the perception of causality is destroyed. From this small demonstration we can at least say that subjects have a bias toward using causal language; moreover, there is every evidence that the perception of causality in this situation is direct and immediate.

If humans perceive geometric objects anthropomorphically and attribute causes to the "behavior" of these objects, likewise we may do the same thing when we encounter Faulkner's Benjy, Melville's Ishmael, or even Jane Austen, as she narrates her novels. Phenomenological descriptions of our experiences of real or fictional others can help us to focus on the mental processes which control our perceptions. If I wish to embody my perception of Ishmael, I must be

---

9 Heider, p. 12.
able to describe it, and my description is likely to include what I perceive are causes.

Attribution theory can reveal to me the structure of that perception, allowing me to study my own response to Ishmael. If I can discover why I perceive his behavior in a certain way, I can clear my mind of presuppositions, prejudices, and expectations, and perhaps get closer to the inner life of this character by attributing motivations for his symbolic actions. Only then can I honestly embody him in performance. Heider's work, since it is essentially intrapersonal, can aid the performer in categorizing his or her attributions concerning a narrator's behavior.

Heider's second paper, also published in 1944, is based on Wertheimer's famous laws of unit-formation which state that "parts of a visual field which are close together or are similar to each other will be seen as belonging together, as forming one unit." Heider extends these factors to influence any phenomenal causation. For example, an aesthetic judgment of high artistic value will carry more weight if given by someone of high prestige because that "prestige" will place the critic in closer proximity to the concept "art" or "great art" than one would perceive an unknown critic. Similarly, in Browning's poem "My Last Duchess," the narrator, the Duke of Ferrara, is placed in close proximity to his art collection. But it is this very closeness that causes me to perceive him as distanced from human and personal considerations. I feel a psychological imbalance or lack of moral similarity between myself and the Duke. The Duke's closeness and affinity to his wife's portrait are causes of my attribution of

\[1\] Heider, P. 12-13.
coldness and aestheticism to his character. On a more literal level, a man running down a street one block from a bank that has just been robbed could easily be perceived as a suspect simply because of the physical proximity between object (bank) and person. Heider's formula for this important law of attribution is written thus:

\[ \text{If } a \sim p, \text{ there is a tendency to attribute } a \text{ to } p. \]
\[ (a=\text{act}, \ p=\text{person}, \ \sim = "\text{is related to}" ). \]

Heider's term "balance" then, deals with the fundamental human trait of attempting to make order out of the chaos of sensual phenomena. This attempt often takes the form of attributing similarity to objects because they are close in proximity, or attributing close proximity to objects because they are similar. All human stereotypes are based on this principle. Attitudes, feelings and emotions are not considered in Heider's balance model, only "interactions between causal units and other units. For instance, how may the appearance of a causal unit be induced by similarity or how may a belief in a causal unit induce phenomenal similarity?"\(^1\) A freshman who believes that a major interest in the fine arts induces snobbery, may actually perceive the phenomenon of snobbery in graduate students of the music department. The fact that Browning's Duke is so much prouder of the painting of his wife, than he was of the lady herself, causes me to attribute coldness and aestheticism to his character. Describing reasons for the behavior of others makes it possible for me to understand them better. I am lead to a feeling of psychological balance when I can say "I know why he did

\(^{12}\)Heider, p. 13.

\(^{13}\)Heider, p. 16.
that and I can cite the behavior that lets me know it."

As Heider himself defines it, "balance deals with relations of relations; and dyadic arrangements in which the relations of the two items are all positive or all negative will be harmonious,"\(^{14}\) and seem to have order. When I see the Duke's relation to the portrait and to his wife as negative, I feel that I understand his essential character and therefore feel comfortable with my attributions because I understand their causes.

**Attribution and Person Perception**

In 1965 Jones and Davis developed a more specific model based on Heider's balance theory. Their model was restricted to human behavior and concerned itself with "how people decided that what a person did was due to some long lasting trait the person possessed."\(^{15}\) The major proposition of the model, called the Theory of Correspondence Inference, is that the more a perceiver could discount external causes, the more he or she could explain another's behavior by internal or dispositional causes. Here again is the distinction between the two basic types of attributions, external/environmental and internal/dispositional. The former is how I come to understand situations. The latter is how I come to know characters.

The correspondence model is based on two simple formulas. The first deals with the number of unique features of a behavior, which Jones and Davis refer to as non-common effects. The perceiver first calculates the range of effects likely to be produced by the other's action, then reckons the effects of

\(^{14}\) Heider, p. 18.

\(^{15}\) Antaki, p. 7.
whatever actions he or she had decided against. If there is little or no overlapping in the two sets of effects, those actually produced and those which were consciously decided against by the other, then the perceiver cannot be accurate in deciding "which of the effects of the chosen action had been specially significant in making the (other's) mind up." In other words, the less unique the effects of a person's actions are, the less likely is an observer able to decide on the motivation for that action. In the Browning poem, the Duke insists that only he can draw the curtain revealing the portrait of his last duchess. This action is distinct enough to allow me to attribute a disposition for "ownership" and "privilege" to his character. The Duke's most reasonable alternative would be to allow a servant to draw the curtain, but he has consciously decided against this action. His insistence about reserving this particular task for himself produces an effect of submission on the part of the emissary who is the listener to the Duke's discourse. It is the uniqueness (i.e. the degree) of this effect of submissiveness that allows me to attribute dispositional qualities to the Duke.

The second formula in the Jones and Davis model concerns desirability: How socially desirable is the unique (or non-common) effect of a particular action? For many years in this country, "pornographic" literature was defined as literature that was consciously designed to have one (and only one) unique effect—to arouse sexual desire in the reader. This effect was socially undesirable. Many writers of the realistic period (such as Ibsen, Gorky, or Zola) dealt with socially undesirable subject matter such as venereal disease and prostitution. These writers might have chosen to explicitly describe physical

\[16\text{Antaki, p. 7.}\]
symptoms of syphilus or the details of the sexual act. According to the Jones and Davis Model, the fact that these writers did not choose to be explicit about these matters, is not likely to be due to some particular disposition on their part to avoid such description, but rather to the external constraints placed on them by social desirability. In short, "people use information about a person's choices and their consequences to arrive at a decision about his or her personal dispositions."17 These inferences are rationally connected either to dispositions of the person, or to environmental and social forces beyond the person's control.

Both Heider and Jones and Davis assume that perceivers make logical (if not always correct) inferences based on received information. But it was H. H. Kelley who, in 1967, devised a model that combined Heider's internal and external bases for attributions under the principles of logical mental analysis. Kelley's work analyzed a particular type of communication situation. Whereas Jones and Davis had dealt with instances in which the perceiver could discover information about only one behavior of the other, Kelley extended his model to include those cases in which the perceiver knew something about the history of the other person's previous behaviors. This is often true of our experience of literary narrators. Even in so short a poem as "My Last Duchess," I infer that the second wife's fate may be similar to that of the first wife because I have already attributed certain stable dispositions to the Duke. As I read a novel, I build up in my memory a repertoire of narrative behaviors and use them to infer future behaviors. For example, I have grown accustomed to Jane Austen's tongue being in her cheek when she makes unqualified pronouncements. I know

17Antaki, p. 11.
that it will be profitable to read Austen's novel *Emma*, even though I am familiar with a letter of hers describing the heroine as a character "no one but myself will much like." Irony is a consistent behavior of Austen's narrators and of Austen herself. Anyone who has read much Austen knows to take the first sentence of, say, *Pride and Prejudice* with a grain of salt.

Kelley states that the perceiver collates information about behavior from three sources: consistency information (how often has the actor done this in the past?), distinctiveness information (how often has the actor done this in different circumstances?) and consensus information (How many other people have done that sort of thing in those sorts of circumstances?). All these three bear on one question: Did the behavior covary equally (that is, did it vary isomorphically) with the actor? In other words, Kelley is stating that in searching for the causes of other people's behaviors, a person tends to look (either consciously or unconsciously) "for the causal candidate which is most closely associated historically with the event being explained."

Thus far I have concentrated on how attribution functions in the pre-formative act, when the actor is the textual narrator and the observer is the rehearsing performer. But attribution is also at work in the recital hall or theatre during the performance; the only difference is that the performer

---

18 Antaki, p. 8.

19 These three elements are combined into "high Consensus" and "high consistency" in Robert Raron and Don Byrne, *Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1977).

20 Antaki, p. 8.
becomes the "actor" of the model, and the audience takes the part of the observer.

**Actor's Versus Observer's Attributions: The Performance Situation**

The terms actor and observer can become confusing unless we remember the dual focus of this study. We are investigating the functions of attribution in (1) pre-formance and (2) the actual situation of public performance. In the former situation, the narrator is the actor, and the performer is the observer who listens and attributes causes to the narrator's behaviors. In the recital hall, the performer becomes the actor as she/he embodies the narrative voice. The audience members observe the performer's behaviors and attribute them, either to the environment of the performance, or to the "stable" disposition of the performer.

As a performance progresses, audiences usually shift the focus of their attention from the performer to the fictional personal embodied by that performer. That is, audiences privilege the fictional characters over the performer as performer. When this event occurs, the audience's attributions are to these fictional persona and are still of two basic types—dispositional or environmental. In the former case we attribute a character's actions to some stable disposition of his or her personality; in the latter case, we see the fictive world as the primary cause of a character's actions.

Of course, in the performance of non-dramatic texts, there is often little or no conscious differentiation in the minds of the audience, between the performer and the narrator. In the eyes of the audience, the two often coalesce into one actor: the narrator of the text. Nevertheless, when we attend to the performance as the actions of a fictional narrator, we do not forget the
performer, we simply de-privilege that performer, placing him or her in the peripheral consciousness while we attend to the fictional persona. Experientially, audience members often enter into a "dialogue" with the fictional narrator more than with the performer who embodies that narrator. It is true that we usually encounter the performer as performer first, and then gradually that performer recedes into the peripheral consciousness as we focus on the embodied narrator.

Consider, for example, the theatrical situation in which a well-known actor (a "star," if you will) steps out onto the stage in the role of Hamlet. It is not uncommon for an audience, upon recognizing the actor, to burst into applause, momentarily interrupting the dramatic illusion. The audience collectively experiences the actor as a performer, not as Hamlet. It may take several moments of concentration by both the performer and the audience for the "star" to recede and the audience to focus its attention on the character of Hamlet.

Attribution research suggests that the attributional patterns of actors differs from those of observers. This is true whether the actor is performing Hamlet or simply interacting symbolically through language in the course of a social conversation. In both interpersonal and fictional encounters, an actor is placed in relation to one or more observers. The current trend in attribution theory is to distinguish between the attributions of observers and those of actors. Using the terminology of attribution theory, we may define actor as anyone who is performing an action, whether in real life or in fiction. In this study, I am reserving the term "performer" to designate anyone who takes on and embodies fictional persona. The term "actor," while it includes the "performer" is simply a
broader generic designation that can also include social encounters.

There is one crucial difference in the attributional tendencies of actors as compared with those of observers. K. G. Shaver, in attempting to summarize research on the actor/observer distinction, concludes that "actors tend to attribute the causes of their behavior to stimuli inherent in the situation, while observers tend to attribute behavior to stable dispositions of the actor." In other words, during those relatively passive moments when we observe others, we tend to look for personality traits to explain their behavior. But when we are acting (in everyday life or on a stage), we tend to see the social or physical environment as the primary cause of our behavior.

When performers embody the narrative voice in a work of prose fiction, they often focus their creative consciousnesses on the epic situation, the "telling" of the story. In such instances the narrator becomes the actor. Performers would do well to become aware that it is a human tendency to attribute one's own actions to environment and to possibly forget the dispositional causes for their own actions. It is also true that narrators, like characters in a traditional play, are responding to a situational context rather than simply responding to their own internal dispositions. They tend to respond to the world rather than to themselves. Likewise, when I embody the narrator of "A Rose For Emily," I must place myself imaginatively in that narrator's experiential context and respond to that rather than to my own personal insecurities as a performer. I must forget my struggles with the narrator's southern accent, for example, and respond to the audience as if they were the

---

narratee implied in the story. Or, if I decide to place a narratee on stage with me, and focus on him, I would bracket the audience and locate my fictional world solely on the stage.

In many ways, attribution is a process of mirroring, a mirroring of ourselves. We look to the others in literary texts for confirmation of our own beliefs, for reassurances about our fears, for advice, and for fulfillment of certain fantasies. One of the most basic problems of literary criticism is the tendency of readers to see in texts only those elements with which they can agree or feel comfortable. Psychological balance is something we all seek between ourselves and the others we encounter. There is ample evidence that people will go to great lengths to rationalize another's behavior in order to justify it, or to in some way bring it into balance with his or her own inner state.

One of the most common errors made in encountering others is projection. There is disagreement among psychologists as to just what this term means, but, for our purposes projection refers to the tendency to attribute to others feelings that are really our own. If I know, for example, that as a Southerner, I am chronically critical of what I assume to be the racial prejudice of other Southerners, I must be careful not to project those holier-than-thou feelings onto the Southern narrator of "A Rose For Emily." In this case projection (attributing to others attitudes that are really our own) is merely a very strong form of attribution. Too much projection in social engagements is aberrant and can lead to misattributions with negative communicative consequences. For the performer, not only can projection result in the serious misinterpretation of a text, but it can prevent the performer (or the general reader) from the empathic,

22 Antaki, p. 10.
experiential involvement that is required if literature is to expand our lived experience as human beings.

I must allow the narrator's discourse to disclose itself to me; and, in order to do this I must bracket my presuppositions, allowing the other to be as he or she truly and fully is. To avoid projection or other misattribution we must reflect carefully on our attributions about literary others. A knowledge of the structures and functions of attribution can aid the performer in the self-reflection necessary to his or her understanding of the behavior of a narrator.

Many of the attribution theorists, regardless of their individual emphases, agree that the conscious mental processes of humans are essentially rational, that is, that the structures of our responses to others are logical structures, based on perceived connections between actions, dispositions, and environments. It must be mentioned here that several researchers such as E. J. Langer and Daryl Bem have called this notion into question. Bem (1967) goes so far as to suggest that attributions are often no more than "guesses based on overt behavior."\(^{23}\) Bem brings the theories of attribution to bear specifically on self-perception, using the models of Kelley and of Jones and Davis. In doing so, Bem opens up a new line of inquiry in the study of attribution. Kelley's and Jones' and Davis' models concentrate on the judgments of an observer; Bem extends their models to cover the actions of the actor as well, suggesting that, in some cases, actors cannot rely on their own private information (about consistency, distinctiveness, or consensus) in explaining what they are doing or what is

\(^{23}\) Antaki, p. 11.
happening to them. "They use what they can see or hear (in the contextual moment), just as an observer would." 24

This concept may prove helpful for the performer of literature. During a public performance, the good performer "forgets" or places into the peripheral consciousness her/his own ego and personality in order to become the narrator in the text. That embodied narrator does not reflect on his/her own attributions but rather, as Bem suggests, on the contextual moment, the "is-ness" of that moment. The narrator is caught up in the world of the story or poem.

However, what one experiences in performance, i.e. the lived experience of the literary other, is the result of a long process of self-reflection during performance. As I prepare a performance of "A Rose For Emily," I react to a narrator; but I also reflect on my reaction and analyze my own attributions concerning the narrator's behavior. During the rehearsal period, a knowledge of the structures of attribution can bring the performer to a fuller understanding of the interior life of the narrator and can also help the performer analyze his or her own deep response to that narrator.

Attribution theory is phenomenological in its insistence on the importance of context. As a performer, a knowledge of attribution can help to remind me always to check to see whether the other's behavior is a simple result of his or her own stable disposition, or, as is more often the case, a result of complex situational and dispositional factors. When I live through a narrator's dispositional tendencies and his or her situations context, I am doing something

close to what professional actors refer to as "creating a subtext." I am looking behind the narrator's utterance for the motivations and internal thoughts that cause the utterance.

Festinger and the Theory of Cognitive Dissonance

One of the several important researchers who have concentrated on the attributions of actors rather than observers is Leon Festinger. He has proposed two theories crucial to the understanding of attribution. The first, published in 1954, is Festinger's theory of social comparison which "assumes the existence of a basic drive within individuals to evaluate their own opinions and to compare their abilities with those of other people." Festinger maintains that, when we can find no objective or nonsocial means for evaluating our own behavior, we must resort to comparison with others. Admired people, whether real or fictional, become mirrors of what we hope to become and our self-esteem is largely dependent on the comparison of ourselves to these others. For example, an adult son might attribute professional failure to himself if he was not "as far along as his father was" at the same age. Likewise, a reader might dismiss his or her own carefully considered interpretation of a soliloquy of Hamlet's because it was in opposition to the views of Coleridge, A. C. Bradley, or Northrop Frye.

In the preformance situation, the actor is the story's narrator who speaks to an observer, the reader. It may seem close to ridiculous to speak of a fictional actor, the narrator, say, of "A Rose For Emily," as making attributions. This difficulty is overcome if we keep in mind the phenomenological perspective

which breaks down distinctions between subject (reader) and object (narrator). I constitute the narrator as an other and, although denied the crucial non-verbal modes of person perception, I am peripherally aware of that narrator's "perception" of me, the reader. This concept has surfaced in recent literary theory as the "implied reader" or the "narratee." In many texts there are obvious clues that signal such narrative attributions to the reader or listener. A brief example will serve to illustrate.

There are many indications that the narrator of "A Rose For Emily," attributes a certain age and sex to the listener to his discourse. The women in the story are consistently referred to as "they" or "them" and are obviously a class of people from whom the narrator and the listener are excluded. Given the historical setting of the narrator's telling of this story, and the implied sexism of his language, it is probable that the narrator attributes "maleness" to the listener. Likewise, when the narrator refers to the "next generation, with its more modern ideas," it would not be irrational to infer that he is excluding the listener from that "next generation." Indeed, part of the power of this story lies in the comfortable relationship between the narrator and the listener, who seems to share the narrator's subtly sexist viewpoint as well as his approximate age. In short, the narrator attributes dispositional similarities to himself and the listener, making the narrative contract masculine, comfortable, and almost intimate. There are, of course, other possible readings of this text. A case could be made for a female narrator, for example. This reading is a good example of textual probabilities arrived at via attributional behavior.

All of these conclusions might be debatable. It is true that attributions by a reader are more frequent and obvious than those "attributions" made by the narrator within the text. The point here is that interpretations were achieved
through attributional behavior of the part of the reader/performer. Knowledge of attributional patterns makes it possible for the performer to reflect more critically on his or her own interpretative strategies. In the above example, attributions about the narrator were based largely on the reader's "social comparison" of himself with the narrator just as Festinger suggests people behave in the social world.

Festinger's second theory, that of "cognitive dissonance," is closely related to his first. Published in 1957, the theory states that two elements of knowledge "are in dissonant relation if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other."27 The feeling of dissonance in such a case would be psychologically uncomfortable and the person would be impelled to rationalize this dissonant tension into a feeling of consonance or balance. This rationalization process is, of course, attribution. A famous historical example of dissonance occurred when the playwright Chekhov, who was on his death-bed, sent his final play to his long-time friend and collaborator, the director Stanislavsky. The production of the play, The Cherry Orchard, was one of the few theatrical failures of Chekhov's career. This failure was due largely to the fact that Stanislavsky did not receive Chekhov's instructions that the play was intended as a new kind of comedy, assumed that a dying man would write a tragedy, and therefore misinterpreted the play. In fact, a similar misinterpretation had occurred during the Moscow Art Theatre's earlier production of Chekhov's The Sea Gull. The playwright's dramatic works up to this point had been plot-oriented farces such as The Bear and The Marriage

Proposal. The attributional principle of consistency lead the company to expect a similar kind of plot-oriented drama in The Sea Gull. "The director and actors were unable to understand the concept of a drama in which mood and talk was more important than plot and action, and the play was a failure."\(^{28}\)

Congruity Theory

The concept of psychological imbalance as a primary cause of attributions has taken many theoretical forms that are more apparent than real. According to Severin and Tankard, "a relationship may be logically inconsistent to an observer while psychologically consistent to an individual who holds the obverse beliefs."\(^{29}\) The doctor who is waiting for permission from parents to administer life-saving medication to a dying child, might experience extreme dissonance when confronted with the parents' refusal due to religious convictions. This doctor might go so far as to attribute negative qualities to religion in general and might angrily express his or her feelings to the already suffering parents. This action would be in line with Festinger's idea that "the greater the dissonance, the greater the pressure to reduce it, hence the greater the chance for attitude change in the direction of the public act or behavior."\(^{30}\) Similarly, a young person with a feminist viewpoint, preparing to embody the narrator of "A Rose For Emily," might attribute negative sexist qualities to the narrator when he says that "only a woman would have believed" Colonel Sartoris's story to Miss Emily about her tax exemption. An older male reader, influenced by the


\(^{29}\) Severin and Tankard, p. 163.

\(^{30}\) Severin and Tankard, p. 158.
ideology of his generation, might attribute no conscious cause to this narrative behavior. Obviously, attributions are a cause of rich interpretive possibilities in different performances of the same text. Further, an awareness of attribution patterns helps the performer to overcome her/his presuppositional biases and blind spots, ultimately allowing a richer and fuller performance.

Attitude change has been associated with attribution from the outset. Wayne Booth and others have recently brought the idea of attitude change into respectability again in the field of literary theory with their new emphasis on ethical criticism. In 1956, two years before Heider's seminal paper, Osgood and Tannenbaum identified what they later called "a special case of Heider's Balance Theory."31 Their Congruity Theory "deals with the attitudes persons hold toward sources of information and the objects of the source's assertions."32 In the preformative situation, the source of information is, of course, the narrator and the objects of the narrator's assertions are the events and existents of the story. The Congruity Model is based on the assumption that simple (i.e. extreme) judgments are easier to make than refined or highly sophisticated ones. It is perhaps easier for the feminist reader to attribute sexism to Faulkner's narrator and the more conventional male reader to perceive a humorous shared attitude about the gullibility of women. A person feels a sense of congruence when the message that person receives and/or the source of the message agree with his or her world view. It has been shown, for example, that people tend to attribute feelings of dislike to bearers of bad news and vice versa. As a hypothetical

31 Severin and Tankard, p. 158.

32 Severin and Tankard, p. 159. In this sense their theory is similar to that of Cartwright and Harari (1953), who first introduced the term "degree of liking."
example one might point to the blasphemous old joke about Easter being cancelled because the body of Christ had been found. The telling of this joke would be more than enough to create a lasting and extremely negative impression from millions of people. Osgood and Tannenbaum are interested not only in the facility with which people form extreme opinions, but also with the "degree of liking a person may have for a source and the object of an assertion." It is easier, according to these theorists, to identify closely with or react strongly against persons, sources, or objects than it is to discriminate fine differences between ourselves and them. Attribution research suggests that we tend to make extreme attributions, such as "good" and "bad" rather than see the complex and sometimes contradictory motives or situational factors that govern behavior. It is easier to see the similarities between ourselves and Ishmael than to see those between ourselves and Ahab.

