1993


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Wise economies: Storytelling, narrative authority, and brevity in the American short story, 1819–1980

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The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993
WISE ECONOMIES:
STORYTELLING, NARRATIVE AUTHORITY,
AND BREVITY IN THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY,
1819-1980

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 English

by
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May 1993
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been honored to work with the dedicated and giving faculty of the Louisiana State University Department of English. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of Drs. J. Gerald Kennedy, James V. Catano, Dana Nelson, Veronica A. Makowsky, Daniel Mark Fogel, Richard C. Moreland, Irene S. DiMaio, and Jesse M. Gellrich, all of whom served on either my examination or dissertation committees. I owe a debt as well to many professors whose work shaped my critical thinking and interest in literary studies. These include Dr. Thomas V. Quirk and Richard Hocks of the University of Missouri; Drs. Michelle A. Massé, Sarah Liggett, Carl Freedman, Robin Roberts, and John Lowe at Louisiana State. A number of colleagues read drafts and offered encouragement: Scott Peeples, Eamon Halpin, and Ralph Pottle, the Class of ’89, deserve special recognition. My mother, Beverly E. Curnutt, has been especially supportive, and my son, Kipley C. Curnutt, endured more than was fair to ask.

What follows is dedicated to the memory of my father, Dr. Jerry L. Curnutt (1942-1992), who would have enjoyed reading it.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ................................................................. ii

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................................................... v

**INTRODUCTION: THE ECONOMICS OF BREVITY** ......................... 1

**CHAPTER**

1. **BACHELOR AMBIVALENCES: ORALITY AND WRITING**
   
   **IN THE TALE, 1819-1853** ................................................................. 18
   
   Irving's "Sleepy Hollow" and the American Reader ...................... 25
   
   "Food for Thought" in Hawthorne's "Wakefield" ......................... 38
   
   Melville and the Rumor about Bartleby ................................... 53
   
   Toward the Realist Short Story .................................................. 66

2. **HABITS OF STORYMAKING: WOMEN WRITING**
   
   **REALISM, 1860-1900** ................................................................. 73
   
   Rebecca Harding Davis and the Cross-Gendered Text ............... 78
   
   Sarah Orne Jewett and the Power of Polite Suggestion ........... 94
   
   Charlotte Perkins Gilman: "The Yellow Wallpaper" and
   "Implicature" ..................................................................................... 108
   
   Toward the Modernist Short Story ........................................... 123

3. **CULTIVATING VOICES: REPORTING SPEECH AND THOUGHT**
   
   **IN MODERNISM, 1908-1940** ......................................................... 130
   
   Gertrude Stein: Indirect Speech and Conversation .................. 138
   
   Hemingway: Repetition, Stylization, and Dialogue .................. 150
   
   Djuna Barnes: Combined Discourse and Parody ................. 164
   
   Richard Wright: Combined Discourse and Empathy .............. 178
   
   Toward the Minimalist Short Story ........................................... 192
ABSTRACT

This study proposes a new way of measuring brevity in the American short story. Since Edgar Allan Poe’s 1847 definition of the tale, literary criticism has looked to various structural features within the text to define the elements that distinguish the short story from other prose genres like the novel. I argue that brevity is an essential feature of storytelling and suggest that its perception is molded and shaped by several historical factors. The phrase “wise economy” offers two ways of thinking about the conciseness of the form: it evokes a history of rhetorical economy central to the formation of a distinctly American English and, more broadly, the exchange that takes place between a storyteller and his/her audience in the narrative act. These meanings work at cross-purposes: rhetorical economy results in the disappearance of the storyteller whose presence is the most visible marker of exchange. I trace how the general elision of the narrative act shapes the reader’s perception of the meaning in a text in four different modes of storytelling (romanticism, realism, modernism, and minimalism) by proposing an interpretive model grounded in speech-act theory. This model is in turn applied to works by Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Rebecca Harding Davis, Sarah Orne Jewett, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, Richard Wright, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Raymond Carver.
"We feed on short stories like living ducks," writes John Barth. "Take a breath, take the plunge, take our tidbit, and soon surface" (72). The simile evokes a variety of sensory impressions: the tightening of the lungs, the sound of the splash, the taste of retrieved treasure, the sight of sunlight refracted through the lapping water. Perhaps most impressive is its compactness: so much effect achieved by so few words, the economy creating the very experience that it describes. Barth illustrates here the intertwining of brevity and desire, how the condensation of experience inspires a reciprocal longing. The idiosyncrasy of the simile cannot be exhausted in a glance. Each re-reading is carried by the current of the syntax, cresting like the life of a wave, leaving us washed ashore, waiting to wade out and ride the next crown. Any event or action can be brief, of course, and whether a punch or a kiss, what remains is the sting or the salt, the aftereffect that kindles memory. In the case of a narrative, as Barth suggests, brevity is a particularly profound experience. All storytellers employ some principle of economy; incorporating every potential detail of a story into the narrative act is impossible. What is left out in the moment of telling, the "minimalizing" of the text, is frequently what invites the audience to risk another plunge.