One of the common causes of the novice reader's misinterpretation of a character in a novel is stereotyping. Often, we tend to place characters in extreme categories such as "good" or "bad," "protagonist" or "antagonist." In the complex form of the novel, such unqualified distinctions are often no more than simplistic stereotyping. Similarly, a common fault of the beginning performer is to decide on a given (dispositional) quality in relation to a character, say "nobility" or "greed," and to perform only that quality rather than the actions of the character which are richly complex and constantly changing. The performer of the novel must attend to a great deal of material.

The principles of "selective exposure" and "selective attention" are more well-known aspects of congruity theory. In the complicated process of selecting what messages, persons, or objects to which we will give attentional priority, we often avoid those elements which are not congruent with our world view. There are many behavioral devices (such as denial, incredulity, or attacking the credibility of the speaker) which we employ to deal with feelings of incredulity. All of these devices are attributions of causes for effects we cannot accept.

Dr. Francine Merritt, a professor of oral interpretation at Louisiana State University, often tells her students a story of a former pupil's reaction to a particular poem, which will serve as a good example of the congruence principle at work. The poem being discussed in class was W. E. Henley's *Invictus*. Nearly all critics agree that the speaker of the poem takes a pointedly agnostic stance:

> Out of the Night that covers me,  
> Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
> I thank whatever Gods may be  
> For my unconquerable soul.  

A young nun in Dr. Merritt's class presented a lengthy discussion of the poem as an exemplar of Catholic dogma. This is, at best, a highly questionable interpretation, but it reveals the power that an individual's world view holds over his or her perceptions. The nun had brought this agnostic and humanistic statement into consonance with her religious beliefs and maintained her simplistic viewpoint rather than admit to subtleties of interpretation. The nun was experiencing cognitive dissonance with the world view of the poem's speaker.

---

and attributed meanings to it which would bring it into balance with her personal religious convictions. This is the kind of "doctrinal adhesion" that I. A. Richards so often warns interpreters to try to overcome.35 A knowledge of our own personal attributional tendencies can help us in this effort.

**Process Versus Content in Attribution**

In discussing Robert F. Bale's book, *Interactional Process Analysis*, John C. Condon sees as one cause of attributions a dissonance in the "dialectical theme of 'procedure and substance' or 'process and content.""36 The implication is that we tend to read the discourse of others in terms of either the communicative process or simply in terms of the contents of the discourse. For example, the newcomer in a group of old friends will often experience dissonance and make attributions based on the fact that he or she must pay a great deal of attention to communicative procedure, whereas the old friends simply concentrate on content or substance. In such a case the newcomer (essentially an observer) would selectively perceive and attribute different causes to the behaviors of the group than would the old friends. To repeat Shaver's observation, the observer would attribute behavior to stable dispositions of the actors (e.g. "They're all just a bunch of football nuts.") while the actors would attribute behavior to stimuli inherent in the situation ("This is the first time we've all been together since the Alabama game.")

---

35 Antaki, p. 5.

36 Antaki and Brewin, p. 14.
For example, let us say that I am placing myself in the position of the listener to the narrator in "A Rose For Emily." The narrator begins with the statement "When Miss Emily Grierson died our whole town went to her funeral." If I am going to use an interpersonal metaphor in my attempt to live through the epic situation, I must assume that the telling of this story begins in medias res. That is, I have to assume that the opening line of the text is not the first utterance in this interpersonal encounter. There must at least have been some social amenities that the author has chosen to leave out. I must fill in these interpersonal gaps in the narrative if I am to fully create the situational context of the telling. Therefore, I ask what this opening statement by the narrator might be in response to, that is, what has happened between the narrator and the listener just prior to this first sentence. I intuit that the listener has just made some reference to Miss Emily Grierson, and perhaps has even asked the narrator to tell him about her. In such a case, I could consider the narrator's first sentence a "process statement," delivered specifically in response to the listener's question. It is intended by the narrator to carry on the communication situation.

However, the following paragraphs of the story are expositional and could therefore be interpreted interpersonally as "content statements" that are intended primarily to convey information. Content statements do not have much to do with the quality of the communicative relationship between the narrator and the listener. That is why the average reader would be likely to experience this story strictly as "content" or "exposition." But the performer might benefit greatly by asking whether the lines of the text imply content or relational messages, or both.
The experienced reader of Faulkner revels in the constant references to other plots and characters of Yoknapatawpha, phenomenologically gathering more and more of the Faulkner canon into the reading experience; the hapless virgin Faulkner reader, attempting to comprehend the narrators of *Absalom, Absalom*, is like a newcomer in a long-standing group. He or she may be so overwhelmed by the substance of the plot, that the process of the novel, that is, the narrator's verbal behavior, is beyond his or her comprehension. This is why Faulkner readings, whether pre-formative or in actual performance, are often problematic. The performer who addresses the audience in his/her own person and explains carefully the necessary allusive background to difficult passages in Faulkner, is helping that audience to gather the requisite materials for adequate understanding. After such an introduction, the performer might more successfully recede into the horizon and allow the audience to foreground the narrator.

**Attributional Theories: The Effects of Attribution**

The ubiquity of attribution in the commonsense daily social lives of humans is apparent. However, simply investigating the ways in which people search for the causes of their own or others' behaviors fails to take into consideration one important aspect of attribution: that is, how these attributions affect the individuals who made them. How do my pre-formative attributions affect my final performance?

A family of theories closely related to attribution has appeared more recently to deal with this question. Attributional theories, as they are called,
have appeared primarily in the field of motivational psychology. The most influential branch of attributional theory is probably Bernard Weiner's attributional theory of motivation. As Antaki and Brewin state it:

Weiner takes Heider's internal-external cause division and cross cuts it with two others: stability (a cause can be long lasting, like habitual laziness, or likely to change or go away overnight, like a causal mood) and control (a cause can be brought under someone's control or it cannot—effort, say, is something one can control, but luck is not). Once one has these three dimensions one can see what people attribute their successes and failures to, and one can make predictions about how that attribution is going to affect their future work. . . . unlike the first two dimensions, control is more applicable to attributions of other's behavior than it is to one's own.38

Weiner's experiments have dealt primarily with students' motivations (or lack of motivation) for tasks encountered in the classroom experience. Principally his experiments have sought to answer the question "How do attributions of success or failure influence students' performances on classroom tasks?" Stated briefly, Weiner's results strongly suggest that "ability, effort (both typical and immediate), and task difficulty are among the main perceived causes of achievement performances."39

To evoke again an example involving the response to a literary text, a pre-med student who has made a low grade on a poetry analysis in an English class might rationalize her performance on the grounds that her ability lies in


38 Antaki and Brewin, p. 15.

39 Antaki and Brewin, p. 15.
the sciences rather than the humanities, that she would have done better if she
had just expended more effort or that it was the instructor's fault for assigning
such a difficult poem. The effects of these attributions on this student's self-
perception are obvious. The perceived causes are also in line with Heider's
balance theory and the congruity theory of Osgood and Tannenbaum.

Difficult or problematic author's are often neglected by performers
because of similar attributions. A general knowledge of attribution can help in
the performance of these difficult but rewarding works by providing performers
with a means by which they can analyze and reflect on their own response to the
narrator of the text.

Summary

Attribution theory is based on three assumptions about people's behaviors:

(1) We attempt to determine the causes of behavior.

(2) We assign causes systematically.

(3) We are affected by the assigned cause.

Further, the theory assumes that humans are essentially homeostatic, balance
seeking creatures. Attribution is the process by which we often achieve this
desired feeling of balance, consonance, or congruity in relation to objects
including literary texts. We look for information about the consistency or the
distinctiveness of behaviors in order to arrive at conclusions about the causes
and motivations of that behavior. Another prominent attribution pattern is
consensus or the degree to which the behavior of the other, in our case the
narrator, complies with social and literary norms or conventions. But the most
fundamental patterns of our attributional behaviors are the tendencies to see the
actions of others as results of either some personal quality inherent in the other's personality, or of some element in the social or physical environment.

Attribution theory is a broad subject which can be applied to a vast range of intrapersonal and interpersonal human actions. It is crucial in our perception of others, whether real or fictional, and in our perception of ourselves. Attribution allows us to make order out of the chaos of our sensual world, and to achieve balance, congruity and identification with that world by refining our use of logic in discovering the causes of what we do and who we are. If attribution can so greatly inform our knowledge of our experience of the phenomenal world, it can do the same for the limitless worlds of fiction and poetry, allowing those worlds to present themselves to us not as objects, but as experiences.

Summary: Patterns of Attribution in Literary Response

A performer in rehearsals of a non-dramatic text must embody the speaker of that text. It makes no difference whether the narrator is constituted as an implied author, as omniscient or limited, as actively or only peripherally involved in the story or poem. What does matter most to the performer is the character's actions and the motivations that prompt them. To embody a narrator we must understand the motivations and live through the actions of that narrator. A knowledge of how attribution functions in our perception of others can provide the performer with a means of structural analysis of what she/he may already know intuitively: that humans seek a rationale for human behavior and we employ a kind of logical process in order to explain the causes of others' behaviors.

Attribution theory can aid in our understanding of narrators, and it can also help us to examine and reflect on our own interpretive strategies.
Attributions to other's behaviors provide our principal means of knowing narrators; attributions to his or her own response can provide the performer with a self-reflexive tool for examining interpretive strategies and for making informed, less biased performance choices.

Attributions, whether to our own behaviors or those of others, fall into two basic categories: those actions that we attribute to the personality of the actor (dispositional attributions) and those actions that we attribute to the immediate context or environmental pressures on the actor. A major theoretical distinction exists between what Heider called internal and external causality.

Internal causality is more subtle, complex, and harder to analyze than external causality because it requires some degree of understanding of the lived experience of the other. Heider further divides internal causality into two subtypes: First, there is perceived personal causality, which means that the observer believes that the actor consciously tried to cause a particular effect. In contrast is what Heider called "perceived impersonal causality," which suggests that, although an effect was produced by a narrator's actions, and those actions were motivated by his or her personality, the performer believes that the narrator did not consciously seek to produce those effects. Questions concerning what a narrator wants to do (intention) and how hard that narrator tries to do it (exertion) are crucial determinants of our attributions of cause for the narrator's lived experience. Some recent theorists have summarized Heider's distinctions this way:

40 Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, p. 67.

In his discussion of how people analyze action, Heider points to variables which are important determinants of our attributions of dispositional properties to others. We take into account information regarding the strength of environmental forces in describing whether or not the other caused the effects, and we then infer both how able he is and how hard he is trying. Heider focuses attention on the distinctions between internal and external causality, personal and impersonal causality, and on the fact that our perceptions regarding can and try determine to a great extent the attribution of both intent and dispositional properties to others.

If we, as performers, attempt to embody narrators, then we must live through the narrators' experiences. We must come to an understanding of the narrator's conscious or unconscious rhetorical strategies. To do this we must bracket or suspend the commonsense idea that the narrator is a fictional construct of words on a page, a compilation and expression of the real author. We must believe in that narrator, and constitute him or her as a living, breathing, motivated other. Therefore we must attend to a narrator's actions just as we would reflect on the behavior of a real friend or acquaintance. The performer must see narrative actions, then, as behaviors. It is when we are most attendant to a narrator's strategy that we become conscious of the behavior of the narrator and infer causes for that behavior.

When we gather these internal and external causes into our experience of the narrator, we are creating an inner life that allows us to live through the immediate experience of the narrator's telling of the story. Attribution theory can provide the performer with the knowledge of structures of behavior that can help that performer enter the narrator's experience. Rather than indicate the narrator's experience, we, as performers, should make every attempt to live it. This is perhaps the central goal of interpretation: to allow students, through
performance, to live through the experiences of literary personae and therefore widen their own experiential knowledge.

**Toward an Attributional Model of the Pre-formative Experience**

The goal of this study is to produce a model that will describe and illuminate the performer's experience of narrators and audiences. I have argued that, because attributional behavior is at the center of our experience of narrators in literary texts, it can be situated at the core of my proposed model. Although there are a number of variations, the basic attributional model is either intrapersonal, involving a person's (the performer's) experience of an object (the narrator), or interpersonal, in which case the narrator becomes the "other" in a dyad which now stands in relation to an object (X).⁴³

---

⁴³Newcomb, p. 12. Newcomb presents the "strain toward symmetry" as an attributional law:

"In propositional form, the stronger A's attraction toward B, the greater the strength of the force upon A to maintain minimal discrepancy between his own and B's attitude, as he perceives the latter, toward the same X; and, if positive attraction remains constant, the greater the perceived discrepancy in attitude the stronger the force to reduce it. We shall refer to this force as strain."
The object (X) in the above model is understood to be the subject of the discourse, or the immanent, imaginative events and existents of the text.\textsuperscript{44} If I decide to "study" a famous nursery rhyme, for example, I might find myself as a performer (P) engaged with the rhyme's narrator (O) concerning a little girl named Mary (X\textsubscript{1}) and her lamb (X\textsubscript{2}). Or, I (P) might engage the narrator of Faulkner's story (O) about Miss Emily Grierson (X\textsubscript{1}) and the town (X\textsubscript{2}). In the pre-formative situation, there is usually a performer, a narrator, and a large but finite number of events and existents concerning which the narrator addresses an audience.

These three elements are the basis of Newcomb's Symmetry Theory, the attributional paradigm discussed in chapter one that forms the basis of my adapted model. If we remember that attributions are controlled by the degree of liking that exists between and among the three elements, we can begin to suggest how the model describes the experience of preformance. If I come to trust the narrator of "A Rose For Emily" and even to like him to a certain degree, this positive relationship will obviously affect my degree of liking for (i.e., my experience of) Miss Emily Grierson.

A positive relation between P and O will increase the likelihood that P will also perceive X positively.\textsuperscript{45} According to Newcomb this triangular relationship is controlled by a strain toward symmetry, the tendency of humans


Chatman identifies the event of a text as its "actions and happenings"; the existents of a text include its "character and items of setting."

\textsuperscript{45}Newcomb, p. 12.
toward balanced (i.e. similar) perceptions of the people with whom they communicate, and the subject matter of those communications.

When I read Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, I am presented with four different narrators: Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson, and the omniscient narrator of the final section. All of these narrators would be different others (O) when I (P) encounter them. All have a very different relationship to Caddy Compson, who becomes the (X) of the model. Benjy worships Caddy and, because I encounter Benjy first in the novel and sympathize with him, I am inclined to sympathize with his sister also. However, I may question the inarticulate Benjy's ability to convey his true feelings. There is a positive symmetrical relationship that governs the "degree of liking" I have for Benjy and for Caddy.

By the time I have reached Jason's section of the novel I have formed a very negative perception of him. When Jason, as narrator, engages me in reference to Caddy, the relationship is asymmetrical. My relation to Jason is controlled by my negative degree of liking for him. So that when Jason derogates Caddy, I attribute his remarks to generally negative and stable dispositions in his character.

This attribution is prompted by the asymmetrical relationship described in the above model. Newcomb's general principle is that conscious rationalization or attribution is most likely when the observer (P) has different qualitative perceptions of the other (O) and the object (X).

My perception of Caddy Compson must gather in all the perceptions of her three brothers as well as the perception I form based on their descriptions of her, and the view of her I get in the final section from the omniscient narrator (who I may also constitute as the implied author).
This example illustrates one of the most important ways in which attribution functions in the performer's pre-formative encounter with a narrator. It is not difficult to see similar relationships existing in the actual performance situation, wherein the audience (P) observes the mediated behavior of an embodied narrator (O) about one or more objects (X). The only major difference is literally who the audience is encountering. A given audience member may constitute (P) as a "performer" and never enter the text imaginatively; whereas the person sitting next to him may constitute the other as Jason Compson, allowing the performer-as-performer to recede into the phenomenological horizon. In either case, attributions are controlling the audience's experience of the text.

Conclusion

Attribution theory informs us about how we all tend to behave in relation to others. It can also inform us about how we "read," both literally and how we interpret the actions of others. A knowledge of the attributional patterns that influence encounters with literary others can aid the performer in his or her own responses to texts. In terms of the pre-formative experience of a text, attribution theory alerts the performer to common patterns of thinking that might easily lead him or her to reductive or unlikely interpretations.

If a performer remembers that psychological imbalance or any feelings of uncertainty about the events and existents in a text can produce a "drive state" that causes attributions, then that performer is more likely to reflect more carefully on his or her attributions, possibly making those attributions less reductive, simplistic, or extreme. When a narrator or character behaves in unexpected or "non-common" ways, the performer is wise to reflect on all of the
possible causes for that behavior. Attribution theory provides the performer with some good questions to ask in analyzing his or her response: Is the behavior consistent for this speaker? Is the behavior normative or likely to be performed by other types of characters or narrators as well (consensus)?

Finally, the symmetry model of Theodore Newcomb alerts the performer to the dynamic, mutable structure of the triangular relationship that exists between performer, literary speaker, and the object of that speaker's discourse. These three entities are not mutually exclusive in the act of pre-formance. They interpenetrate one another and influence one another. Major patterns of attribution, particularly dispositional and environmental attributions, gather in rather than reduce the experiential perception of literary others. The following chapter will investigate in more detail the role of symmetry and attribution in a pre-formative encounter with the narrator of William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily."
Chapter Three

THE TEXT AS OTHER:

THE MANY VOICES OF PROSE FICTION

The complexities of the reading experience will not be reduced in our attempt to focus on attributions in pre-formance. Rather, we will keep constantly in mind the Gestalt of the performer's experience and make sure that our proposed model does not reduce it. It is precisely for this reason that attribution theory, with its complex phenomenological base, is such a felicitous paradigm for the study of literature in performance. Our goal is an eidetic description of pre-formance, not a parsimonious theory.\(^1\) The experience of performing literature is extremely complex and phenomenology, particularly as it is manifested in attribution theory, can help to clarify those complexities. A phenomenological description of the conscious act of pre-formance can highlight the function of attribution in the interpretation of literary others without reducing the experience to summary theoretical statements.

When we encounter narrators, characters, and implied authors in texts, an important part of our experience is attributional. If we attribute motives to the behavior of one of these others, we are, in effect, interpreting the text. Attribution then, is fundamental to the conscious experience of literary interpretation. And we know from experience that every reading of a text is but an instance of that text. No two readings are exactly alike. Therefore, our description of the experience of literary others must embrace complexity rather

---

\(^1\)This search for description rather than theory is, of course, the primary reason I have employed the methodology of phenomenology.
than avoid it. This chapter, in attempting such a description, will discuss various ways in which critics have constituted texts as other (i.e. separate) entities, and then will break down those distinctions between self and other by revealing how attributions of the individual performer actually help "create" a particular instance of a text.

A Phenomenology of Pre-Formance

Humans tend to concentrate their attention on one thing at a time, even though this focus may change drastically from one second to the next. When I reflect on Faulkner's intentions during a reading of "A Rose For Emily," I am, for the moment, only peripherally aware of a dramatistically conceived narrator, the physical milieu of the story, or the way I might use dialects in a performance of the text. These are all a part of my Gestalt experience of the story at a given moment, but they form a background or matrix for my focalization of authorial intention.

One of the cornerstones of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is the fact that human consciousness is always conscious of something. When we adequately prepare a great text for performance, we might attend to any number of intrinsic or extrinsic elements, all of which are inseparable parts of our experience of the text—an experience we hope to translate into performance.

Human experience is fluid, mutable, and many-layered. It is controlled to a large extent by the flux of temporality and the environment of the perceiver. If, while preparing "A Rose For Emily" for performance, I focus my attention on

---

the physical appearance of Miss Emily Grierson, I would, in Husserl's terms, be "intending" Miss Emily as a focal object at that particular instant. However, in the background of my consciousness, I might also see the room in Emily's house where I picture her standing, or I might dimly sense the narrator's valuation of Emily, my own personal experience of eccentric senior citizens of the South, and many other related perceptions. In phenomenological terms, I would be "intentionally focused" on the face and body of Emily, but this experience would also include the aforementioned related perceptions as part of the "ground" of my experience of the figure that is grounded in the general consciousness of the person—a combination of all of his or her lived experience up to and including that particular moment, and even incorporating the hopes and future expectations of the person. And at the instant that my consciousness focuses on another object in the text, such as Emily's eyes "like two lumps of coal," my intentional focus changes but retains the ground of Miss Emily's face within the field of my perception. My intentional gaze can shift from eyes to face to room to South to world as I think about what I read and intend to embody in performance.

Husserl used the term "intentionality" to denote the focus or the figure-in-the-ground of general consciousness:

It belongs as a general feature to the essence of every actual cogito to be a consciousness of something ... In so far as they (internal experiences) are a consciousness of something they are said to be "intentionally related" to this something.

As a performer reads a text, his or her intentional focus can shift an

3Husserl, p. 108.
almost infinite number of times. But the various intentional objects cannot be separated from the contextual ground of the performer's consciousness. The ground can give rise to figures and these figures are what they are because of the ground in which they are set. An eighteenth century whaling manual has less than universal appeal. But when it is set in the midst of a novel its essential nature as a whaling manual is changed; it becomes part of an artistic work of epic proportions; and when we read this manual in excerpts in Moby Dick, we constitute it differently because of its context. It is, incidentally, in the same manner that our attributions about people are so heavily influenced by the context or environment. We often perceive others as figures in a complex contextual ground.

Phenomenologist Calvin O. Schrag provides an exemplary description of the essential inter-connectedness of figure and ground. He refers to experience as a "configuration" in which the various constituents of the experience are woven inextricably together. Schrag says that these constituents

... include experiencer, act of experiencing, figure, and background. The presentational complex of the experiential field is that of experiencer-experiencing-figure-with-background. The insertion of hyphens between the words is neither arbitrary nor accidental. They are grammatical indices of the bonds or connective tissues within experience and are essential for grasping the field notion itself. Experience, in its lived concreteness, is the act of experiencing figures (objects, events, situations, persons, moods, chimeras, hallucinations) not in isolation but contextualized within both determinate and indeterminate backgrounds. Every experience has its figure and background. 4

The way in which these constituents are interconnected, says Schrag, is

the primary subject of the description of any experience. There is no way to separate the listener from the narrator in "A Rose For Emily" because objects and perceivers are part of the organic whole of the experience of perception. Everything that influences the perceiver—values, attitudes, beliefs, distractions, environment—is an essential part of the experience. We may focus on one part of the experience at a time, say our attitudes toward the author, or the South, but as we do, we are seeing those attitudes themselves as figures in a contextual ground. We attend to the pattern of the weaving, even though our momentary gaze is on an individual thread. The pattern is primary to consciousness; the thread itself is secondary.

The consciousness of a performer constantly shifts from primary to secondary levels during pre-formance. One moment I might "see" the image of Miss Emily as the narrator does, but if, in the next instant, I reflect, however briefly, on the narrator's valuation of her, I have shifted my intentional focus from a primal "living-through" of the narrator's telling to a secondary level of attention to the narrator's attitude towards Emily. That is, I have shifted attention from an existent in the text (Miss Emily), to the narrator's reasons for describing her in the way that he does. This secondary attention, involves a reflective or pre-reflective attribution as I mentally posit reasons for the narrator's attitude. Either intentional object (Emily herself or the narrator's attitude toward her) is a momentary focus of my attention, and, as such, exists only in its relation to its phenomenal field. This field or "horizon" contains every constituent of consciousness, including memories and expectations, that have contributed to the complete experience of the figural object.
Nowhere is the interpenetration of figure and ground more revealing than in the human experience of language. Words exist within context. They gather meaning from the historical, social, and psychological ground in which they are used. Prior to World War II, the word "aryan" had few, if any, negative connotations. As a word, that is, as a linguistic symbol that names one of the world's numerous racial groups, the word produced a relatively neutral effect. But, for anyone who has lived through the middle of this century, the word cannot be divorced from the context of Nazi racial policies in the Third Reich. The word "aryan" now summons an entire world to our consciousness—a world that most of us never experienced directly, but which nonetheless produces powerful resonances that are an essential part of our experience of that word.

If it is to avoid reductivism, our proposed model of pre-formance must account for the complex figure-ground relationships in our experience of literary language. In order to accomplish this, I will borrow a literary theory proposed by M. M. Bakhtin, a Russian critic who also maintains that a given word or phrase summons many different contexts. He calls the theory "dialogism" because it stresses the inter-relatedness of the various contexts in which a particular word can figure. Later in this chapter Bakhtin's conception of literary language will be set forth and applied to "A Rose For Emily."

It is because of the situatedness of language that our literary experiences can be as rich and as personally stamped as they are. Narrative is language and language gathers worlds unto itself. Narrators in prose fiction can communicate with us only through language. As others, these narrators are inextricably bound to the world that their language summons. World and narrator constitute each other, in the same way that the image of an old woman is altered drastically
when we place an infant in her arms. The juxtaposition of youth and age summons the temporal world, the human life cycle, the vague memory of our own childhoods and the expectation of death, and brings the poignancy of life's final moments into the "now" of our experience. Woman and child constitute each other and our intentional focus can shift from one to the other and then to a secondary level of more abstract and universal meaning.

When I, as a performer, undertake the first critical reading of "A Rose For Emily" prefatory to performance, the intentional focus of my consciousness is in a state of constant change, flowing, and gathering the events, images, voices, and devices of the text into a complete experience. I hear the narrator's voice in the opening paragraph; in the second paragraph I sense the voice of the implied author; I see Miss Emily's corpse, vaguely, for she has not yet been fully described to me as a living being; I see for an instant, her funeral; I see the townspeople, the stiff men and the curious women; I see the Grierson house and, a sentence later, I set this house amidst old cotton gins and gas stations. With each new detail of the text, my intentional focus changes, and yet retains all that I have read up to that point. As the text unfolds in my consciousness, the words of the text call the peculiarly Southern world of the story into living presence within my consciousness.

If, on a second or third reading, I constitute the text as the speaking voice of a narrator, my experience of the text is no less complex. I begin by focusing on the narrator, and on his language as "speaking," as verbal "behavior." However, when the narrator describes something, such as the Grierson house, I momentarily attend to that house, making the reported architectural details the
figure of my consciousness, and allowing the presence of the narrator to become part of the ground, or "setting" from which those details emerge.

Language is one of the principal modes by which we apprehend other human beings. However, in literature, language is the only mode of encountering the other consciousnesses contained in the text. In attempting to know fully the narrator of a story, we are denied the nonverbal channel of communication and must therefore depend on the language employed by that narrator, constituted as his or her verbal behavior, to reveal the narrator to us.

At the same time, I experience the words of the text as a speaking that is much more than the expression of a narrator. Language does more than express thoughts. In the case of the literary work, language literally calls the fictive world into being. In the words of Martin Heidegger, "Language speaks."  

Heidegger's simple proposition, that "language speaks," is deceptively complex in its viewpoint. We might argue, for example, that language does not "speak," but, rather, it is people who speak by way of language. But the language of a literary text, is not the actual utterance of another consciousness. It can be attended to as such, and embodied as such, but it also remains as the original words on the printed page. As Georges Poulet characterizes it, the consciousness behind literary language differs from a flesh-and-blood consciousness in that it

is open to me, welcomes me, lets me look deep inside itself and

---

even allows me, with unheard of license, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels.\(^6\)

It is in this way that printed words "speak."

They speak, according to Heidegger, because they "name."\(^7\) Language names things; this naming calls the named things into presence and presents them to the consciousness of the listener. When I read the first paragraph of "A Rose For Emily," the words of the text call into presence and place near to me the once-living, but now dead Emily Grierson, her funeral, the men and women who attended it, and the "inside of her house." Moreover, it calls a social world into being. I read, "When Miss Emily Grierson died," and, as I read it, the use of the word "Miss" calls the world of Southern courtly traditions into living presence within my consciousness. It is in this way, Heidegger says, that language itself speaks:

The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order to set it down in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it there. The call does indeed call. Thus it brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness. But the call, in calling it here, has already called out to what it calls. Where to? Into the distance in which what is called remains, still absent.

The calling here calls into a nearness. But even so the call does


not wrest what it calls away from the remoteness, in which it is kept by the calling there. The calling calls into itself and therefore always here and there—here into presence, there into absence.  

Miss Emily and her world are made present to me through the naming accomplished by the language of the text. This language brings her world near to me, and yet allows it to remain remote and separate from me at the same time. The text literally calls the world to me by naming its parts, but somehow this text remains immanent and "other" within my consciousness.

Heidegger makes the point that everyday discourse is no less a naming and a calling than the language of literary works. In this he reinforces our analogy between social and literary engagements. However, he argues, literary language is often perceived as dwelling on a higher level, more ordered, more complete, and richer than everyday language. And yet, ontologically speaking, the language of a poem and the language of everyday discourse, differ only in the degree to which they call a world and make it present.

Mortal speech is a calling that names, a bidding which, . . . bids thing and world to come. What is purely bidden in mortal speech is what is spoken in the poem. Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (melos) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer.

The opposite of what is purely spoken, the opposite of the poem, is not prose. Pure prose is never "prosaic." It is as poetic and hence as rare as poetry.

To illustrate Heidegger's concept, let us look briefly at the narrator's use

---


of one definite colloquialism in "A Rose For Emily"—the use of the title "Miss" in front of Emily's name. This device is used throughout the text. It is a nomination with which I am very familiar, because I grew up in a small Southern town not unlike the one described by the language of this story. When I return to my home town and hear about "Miss ________" and "Miss ________," I do not experience the calling of a world. I have become so used to the title "Miss," in the social context of my home town, that the word has used up its potential for gathering the world of that town into it.

But when the narrator employs the term in the first sentence of the story, it calls to mind an essential quality of the old South: that is, the courtly deference and distance between men and women of the upper classes. The word also exists in a dialogic relationship with my experience of the current usage of the word in contemporary society—at least in those social circles in which I have gained my experience. From the perspective of 1984, the word "Miss" conjures up the social condition of sexism, and when it is used in the historical context of the story, the word gathers into itself the tension between the pre- and post-feminist views of unmarried women.

Indeed, as I reflect on the narrator's use of it, the title "Miss" calls into being the tragic essence of Faulkner's story.

When Miss Emily Grierson died . . .

I am confronted at the outset of the story with a doomed woman—a "fallen monument." The tragic element in the story involves the reader in significant environmental attributions, for, if we see Emily as controlled to a large extent by fate or social forces beyond her control, our estimation and
valuation of her will likely be less critical than if we attribute all her actions to her own dispositions. Emily is described as old (I attribute age to her based on the word "monument") and she is also unmarried. I gather my post-feminist perspective on the social concept of "old maid," and my attribution of the narrator's view of it as well. "Old Maid" is a term rarely used today because of its sexist connotations. But the use of "Miss" by this narrator calls into being the sexism of the old South, a social condition which contributes significantly to the tragic irony of Emily's life—an irony that is crystallized in the final macabre description of the "bridal chamber" of Emily and Homer Barron.

I could reflect on the term "Miss" as a behavior of the narrator that places him in a comfortable relationship with the unintentional sexism of his time. In other words, I attribute his verbal behavior, i.e. his use of "Miss," to the social and ideological context in which he exists. Because of my knowledge of attribution theory, I realize that here I am making a typical "observer attribution." That is, I tend to see environment as the primary cause of an actor's behaviors. However, I might also attribute dispositional qualities to the narrator based on his use of the term. He is respectful of "women's place in society;" he is unconsciously sexist; he probably places himself at some emotional distance from Emily herself, seeing her more as a symbol or a "monument" than as an other consciousness. As I attempt to embody this narrator in performance, the language of the text, in Poulet's words, lets me "think what it thinks and feel what it feels." As I move from reflection on the text to embodiment of it, I move from my own field of figure-ground relations to the experience of the narrator's consciousness of figure-with-ground. That is, I experience the narrator's experiencing Miss Emily.
As Martin Heidegger says, individual "things" do not exist separately from the worlds in which they exist.

... world and things do not subsist alongside one another. They penetrate each other. Thus the two traverse a middle. In it, they are at one. Thus at one they are intimate.\(^{10}\)

This narrator, likewise, does not exist apart from the fictive world of Faulkner's story. He is not merely an element in that world. Narrator and world penetrate and depend on each other. There is no better example of this than the Heideggerian notion that language—language conceived of as (the narrator's) expression and language conceived of as fictive world—speaks by calling both thing and world into presence.

First, consider language as expression. It might be the expression of implied author, character, or, in our present case, language as the expression of a narrator. In one sense, language is narrative behavior, but it is much more than just that. As Heidegger suggests, language calls the world of a literary work into a living presence by naming that world; it is a presence that brings the world near and yet, at the same time, lets it remain absent (i.e. other and immanent). Language is expression, but language is also literally, world. In "A Rose For Emily," language functions as both thing (narrator) and world—and narrator and world interpenetrate and depend on each other. They cannot exist separately because they are formed from the same thing. In terms of phenomenology's figure-ground perspective, language-as-narrators-expression is the figure in a groundwork of language-as-fictive-world.

When I focus on language as the expression of a narrator, I must remember that not only does the narrator speak, the language of the text speaks as well. Similarly, attributions are of two primary types—dispositional and environmental. As I proceed to constitute the text of "A Rose For Emily" as the expression of a narrator, I must be careful to uncover the world called forth by the language of the text. For it is this world that is responsible for much of a narrator's behavior.

At some stage of performance, it is common for a performer to focus on the text as an utterance—the spoken word of a narrator, an implied author, or characters. As intentional objects any one of these different expressive voices exists in relation to the other levels of voice that form part of the ground of the reader's experience. I may, throughout much of my performance, focus on the voice of the narrator in "A Rose For Emily" and attribute qualities to that narrator based on his or her verbal behavior. But, these attributions to the narrator force me to consider other voices in the text—voices that call forth the fictive world. For example, if I attribute sexism to this narrator, I will likely be impelled to ponder the implied author's attitudes about feminism as well, and, perhaps more importantly, to speculate on the sexist attitudes and qualities inherent in the world of this story. Any sexism in the narrator is interpenetrated by the sexism of Yoknapatawpha. They traverse a middle; they are, in Heidegger's sense, intimate.

As the chapter progresses, I will explore more fully the ways in which attributions about narrators urge us to set the narrator in an experiential field that includes implied authors and characters as well as other textual and subjective constituents. As I proceed, I will attempt to keep in mind that all of
these constituents—implied authors, characters, narrators—are intimately and inextricably bound up in the world called forth by the language of the text. Attribution will enter the analysis as I speculate on dispositional qualities of individual constituents such as implied authors and narrators, and as I reflect on the degree to which the fictive world, the context in which these individual others act, is responsible for their actions. What follows, then, will be a phenomenological exploration of the ways in which attribution functions in my own pre-formance of the opening paragraphs of "A Rose For Emily."

Attribution in the Experience of Reading

I encounter a new text in much the same way that I encounter a potential acquaintance or friend. I have decided to engage that text in some detail or at some length, just as I engage a person to whom I have decided, for whatever reason, to give a fair degree of attention. So, the initial "attraction" to the poem, the prose, or the play is determined by the degree of my attraction and interest in the speaking voice of the text; perhaps I like the title, the implied subject matter, or I like the author because I have encountered him or her in other texts, or perhaps I like the form. In most human interpersonal encounters, the first attraction is largely physical or based on presuppositions. Of course, there is always the important "contact" one "should" meet, the text one "ought" to know. Such encounters I approach with an open mind (at the beginning). Some of my best "friends" and worst "enemies" were assigned rather than selected personally. I have grown to love teachers I first thought were pedantic, or affected, or even elitist. The same description applies to my maturing readings of Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury or "A Rose For Emily."
As I read a new text, I try to keep an open mind. But first impressions are powerful. Often, I find I must struggle with difficult language or syntax, with archaism, elliptical form or content, verbosity. Despite my rational intentions to overcome such obstacles, they often overcome me and I put the text aside. Frequently, it is for no other reason than the fact that I do not feel drawn to the way the author (or the text) expresses himself (itself). "When the rash mood is on" I don't want to have to work too hard.

But the greatest pleasures in my literary "acquaintances" have come, of course, from those texts with which I have had to struggle the most. I fear I may never have loved Faulkner, Joyce, Chekhov, or Henry James if I had not been assigned to read them in college. On the other hand, I somehow made easy and early friends of Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Lawrence, and T. S. Eliot.

As I read the first few words or lines of a work, rarely is my imagination immediately rivetted. It takes at least a few seconds for the physical environment in which I am reading to recede and the text to become foregrounded in my consciousness. Works which open with a vivid image, a concrete mental picture, are easier for me to "enter," whether they are good literature or not. This initial impression on my imagination makes it easier for me to fall into the flow or the rhythm of the work, something which seems to take more effort somehow than the simple "picturing" of literary images.

In cases of densely rich literature, I must constantly go back, reread, change first impressions, "try out" new interpretations and generally enter into a dialogue with the work. During this process, I posit causes for the text's behavior and am therefore attributing. Once I am engaged, the greater the expenditure of intellectual and imaginative energy, the greater the rewards.
But, again, I must come to these rich works in the proper frame of mind: open, refreshed, anticipatory, with a desire to encounter the particular work, just as in the social world my desire to understand the other person is the prerequisite to my comprehension of her or him. Attributional behavior is most apparent when it becomes the means of knowing an other we have a strong desire to know.

When I engage a story that I intend to perform for an audience I must "listen" to the discourse of that story many times. I will first listen to the text in order to be able to speak it. I must gain an experiential entrance into the story's characters and its world. This encounter exists over a time period beginning with the first pre-formative reading and possibly ending at the conclusion of the final public performance. I can hope that during this performance I have done more than get close to the text; I can hope that I have lived for a time inside it. One means of doing this is to understand the causes for the effects of the text by reflecting on my own attributions concerning it.

Despite the fact that I might experientially inhabit the text while performing, during the rehearsal period I have periodically constituted it as a separate other to be known and understood. My attributions of causes for the story's effects, the narrator's behavior, and the actions of characters have been an integral part of my gradual breaking down of this distinction between my self as performer and the text. As I read and reread the text, I gather the constituents of my experience, reflecting on them in turn, thereby enriching the experiential matrix of the text as I proceed. During these rehearsals, the idea of the text as a separate other is gradually broken down as I seek to weave myself into the text, to embody that other within myself. In the case of the narrative
voice, I move from a dialogue with an other—the narrator—to the embodiment of that narrator within my self.

Of course, there are many levels of "voice" in a text other than that of the specific narrator. As readers and performers, we constitute the various voices of literary texts in many different ways. The following pages will present a partial list of the possible others inherent in a text such as William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily." This investigation is intended to focus on the performer's experience of only one of those voices. However, by revealing how attribution functions in the performer's experience of the narrator's voice, we can devise a model that can be generalized to describe the experience of any discrete voice on the text. But first it may be helpful to view various literary approaches to the question of the "other-ness" of the text.

The Development of the Interpersonal Metaphor in Literary Criticism

A work of prose fiction can be many things to many people. An individual consciousness may constitute a text in various different ways. Modern literary theory and criticism has been concerned with the problem of different responses to texts, especially since the publication in 1929 of I. A. Richards *Practical Criticism.*\(^1\) This important study showed us that responses to texts not only vary greatly with the individual reader, but that the logic (in the sense of making logical connections between causes and effects) behind many such readings produces misguided or inadequate readings. When we attribute causes to the behaviors of others, we are making what we tacitly assume to be viable

---

connections between actions and the situational or dispositional forces that impel those actions. These connections may or may not follow rules of formal logic; the point is that we assume that they do.

Different readings of texts are what make them exciting, renewable sources of creative raw material for the performer. And yet, a story such as "A Rose For Emily" cannot be validly read in any way a reader chooses. However, the performer can approach the story by alternately foregrounding an astonishing number of different elements, levels, or "voices." This study concentrates on the performer's creative experience of just one of those voices: the voice of the narrator, the story-teller, the epic speaker. But if the model I am building from attribution theory is to be valid and worthwhile, it must also be applicable to the performer's constitution of any of the voices inherent in a text. These might include the voices of implied authors, characters, or even ideological "voices" such as the voice of religious doctrines, social causes, or political movements. These latter voices, while not literal utterances in the sense of the "spoken word" of narrators or directly quoted characters, do exist within the context of the text. That is, they are dwelling within the language of the text, within the words that the performer will embody. They may not "speak" in the literal sense that a narrator does as he tells the story or that a character does in direct discourse, but they inform the literally spoken discourse and are therefore an integral part of our experience of the performed text.

Perhaps the most common way in which readers experience a literary work is simply to conceive of it as a separate and complete entity, a "thing-out-there" that we call the "text" or the book. The New Criticism and its relatives (e.g. the Prague structuralists and the Russian formalists) are primarily
Edward Proffitt has recently taken the New Criticism to task for the failure to balance the idea of the inviolable text with the idea that literary works, particularly poems, are experiential, requiring active engagement by a reader.\textsuperscript{12} The image of the critic as a scientific close reader studying the poem for its meaning may have led to the renunciation of the sanctity of the text by the recent schools of reader response criticism and deconstruction.

But the experiential reality remains. Rehearsals for a performance of literature are more properly studied as experiences than as the contemplation of an object. If I am asked to write a critical essay on some aspect of "A Rose For Emily," I would probably begin with some analysis of the constituents of the story and end by describing how those parts fit into the text as a whole. In such a case I think of the text not as discourse, not as experience, not as communication or dialogue, but as an object called the text: a complete and separate entity whose parts I must come to understand. But a performance of that text goes beyond the understanding of an object, because once the object is understood it must be embodied as human experience.

The objectivist approach to literary study is useful in its insistence on logical close readings of particular works. But, for the performer who seeks a more experiential entrance into the text, the objectivist model is often too one-sided, suggesting that a systematic analysis of the part of the reader can most adequately explicate the work. A performer must always remain open to all of

\textsuperscript{12}Edward Proffitt, "In Mid-Career: Literary Study and Individual Growth," \textit{Journal of Aesthetic Education}, 16 (Spring, 1982), p. 29.
the possibilities of a work in rehearsal, but he or she cannot deny the affective experience of that work. To do so would be to suggest that a "right reading" of a text never includes the reader's response.

The perspective of the symbolic interactionists, particularly that of Kenneth Burke, has done a great deal to adapt the objectivist paradigm so that it becomes much more felicitous for the performer who views the literary experience in terms of interpersonal communication. Burke, Don Geiger and their successors extended the objectivist model to include the dramatic context of the utterance that is the literary work. Their perspective allows us to view the text as the complete and objectified utterance of an implied speaker. Because it is based on a theatrical metaphor, this new perspective came to be called dramatism. Dramatism was not yet an interpersonal perspective in that it focused almost entirely on the speaker of the utterance. But it did represent a move in an interpersonal direction.

Dramatism requires that I ask, first of all, who the speaker of the text is. This posits a concrete other in the text, a persona to whose discourse I listen and respond. I must also ask about the identity of the implied listener to this discourse. Answering these questions will cause me to attribute dispositional qualities to the narrator/speaker and to the implied listener.

If approaching the text dramatistically, I would also ask quite specific questions about the intentions (purposes) of the speaker's actions and about the

---

situation or context (scene) in which those actions occur. These questions will elicit my critical attributions concerning environment.

The dramatistic perspective of performance requires the reader to make attributions about a text's behavior. I use the term behavior here advisedly as the symbolic actions of the speaker of the text. As I have shown in the previous chapter, these attributions will concern individual dispositions of speakers or of characters, and the literary world or environment in which they exist. The dramatistic analysis of literary works was at the forefront of an evolutionary period in literary criticism that focused more and more on the interaction between texts and readers, thereby increasing the relevance to criticism of interpersonal communication theories like attribution. A selective glance at several other "interpersonal" views of literary response will reinforce my proposed interpersonal model of the act of preformance.

It would seem that speech act theory has taken a vital place in the recent evolution of literary theory. This theory, promoted by scholars such as G. D. Searle, A. L. Austin, and Mary Louise Pratt has, like attribution, been appropriated from the social sciences. Speech act theory can be described as a focusing on the acts or the actions, both literal and metaphorical, of the literary utterance. The basic premise of speech act theory is that words often stand for real or psychological actions. In literary response, speech act theory could lead us to a concentrated examination of literal or metaphorical verbs.

The narrator of "A Rose For Emily" begins his utterance this way:

When Miss Emily Grierson died our whole town went to her funeral...  

Using a speech act approach, the performer of this sentence, seeking to embody this narrator and make the narrator's actions clear to an audience, would concentrate on the action on this particular line. That is, the performer would attribute causes for this particular utterance of the narrator. One performer might perceive the action as "to protest," suggesting that there has been some negative criticism of the townspeople's reaction to Emily immediately prior to this utterance. Another performer might attribute the action as "boasting," implying that one of the narrator's motives in telling this tale is to gain a positive reaction from the listener concerning the people of Jefferson, Mississippi. Many other interpretations of the action of this line are possible. The point here is that we can experience the language of a text not only as the utterance or the discourse of an other, but also as the actions of that other.

Concentration on the actions of literary others means that we, as readers, respond to those actions. As performers, the structure of our response is attributional: we infer causes for the interpretated actions of narrators, authors, or characters. "Why," we must ask, "is the narrator boasting?" Inferring motives is the primary interpersonal dynamic of a performer's attempt to know the other in the text. And without knowing there can be no embodiment.

The decade of the seventies witnesses an extraordinary growth in reader oriented criticism. This type of criticism, while it has taken many different forms, is important to the performer because it seeks to understand the subjective nature of individual responses to literary works, including the subjective pre-formative responses of a performer. Again, subjective responses to others are controlled, to a large extent by attributions. Many disparate critics have been grouped together under the aegis of reader response criticism. Their perspectives range from conservative to radical and reveal other ways in which readers and performers constitute literary others. Dramatism's objectivist view has been incorporated into the more pragmatic context of reader response critics and it is here that attribution theory can be particularly helpful in informing us about the dyadic communication between the work and the reader.