A reader less tolerant of lyricism might complain that Barth merely says the most obvious thing conceivable about a short story: it is short. What constitutes brevity is not easy to determine, however. In his 1847 review of Hawthorne's *Twice-told Tales*, Poe claims that the well-wrought tale (the phrase "short story" would come into fashion after his death) is the highest achievement possible in prose, far exceeding the novel, which commits the "one unpardonable sin" that literature can: it is too long. His preference for shorter writing is, in part, a reaction to a critical bias that survives in our own time: "There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the
office of this age to overthrow—the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its interest" (446). In America, bigger has always been advertised as better, at least until the fall of Donald Trump and the reorganization of General Motors. The history of literary criticism reverberates with calls for a national literature that does justice to the vastness of the country, with vast measuring geographic dimension, not cultural diversity. Implicit in the very idea of the "great American novel" is a formidable text that occupies more than its fair space on a shelf. In Poe's time, novels (as with most books) were customarily divided into separate volumes to enhance their market value. Even works that were too short to bind profitably by halves or thirds were published with multiple title pages, as if to foster the illusion of a more impressive mass. The multi-volume format has long since proved commercially unfeasible, yet big books continue to demand attention if only for the sheer obstinacy of their presence. Reviewers of Norman Mailer's 1,310-page *Harlot's Ghost* (1990) are invariably impressed with its weight and bulk, as if the author had delivered the world's fattest baby. In such cases, they reward what Poe calls the "sustained effort," not recognizing that "perseverance is one thing and genius quite another." By comparison, authors whose talents are better suited to shorter contexts may suffer critical disappointment. The careers of Sarah Orne Jewett and Raymond Carver, for example, share two similarities: a marked preference for the short story over the novel and a history of critical commentary lamenting the artistic cowardice of avoiding Big Themes in Big Spaces. If, as Barth's metaphor suggests, eating is a valid metaphor for reading, American literary appetites hunger for the smorgasbord of the novel. The short story, by contrast, is a snack.

Poe himself was a victim of this bias. In late 1833, he submitted a collection of short fictions called *Tales of the Folio Club* to Carey & Lea; the Philadelphia publishing house waited an entire year before recommending that he sell them piecemeal on the periodical market, where they were more likely to turn a profit. Three years later, another publisher, Harper and Brothers, assured him that American audiences preferred books "in
which a single and connected story occupies the whole volume" (qtd. in Silverman 133). Only after producing a longer narrative, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), did he publish a volume of tales. Whatever personal stake Poe had in establishing brevity as the criterion *par excellence* for literary achievement, his review of Hawthorne makes a valiant effort to overturn the aristocracy of genres. "As the novel cannot be read at one sitting, it cannot avail itself of the immense benefit of *totality,*" he writes. "Worldly interests, intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, counteract and annul the impressions intended.... In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out his full design without interruption. During the hour of perusal, the soul of the reader is at the writer's control" (448). The argument has formed the cornerstone of most short-story theories. Brevity gives the tale a potential "unity of effect" or intensity absent in longer works. It is an ethic of efficiency to which a good storyteller adheres: every narrative element contributes to the culmination of this "single effect" or "thesis." But Poe hints at another effect. The reader is the site where brevity is realized because s/he experiences the "true unity" of a tale in a "single sitting" of thirty minutes to two hours. In the first case, brevity is a structural component fixed wholly within the text, but in the second, it is grounded in the reception of the story. Brevity itself is an experience inscribed within the act of telling.