Many of the so called reader response theorists have also drawn on interpersonal metaphors to describe our reactions to literary texts. David Bleich, a radical exponent of the subjectivity of literary response, has based his subjective paradigm in part on D. W. Harding's study of the similarities between the situation of social gossip and the response to literature. Both, says Harding, are in the mode of response of an "onlooker at actual events." In characterizing the other in the text as analogous to a social gossip, Harding maintains that the correspondent of the gossip-reader is not a collection of real people "but only a personae created by the author for the purpose of


communication." While this is but one example of the use of an interpersonal metaphor in literary criticism, it is not an uncommon perspective. It supports the view of the narrator as a definite other for whose verbal behavior we posit causes.

Georges Poulet, a leading phenomenological critic, also sees a close resemblance between social and literary encounters. He describes the reader's interaction with

... the consciousness of another, no different from the one I automatically assume in every human being I encounter, except in this case the consciousness is open to me, welcomes me, lets me look deep inside itself and even allows me, with unheard of license, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels. 19

Here Poulet has identified a fundamental difference between social and literary encounters, but this is not a problem. An attributional theory of literary response would welcome the fact that we can reflect on literary language more carefully than on transitory social discourse. The longer we reflect, the more "verbal behaviors" we can isolate and attend to; the more verbal behaviors on which we intentionally focus, the more attributions we can make; and the longer we study a literary discourse, the more careful those attributions can become. The task of the performer is to somehow manage to clarify his or her attributions during the performance. When a text is embodied, the literary discourse becomes much closer to everyday discourse in its rapid and inexorable

18 Harding, p. 147.

delivery. In performance, the fundamental distinction between permanent written discourse and ephemeral human speech almost ceases to exist. It is for this reason that clarity of intention on the part of the performer is so important. Whatever methods of literary analysis the performer uses, he or she will embody the textual voices for an audience who will not have time to go back and gaze at length into an "open consciousness." Performance is never static. That is its richness and its danger.

Whether the critical perspective is dramatistic, speech act, phenomenological, or some pluralistic combination of all of these, the performer must first constitute the textual other in order to embody him, her, or it. And somewhere behind the fictional others in a text (e.g. narrators and characters) there is the voice of the author: a voice of which we are aware even as we attend to narrators and characters.

Wayne C. Booth is a critic who, for the past twenty years, has provided literary perspectives that are of particular value to the performer. His theories have grown out to the rhetorical tradition of the Chicago Aristotelian school and have embraced dramatism as well as ethical criticism (which he refers to as the after-effects of a text). Booth's perspective is remarkably pluralistic and tolerant of other critical positions. For the purposes of this study, Booth is important as an exemplar of the reader's constitution of the other in the text as an "implied author." We often reflect on authorial intentions when we read. The writer's intentions are a valid clue to meaning. Experientially, the implied author is yet another of the textual voices that can arise in a reader's

consciousness against the background of the Gestalt experience of literary response.

When I prepare "A Rose For Emily" for performance, I concentrate on the narrator's voice. However, I am familiar with other works by Faulkner and at times during my pre-formative reading, I reflect on (or constitute) a voice in the text as Faulkner's voice. Gathering Faulkner's voice into the multi-level experience of the text is, according to Booth, a requisite critical method.

Particularly when you read three or four books by the same author, you start making inferences [attributions] that go beyond the individual imaginative act. You can't resist and I don't think you should resist the temptation to start thinking about the qualities of the creature behind all that. I think that because of certain modern dogmas about ruling out the intentions of the author, we have needlessly ruled out some very interesting kinds of criticism by saying that's none of our business.²¹

Put briefly, the implied author is the reader's perception of the person who wrote the story. The implied author, then, is not to be confused with the real author, the flesh-and-blood human being who wrote the story. Rather, she or he is a construct of the reader of that particular story or work. Booth implies that the constitution of this implied author is an integral part of the reading experience.

The value systems we attribute to implied authors are most important. For example, we might attribute a high degree of intelligence and rhetorical sophistication to Faulkner, a sense of humor to Twain, a sense of worldliness to Fitzgerald or Thomas Mann, or a sense of detachment to Hemingway or Robbe-
Grillet. The social ideologies of a writer are certainly a part of these implied value systems, especially in activist writers like Steinbeck or Alexsandr Solhenitsyn. The values and attitudes that we attribute to the implied authors of literary works are key determinants of our eventual interpretations and performances. In terms of attribution, the degree of identification we feel with the implied author's voice, that is the degree of "balance" between ourselves and the implied author, often directs our response to the events and existents of the story.

Booth's theories, grounded as they are in the rhetorical tradition, appropriate the idea of "shared meanings" between readers and the various voices of a text. Booth takes the idea of like-mindedness or shared meaning from Plato (whose term is homonoëia) and sees it as a prerequisite for establishing "friendship" with implied authors. Booth's scheme is to determine the degree of (1) intensity and (2) reciprocity in the relationship between the implied author and the reader based on the work's apparent purposes or intentions. These might include the simple production of pleasurable response, utilitarian or pragmatic response (as in "social" works such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* or the feminist works of Simone de Beauvoir, works designed to have some rhetorical social purpose), or the intrinsic value of the relationship between "poem" and person.

Although my project focuses on the constitution of a narrator's voice, it is often impossible to bracket the implied author as I form a performance. When I prepare "A Rose For Emily" for the public, I cannot forget my previous reading

of and thinking about William Faulkner. A good example is my pre-formative choice about how to convey both the narrator's and the implied author's intentions on the line about how Colonel Sartoris had

fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the street without her apron: . . .

As I ponder this problematic and ambiguous phrase I position myself philosophically in relation to two significant others in my life: my father and the William Faulkner I have come to know through his works. Both are Southern men whom I feel that I know, regardless of the fact that one is real to me and the other a construct of my own consciousness. I have, in a sense, constructed them both in terms of their relationship to the idea of historical racial relations in the South. The chief instrument with which I constructed them was attribution. I attribute their behavior to the contextual influences of Southern racial issues.

My personal reaction to the edict mentioned in the story is to call up the concept of "inherited guilt." The concept that all white Southerners are, to some extent, guilty for the social persecution of black Southerners was first presented to me in Faulkner's works. Although the concept is not integral to this particular story, I cannot help but gather it into my reading experience, at least peripherally.

I recall, as a teen-ager, discussing these concepts with my father, who would often become almost violently angry at the idea that he, as an individual supportive of civil rights, should feel guilty for the racial inequalities produced by Southern society. In terms of Newcomb's symmetry model I (P) was engaged alternately with two others (O), my father and William Faulkner, concerning the

23 Faulkner, p. 119.
inherited collective guilt of white Southerners (X). At this time in my typically rebellious youth, I felt more affinity with Faulkner on this subject than I did with my father. My positive "degree of liking," that is, my respect and admiration for the intelligence and accomplishments of Faulkner, brought me into balance with his ideas about collective racial guilt. In the language of attribution theory, my positive relationship to Faulkner caused a "strain toward symmetry" that urged my positive response to his ideas about collective guilt.

My stormy relationship with my father was comparatively negative on this subject. At the time I did not know how to articulate "why" this was so. Now, because of my knowledge of the structures of attribution, I do. I attributed dispositional qualities to my father based on the intensity of his denunciation of the collective guilt idea. Although I did not have a word for it at the time, I could easily sense or intuit the dissonance, imbalance, and distress the idea caused my father. I decided (attributed) that the cause of this intense reaction was a suppressed individual guilt that my father felt about racial conditions and his personal prejudices against blacks. I believe that my father had brought himself into psychological balance with this concept, by insisting on his own individual innocence. I attributed Faulkner's ideas to his egalitarian social stance and his admiration for Southern blacks expressed primarily in his famous Nobel acceptance speech, a speech that I know well and that I gathered into my reading of all his works.

In performing the narrator's comment about the edict in "A Rose For Emily," I must gather in my attribution of where both Faulkner and the narrator stand in relation to the edict. And, as the symmetry model (P-O-X) requires, I must determine where I stand qualitatively in relation to the edict, and why I
stand there. In performance, I must embody or become the narrator's voice and I must also embody his stance in relation to the constituents of the story. I must both "be" the narrator and, somewhere on the horizon of my consciousness, objectify that narrator. It is the tensive pull between these two intentions of the narrator's character that has long distinguished the essential nature of the performance of literature.

The pull between the constitution of the narrator as an objectified "other" and the narrator as a voice to be embodied, also distinguishes pre-performance from actual performance. As I prepare to perform "A Rose For Emily" I reflect on the nature of the narrative voice. I attribute causes or reasons for the narrative behavior. I possibly consult outside sources for critical insights into the text. I vary performance choices in order to see which ones most honestly support and illuminate the text. I seek to understand the words of the text as I rehearse them. In short I focus my intention on the text as an other; that is, I conceive of the narrator as a part I must play, a role I must take on, at least during part of the rehearsal process. But as I near performance, the text as an entity recedes as I move closer to an embodiment of the narrative voice. When I successfully embody that text, when I "become" the narrative voice, the figure in the ground of my consciousness is whatever object or idea is figural in the narrator's consciousness.

For example, when the narrator imagines Emily Grierson framed in the distance between her father's legs I (as the narrator) "see" this image also. I see what the narrator sees because experientially I am the narrator. And yet, at the same time, I am dimly aware of any extrinsic criticism or personal experiences during the rehearsals that have prepared me to see this narrative image in the
idiosyncratic way that I see it. Performance of the speaker's voice always gathers in the whole pre-formative experience.

Obviously, shared meanings have a great deal to do with our degree of attraction for and our communication with the various others in a text, whether we constitute the principle voice as implied author, an objectified text, a narrator, or a character within the discourse. Stanley Fish has argued that when different readers constitute a text they must, of necessity, constitute different texts. The reason, according to Fish, that different readers' interpretations of a given text are as similar as they are is that the readers belong to shared interpretive communities.  

I share social tendencies with William Faulkner, but not necessarily with the narrator or the characters in his story. An interpersonal perspective on the performer's response to literature allows a performer to reflect on how he or she perceives and interprets the behaviors of the individuals who populate the great literary works. If we constitute these literary others as beings whose behavior we must understand, we may find the attempt to embody them through performance more complex, more relevant to our own human behaviors. In the final analysis, performers do more than embody the printed page; they allow the others in the text to inhabit their physical selves, making performance a synthesis of text and performer.

Attribution theory can provide a viable means of accomplishing this synthesis. If, in pre-formance, we reflect on the causes of the verbal behavior of the narrator, we are going to think about the pre-reflective mental activity that

——

has resulted in the narrator's behavior—word choice, tone, stance, imagery, level of linguistic sophistication, or any other rhetorical device for which we attribute a cause. If we can use the structures of attribution as a guide to thinking about the causes of a narrator's discourse, we are doing something similar to what an actor does when he or she creates a subtext for the spoken lines of a character. When the causes of a narrator's behavior are attributed to environment, we are constituting the world of the text. When we attribute verbal behavior to a narrator's disposition we are building the inchoate, pre-reflective basis for our own embodiment of that narrator. In both cases, we are seeking a psychological balance between ourselves as performers and the narrator with whom we are engaged.

Psychological Balance in the Pre-Formative Constitution of Textual Voices

Most of our great literature resists simple interpretation. Perceptive readers are constantly finding valid new perspectives on the classic texts because these works are open to us only to the extent to which we can infer reasons for their contents, strategies, and structures. Analysis and interpretation of a given work are in a perpetual state of becoming and this is particularly true in the forming of a performance.

When a performer rehearses she or he varies performance choices on individual lines or phrases in order to eventually gather some of these possibilities into a performance that does not simplify the rich interpretive possibilities in the work. Stanley Fish has written that the very act of literary criticism often involves a desire to "come to the point." This desire is similar to what attribution theorists call a "strain toward symmetry." Although Fish
apparently does not know attribution theory, he says that if we are to allow the

\textit{text to "become,"} we must resist the strain to "come to the point:"

\hspace{1cm} \textit{Coming to the point fulfills a need that most literature frustrates}
\hspace{1cm} (if we open ourselves to it), the need to simplify and close.\textsuperscript{25}

Although Fish seems harsh in his implied criticism of the objectivist

\hspace{1cm} \textit{position, his statement is in support of the basic premises of performance}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{studies: the performance of literature allows the text to present itself in various}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{living modes and, more importantly through as many living consciousnesses as}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{there are potential performers. The experiencing of literature is never static. And if, in pre-formance, we come to an interpretive point and insist on staying there, we run the risk of arresting our experience of the text. Our need for balance and understanding is usually enhanced rather than frustrated when we allow literary experience to be the essentially temporal thing that it is. The linguistic symbols (i.e. words) of a text may be static, but our experience of them never is.}

\hspace{1cm} \textit{It is the fact that we communicate through these shared linguistic}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{symbols that allows for the much touted "free play" of linguistic meaning in}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{recent criticism. Certainly language permits and encourages free play up to a}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{point. Still, the fact remains that one could view an infinite number of different}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{performers playing Hamlet; no two would be exactly alike; all would be a}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{presencing of the text, mediated by an individual performer; but, all would}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{remain recognizable as Hamlet; not even a novice critic would mistake the}

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{25}Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," \textit{New}
\hspace{1cm} \textit{Literary History, 2 (Autumn, 1970), p. 150.}
performer for Macbeth. For all its free play of meaning, the language of Hamlet presents us with something that is essentially the character of Hamlet and no one else.

Performance involves the mediation of the text by the lived experience of the performer. That performance involves many interpretational choices from all of the probable and possible readings of that text. If we bracket or suspend the notion of the text as a printed page and try to understand the narrative as the behavior of a narrator, our readings will be produced largely by way of our educated but subjective attributions. An attributional theory of the act of performance implies the same. Whether we constitute the text as an object or as the utterance of an other, we have only the text itself as the guide to interpretation. The only difference is that the performer constitutes the text as the utterance of a living other rather than as a printed text. The other in the text can be constituted in a number of ways, by alternately focusing on the different voices of that text and engaging them as one would another human being.

Thus far I have discussed only three primary voices in a narrated prose text: the voice of the narrator, the implied author, or the characters. All of these discrete voices are contained in the text-as-it-calls-forth-a-world (a kind of synthesis of all the possible voices, but chiefly constituting the text only as a text); more important for the performer is the text constituted as the voice of a narrator and/or an implied author. Recent criticism, particularly that of M. M. Bakhtin, has posited many other voices within a text, voices that are not necessarily the discourse of a narrator, an implied author, or a character. Often there are voices in a text of which performers may be only minimally or
subconsciously aware. A knowledge of these voices can help the performer to engage narrators, implied authors, and characters and evolve a rehearsal method that is based on the attribution model of an interpersonal encounter. Because they identify these non-individualized voices, the theories of M. M. Bakhtin can help to provide such a rehearsal method.

The Many Voices of Prose Fiction

The essence of a prose text lies in the manner of its telling, that is, in its narrative style. This is what makes prose qualitatively different from, say, a play. Since the narrator is the "teller," the narrator's behavior is crucial to the interpretation of prose texts.

The performer who seeks to use a knowledge of attribution as a critical tool must, in the final performance, foreground a narrator's voice if one is present in the text. Other voices, such as those of implied authors or characters, are usually embedded in the narrator's voice, but have a living presence of their own. Unless the direct dialogue of characters is being presented dramatically, the embodiment of the narrator's voice is the performer's intentional focus. However, the other voices of the text remain on the horizon of consciousness and influence that embodiment.

A Russian critic, M. M. Bakhtin, has developed a theory of the embedded voices of a text that he calls "heteroglossia." I will proceed with a very brief definition of the theory and its importance, keeping in mind my central metaphor of interpersonal encounters: A text is an other that can be thought of as essentially like the others we met in everyday life. For example, I might tell a long narrative at a party. Embedded within that narrative might be the voices of my story's characters, my social conscience, even my professional language—the
language of performance or communication theory. It is this image of embedded voices within an apparent narrative monologue, that forms the basis for Bakhtin's conception of the narrative voice.

As Michael Holquist says in his introduction to The Dialogic Imagination, a "highly distinctive concept of language" is "at the heart of everything Bakhtin ever did." Holquist goes on to describe Bakhtin's work as based on the assumption of a dialectical conflict central to existence: to culture in general and to language in particular. This almost violent opposition is characterized as a struggle between the centripetal pull towards understanding and "shared meaning" on the one hand, and the centrifugal forces of diversity and entropy on the other. Bakhtin sees these forces at work in all cultural and literary production, but believes that they are most clearly expressed in the dialogic form of the novel. Everything Bakhtin says of the novel is theoretically true for the short story.

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even a diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day... this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment... is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre... Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia

---

These various stratified languages form a major part of the experiential field of a reader or a performer. Any particular voice can be the figural voice at a given moment in the reading process. As one continues to read there is the constant shifting and flowing as one level of voice rises to the intentional focus and others recede. Yet, as one voice rises, the others remain on the horizon, forming an integral part of the interpretive experience.

M. M. Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia offers the student of performance a new method of close reading, a method that can illuminate and form the basis for a systematic rehearsal methodology. This methodology is based on the conception of the text as a foregrounded other for whose behavior we attribute causes. I will describe this application of heteroglossia to the building of a performance by using as examples passages from "A Rose For Emily."

Bakhtin's theory of prose discourse is based on the assumption that all language is a complexity of stratified languages such as social, cultural, geographical, ethnic, or professional dialects. All people are capable of using many of these different languages simultaneously in everyday discourse. Such dialects often quite literally include other languages.

For example, Cajun French includes both the French and English tongues as well as Southern regional dialects. This simultaneous presence of several national languages is what Bakhtin calls "polyglossia." Furthermore, a Cajun lawyer or a Cajun farmer would each be conversant in different professional

27 Holquist, "Glossary," The Dialogic Imagination, p. 431.
languages. Bakhtin maintains that all language is therefore "polyglot" and, at the same time "heteroglot." Heteroglossia refers to the context in which a word or language is used. The same words can take on strikingly different meanings when they occur in very different settings, environments, or contexts. Heteroglossia, then, is

The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress.

Not only does this definition have a phenomenological core, insisting as it does on the uniqueness of any given utterance, but, in terms of attribution, the concept of heteroglossia emphasizes the utterance as a context-bound behavior that can always be attributed, at least in part to the setting or the context of the utterance. Not only does practical, everyday language incorporate many different voices, but these voices are identifiable and dependent on the full context in which they are used. For example, when I, as a storyteller, imitate my mother, her voice and all that it reveals of her is incorporated into my voice, a listener would simultaneously recognize both of these discrete voices: my mother's and mine. The same could be said of a pre-formative "listening" to a narrator's discourse, into which he or she incorporates other voices.

Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, pp. 262-63.
According to Bakhtin, the condition of heteroglossia (different voices) enables the production of the novel and, I would add, to a lesser degree, the short story. A story such as "A Rose For Emily" might incorporate the dialect of traditional Southern oratory (as in the use of antiquated adjectives such as "august"), the language of individual characters (such as the voices of Miss Emily and the townspeople of Jefferson), and sociological or historical voices (as in the description of the late Colonel Sartoris as "he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron.") The story incorporates these as well as other languages and actually exploits the linguistic phenomenon of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, there is a constant interplay between the various stratified voices of a text and this dynamic, tensive relationship he calls dialogism. The dialogic relationship that exists between different voices of a text can offer the performer fresh and useful tools, not only for literary analysis but also for the free variation of informed performance choices.

It might be wise to pause at this point and pull together the various strands of our proposed theory. We are dealing with the specific situation in which a performer tries to embody the voice of a narrated text in a public performance. In order to "become" the narrator, to live through the narrator's experience of the telling of the story, a performer constitutes the narrator as a living other, and the narrator's discourse as the symbolic actions of that other.

In seeking to understand how the ubiquitous phenomenon of attribution functions in the interpretation of the narrator's actions we cannot forget the

essential differences between a flesh-and-blood other and the fictional narrator of a text. In real life, we can literally see, hear, feel, smell, and touch the other. In literature we can only imagine him or her. We come to know narrators through only one sense—we "hear" them tell their tales. Because we apprehend narrators only through "hearing" their discourse and interpreting its symbolic actions, it is necessary for our theory to do justice to the contents of that hearing. For this reason, the theories of Bakhtin are of particular help and enlightenment. Bakhtin never fails to view the text as utterance, as statement, as discourse, in short, as a telling. At the same time, he never allows the riches of a text to be reduced by a simple "hearing." Like many performers, he keeps returning to the text, looking for the embedded voices within the apparent monologue of the narrator.

If we are going to think of the text as a narrator's verbal behavior, we can apply the interpersonal structures of attribution to our reflections about the narrator's acts. Our everyday discourse is an incorporation of many different languages (social, historical, and professional, for example), and so is the discourse of a literary narrator. The way in which a narrator uses language, what he is serious about and what he jokes about, what jargon he borrows, what ideologies he embraces through language, tell us two things about him: the environment of the narrator is often revealed by the languages and words he incorporates, and the disposition of a narrator is frequently disclosed by his position in relation to these incorporated voices.

For example, in "A Rose For Emily," the narrator uses many legal terms as we shall see. We might reasonably attribute that the legal profession is part of the narrator's environment, and that his straight, serious, non-parodic use of
this professional language indicates some stable disposition in his character. These primary modes of attribution (i.e. dispositional and environmental) can become more obvious to the performer if he knows how to find the languages embedded in the narrator's apparent monologue. Bakhtin's theories can show the performer how to find these embedded voices.

Heteroglossia as a Rehearsal Method

Any performer who has read Bakhtin carefully is in possession of a new means of analyzing the discourse of a text. That reader can look for the dialogic relationships that exist between the different identifiable voices or languages within a text. The performer can then rehearse a physical embodiment of each particular voice in the text. Then the performer can seek to embody the dialogic relationship wherein one voice is an invisible presence with another voice, as in parody. This method of repeated readings would, in turn, foreground each discrete voice as it was found in the text. All of the different readings of a paragraph, for example, would then be blended and be present in the coalescence of the actual performance. Perhaps an old anecdote would serve to illustrate this coalescence.

An apocryphal theater story describes Orson Welles' difficulty in directing Agnes Moorehead in a scene in the film *The Magnificent Ambersons*. It was a short sequence that called for Miss Moorehead's character, who was insane, to run down the long corridor of a family mansion. Apparently, Welles was not satisfied with the scene because none of the actress's versions of it seemed rich or complex enough. He told her to improvise and play the entire scene as if she were literally one year old. She complied. Then he told her to play it as an old man, as a cat and as a coquette, as a murderer and as a martyr, and so on.
through an exhausting and seemingly irrelevant list. Yet after a few attempts at combining many of these various versions into one scene, both Welles and Moorehead were satisfied that they had achieved the complexity and the reality they had wanted. Of course, in the final version, Moorehead played only her character and allowed the other performance possibilities to inform that character.

After reading Bakhtin on heteroglossia, I tried a similar rehearsal method on a section of Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily." I know the story well. But for the performer, familiarity with a text can be blinding as well as illuminating. However, in this case I read the story in order to look for what Bakhtin might call the "sociological voice": that voice which incorporates the language and value systems of social classes and customs. But foregrounding this particular voice in the text throughout several readings, I was able to recognize new performance possibilities as well as new themes in the story. This social voice is manifested chiefly in the tension that is implied between the social values and customs of Miss Emily's generation and those of the following one ("the next generation, with its more modern ideas . . .").

There is a thick layer of ambiguity in many narrational passages in the story. Nowhere is this ambiguity more apparent and problematic than in several passages that refer to the social phenomena of Jefferson, Mississippi. For example, in the second paragraph, immediately following a description of "what had once been our most select street," there is this passage:

But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was
left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish delay above the cotton
wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores.30

It is difficult to decide whether this description is straightforward or parodic,
whether the narrator is taking sides with Miss Emily's generation or the "next
generation," with the cupolas or with the cotton gins. Even the choice of the
adjectives "stubborn" and "coquettish" is unclear. Both words carry positive
and/or negative connotations. One of this story's great mysteries is the nature
of the narrator's stance in regard to Miss Emily. Does he admire her
"stubbornness" or disapprove of her intentions? His description of her house
symbolically defines this relationship as an enigma.

In rehearsal, the performer can experiment with this ambiguity by
alternately attempting to embody the negative and positive possibilities of the
narrator's ambiguous stance towards Miss Emily. Each dispositional quality of
the narrator is "tried on for size." The final step in this rehearsal method is to
follow the suggestions of Bakhtin and to let the disparate connotations exist
together, simultaneously, in a dialogic relationship. The narrator's admiration
for Emily can be mixed with a distaste for her "high and mighty" social
affections.

By gathering the complexities of voice into a coalescence, a performer
can avoid what many teachers of the acting "method" call "playing a quality"
rather than finding the "action in the line." In other words, playing the dialogic
action of approach/avoidance, in this case, will avoid the amateurish trap of
playing qualities such as "admiration" or "moral indignation," both of which

30 Faulkner, p. 119.
would be reductions of the story's essential complexities. Playing actions that combine two opposing responses at once, while not the easiest performance choice, may be the choice that is the richest and the truest to this text.

It is common for acting teachers to instruct their students to keep the audience intrigued with a character by avoiding simplistic, quality-based performances. Learning to "play" Bakhtin's dialogic relationships seems an ideal way of accomplishing this. As in the experience of Agnes Moorehead, the synthesis of several layers of performance choices based on the dialogic relationship between various stratified layers of language, can enable the performer to live through the complex and often contradictory motives and attitudes of a fully realized narrator.

The third paragraph of Faulkner's story will serve as an excellent final example of the heteroglossic approach to forming the performance. It contains several different "voices" that are unmarked in the text and can therefore be embodied only through "intonational quotation marks." This term of Bakhtin's refers to the actual verbal performance of a person, inflected in such a way as to make obvious the embedded voices within the discourse.

 Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor—he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron—remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of
reifying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

A close reading of this paragraph reveals at least several layers of heteroglossia that might inform a performance. First, there is the temporal pull between the voice of the past and that of the present epic situation. The narrator speaks in the immediate present, but his voice exists in a dialogic relationship with the historical/traditional past of the town. As a performer I (P) must engage the narrator (O) about his stance in relation to this past (X). This phenomenon is marked by intonational quotation marks around such constructions as

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition . . .

. . . dating from that day in 1894 when . . .

. . . —he who had fathered the edict . . .

These constructions suggest an almost valorized past, a past impossible to divorce from its rhetorical and oratorical conventions. These sentences seem qualitatively different from those in the second half of the paragraph. When the narrator says, "Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity," he seems to extricate himself from a formal, almost oratorical tone, to a tone more immediately addressed to the listener or the narratee. Obviously, this temporal tension between the events of the story and the telling of those events is crucial to any physical embodiment of this text. In rehearsal, the performance might

31 Faulkner, pp. 119-20.
gain much from sustained readings which alternately foregrounded the past events and the present telling. Eventually, these voices would be gathered into the final performance.

Another language that coexists in this passage is the professional language of the lawyer. Constructions such as "Dating from the date . . ." and "the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity . . ." are obvious images of legal language. The same could be said of individual word choices such as "edict," "remitted," and "dispensation." This formal, detached language is the language of a man who is well-practiced in retaining his professional objectivity and in using his professional dialect. Therefore, that language, that symbolic action, becomes the basis for my attribution of detachment to the narrator. I sense that the narrator's use of local jargon is understood and perhaps shared by the listener. Not only that, but the use of the embedded language of the legal profession, permits me to attribute that the narrator is quite possibly a lawyer, a judge, or someone closely related to those professions. Admittedly, this latter attribution is only a textual possibility, not a probability or a certainty. However, it provides a performer with a more definite character to portray without violating the text.

Further, this legal language is in a dialogic relationship with the almost courtly language of the old South manifested in phrases like "coquettish decay," "hereditary obligation," and "Negro woman." In fact, if I pause for a moment and foreground the implied author here, I might ask why he has chosen to place this description of the "hereditary obligation" that the town has toward Miss Emily alongside the description of the edict. I suspect that Faulkner is making some subtle comparison between the "white man's burden" towards Miss Emily and
towards the Negro women of Jefferson. Traditionally, the white rulers of Southern society have paid the white woman's taxes, and they have insisted that the black women wear an insignia of their inferior social position. I could never have discovered (or attributed) this possible motive of the implied author, had I not known to isolate the social voice in the text.

But I must always finally return to the narrator. These linguistic images are clues to ways in which this narrator could become more highly defined in performance: mature, but not old enough to have been a contemporary of Sartoris, gracious, aristocratic, involved to some extent in the legal profession, and subconsciously racist and sexist in spite of the fact that he seems to realize there is racism around him. The latter two qualities are in an obvious dialogue with the aforementioned historical-social voice.

One step in my definition of the narrator is to occasionally foreground the implied author as an other (O) and to make attributions concerning where the implied author stands in relation to the narrator who then would become the (X) of the basic symmetry model. In most cases these attributions would deal with how the implied author is disposed toward the narrator. As a performer I intuitively sense the voice of the implied author in the juxtaposition of images and in constructions such as "coquettish decay." I must, according to this performance method, foreground and reflect on the implied author's voice and eventually incorporate it into the foregrounded voice of the narrator during my performance. In the final sentence of this paragraph, the previously cited ambiguity in the narrator's view of the past returns. It is not clear whether he has respect or contempt for Colonel Sartoris ("—he who fathered the edict . . ."). There is, however, little ambiguity in the final, benignly sexist
comment that "only a woman would have believed it." Clearly, a performer who comes to this passage armed with the theory of heteroglossia knows what to look for and how to find it. That performer focuses his or her attention on various textual voices, attributing relationships between the voice in focus and those other voices that form the ground of the voice being attended to.

Bakhtin's conceptualization of prose fiction as a dynamic interplay between stratified languages is an especially rich theory for the performer. One of its great virtues is its critical generosity. It is able to coexist with other theories to a remarkable degree. A performer could use both heteroglossia and dramatistic analysis to fully define a narrator, as in the case of "A Rose For Emily." But heteroglossia, like attribution, is also compatible with the New Criticism and even deconstruction (which could be viewed as a critical foregrounding of the centrifugal force that partially animates heteroglossia). Heteroglossia as a performance method is particularly felicitous in relation to phenomenological criticism and practice. The method I have described is a way of "walking around" the immanent text and viewing it from as many "sides" as possible. The attractions and the repelling forces that constitute heteroglossia also, to a large extent, constitute the mutable phenomenon of a performer's creative encounter with a literary text.

The Figural Voice

The phenomenological rehearsal and analysis method that I have outlined could be clarified perhaps with a simple term that describes the process. I would like to propose the term "figural voice" to signify the particular language or voice that is the momentary figure in the ground of the performer's consciousness during a reading of a text.
The narrator's voice is only one of the voices that we attend to when we prepare a text for performance. We also engage the obvious voices of characters within the story, the less obvious voice of the implied author, and even those "voices" within the discourse that we sense only dimly. Eventually a performer will gather all of these voices into an embodiment of the narrative voice; in order to render our proposed model more generalizable and more able to describe the complex act of performance, the term "figural voice" is preferable to more restricted terms such as "narrator," "character," or "implied author," because it more accurately reflects the many ways in which we constitute narrative voices as we form a performance.

If a performer were to follow the methods of heteroglossia, she or he would concentrate on or attend to one identifiable language or voice at a time in the readings preparatory to performance. Then the reader would attempt to describe and embody the dialogic relationships between these voices, attributing causes for the presence of each discrete voice within the general discourse of the narrator. In terms of Newcomb's symmetry model the performer (P) would consider the embedded voice part of the content (X) of the narrator's (O's) discourse, and would try to determine where the narrator stands in relation to those contents. As a performer I (P) set the narrator of Faulkner's story (O) in relation to, among other things, the legal language contained in his utterance. Then I must attribute environmental or dispositional reasons for the narrator's use of this language. This process allows me to systematically build up the outer circumstances and the internal motivations that control the narrator's behavior. Once I have entered this deep level of the narrator's experience, I should be more capable of "becoming" that narrator in performance.
Chapter Four

THE FUNCTION OF ATTRIBUTION IN A PRE-FORMATIVE READING
OF "A ROSE FOR EMILY"

All of the major parts of the theoretical model are now in place and the method can be applied to a specific work. I will continue to analyze my own pre-formative encounter with the narrator of "A Rose For Emily." I must keep in mind that, although the narrator's voice is the focus of my critical attention, that voice also contains the word of the implied author, of characters such as Emily Grierson and her father, and various other voices that I can now call up into my consciousness thanks to the theories of Bakhtin.

I begin by making a partial list of the voices I can already discern in the text, voices that I have listed after two or three "diagnostic" readings of the story. These voices include

(1) the voice of the narrator as a single personae
(2) the voice of the narrator as a chorus of different persona (incorporating the various voices of some possible inhabitants of Jefferson, Mississippi)
(3) the voices of individual characters in the story (marked in the text by direct quotation marks)
(4) the sociological voice (e.g. "the edict")
(5) the historical voice of the Southern past
(6) the legal voice (the professional dialect of the legal profession)
(7) the formal Southern voice or the voice of the Southern oratorical tradition
(8) the text-as-entity: Although this voice is almost contradictory to my proposed model, it is difficult not to think of the text as a complete entity, as a balanced and completed object rather than as a balanced and completed utterance. This concept should be avoided (bracketed) in the initial phases of preformance in order to allow the narrator's voice to be presented as the voice of a living other. My theory recognizes the great value of the objectivist approach but privileges the idea of the
objectified text as an utterance rather than as words on a page. First, though, the performer must reflect on his or her own attributions about the narrator. This, in turn, will produce much valuable information about the objectified text.

During my pre-formative rehearsals of this story I (P) will focus on the figural voice of the narrator (O), engaging that voice and seeking, through attribution, to understand the causes for the narrator's verbal behavior. Throughout this engagement, the narrator and I will be set in relation to certain objects and events (such as the edict, Homer Barron, or Miss Emily herself). Subsequent rehearsals will alternately foreground other voices inherent in the discourse of the narrator. By focusing on, say, the sociological voice, I would temporarily constitute it as the figural voice; the relationship that I discover, through attribution, between the narrator's voice and the sociological voice, will allow me to live through the narrator's immanent experience and develop a rich inner life when I embody that narrator on a stage.

Because my analysis will focus on the initial impressions made by the narrator of this story, I reprint the first two paragraphs of the story below.

When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen
monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

One of the more important objects discussed by the narrator is Emily's house. The narrator places his description of the house early in his discourse, giving it a place of symbolic prominence. As I "converse" with the narrator about his description of this house, I must attribute causes to his verbal behavior: why he places the description in such a prominent place and why he chooses to describe it the way he does. If the structure (in this case the order) of the narrator's utterance is important, then I should attribute causes for that order. I also must attribute either environmental or dispositional causes for the narrator's use of oxymorons such as "heavily lightsome" in his description of the house. If I am going to encounter this narrator as an other, I must decide why he tells the story in the way that he does.

I must also be aware that the narrator's voice incorporates the voice of the implied author. I find that, in the first paragraph, it is easy to foreground the narrator's voice because of the almost informal "conversational" style. In

---

this functional first paragraph, the narrator's presence is strong as he seems to launch an involved and often-repeated story; the narrator aligns himself with the other townspeople ("our whole town") and, because of the conversational feel of the utterance, the paragraph offers few problems for the performer trying to embody this narrator.

But the second paragraph is another matter. This long description of the house seems formal and very carefully prepared (i.e. "written"). It has more of a "literary" feel in that its language is so obviously calculated. It is not conversational style, even for a Southern professional man, to use constructions such as "the heavily lightsome style of the seventies," or verbs such as "encroached and obliterated," or adjectives such as "august." The entire passage has more of the quality of oratory than conversation. While I must primarily embody the narrator in a solo performance of this story, I must contend with the "literary" behavior that distinguishes this paragraph say, from the first paragraph. As the discourse is presented to me, I immediately attribute the paragraph more to an implied author than to a narrator. I make this determination by way of the attributional pattern of consistency (discussed in chapter two). I recognize the style of the second paragraph as containing something that is essentially akin to the other works of Faulkner that I know. I might not think of this during the final performance, but now, in my pre-performance, I can. The different figural voices that I constitute in the first and second paragraphs, could be the key to solo performance choices or even to a group staging of the story.

Let us say that, keeping my attributional perspective on the text, I desire to play the narrator as a highly defined character throughout the performance.
In such a case I would embody the character in much the same way as an actor would in a realistic play. That is, I would bracket everything other than the narrator's consciousness. I would seek, through some combination of method, technique, intuition, and inspiration, to become that character. In rehearsals I find that this approach works well for the first paragraph, but not so well for the second.

Real people who are engaged in face-to-face encounters do not generally speak through the voice of an implied author. There may be an element of this in the everyday situation in which one person tries to get an absent person's ideas across to a face-to-face partner, but it is not generally the way we constitute the speech of an other. And yet, the voice of Faulkner seems to be an essential element in the verbal behavior of the second paragraph.

How do I know this? I know it the only way a performer can: by bracketing the existence of Faulkner's voice, that is, by pretending that Faulkner's voice is not part of the second paragraph. I attempt to doubt Faulkner's presence here in order to justify the discourse as only that of the narrator I must embody. I then try to perform this bracketed version, privileging only the voice of the narrator. I attempt to speak the sentences in an informal, conversational and naturalistic manner, possibly using the old acting technique of foregrounding the present lived moment of the narrator and "searching for the right word." In this performance a comma would mean a natural vocal pause or that the narrator is trying to think of the best word to describe an element of the house.

This naturalistic delivery technique works well—up to a point:

It was big, squarish frame house that had once been white,
decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies...

These words could be spoken naturally in a real-life conversation without sounding contrived or "written." However, the phrase "in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies," becomes problematic when I attempt to perform it only as the word of the narrator. It sounds stiff, formal, and is all but impossible to perform naturalistically.

"Why," I must ask, "does the narrator choose these words?" Am I to attribute this verbal behavior to the narrator's disposition or to some environmental factor? In the former case, I run the risk of creating an affected and possibly unreliable narrator; in the latter case I must imagine a very formal setting for the epic situation— a choice that perhaps could be supported textually, but that could also weaken the dramatic immediacy of the performance. Keeping my interpersonal perspective in focus, I reflect further on the context of this dyadic encounter between narrator and listener. If I place myself in the narrator's position, I realize that the narrator's attention is focused not so much on the story as on the listener.

Another possible environmental factor could be this implied listener. If I focus on the narrative voice, and insist on positing causes for its verbal behavior, then I could posit a listener who is also very formal, highly educated, with an unusually sophisticated everyday vocabulary: in short, a listener who is in the same "interpretive community" as the teller of the story. When the narrator speaks of "the next generation with its more modern ideas," for example, he signals a narratee who would know the generation being mentioned and probably have some definite reaction to it.

\[\text{Faulkner, p. 119.}\]
But if I am to do justice to the text as it is fully presented to me, I cannot ignore the voice of the implied author. Therefore, I perform the second paragraph once as the narrator and a second time as the implied author. That is, I live through the second performance as if I were Faulkner. Eventually, I will have to return to the foregrounding of the narrator's voice, but this voice will contain the word of the implied author. In performance, I play only the narrator and try to live through the experience of the telling of the story. But if, during rehearsals, I have also played the passage as the implied Faulkner, I can gather Faulkner's voice into the narrator's by allowing it to "be" in the horizon of my consciousness. The second reading forces me to deal with authorial intentions by insisting that I attribute causes (mostly dispositional) to Faulkner's verbal behavior.

I suspect that most good performers already "allow" this dual presence in performance. My point is that a discrete and conscious foregrounding of the different voices of a text during performance, can make the embodiment of these voices more clear and a more vital part of the rehearsal experience. This clarification of the lived experience of rehearsal is a product of the constant questioning by the performer of the figural voice in the text. I must ascribe reasons for the behavior of whatever voice I am foregrounding at a given stage of my pre-formance.

The exhaustive questioning of a text during pre-formance is rarely a teleological process. It is often possible to discover new voices embedded in a narrator's discourse if one looks hard enough for them. I return to this same paragraph of "A Rose For Emily" and this time I look for Bakhtin's sociological
voice. In this text that voice will contain an ideological and sociological element. It will call up images of social class, racial distinction, and the essential "Southerness" of this regional story. The "dialogue" between these voices can become the intentional object of our consciousness, helping us to fill in the fictive world of Yoknapatawpha. The sociological voice in Faulkner's story gathers in the history of Southern racism and sexism. Rather than remaining in the ground of our consciousness, this voice can become, briefly, the figure or intentional object of our reflection, increasing the potential for clarifying and vivifying our experience of the text. Remember that Newcomb's symmetry model could diagram this example as a triangular relationship between the performer (P), the narrator (O), and the peculiarly Southern social issues (X) implied in the text. These relationships are governed by the degree of attraction or repulsion between the three entities.

Let us return to that curious "heavily lightsome style" of Miss Emily's house. This time, in rehearsal, I foreground the social voice implied by the text. I treat it as a separate voice that will eventually be incorporated into the performed embodiment of the narrator's voice. Attribution theory would suggest that the phrase is a behavior that can be attributed to dispositional or environmental factors. An attributional model of this pre-formative encounter with the sociological voice requires that the performer (P) ascribe environmental or dispositional causes for the behavior of the voice. The social voice (now the figural voice in the text) is set in relation to an object (X), in this case Miss Emily's house.
The oxymoronic description could be attributed to an ambivalent feeling in relation to the house. The word "lightsome" suggests grace and delicate beauty; the word "heavy" is just that, and it suggests something ponderous and oppressive. There could be different responses to the narrative use of these words, but these are, at least, very possible reactions on the part of a performer. In attribution theory, the degree of attraction or repulsion an other has for his or her discursive objects is a crucial element in the attribution of causes for such word choices. "Lightsome" seems to place the narrator in a positive relation to the house, and "heavily" places him in a negative relationship.

Once the foregrounding of the social voice and the use of the symmetry model have clarified this ambiguity, it is up to the performer to attribute reasons for the narrator's implied social ambivalence. Actually, two attributions are called for, one applicable to "heavily" and the other to "lightsome." The narrator seems simultaneously aware of the graceful beauty and the ponderous dark weight of Southern tradition.

This dual awareness is again suggested a few lines later in the text by the
description of the "coquettish decay" of the crumbling facade. Something in the
voice of the text both pitied and loathed the symbolic house. That tense
 ambivalence could be the key to a performative embodiment of a complex
narrator, a performance that is primarily an embodiment of a fictional
character, but that does not betray or ignore the complexities of this great text.
The duality of this narrator, his love/hate relationship with the central events
and existents of this story, while not the only interpretational possibility, could
provide the necessary consistency of behavioral objective so important to a
performer's building of a character.

Attribution theory and common sense tell us that individuals tend to
behave in consistent patterns. This is the basis for our attribution of
"personality traits" to individuals. It is quite possible that the most important
consistency in this narrator is his ambivalent feelings about the principle
character in his story. A focus on this consistent behavior could help the
performer create a more accessible and concrete embodiment of this narrator.
Ambivalence towards Miss Emily could become a consistent through-line, a
general direction in which to develop the performed character.

As a storyteller, this narrator does not try to direct the listener's reaction
to Miss Emily by making simple moral pronouncements about her. He seems to
take pains not to bias the listener for or against Emily. His goal in the telling,
his "through-line," if you will, is simply to keep the listener intrigued until the
final, carefully prepared moment. At the same time, the narrator seems
determined to allow the listener to make up his or her own mind about Miss
Emily and would therefore be keenly interested in his listener's reactions,
especially at the "shocking" end of the narrative.
This analysis is only one more example of how the phenomenological perspective of attribution can inform and illuminate the act of pre-formance. One could perform similar attributional analyses of such problematic phrases as "the cedar-bemused cemetery" or the two references to Miss Emily as an "idol." The point is that the performer must first determine whether the verbal descriptions can be attributed to the disposition or the situational context of the narrator. Then, the performer must determine whether the behavior of the narrator is an example of one of the several possible patterns of attribution such as distinctiveness, consensus, or consistency. To illustrate, I will use another example from the problematic second paragraph.

Twice in the paragraph, the narrator refers to the "august" names of the former neighbors of Emily Grierson. He never uses the word again. Therefore, the verbal behavior of the narrator here is distinctive. It is also consistent in that he only uses the adjective "august" to refer to the names of the former owners of the houses on Emily's street. It would be unlikely to attribute the use of the word to social practice or "common usage," that is, to see the word choice as an example of consensus. Even in the upper classes of the South at the time of the story, the word "august" was becoming an affectation or an archaism and it is certainly often viewed that way by the contemporary reader. That is why, incidentally, that the use of the word seems more a choice of Faulkner's than the narrator's, and why the word becomes problematic for the performer who must essentially play the narrator rather than Faulkner. Faulkner's word must be made to "work" as the narrator's word; that is, the performer must gather his or her attribution for Faulkner's use of the word into the narrator's use of that word. The performer can engage Faulkner concerning the word "august;" the narrator cannot.
As a performer, then, I am forced into a dilemma. I know that this particular word is not uncommon in other works by Faulkner, who consistently and distinctively uses a style redolent of the high flown rhetoric of the ante-bellum South. Faulkner both censures and embraces the traditional South and I must preserve this dialectic pull, this essential ambiguity in performance. Faulkner appropriates archaisms for stylistic purposes. But I must justify the narrator's use of these words without distorting the probabilities of the text.

I do this through the process of free cognitive variation of interpretive ideas. I posit different motivations for the narrator's use of the word and try these motivations out in performance. For example, the word "august" could be intimidating to some listeners. Therefore, I "question" the narrator to see if he is possibly trying to intimidate the listener. I quickly reject this interpretation because it is not consistent with the straightforward, engagingly suspenseful development of the story-line by the narrator. The last section of the story is anything but intimidating. Rather, it has the feel of a rehearsed, quietly effective, master story-teller. The narrator certainly seems consciously to control the effects of his story, but he does not intimidate.

Another possibility for the narrator's use of the word might be to "test" the listener's reaction to it. I come to this possibility by incorporating the aforementioned ambiguous use of the word "august" by Faulkner himself, whose implied voice I must incorporate into the narrator's. I try to find a way to preserve this ambiguity in embodying the narrator's intention of the word "august." I attribute ambivalent feelings about Miss Emily to the narrator based on his alternate descriptions of her which are sometimes positive ("She vanquished them," "She carried her head high . . .") and sometimes negative (as
in the latter descriptions of Miss Emily as "bloated" and her voice as "dry" and "cold.")

As I discussed in chapter two, one of the most common causes of attributions is the close proximity of two items in one's experiential field of vision. The narrator seems ambivalent towards Miss Emily; therefore it is not unlikely that he might equate the "august names" of her neighborhood with Miss Emily herself, extending his feeling of ambivalence to all that Emily's generation represents. The word "august," if it were played as a testing word for the listener, could then be allowed to be non-committal. The narrator waits to see how the listener will react to it. This performance choice, while not the only possibility, lends immediacy to the scene and preserves the essential ambiguity of Faulkner's voice by incorporating it into the narrator's.

Preserving the narrator's ambiguous relationship to Emily and her house can preserve the authorial intention without sacrificing the lived immediacy of my performance as the narrator. Any performer of literature knows that creating a subtext or an "internal monologue" for a character frequently involves the mental creation of textual possibilities as well as probabilities. In fact, the fully lived performance often involves more possibilities than certainties or probabilities because of the prodigious amount of imaginative "filling in" required of the performer. In this particular case, I could attribute the narrator's use of the word "august" more to the situation of his face-to-face

---

engagement of the narratee than to his ambivalent disposition towards Miss Emily herself. I might play the action on this line as a testing action. The narrator (like Faulkner) could be deliberately non-judgmental in his use of the word in order to observe his listener's reaction to it. This is hardly unlikely behavior for a man involved in the legal profession, as I have posited this narrator to be. More specifically, the narrator might use the term even jokingly, or with a slight wry smile, in order to see if the listener shares a tolerant yet critical opinion of the "high and mighty" upper classes of the previous generation in Jefferson, Mississippi.

I do not mean to suggest that this is the only right interpretation of the narrator's motivation. Indeed, I do not even suggest that it is necessarily the best interpretation. It does, however, provide the performer with a clear motivation for the use of an unusual word; it is a valid possibility of the text that does not simplify the essential ambiguities of the story; and, it is an interpretation that gathers the authorial voice into the performer's singular embodiment of the narrator.

Focusing on the voices of the others in a text, primarily the figural voice of a narrator, can help the performer to reflect upon his or her own attributions about that narrator and to avoid possible distortions of the text that can result from unexamined subjective responses. There is ample evidence that individual readers often allow their subjective reading styles to affect their interpretive responses. Much of this evidence has come from psychologist Norman Holland.

Norman Holland's continuing work in the psychoanalytic investigations of readers' responses to literature has presented persuasive evidence that when readers' expectations (of a text or of their world) are violated, they tend to
construct psychological defenses against these violations. When a text violates our expectations, Holland argues, we mentally defend ourselves by justifying or ignoring the literary elements (the Xs of my model) that were incongruent with our expectations. These defenses, according to Holland, lead to interpretational patterns that fulfill conscious or subconscious fantasies on the part of the reader—fantasies from which readers construct the story's theme. Holland does not use the language of attribution, but he is obviously postulating a psychological strain toward symmetry that directs the interpretational pattern of a given reader.

In his book *Readers Reading*, Holland analyzes the interpretational strategies of five readers of "A Rose For Emily." He presents the experiential record of these readers as transcripts of his interviews with them concerning the story. Holland himself is a psychoanalyst, and makes an admirable (if not always successful) attempt to minimize his own influence on the readers' responses.

It is interesting to note that all five readers intended the narrative voice of "A Rose For Emily" as primarily that of the author. That is, they constituted the speaking voice in the text as William Faulkner's rather than as a fictional narrator. They seem to relate more to the implied values and intentions of Faulkner than to the narrator as a well-defined other. Of course, none of these readers intended to perform the story; they read it silently in the traditional manner. This fact undergirds the often stated hypothesis that silent readers do not approach a text in the same way that a trained performer does. The attributional theory that I am proposing, while it is designed specifically for the performer, is also a valid method for the general reader, who might not reflect consciously on his or her own subjective attributions about the text until he knows the structure of those attributional patterns.
General readers and even those readers who are considered experts in literature may constitute texts in ways that are fundamentally different from the methods of a performer. In terms of the symmetry model, non-performing readers may be more inclined to focus on the contents of the utterance, the Xs of the model, rather than on the act of utterance itself or, rather, the consciousness that produces that utterance. Of course, the contents of the utterance are of paramount importance in interpretation, but we may often overlook the relationships between the narrator and the contents of his or her utterance. It is precisely this perceived relationship between a speaker and the contents of her or his discourse that is the concern of Holland, of Bakhtin, and of attribution theory.

Readers who intend to perform a work often must find ways in which to make the artifice or the "literariness" of style viable as actual speech. As I stated previously, one way to handle this problem is to bracket the notion of the text as a printed page and to justify the discourse entirely as an utterance, letting the text become the utterance of an other whom the performer will embody in performance.

In order to justify the style of the text as an utterance, I might constitute that very style, not as "literary style" but, rather, as verbal "behavior." This would allow me to use the attributional paradigms as theoretical and methodological underpinnings for a rehearsal method. A knowledge of how humans tend to perceive each other, then, can greatly inform the performer about how he or she perceives the other in the text. This is particularly true of the perception of a narrator.
The silent reader, that is, the non-performing reader such as those interviewed by Norman Holland, may "lose" the narrative voice in the reading experience and concentrate only on the events and existents (the contents) of the text. If so, that reader might forget to look "behind" the text and attribute motives to the verbal behavior of the narrator (or even the implied author).

On the other hand, the pre-formative reader, armed with a knowledge of the structures of attribution, may be more inclined to develop complex motives for a narrator's actions because he or she is intending to embody that narrator and live through that narrator's behavior on a stage. Attribution then, can help the pre-formative reader look behind the text, and at the same time bring the printed text into the world of interpersonal encounters: Speaking the text and living through it during performance is a way of allowing the text to fully disclose itself to us.

The claims that silent readers tend to de-emphasize the narrator as an other is supported by Norman Holland's ongoing work in the psychoanalytic investigations of readers' responses to texts such as "A Rose For Emily." One of the readers, whom Holland calls "Sebastion," is representative of the tendency to think of the text as an object rather than as an other consciousness. He speaks of "its" (i.e. the story's) preparation for the surprise ending, rather than as his (i.e. the narrator's or even Faulkner's) intended final effect in the text. Holland interprets this objectification of the text as a defensive strategy growing out of a fear of total engagement with the story. While Holland's views are extreme, they offer another perspective on the feeling of balance that readers seek with a literary work—a feeling that motivates attributional behavior. Holland writes that
Where a reader's projections do not fit easily into a story, he will tend to drive himself away from the story as most people conceive it, creating distortions or tangents.  

Holland's interpretation of Sebastion's response to "A Rose For Emily" suggests that Sebastion insists on constituting the story as a coldly objective "work of art" in order to "remain outside it" or to avoid an intimate experiential involvement with it. Still, Holland had spent a great deal of professional time with Sebastion prior to his reading of the story, and had already detected Sebastion's tendency to insulate himself from strong emotional reactions and involvements with others.

Sebastion's reading was consistent with Holland's professional expectations. Indeed, Holland's ability to predict the kinds of readings that his clients will present is intriguing evidence that responses to literature are highly subjective and subject to the idiosyncracies of the individual personality.

In terms of the proposed model, it is interesting to see how Sebastion exhibits both dispositional and environmental attributions to the behavior of Miss Emily in the story. For example, Sebastion attributes Emily's murder of Homer Barron to her dispositional quality of shame, the shame she feels after being rejected by him. This is an intriguing point. This same interpretation could also be viewed as an environmental attribution if we foreground the sociological

---

5 Holland, p. 177.
6 Holland, p. 177.
7 Holland, p. 184.
voice as well as Miss Emily's voice in the story. Her shame could then be attributed to the traditional Southern code of behavior for aristocratic unmarried women at the time of the events of the story. To be single, or to be rejected by a man, especially after a certain age, was, in the South, a severe social stigma. My proposed performance method could not only incorporate both the feminist viewpoint and the subtextual individualization of Miss Emily as a character, it could project these attributions that originate inside the reader, into the performed narrator, creating a full presencing of the text, and one that is dramatically viable as the single embodiment of the narrator.

The experiential record of Holland's readers provides information that can easily be illuminated by the attributional perspective. By way of example, let us look very briefly at several of Holland's readers reactions to another problematic line in the text—the inserted information about Colonel Sartoris' "edict:"

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor— he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron—remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity.

Sebastion, who would be the P in our model, attributes Colonel Sartoris' "fathering" of the edict entirely to environmental or situational pressures. He sees the Colonel as a Southern ruler and maintains that

Even the rulers have no choice, because they're so completely determined by the system that they work under.

8Faulkner, p. 119.

9Holland, p. 176.
Sebastion went on to interpret the edict as referring to the sexual victimization of Southern black women by white men. Our model might analyze this reaction as an example of misattribution based on distinctiveness information. The distinction exists in the narrative use of the word "fathered." Because the word has sexual connotations, Sebastion linked it to a racial issue that is, at best, only tangentially related to this story.

Structurally, misattribution is no different from attribution. The current theories of attribution deal only with person perception; they do not address the validity of those perceptions. Likewise, my model is perception-oriented in that it describes how attribution functions in the performer's response to a literary other. A knowledge of the structures of attribution cannot assure the performer of a valid interpretation of that other's behavior; but it can show the performer how to analyze his or her own reasoning concerning the causes of the other's verbal behavior. That is, attribution theory can inform the performer about the quasi-logical connections that create his or her interpretation of the others in the text. If we, as performers, know attribution theory, we can reflect on our attributional patterns as we try to interpret texts. By allowing our own attributional behaviors to become the intentional focus of our consciousness as we read, we may indeed avoid some misattributions and overcome some of the idiosyncratic blocks in our perceptions of literary others.

Another reader, whom Holland refers to as Saul, also singles out the distinctive use of the word "fathered" in the third paragraph of the story. Saul translated the verb as "sponsored" which, according to Holland, was consistent with Saul's other "safe" interpretations of possibly controversial or
uncomfortable interpretations. Likewise, during the interviews Holland had to remind Saul that the edict refers only to "Negro women." Saul consistently lumped the women into the generic category of "Negroes," thereby divesting the word of any sexual connotations.

Holland's analysis of these responses suggests that individual readers tend to read works with consistent defenses, biases, interpretational patterns, or doctrinal adhesions (to borrow I. A. Richards' term). Had Saul had the benefit of the attributional paradigm and the method of foregrounding the different voices of the text, he would have been forced to come up with an answer for any narrative behavior that struck him as distinctive or consistent.

If, in rehearsal, my figural voice is the implied author Faulkner, I might ask why he seems so caught up with "fathers" in this story. The use of the word "father" and the employment of other paternal imagery is a consistent behavior of Faulkner in this story. He has a good deal to say about Emily's stern, autocratic father and he evokes striking images such as the "picture" of Emily in the doorway in the distance framed by her father's foregrounded legs as he wields a horsewhip. More importantly, if my figural voice is that of the narrator, I must attribute the word choice of the narrator to some stable disposition in him, or to some environmental factor. Although the word "fathered" is used distinctively, it can be made consistent or brought into balance with the aforementioned ambiguous social stance of the narrator. "Fathered" is an ambiguous word in this case. It could have a warm, positive

10 Holland, p. 176.
11 Holland, p. 176.
paternal feel, or it could call up all the negative associations about historical and racial paternalism. The execution of the heteroglossic rehearsal method, allows me to play both actions (e.g. "to warm" and "to force"), while privileging the viewpoint that is critical of Colonel Sartoris.

This attribution might bring about a little laugh after I (as the narrator) refer to the edict. It is a critical laugh, on that places me in a slightly negative relation to the edict. But, I also look up into the eyes of my listener and "check" his reaction before proceeding. This not only gives the scene dramatic immediacy, it preserves and justifies the narrator's ambiguous relationship to key elements in the story. In terms of the model, I have achieved a symmetrical relationship between all the paired elements in the triangular relationship: myself (P), the narrator (0), and the edict (X). (Remember that, according to Newcomb, the relationships between the different elements do not all have to be the same, either positive or negative, but the valences of the relationships define the performer's experience).

Through this detailed analysis of some isolated behaviors of the narrator of "A Rose For Emily," I have tried to make a case for the recommendation that performers encounter the narrators of texts much as they would encounter other human beings in everyday life. By adopting this interpersonal metaphor, and by learning the universal structures of human attributional behavior, the performer can come to know a text and his or her own response to it in a clearer way, and can then use that knowledge to feed a concentrated embodiment of the narrator's voice.

But in adopting this method, the performer is cautioned not to reduce the rich experience of pre-formative reading by searching the text only for narrative
behaviors. Narration occurs by way of language, and that language calls the
world of the text into living presence. We need to define and reflect on the
world that is summoned by the language of a text, and to ask to what degree our
attributions about narrators are a function of that language. No intentional
object, including the voices of narrators, can exist independently of the ground
from which it emerges and to which it is inextricably bound. The attributional
model that I will now describe seeks to embrace rather than reduce the rich
complexities of our experience of textual language and the worlds they summon
and in which they exist.

The Purposes of the Model

The performer who reads a text with the intention of performing it for
some audience is approaching that text with a fundamentally different purpose
than that of the general reader. Because they plan to embody the text, pre-
formative readers often intend the text more as an utterance than as an object.

Before pre-formance, that is, before the reader decides to perform a work
for the public, he or she often does think of the work as an object. The poem,
story, or novel is often perceived as a complete entity, a thing-out-there that is
to be presented to the reader's consciousness. This is the foundation of
objectivist criticism. The text is thought of as a written structure of parts that
make up a whole and the structure as well as the individual parts must be
understood by the reader.

The act of interpretation, oral or written, is an attribution. Academic
critics, as well as performers, spend a great deal of their time and efforts in an
attempt to understand the causes of a text's symbolic (i.e. linguistic) behavior.
They may attribute this behavior to characters, implied author's, or narrator's within the text. Attribution can be used as a central analogy that forms the basis of a "performance aesthetics" in regard to narrated texts. Further, the attribution paradigm of Theodore Newcomb, when applied to the act of performance and used in conjunction with Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, can suggest a performance methodology of unusual versatility and heuristic value. Newcomb's model (the P-O-X model controlled by the "strain toward symmetry") diagrams the perceiver's social encounter with a flesh-and-blood other. In order to adapt this model to the act of pre-performance, we must add to it the perceiver's phenomenological field of experience. That is, we must include in the model not only the performer's intentional focus at a given moment, but also any part of his or her peripheral consciousness that might affect the attributions of cause for the other's behavior. This peripheral consciousness is what Martin Heidegger calls the "horizon" and what Edmund Husserl refers to as the "co-present margin" of the perceiver's experience.

As I develop this experiential model, I will apply Newcomb's interpersonal diagram towards the perceiving performer by placing it in the ever-present context of the perceiver's field of experience.

The Phenomenological Experience of the Text-as-Utterance

I decide to allow a text to present itself to me as the utterance of a living other. I let this other "speak" to me as in a conversation. In doing so, I allow the text to open itself to me. Martin Heidegger defines the word "say" as "to show, to let appear, to let be seem and heard."¹² I not only listen to the text, I also

speak to it, question it, argue with it, court it, frustrate it, and in short, attempt to interpret it. This hypothetical "conversation" between a performer and a narrator is a complicated phenomenon, for, as Heidegger explains:

... speaking is at the same time also listening. It is the custom to put speaking and listening in opposition: one man speaks, the other listens. But listening accompanies and surrounds not only speaking such as it takes place in conversation. The simultaneousness of speaking and listening has a larger meaning. Speaking is of itself a listening. Speaking is a listening to the language that we speak. Thus, it is a listening not while but before we are speaking. ¹³

I have tried to show, in the previous chapter, how the narrator of "A Rose For Emily" listens to the narratee's reactions as he tells his carefully prepared story, a story that the narrator "hears" even as he speaks it. The performer does the same: his listening to the narrator's discourse is also a critical speaking to that discourse. My hypothesis is, that the essential dynamic of this "conversation" is determined by the attributional behavior of the performer.

The attributional perspective requires, then, that the performer/listener must perceive the narrator's discourse as verbal or symbolic behavior. This, in turn, requires the performer to consciously posit causes for any narrative behavior on which he or she consciously reflects. If we remember that we tend to take notice of and attribute causes for "non-common" effects or behaviors, it is not difficult to see the similarity between attributional behavior and what is commonly called "interpretation." When, as we read, we "notice" a stylistic device, an unusual viewpoint, a striking word choice, we are intentionally

focusing on "non-common" elements of textual discourse. When we attribute causes for these narrative "behaviors," we are interpreting the text.

Attribution theory deals with the ways in which we interpret everyday interpersonal events. For many attribution theorists such as Jones and Davis, the term "interpretation," when applied to person perception, simply means the degree to which the effects of an action are non-common. We interpret unusual (i.e. non-common) behaviors according to the degree and force of the motivation for that behavior. The behavior in question might be highly specific, like a narrator's use of an unusual word, or it might be a more generalized perception of the narrator's behavior. For example, the narrator of James Joyce's *Ulysses* or the Benjy section of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* differ from expected or traditional norms of narrative behavior; and, it is precisely their behavior that allows me to form an experiential record of their interior selves. I look behind the language, I listen to it, to discover the essential character of the narrator. I do this anytime the narrator's "style" becomes the momentary object of my attention and I do this primarily through the process of attribution.

Some narrators, like the traditional omniscient ones, do not seem to deviate from the norm to the extent of those mentioned above. Many writers, Hemingway for example, cultivate a kind of negative capability; as implied authors they "disappear" behind their seemingly conventional use of the narrative voice. In any case, traditional or nontraditional, the "style" of the narration determines what I am referring to as behavior. We, as performers, often must

---

deal in some way with any unusual stylistic devices of a text, and justifiably incorporate those devices into the embodied "speech" of the narrator. If a narrator is verbose, or even seems so, we would do well to justify that verbosity in our performance by attributing specific causes for it. Likewise, if the style is lean and sparse, we might look for attributes that give rise to that aspect of the narrator's style.

To summarize, the attributional theory of the act of preformance insists that in the final stages of rehearsal the performer must concentrate on the text as the utterance of the narrator. All that has been learned through the application of any other critical methods must finally be gathered into the embodiment of a narrator who is conceived of as the speaker of the text, and to whose symbolic behavior, especially problematic behavior, we must attribute causes. A knowledge of the structures of attribution can help the performer reflect on his or her own critical response to the text. As Mary Louise Pratt says, "our knowledge of the selection process is one of the most important sets of presuppositions we bring to bear when we read a literary work."^{15}

Balance or the Strain Toward Symmetry as the Principal Dynamic of the Response to a Text

I have determined that the narrator of "A Rose For Emily" has decidedly ambivalent feelings about Emily Grierson. I have also, during my imaginative attempt to live through the internal experience of the narrator's discourse, attributed very positive dispositional qualities to him. These include courtesy, intelligence, authority to tell the story, and great relish in the telling of it.

Because of my conscious attempt to constitute the narrative voice as a living, breathing, human other, I have come to understand him more and more. As my understanding of him increases, my assimilation of his ambivalent feelings about Emily not only grows but becomes more comfortable to me.

What I have just described is a good example of psychological balance principles at work. It is well to remember that attributional behavior is usually motivated by feelings of psychological imbalance or dissonance. Similarly, when two people discuss an object, the balance-seeking individual will exhibit a "strain" toward symmetry, a strong desire for a comfortable triangular relationship between himself (P), the other (0), and the object (X). In the language of attribution theory, if P has a high "degree of liking" for O, then P is more likely to accept and even assimilate O's attitudes, beliefs, and values. If I respect "Emily's" narrator and am attracted to him, I tend to make his ambivalent feeling my own.

Theodore Newcomb's symmetry model is the core of my attributional model of pre-formance. Newcomb diagrams the interpretational dynamics resulting from an assymetrical relationship among the three elements. For the purposes of illustration, let us suppose that, on a first reading, a person found Miss Emily repugnant.
Then, suppose that reader decided to perform the story for an audience, and read
the story again, this time bracketing all the possible textual voices other than
the narrator's. This reading develops a very positive relationship between the
performer and the narrator—a relationship similar to the one described above.
The narrator's positive estimations of Emily become apparent, as do his less
numerous negative ones. We now have an assymetrical relationship.

The essential imbalance is the performer's negative view of Emily and the
many positive feelings about her that the performer attributes to the narrator
based on his symbolic behavior in the text. The easiest way to achieve symmetry
is to allow one's perception of the other person (O) influence his or her
perception of the object (X). I gather so much of the narrator's apparent respect for Emily into my own vicarious experience of her, that my perception of her also becomes at least ambivalent, if not altogether positive, so that we now have a symmetrical relationship.

Newcomb himself presents the idea of this "strain towards symmetry" as an attributional law:

In propositional form, the stronger P's attraction toward O, the greater the strength of the force upon P to maintain minimal discrepancy between his own and O's attitude, as he perceives the latter, toward the same X; and, if positive attraction remains constant, the greater the perceived discrepancy between his own and O's attitude, the stronger the force to reduce it. We shall refer to this force as strain.\textsuperscript{16}

Performers who know about this interpersonal tendency to reduce dissonance can reflect more critically on their own responses to narrators. They might ask why the narrator seems to respect Miss Emily. The answer comes

from the narrator's utterance, from the text itself. For example, when the narrator says "She vanquished them, horse and foot, . . . " I intuitively sense that the narrator's behavior on this line (his speech act, if you will) is "to praise" or "to grudgingly admire;" in fact, I can "hear" a faint chuckle behind the utterance, a laugh that seems to say "the little lady was too much for the town; she was more than a match for them." I have attributed this dispositional quality to the narrator based primarily on his use of the verb "vanquished," a strong word that suggests complete and utter victory, and the colloquialism "horse and foot," which not only brings the narratee into a friendly, comfortable relationship with the narrator, but also implies that the narrator is "pretty sure" that the listener will agree with his estimation of Emily. I have attributed the behavior of the sentence, that is, the narrator, to the dispositional and environmental qualities that lie behind the language. My performative interpretation is a direct result of my specific attributions—attributions that might give rise to exciting and creative performances or, admittedly, that might, if I am not extremely vigilant in pre-performance, result in misguided interpretations.

The Fundamental Attribution Error

The performer using this method must constantly remember to foreground the text as a narrator's verbal behavior, in order to avoid projecting his or her own presuppositions onto the narrator without textual reinforce ment. Projection is understood here to mean the attribution to others of attitudes that are really our own. Too much projection is aberrant, and can lead to misattributions and gross misinterpretations. In performance, I must embody the narrator and not the other way around.

Norman Holland's work has produced much evidence that readers do
project a great deal of themselves into the texts they read. He concludes that

any individual shapes the materials the literary work offers him . . . to give him what he characteristically both wishes and fears . . . and he also constructs his characteristic way of achieving what he wishes and defeating what he fears.¹⁷

Conceiving of the text as the utterance of an other who may be quite unlike ourselves, can help us as performers to remain rooted in the text, rather than in our unexamined responses to it. Both text and response are important, but the reasons for interpretations must be inherent in the textual voice. By questioning our own attributional response to the narrative voice, that is, by asking the text "why" we have attributed dispositional qualities such as courtesy and admiration to its narrator, we can insure that there are always textual bases for our characterization of the narrator in performance.

The most recent theorizing about the attribution process has identified the "fundamental attribution error,"¹⁸ a cognitive pattern of which the performer should be wary. Essentially, the error involves the tendency to focus on only one of the two most general types of attribution—dispositional attribution—and to selectively forget the environmental or situational reasons for an other's behavior. As Shaw and Costanza state it,

. . . there is a pervasive tendency in perceivers to "overattribute" behavior to the personal dispositions of actors.¹⁹


¹⁹Shaw and Costanzo, p. 249.
Living through the complex experience of an other takes an extraordinary amount of time and reflection. Often, in our necessary rush to build a performance, we do have to concentrate on the essential character of the narrator, but we must always remember that the narrative personality and its behavior can result from situation as much as from disposition. The atmosphere of comfort, the masculine social milieu, the fact that the telling takes place in Jefferson, Mississippi, and so forth, all contribute to the narrator's behavior in "A Rose For Emily." The degree to which the performer imaginatively fills in these situational details can inform and define a performance more fully, and bring the world of the text into a richer presence.

In other texts, situational constraints may override dispositional qualities. In Eudora Welty's short story "Why I Live at the P. O.," the narrator, a grown woman who has just run away from home, has set up a "permanent" residence in the local post office, where she is the sole employee. The fact that she has only been there three days, and that she is probably addressing a hapless customer, or at least some generalized listener, may have more to do with her behavior than any inherent dispositional quality she may possess. While it is obvious that she is a paranoid person by disposition, the situational factor of her favored sister's return has a great deal to do with the story's hysterical tone (she even begins with the phrase, "Thing's had been fine until . . . ").

Many of Dorothy Parker's stories, such as the often-performed "The Waltz" and "The One on the Right," when analyzed according to attribution theory present the performer with an intriguing blend of situational and dispositional reasons for the narrator's caustic verbal style.
In short, the attributional perspective on the act of pre-formance requires the rehearsing performer to reflect on his or her own attributions concerning the narrative voice. This means that the performer will, at some point in the rehearsal process, stop and ask whether particular narrative behaviors are the result of situation, disposition, or a combination of both. These constraints on the narrator's behavior can then become definite elements in the performer's "inner monologue" or subtext during the actual performance. An understanding of the causes of a narrator's behavior can allow us, as performers, to fully live-through and embody the narrators and characters we meet in fiction and poetry.

Our questioning of the narrative will often bring forth into our consciousnesses individual behaviors that might have gone unnoticed had we not reflected on our attributions during pre-formance. Focusing on interesting or unusual behaviors of narrators can obviously aid the performer in individualizing and concretizing the persona he seeks to embody.

Non-Common Narrative Behavior

Thus far, the attribution model of the act of pre-formance has concentrated on the performer's constitution of the narrator, and the complicated triangular relationship that exists between the performer, the narrator, and the various events and existents (Xs) in the text. The model has also detailed how the "degree of liking" or the attraction level between these three elements can create an asymmetrical relationship that produces a strain toward symmetry that, in turn, motivates the attributions of the performer.

We should keep in mind the fact that no performer could reflect on every discrete "behavior" of a narrator. In pre-formance, some performers will single out some narrative behaviors as the most important or "non-common" while
other performers might concentrate on different actions of that same narrator.

The point we must emphasize is that people tend to attribute causes more to "non-common," (that is, unusual or non-characteristic) behaviors. I have shown how the non-characteristic use of the term "august" led me to make attributions about the narrator and the implied author of "A Rose For Emily." Non-common textual behaviors are often problematic for the performer. During performance, the performer must, of necessity, attribute causes for the non-common effects of the discourse, and must justify those attributions only through the symbolic action of the text itself. When the non-common behaviors of a text force the performer to recognize levels of textual voice other than that of the narrator, the performer must deal with those voices before incorporating them into the final embodiment of the narrator. This is where the concept of the figural voice must be added to the pre-performance model.

The Figural Voice

Because we are appropriating the attribution model from the social sciences and, more specifically, from theories of interpersonal communication, we must account for and adapt that model to the situation in which one member of the dyad is a written text. It is not enough to say that, experientially, the performer must constitute the text as an other's utterance. There is still the objectified text, the printed page, to contend with in the pre-formative experience. In many ways the interpersonal analogy will still hold. However, the text as an objectified "work of art" is, in its permanence and stasis, essentially unlike a living other. It is like the printed text of a public address: its linguistic constituents are the same as those of the delivered speech, but our experience of the two modes, written and oral, is quite different. In order to preserve the
sanctity of the text, and to avoid the inevitable accusations of relativism, I have proposed that the concept of the "figural voice" be added to the model. This perspective, suggested by the theories of M. M. Bakhtin, allows us to deal with the various "voices" that exist within the narrator's discourse. Such voices might include the sociological voice, the voice of history, the ethical voice or the voice of the implied author, character voices, even specific sociological voices such as Marxist voices or the "feminist voice."  

By including in our pre-formative strategy, the discrete questioning of each identifiable voice in the text, particularly the voice of the implied author, the performer does not run the risk of reducing the text to a simplistic reading or privileging his or her own response to the text over the authorial intention. All can exist together and be incorporated into the final, crucial embodiment of the narrator, as I have shown.

The model, as it now stands, closely resembles the original symmetry model of Theodore Newcomb and the dynamics are the same as his.

\[(O_1, O_2, O_3, \ldots)\]

\[P \leftarrow \text{"degree of liking"} \rightarrow O \]

\[\rightarrow X \]

\[(x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots)\]

---

20 Wayne Booth has pointed out an interesting omission in Bakhtin's otherwise inclusive list of possible textual voices—that of the feminist voice. See Booth's article "Freedom of Interpretation: Bakhtin and the Challenge of Feminist Criticism," Critical Inquiry, 9 (Sept. 1982), pp. 45-76.
As we look at the model in terms of literary response, we should keep in mind that the attributional behavior of the performer is motivated by the "strain toward symmetry" that results from feelings of psychological imbalance. Imbalance could be a function of many types of emotional responses to the literature, lack of literal understanding, inability to empathize with the narrator or characters, personal distaste for the subject matter or other works by the same author, even the mood the performer is in at the time of a particular reading of the text. The strain toward symmetry causes the mind to make quasi-logical connections based on consistency information (how often has the actor done this in the past?), distinctiveness information (how often has the actor done this in different circumstances?), and consensus information (how many other people have done that sort of thing in those sorts of circumstances?). Behaviors that violate our expectations about consistency, consensus, or distinctiveness will often initiate our attributions of causes for those behaviors. We tend to attribute behaviors to one of two general sources: dispositional or internal causes, and environmental, contextual, or external causes.

These latter two patterns, dealing with internal or external causation, are the most common attributional styles in humans. This is true whether we are responding to social others or to the others we encounter in the reading experience. We might illustrate this point with an example of one of the most basic determinations about dramatic literature—whether or not a text can be said to fit into the category of a tragedy or not. Internal versus external causation is still the test for whether a tragedy can be called a tragedy of fate (external causation) or a tragedy of character (internal causation). But there are several other attributional patterns of which it is helpful to be aware as we focus
on the interconnecting lines of our model.

Closely related to internal/external causality is the concept of impersonal versus personal causality. This dimension of attribution requires that the performer decide whether or not the narrator is consciously trying to cause the effects that he or she produces. This perspective, sometimes referred to as the "perception of try" was first articulated by Fritz Heider, the founding father of attribution theory.

Heider also divides perceptions of causality into instances of personal causality and impersonal causality. Perceived personal causality is a subset of perceived internal causality and encompasses only those events which the other intended to produce.21

Conversely, "perceived impersonal causality" refers to actions that the narrator "did not try to produce."22 A person, in this case a narrator, would be held responsible only for effects that he or she consciously tried to produce. Only such internally motivated effects would yield information about the dispositional properties of that narrator.

Consider, for example, the central mystery of "A Rose For Emily." This story shares an essential quality with all "mystery stories" in that the answer to the major dramatic question is withheld until the carefully prepared ending of the story. The essential presence in such stories is the absence of the answer to the mystery. Indeed, what happens up in Miss Emily's bedroom on the night of Homer Barron's death remains a mystery at the close of the narrator's tale. The

21Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, p. 65.

22Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, p. 65.
reader must ask, then what the central mysteries or absences are that keep the reader reading or the listener listening. In Faulkner's story, the narrator continually drops hints throughout the discourse that point toward the concluding sentence. One such device is the narrator's teasing references to "the smell" around Miss Emily's house. This smell is mentioned several times in the story, but it is essentially developed in the page-long inserted report about the nocturnal liming of Miss Emily's yard by four men of the town. At this point in the narrative, the cause of the smell is a mystery and the listener might wonder why the narrator makes such a point of it.

At any rate, the references to the smell become obvious (i.e. distinctive, noticeable, or "non-common") actions of this narrator. As a pre-formative reader using the proposed attributional model, I am required to reflect on and attribute causes to any behavior that I notice as unusual or distinctive. "What," I ask, "is the narrator up to here?" As a listener, I sense that this and other seemingly irrelevant details (such as the rat-poison episode) are leading up to something. I interpret the narrator's symbolic behavior in this passage as a "teasing" or a conscious attempt by the narrator to keep me guessing. He is, in a sense, preparing me for the story's climax. The references cause me to think forward briefly to that point in the story at which the narrator will explain the smell. Following the method I have outlined, I must then ask whether or not the narrator is behaving this way because of the epic situation, because of some internal disposition, or some combination of both.

My first impulse is to attribute the narrator's teasing references to his own relish in telling a romantic and gruesome story—a telling that he may well have perfected through years of practice. But I know that the "fundamental
"attribution error" is to overattribute behaviors to dispositional qualities of an actor and therefore I "ask" the text whether or not there could be less obvious situational causes for the teasing references of the narrator.

I have already described the easy, masculine, professional context in which this narration seems to occur. If I empathetically put myself in the narrator's place, looking out at the epic situation through his eyes, I find that the focus of his attention must be the listener. The most powerful situational factor in the narrator's environment is the listener.

The listener, I decide, is new to Jefferson. Otherwise, he would already know this famous local legend. As I try to enter the narrator's experience of the listener I develop an inner monologue that goes something like this:

Here is a fine young man who is new to the town. I suppose he sees me as a kind of mentor, or at least his initiator into the ways of Jefferson. What good fortune! He has asked me about Miss Emily Grierson. So, he doesn't know the story. Well, he's certainly come to the right place.

This subtext is a possibility in the text. As a performance choice it has two benefits. First, it helps me to create a concrete world for the story and a highly defined context for the epic situation. Secondly, in attributing the very presence of the listener as the chief cause of the narrator's teasing references to the end of the tale, I provide myself with a dynamic partner in the scene. Whether I decide to "place" the imaginary face of the listener somewhere on stage, or to use the various faces of the actual audience as my listener(s), I have given myself a face to which I can react and whose reactions I can constantly monitor during the telling of "my" story. By attributing the narrator's behavior to the situational factor of the naive listener's presence, I have provided myself
(as performer) with actions to play and with a definite focus for those actions. I have known how to vary my performance choices by consciously attempting to avoid the fundamental attribution error—that is, to avoid the overattribution to disposition. By consciously attempting to foreground the epic context of the telling, I can do more than enter the narrator's internal experience, I can construct the epic world called forth by the language of the text and transfer that world from the page to the lived experience of performance.

The most important result of the conscious avoidance of the overattribution to disposition is that it channels the performer's attention toward the world of the story. The context or environment of Faulkner's story is manifested on two levels. First, there is the aforementioned epic situation, the world-of-the-telling. And there is also the context in which the past events of the story occur. This is the world of the American South, of Jefferson, of Yoknapatawpha, the world in which Miss Emily lives. Both levels of world are essential to the story and essential to the successful realization of the text in performance.

The concept of the figural voice is the means by which a performer can allow the world of a text to fully disclose itself. If, during pre-performance, I keep in the back of my mind the less obvious levels of textual voice, levels such as the sociological, the historical, the feminist, or the parodic, and if I attend to each one as I notice it, I am allowing the contextual world of the story to fully present itself to me. A trained reader often does this intuitively, but it is a complex experiential process and must be included in the model. This is accomplished by the simple surrounding of the "figural voice" with the matrix of "all co-present textual voices."
The model now becomes a phenomenological description of the heteroglossic performance method I have outlined. Whatever level of voice happens to be the momentary focus of my intention, exists and is experientially defined by the co-present ground of voices from which it arises. For example, if I focus my attention on the feminist voice in "A Rose For Emily," I will experience that voice in a dialogic relationship\(^23\) with the social and historical voices in the text. The implied sexism in the narrative voice of this story, must be analyzed in terms of the socio-historical context from which it arises—the context of Yoknapatawpha in the early years of this century.

And yet, if we continue this example, it is obvious that a complete description of the performer's experience of this feminist voice is also influenced by the context or world in which the performer exists—the world of the post-feminist decade of the nineteen-eighties. The performer's attributions and

\(^{23}\text{M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 411 ff. The basic idea of Bakhtin's theory is the interconnectedness of or dialogue between the various embedded voices within a discourse.}
possible feelings of dissonance or imbalance might be heavily influenced by the social milieu in which he or she has lived. The world of the performer encompasses the world of the text and enters into a dialogue with it during preformance. We represent this graphically in the model by surrounding the performer with all of his or her "co-present lived experience," because our readings of texts are inextricably bound to our experiences as human beings in our own world. As a person prepares a performance, the co-present lived experience of the performer includes the moment-by-moment reading-in-program as well as any previous reading of the text during the performer's lifetime. Analogically, the pre-formance model is bounded by this lived experience. The performer, within the context of his or her experience, constitutes or attends to one of the possible figural voices in the text. As the arrows show, that performer then attributes causes to the "verbal behavior" of the figural voice. The attentive reader might well ask at this point why the arrow is a double arrow. This study has concentrated almost exclusively on attributions made by a performer concerning a narrator; but the attributional model is an analog of a social experience and is therefore dyadic. A narrator may also make attributions about a reader or listener to his or her discourse. The speaker of "A Rose For Emily" has been shown to make several minor but important attributions about his listener. These attributes were detailed in chapter three and include masculinity, professionalism, and relative unfamiliarity with the local legends of Jefferson, Mississippi. Attributes made
by a narrator about his or her listener are not new to critical theory. They are most clearly dealt with in recent criticism as a "signaling of the narratee."\(^{24}\)

But our focal concern is more with the act of pre-formance than with narrative theory in general, even though the model has obvious applications in both areas. As we analyze the attributional behaviors of the performer in regard to the narrative voice, we must include the subject matter of the encounter, for it is this content that sets up or resolves any psychological imbalance on the part of the performer, motivating his or her attributions.

This final element in the model is difficult to nominate. When we encounter an other and speak with that other, we always speak about something. The discourse of a text always contains subject or objects. A text may produce images, events, characters, objects, and it may also produce concepts, ideas, dialogues, tones, attitudes, beliefs, values, symbols, and any number of other constituents.

When we engage an other in a "dialogue," the other's discourse contains (symbolically) certain subjects or objects. These may be concrete, such as a house, the image of a woman at a window, or the description of an event such as the nocturnal spreading of lime around an old house. Or, the contents of a discourse may be conceptual, such as a description of death as "the long sleep that outlasts love," 25 or "the newer generation, with its more modern ideas." 26 The point is that, when we "listen" to a figural voice, we always place it in relation to its specific subject. And the strain towards symmetry that motivates our attributions to a narrator is controlled by the tensive relationships that exist

---

25 Faulkner, p. 130.

26 Faulkner, p. 120.
between ourselves and the narrator, ourselves and the subject of the narrator's discourse, and the narrator's relationship to the subject of his or her discourse.

Seymour Chatman provides a helpful perspective on this quality of narrative when he distinguishes between story and discourse. A story, says Chatman, is composed of events, characters, and details of settings, as well as conceptual "things" such as love, death, and honor. He refers to story as "contents" and distinguishes it from discourse, which he calls "expression." In an attributional theory of literary response we would include all contents of a narrative as the Xs of the model. We would characterize the discourse or expression of those contents as the "verbal behavior" of a narrator, an implied author, or a character. These individual contents become the momentary focus of our attention as we read through the text. They exist, not alone, not discretely, but as figures called up and viewed against the ground of all the other contents of the story. It is not possible to focus the intentional consciousness on Emily Grierson's house without setting it against the "garages and cotton gins" that surround it. The attributional model would graphically depict the house as an object (X) that is called into a presence by the narrator and is configured against the background of the described setting.

Chatman, pp. 23-26.
Conclusion

The completed model now highlights the psychological process of attribution in the pre-performance of a text, and also places that attributional behavior in its appropriately phenomenological context. At the critical moment of pre-performance described in the above model, the figural voice is constituted by the performer as the voice of the narrator, and the performer's valuation of the object in question, Emily's house, is a function of the "degree of liking" or empathic understanding that the performer has of that narrator. If the narrator
calls the house "an eyesore among eyesores" the performer is likely to experience the house in somewhat the same way, since this narrator has been shown to be credible and fair-minded. Furthermore, the performer would, either consciously or subconsciously, make attributions about the narrator based on the latter's verbal behavior in describing the Grierson home in this particular way. The performer comes to know the narrator as he would come to know another in a face to face engagement—by attributing causes for the verbal behavior of the other.

Attributional behavior is the principle mode of the human perception of others. As Hastorf, Schneider, and Polefka have summarized it,

We begin with the phenomenological fact that our perception of others does not stop with observations of their behavior. We also perceive other people as causal agents or at least as capable of being causal agents. The perception of causality is central in our perception of other people.

When performers constitute a text as a series of utterances, they experience the same psychological patterns in determining the attributes of the speaker of that utterance. This critical method of focusing on the speaking voice in a text is similar to the method of dramatism and has been shown by such critics as Kenneth Burke and Don Geiger to yield valuable insights for the performer who desires to embody a narrative voice.

28 Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, p. 89.
29 Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, p. 89.
30 Geiger's principal statement on the subject of dramatism is The Dramatic Impulse in Modern Poetics (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967).
The attributional model of pre-formance embraces the perspective of
dramatism but also goes beyond it phenomenologically. Whereas dramatism
focuses on the personae of the narrative voice, this model allows for and includes
all possible perceptions of who is speaking the text. The figural voice might, at
various dynamic moments of pre-formance, be conceived of as the implied
author, a character, or the narrator. These are the principle others in an uttered
text, but the human experience of these others is configured by any and all
experience that bears on our perception of them. As Susan Lanser has said, "The
textual voice must be reconstructed by taking into account all levels of narration
and focalization in their hierarchical relationships." This is why the
introduction of Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia was necessary to the model.
Less obvious levels of voice such as sociological or political levels, make present
to us the world in which the epic and dramatic events of the story occur.
Letting this world fully disclose itself through textual voices makes it possible
for us to avoid over-attribute to dispositional qualities of a speaker and to
focus on context and situation as equally important factors in our attributional
behaviors, thereby improving the quality and fullness of those attributions.

When we (P) engage a narrator (O) or an implied author (O), we let him or
her speak to us concerning "things" (Xs). Any dissonance we might feel in this
engagement is likely to result from asymmetrical relationships among the three
principles of the model: performer, narrator (or whatever figural voice is
constituted by the performer), and whatever "things" the figural voice is bringing
into presence through the language of the text. If we constitute this language as

---

verbal behavior and consciously vary possible situational and/or dispositional causes for that behavior, we are reducing psychological dissonance and "looking behind" the uttered text while remaining firmly rooted in it.

While not the only valid approach to pre-performance, the attributional model provides a perspective and a method that can create a socially immediate atmosphere for the engagement of a narrator by a performer. In this atmosphere we deny nothing that might influence our attributions to the narrative voice. It is hoped that this perspective can help a performer to balance his or her own responses to a text with a "passionate attention"\(^{32}\) to the text itself, so that, in the words of Theodore Roethke, we might "greet a poem, now, like a living person: with curiosity and respect."\(^{33}\)

---


The Performing Consciousness

The consciousness of performers is at the heart's core of everything that the discipline of performance studies seeks to know. A full description of the performing consciousness would gather in everything that influences a particular performance, regardless of whether those influences come from the printed page, extrinsic factors, or even the relevant lived experience of the performer. When we "take on" a work of literature in performance we are manifesting a desire to encounter that work in a way that is essentially different but still similar to critical writing about literature. Like the publishing critic, performers wish to make informed critical judgements that will illuminate the text, and, like the critic, they need to articulate their judgements clearly and fully. But performers need to be able to do more than articulate their understanding of a text; they must also be able to embody it.

Performers, of necessity, must express the text in terms of their own human behaviors. Their performance behaviors, in turn, are the result of attributions about the text gained during various pre-formative engagements with it. The study of narrative theory has proven particularly fruitful in regard to this translation of critical judgements into the behavioral dimension of performance. Part of the reason for this may be that its focus is on the narrative voice in the literary text, a perspective that privileges the behavioral communication channel of voice or utterance. When we focus our attention on the narrative voice, we are essentially willing ourselves to constitute that text.

175
as an other, usually human, consciousness; how we perceive that consciousness, the motives we posit for its verbal behavior, form the spine of our critical understanding of the text. This is especially true for the performer who will "take on" the epic voice and embody it.

Attribution in the Performer's Engagement With the Text

It would seem logical that one of the most credited theories in current social psychology, a theory concerned with how people perceive each other, might illuminate the experience of a performer seeking to come to an understanding of the speaking consciousness of a text. In a sense, both the social encounter and the literary encounter are dyadic. When we seek a deep knowledge of a narrator, an implied author, or a character in a text we need to examine critically our own subjective reactions to him or her. That is, we would do well to reflect on our attributions about the other more closely than is usually possible in the face-to-face social engagement.

Wolfgang Iser characterizes the essential difference between social and literary engagements as a function of "ascertainability." Iser reminds us that in face-to-face engagements both parties constantly monitor each other and regulate their communication according to their perceptions of "how far their images have bridged the gap of the inexperiencability of one another's experience." Texts cannot constantly adapt and regulate themselves to the reader's experience. Readers cannot ask a text for the simple answer to the

\[1\] Hastorf, Schneider, Polefka, Person Perception, pp. iv-v. The major chapter in this book is devoted to attribution theory.

direct question, "What is your intention here?" In his attempt to articulate the
text-reader relationship, Iser unconsciously uses the language of attribution
theory:

... it is the very lack of ascertainability and defined intention
that brings about the text-reader interaction, and here there is a
vital link with dyadic interaction. ... it is the gaps, the
fundamental assymetry between text and reader, that give rise to
communication in the reading process. With dyadic interaction,
the imbalance is removed by the establishment of pragmatic
connections resulting in an action, which is why the preconditions
are always clearly defined in relation to situations and common
frames of reference. The imbalance between text and reader,
however, is undefined, and it is this very indeterminacy that
increases the variety of communication possible.³

Iser, then, sees the imbalance between the reader and the voice of the
text as the motivator of communication between them just as Newcomb's
symmetry theory sees such imbalance in social encounters as the motivator of
interpersonal attributions. Other critics have also evoked symmetry theory in
defining the communicative act of literary interpretation, but have described the
voices of a text as being more, rather than less "ascertainable." Their arguments
suggest that attribution may be even more important to literary encounters than
they are to interpersonal perception.

Because of the essential stablity of a text, (see Chapter Three) the
relative permanence of its written discourse, we can examine our attributions
about its strategies more fully than we can in the temporal flux of the social
world. Both pre-formance and social discourse are temporal acts, but the former
is essentially different in that the linguistic contents of one side of the

"conversation"—the textual side—are permanent and unchanging. This is why Georges Poulet can say that a text is different from a flesh-and-blood other because its discourse

... is open to me, lets me look deep inside itself and even allows me with unheard of license to think what it thinks and feel what it feels.4

The degree of "ascertainability" of a given text, the degree to which a figural voice allows me inside itself, is a function of the essential communicative nature of the individual text. For example, the central consciousness of Isabel Archer, the heroine of Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, is remarkably open to the reader who engages it. However, the central consciousness of that author's governess in his *The Turn of the Screw* is infuriatingly closed to the reader, a fact that has allowed for a variety of possible communications and attributions by readers about this character. While we are best advised not to make sweeping generalizations about literary others, it is nonetheless obvious that attributions are always a part of our perception of those others. And it is also true that, in pre-formance, we are in control of the temporal aspects of the reading process and are more able to focus on our own attributions to characters, implied authors, or narrators.

Time is the enemy of valid attributions in the social world. Communication with other humans is dynamic and ephemeral; a given moment of social intercourse is impossible to freeze and analyze. This is also true of our

encounters with literature, but to a significantly lesser degree. The language of a literary other is stable. The words of a text do not change. Our perceptions of those words may alter drastically on repeated encounters with them, but the words themselves are immutable. It is for this reason that attribution theory is so valuable to interpretation.

We have time, during pre-performance to reflect on and examine the behaviors of, say, a narrator. We are not bound by the inexorable phenomenon of social conversation. Rather, we can stop in the middle of a narrator's sentence and reflect on inconsistencies, word choice, valuation, or any other aspects of the narrator's disposition and environment. In social discourse, attributions often remain subconscious due to the rapidity with which they must be made and the constant influx of new information as the conversation progresses.

Attributional behavior is ubiquitous and almost constant in everyday social life. Because it is pre-reflective and intuitive we tend to overlook it. So it is not surprising that it has also been overlooked in investigations of literary response. And yet, ironically, it is here that attributional behavior can more successfully be focused on and analyzed due to the objective nature of the textual language and the control the reader has over the temporal aspects of the reading process. Finally, the fact that a text has an objective quality does not preclude our simultaneous constitution of it as both object and as an other consciousness. As Walter Ong has stated it,

... in a valid but not exclusive sense, each work of art is not only an object but a kind of surrogate for a person. Anything that bids for attention in an act of contemplation is a surrogate for a person. In proportion as the work of art is capable of being taken
in full seriousness, it moves further and further along an asymptote to the curve of personality.\(^5\)

The purpose of this study's attributional model of the act of pre-formance is to describe and illuminate the gestalt experience of a text. It privileges the reader's constitution of the text as the utterance of some other, but does not deny our simultaneous constitution of that utterance as a balanced and complete "thing-out-there" that is presented to our consciousness and about which we make attributions.

Reflections on our attributions is a means of exploring deeply the psychology of our responses to literature. Examining our attributions about texts is self-reflexive and yet it keeps us inextricably connected with the other, that is, with the text. It is, like Husserl's pure cogito performing the phenomenological reduction, a rigorous means to a fuller knowledge, not just of our selves, but of the others we encounter and with whom we are connected by the tissue of experience. An attributional perspective on literary response is phenomenological in its breaking down of distinctions between self and other (or object). However, in its focus on person perception, it allows that other, in our case the figural voice of a text, to remain a complete other, for whose behavior we infer causes. The process of attribution, then, is phenomenological, and its methods have been applied throughout this study. But I hope I have shown that the perspective of phenomenological attribution also preserves the sanctity of the text by focusing on its intrinsic "behavior" as the source of our attributions about it. We are concerned here as much with the discursive text itself as we

David Bleich has said that "interpretive knowledge . . . is constructed from the uncontrolled experience of the interpreter, and the rules of construction are only vaguely known by anyone observing the interpreter." The attributional model I have proposed does not deny the "uncontrolled pre-reflective experience" of the interpreter: It is determined by all of the co-present experience of the interpreter. This is what keeps the model from reducing the complex experience of literary response. What the model does accomplish is to render less "vaguely known" those "rules of construction" that directed the interpretation. Like dramatism, the attributional perspective centers on the speaking voice in literature; but it does not stop there. The concept of the figural voice takes this theory beyond dramatism into a more holistic description of literary experience. It keeps the dramatistic elements of speaker and context, yet allows for the inclusion of a reader's subjective response into the paradigm.

Attribution as an Aid in Forming a Performance

Attribution is perhaps the most important principle in the psychological construction of a response to a literary text. Human beings in the social world engage in attribution almost constantly as they posit causes for the behaviors of others. A knowledge of this fact is implicit in all human behavior. But when this generalized awareness is coupled with a more specific knowledge of the most common attributional patterns (e.g. consistency, consensus, distinctiveness, and

---

the "fundamental attribution error"), we are better equipped as interpreters to focalize and validate significant attributions that we make. A knowledge of how people attribute can lead us to a fuller knowledge of one of the most important means by which we construct experience.

Three of the major claims in current attributional research will serve to summarize the phenomenological importance of this theory to the act of performance. The first claim is that there is an essential difference in the way actors and observers make attributions (see chapter two of this study). Research suggests that the performer, who is principally an observer of a narrator's discourse, might "tend to attribute behavior to stable dispositions of the actor," rather than to contextual or environmental causes. This brings us to a second major claim in recent studies of attribution—the claim that the "fundamental attribution error," the tendency to over-attribute to disposition and under-attribute to environment, is a primary cause of misinterpretation. Finally, the claim that people are largely unaware of the cognitive processes that influence and explain their behavior suggests that anyone who wishes his or her perceptions of others to be more accurate and less superficial or idiosyncratic, may be helped by findings of attribution research. This is certainly also true of the performer who attempts to embody the often enigmatic others contained in great literature.

---


9 Locke and Pennington, p. 223.
Attribution theory, then, offers the performer a perceptual perspective on his or her response to a text. It provides a theoretical model that describes the cognitive patterns we use in our perceptions of others. A sound knowledge of these attributional processes can help the rehearsing performer to more systematically analyze important attributions about narrators, characters, and implied authors. This is why the model is perhaps most valuable in the formation of a performance, the rehearsal process that I have designated "pre-formance." When we embody a text we are providing an audience with an instance of that text; a full understanding of both the text itself and our experience of it is necessary if we are to avoid reducing the text as we in-stance it. A final example will serve to summarize the performer's use of attribution in such an instance.

A Final Example

Let us suppose that a performer is rehearsing the final act of King Lear. He is engaging the character of Edmund at a problematic (non-common) moment in the text—his final, uncharacteristic "good act." A performer would very likely reflect consciously on Edmund's motivations for this apparently significant action. This is a good example of the violation of consistency patterns that, according to Theodore Newcomb, produce the strain toward symmetry that motivates attributional behavior in the observer. Just before he dies, Edmund, who up to this point in the play has exhibited an apparent disposition of consummate evil, tries to save the lives of Lear and of Cordelia by rescinding his writ of execution on them.

I pant for life. Some good I mean to do
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—
Be brief in it—to th' castle, for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.
Nay, send in time.

(V, iii, 244-48).

It is not uncommon to see this moment played as the genuine repentance of a man who has had some spark of good in him all along; that is, to attribute the action to Edmund's inherent disposition. This is a possible interpretation. But let us, as Heidegger suggests, let Edmund's words themselves, his verbal behavior if you will, speak to us. Let us reflect on them fully and, at the same time, make a conscious effort to avoid the fundamental attribution error of emphasizing disposition over context as the primary cause of Edmund's action. This effort, rather than imposing attribution theory on our interpretation of Edmund's action suspends the usual human behavior of dispositional attribution. This suspension of the writs of behavioral convention remember, is the primary operation in the phenomenological reduction.

Edmund's speech occurs as he sees the bodies of Goneril and Regan, his compatriots in evil, covered in death. He has linked himself to them in death with his previous speech ("... all three/Now marry in an instant."). If we attribute the "good" that Edmund "means to do" here to a dispositional repentance, we may well be correct, but we have probably not been complete. We must also look to context for the cause of Edmund's act if we are to avoid the fundamental attribution error. He knows that he is dying and his "Nay, send in time..." suggests a sincere desire to see Lear and Cordelia saved. If we

allow Edmund's repentant language to resound in the world of the play, and in the contextual moment of this scene, we may remember that he has, much earlier, repudiated all influences of "the gods" or "fate." He is a man who has placed himself rhetorically in the philosophical camp of existential free will, refuting any notion of divine intervention in human life.

Thou, Nature, art my Goddess;
(I, ii, 1)
I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the universe twinkled on my bastardizing.
(I, ii, 127-29)

And yet, as soon as Edmund's body is invaded by his brother's sword, he seems to do a philosophical and moral "about face," saying,

The wheel has come full circle; I am here.
(V, iii, 175)

This line (this speech act, if you will) evokes the medieval Christian world view of the inexorable wheel of fortune and the mutability of individual human achievement. In a sense, Edmund's speech is in a dialogic relationship with that medieval world picture precisely because he has rejected it earlier in the play. If we consciously look to the context, the world in which Edmund "repents," and attribute at least some of his motives to the pressures exerted by that world, we are lead to an interpretation that sees the very philosophy that Edmund has previously rejected as executing a final and crucial influence on him. He is at the bottom and realizes he will not rise again. The results of his unnatural disposition are all around him, and prompt him to this repentance. As interpreters we can allow the moment to live fully by partially attributing
Edmund's act to the tragic victory of the medieval Christian world of the play, a world that expels the evil in it, but at great cost. And as we speculate on this point, the voice of Edmund may well recede in our consciousness as the implied voice of Shakespeare becomes figural.

Edmund may well be surprised at his own utterance when he says "Some good I mean to do . . ." What I am suggesting here is that the motivation for the utterance is much more complex than a simple death-bed repentance. The phenomenological context of Edmund's world is exerting more of an influence here than any element of his disposition. The performer who decides to play the scene with this interpretation in mind, that is, to let Edmund be surprised at his utterance and to experience the epiphany of the triumph of the medieval world picture, possesses all the ingredients of an instructive, critically sound, and dramatically vibrant performance moment.

Other Applications of the Attribution Model

The performance situation described above exemplifies the practical use of attribution theory by a performer. When a performer engages a figural voice in a text, usually the voice of a character, a narrator, or an implied author, that performer needs to fully live through any problematic or non-common behavior of the figural voice. As we have seen, such non-common moments often result in an asymmetrical relationship between the performer (P), the figural voice (O), and the object of the discourse (X). A basic knowledge of attributional structures helps the interpreter to investigate whether the behavior of the figural voice violates expectations of consistency, consensus, or distinctiveness. The motives for that behavior can then become the object of the interpreter's reflection as he or she seeks a balanced relationship with the figural voice in
relation to the object of the discourse. But attribution theory can aid in the performance of literature in several other ways.

**Intrinsic Applications**

First, there is the possibility of using the model to explore the intrinsic qualities of a text. Not only do characters engage readers, they also engage other characters. Others within a text can therefore make attributions about each other and it is important to our understanding of a work that we understand the attributions they make. The narrator of "A Rose For Emily" engages his central character in a sense—he certainly attributes motives to certain actions of Emily Grierson. For example, when he describes Emily's refusal to allow her father to be buried, he says

> We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that, with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.\(^1\)

Whether we intend this voice as that of narrator or implied author, an attribution is being made about Miss Emily—an attribution that denies the dispositional cause ("She was crazy") but that attributes her action to the situational presence of having "nothing left." Perhaps more important is the narrator's implication that Emily's behavior does not violate consensus expectations; she merely behaves "as people will." Placing the elements on our model may tell us a great deal about the world of this text. The narrator, and probably the implied Faulkner, do not condemn Emily for her behavior here:

\(^1\)Faulkner, p. 119.
rather, they seem to agree that this is usual (that is, common) human behavior for someone in Emily's situation. Such a perspective makes it more likely that the narrator, at least, views Emily as a tragic figure, a victim of her world and her times.

Another intrinsic aspect of a text that would be illuminated by the attribution model is the relationship of implied authors to narrators. As always, when we focus our consciousness on one literary element, we see it in relation to a background of related elements. In the example above, the narrator's discourse, and the implied author's discourse are both contained in the text. They exist in a dialogic relationship with each other. One of the ways in which a critic would determine the essential nature of this relationship is to set both elements, narrator and implied author, in relation to some important element in the discourse.

In this case we return to our heteroglossic rehearsal method and constitute the text first as the utterance of a narrator. We determine that the narrator primarily respects Emily and attributes some degree of tragic stature to her. This is a positive valuation. Then, we bracket the narrator and attend to the voice of the implied author. We have already noted several passages, such as
the one in the first paragraph of the story, in which Emily's house is described, as sounding more "literary," more "written," and attributed them more to the implied author. We have also noted ambivalent valuations in such oxymoronic adjectives as "heavily lightsome." If we, with the help of our model, determined that the narrator's attributions to Emily and her house were essentially positive, and that the implied author's attitudes towards them were ambivalent, we could want to determine how the implied author feels about the narrator.

The model would direct us to look for the "degree of liking" or identification between these two levels of textual voice. Without it the model would look like this:

![Diagram showing the relationship between Narrator, Implied Author, and Emily's House]

Until a relatively positive or negative attribution by the implied author toward the narrator is determined, we cannot determine whether our tripartite psychological relationship is in or out of balance. We search the text for any negative attributions made by "Faulkner" to the narrator. In terms of tone, the two voices seem to merge rather than to diverge at any point. We decide then that the implied author is sincerely "in balance" with his narrator. We place a + in the attributional channel between the two voices and the model describes a
symmetrical relationship\textsuperscript{12} but one that reveals an implied author who is slightly more critical of Emily than the narrator seems to be. In order to fully embody this text, the performer must place the narrator's figural voice, with all its attributions to Emily Grierson, against the ground of the implied author's estimation of her. The performer may focus on the narrator's voice in the actual performance, but the tensiveness of the text depends on that voice containing the word of the implied author as well.

Extrinsic Applications

A great deal of highly specific clinical work has been done in interpersonal attribution (or person perception). These studies open up vast heuristic possibilities for the study of psychological responses to texts. A specific example will illustrate the structure of such inquiries.

Forsyth and Pope (1983) recently conducted a study of students moral attributions to certain human behaviors such as telling the truth and keeping promises. The subjects were presented with the behaviors through written narratives. The findings, while admittedly not conclusive, strongly suggest that

\begin{enumerate}
\item Moral character is assumed to be a prime cause of behaviors that are low in distinctiveness and high in consistency, 
\item actions that are high in distinctiveness and low in consistency are less likely to be attributed to the actor's moral character, and 
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{12} Theodore Newcomb, \textit{The Acquaintance Process}, p. 12.
consensus information has a lesser impact on moral judgements.\textsuperscript{13, 14}

Such findings suggest normative patterns in our moral evaluations of others; a knowledge of such evaluational patterns may alert us to human tendencies in literary response as well. Edmund's aforementioned "good deed" in King Lear is a good example of behavior that is "high in distinctiveness but low in consistency," and is therefore, according to Forsyth and Pope, less likely to be attributed to some moral quality of Edmund's character. Forsyth's and Pope's study is experiential human evidence of Shakespeare's mimetic authority—a clinical reinforcement of the view that Edmund's attempt to save Lear's life is externally motivated by the situational crisis in which he finds himself.

These examples remind us to look to the fictional world for causes of the actions of its characters and narrators, for it is here that we are more likely to find fuller, less stereotypical judgements. The findings of social psychologists can affirm or deny our assumptions about how we perceive others; and these assumptions are the basis of literary as well as of social attributions.

Conclusion

Robert R. Hellinger has said that to read well we must make vulnerable


\textsuperscript{14} Similar findings were reported in Jennifer Crocker, Darlene B. Hannah, and Renee Weber, "Person Memory and Causal Attribution," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44 (January 1983), pp. 55-56.
our identity. To do this we must enter the world of the text as fully as possible, but we must still be able to come out of that world and, in our own persons, attribute causes for the behavior of the shifting voices that sing the song or tell the tale. Obviously, a knowledge of the cognitive structures of attribution can help us to analyze our response to the frequently unusual (non-common) behaviors of the great texts.

When we are aware of attributional patterns we can bring into fuller presence the consciousnesses of the literary others we embody, lending those consciousnesses mimetic authority and deep psychological life by the textual and subtextual embodiment of their attributions. As performers of literature we need to, as one critic has recently suggested, look into experience rather than at it. Looking into experience is the purpose of the attribution theorist as well as the purpose of the poet and the performer. By sharing what they have learned with each other, all three can perhaps more deeply and humanly realize that noble purpose.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Attribution Theory


The cognitive (system paradigm) approach and the reinforcement (stimulus-response, learned behavior) approach are not mutually exclusive. They merely use different types of language and types of empirical research.


A major document of experimental research in cognitive consistency theories.


Surveys the major texts in S. I. from Mead through Burke and Hugh Duncan.


Explains paradigm as attribution in individual and collective systems.


II. Phenomenology and Literature


Komarovich (Russian critic) is one of many examples given by Bakhtin of critical attribution of monology to the polyglossic novels of Dostoevsky, because the expectation of the novel critic was an artistic unity. Bakhtin says to knit Dostoevsky's many "voices" under "themes" of capitalism or "will" is to misattribute (my word).

21- Dostoevsky puts his "ideas" into egalitarian dialogue with those (ideas) of his characters. This keeps his novels from having a "unified" or monological "spirit."

23- The principal category of Dostoevsky's artistic vision is not evolution (ideological or spiritual) but coexistence and interaction.


Poetically conceived passages on the erotic relationship between text and reader.

Advocates negotiated knowledge of literary meaning between students and teachers rather than reliance on the "established" interpretations of scholars.


Places feelings and associations of individual readers at the center of critical attention. Attacks current pedagogy in literary criticism.


"Knowledge is made by people and not found. New truth is created by a new use of old knowledge."


Parallels drawn between Bakhtin and Burke's dramatism and George Herbert Mead's Symblic Interactionism.


Literature is a vehicle for the repressed fantasy of the reader, freeing the libido of the reader and, in a sense, the implicit "libido of the text."


Uses conversation as a basic model for literary criticism.


Readers either (a) dominate a text (too critical) or (b) are submissive to a text (not critical enough), or engage in (c) "productive interaction," balancing empathy and judgment.

Most sample student responses to stories were submissive. Males were found in this study to be closer to extremes of domination and submission, females more often to interaction.


Especially theoretical chapters I-IV.


Especially model on p. 52 which relates to Newcomb.


Five students read Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" and each student's reaction is attributed to his or her "identity theme." Ego-mediation of forces of literary work.


Shows how Holland's reading of Hamlet is attributed to his own "identity theme."


Contrasts males; vs. females' responses to the scene.


Literary meaning requires active participation of the reader. Survey of the kind of responses demanded of reader in texts of various historical periods.


A fine example of intrinsic criticism which discovers mirrors of human behavior in a text based on verifiable communication theories. In this case the "double-bind" theory of R. D. Laing and the relation theories of Gregory Bateson are used to argue the causes of an alleged schizophrenic element in the title character.

"Play" is how Hamlet seeks to escape from the double-bind of the ghost. Nardo sees a complicated system of double-binds (contradictory messages) between all major characters.

When we give a full response to a literary work, we do not consider belief in narrative events. We have visceral as well as cognitive responses; our response may be qualitatively the same as responses to real-life discourse.


Barth deliberately violates readers' expectations in order to shake off their patterned responses (e.g. consistency attributions). Barth's relationship to readers is often hostile.


Chapter 4, The presence of Narrators. Chapter 5, The Discomfort of Reading.

Literary works exist to exercise reader's imagination, and therefore argues for the reader's imaginative closing of an apparently epic situation.


Sees narrator as quite vague.


III. Performance Theory


Discusses the physical embodiment and the Modernist emphasis on the physical embodiment which is contrasted to the "art concealing art" principle of the 19th and early 20th century. Relies very heavily on Husserl, especially the terminology of phenomenology. Primary examples explored are Dance of Twyla Tharp but the avant-garde theatre of Robert Wilson is also discussed as is the oral nature (embodiment) of literary texts in general.

Shows how avant garde performers like Robert Wilson's "Stalin" bracket the idea of genre (a dance-lay-chant-slow motion, 12-hour musical).

P. 135: Twyla Tharp's dances "are, in a way, self-referential. Not so much 'about themselves' however, as 'about' the dance heritage from which they were gathered." See also 136, 139.

VITA

John Creagh was born in Jacksonville, North Carolina and attended public school in Jones County from 1956 through 1969. He received his high school diploma in 1969 and entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the fall of that year. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1973, majoring in English and Speech Communication.

John Creagh taught speech and theatre in the community college system in North Carolina for six years and was awarded his Master of Arts degree in Speech Communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1982. During that year he also entered the doctoral program in speech at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the spring of 1985.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: John W. Creagh, III

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: Literature as Phenomenon: An Attribution Theory and the Act of Performance

Approved:

[Signatures of Major Professor and Chairman, Dean of the Graduate School]

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures of Committee Members]

Date of Examination: March 5, 1985