This implicit aspect of Poe's theory illustrates the need for an historical approach to brevity. There are numerous histories of the short story, of course, beginning with Fred Lewis Pattee in 1923 and culminating recently with a multi-volume series from Twayne, edited by William Peden, himself author of a valuable book on the subject. But these studies, instructive as they are, track the development of the genre according to the careers of individual authors and concern themselves only tangentially with questions of definition. 2 As for establishing a theoretical perspective, it may not take genius to claim that what was brief in 1847 might, in 1993, strike some as tedious. Yet short-story theory (the counterpart of historical criticism) is preoccupied with defining brevity
according to formal properties, without reference to cultural conditions. E. M. Forster distinguished the novel from the short story according to word count; in the past few years, however, publishers have grown fond of novels that run little more than one hundred pages, roughly the same length as Henry James's "The Lesson of the Master." Other theories of brevity apply standards that are only a little less arbitrary. One of the most influential short-story theorists, Norman Friedman, dismisses length to substitute another structural criterion, scope. "We will not argue... about length in strictly quantitative terms," he says. Instead, scope refers to content, allowing him to measure brevity according to plot dimension. A story's "action" may be "inherently small," ranging from a single speech (Dorothy Parker's "A Telephone Call") to a scene (Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants") to an episode or sequence of scenes (Hemingway's "Ten Indians"). Or a story may contain a number of episodes (a plot) that must be cut down to size; a writer makes it "short in the telling." By linking a story's length to its subject matter, Friedman resists the pitfalls of quantitative analysis, yet his qualitative categories are equally restrictive. Their obvious limitation (if we take the application beyond the abstract classification of constituent parts into speeches, scenes, and episodes) is that brevity can be analyzed only according to composition history. Such an approach is not fruitless, of course; an author's manuscript revisions offer vital insight into the creative process. Yet the end result is a limited critical purview: the shortness of a story is always manifest in structural features and needs little relation to its cultural milieu to be understood.

The most recent attempt to address the question of brevity is a collection of essays edited by Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey, *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* (1989). The book offers an intriguing array of models and metaphors for conceptualizing the differences between prose genres, as well as thoughtful commentary on the difficulties of defining them. What strikes me as telling is the prevalence of structuralist descriptions: a story is the product of tensions between "the force of a shaping form and the resistance of
the shaped materials," or a "debunking rhythm...that depends on a special use of antithesis" to project closure and give the reader a teleological sense of development. The most striking essay, by William O'Rourke, offers a triptych of metaphors for differentiating a short story from a novel. The first is zoological: the novel is endoskeletal while the short story is exoskeletal. The novel has an interior vertebrae, a bone structure hidden under the flesh of text. In short fiction, however, structure and text are one, and like a lobster or an oyster, size is limited by shape. With disarming ease, O'Rourke interweaves zoology with space-time physics and microeconomics to conclude that, during the 1980s, the short story became fashionable if not popular because it is "a piece of literature of which a good example can be produced by accident—or by an amateur" (203). (This attitude will be explored more fully in the last chapter). It is a bravura performance, yet, as with Barth's "feeding duck" image, the exoskeletal metaphor is more provocative than substantive. Its crustacean shell covers a guiding interpretive truism: a short story is structurally concise. Again, a universal standard of size delimits the genre.

I am not questioning the relevance of these essays or the value of formalist readings; as a glance through my chapters reveals, my argument depends on close scrutiny of textual nuances. What I find frustrating throughout short-story theory is the absorption with form. Locating brevity in structure turns texts into objects, a tendency that may express a critical desire to make the short story an artifact comparable to the novel. Our understanding of a novel can be influenced by its status as a concrete thing: packaging strives to be totemic of aesthetic value. But the idea of a short story as an object is more abstract, simply because one rarely exists as an isolated, self-contained text. Its membranes pass intertextual meanings either from the editorial content of the periodicals in which it appears or other stories gathered in the same collection. What goes missing in the emphasis on form is the key word in Poe's theory: the effect. Is there a
way to define brevity not as an expression of length or structure but as an effect? And can this effect be related to the historical development of the American short story?

This study is an experiment in answering those questions. My title comes from an 1851 essay on Hawthorne by Henry T. Tuckerman, who describes the tale as a "wise economy of resources." He borrows heavily from Poe in championing the concise over the prolix: "...the choicest gems of writing are often the most terse; as a perfect lyric or sonnet outweighs in value a mediocre epic or tragedy, so a carefully worked and richly conceived sketch, tale or essay is worth scores of diffuse novels." Yet, as the word "terse" suggests, the essays differ on one important point. For Poe, brevity is a structural feature, a distillation of dramatic components into a single plot. Tuckerman, on the other hand, defines it as an expression of style: "it is a characteristic of standard literature, both ancient and modern, thus to condense the elements of thought and style...it gives us the essence, the flower, the vital spirit of mental enterprise" (344).

What makes a story short is rhetorical economy. By invoking "the essence, the flower, [and] the vital spirit of mental enterprise," Tuckerman implicitly grounds his argument in a rhetorical tradition that challenges the "bigger-is-better" prejudices of aesthetic criticism: the idea that less is more. Richard Bridgman was one of the first critics to gauge the influence of this tradition on American prose. He traces the "colloquial" styles of Twain, Stein, and Hemingway to the post-colonial cultivation of an "indigenous" American English that valued a "greater concreteness of diction and simplicity in syntax" than British prose styles allowed. Rhetorical brevity was not invented in the new world, of course. The plain or vernacular style has advocates as as old as Aristotle; Tuckerman's imagery even echoes the "common-sense" rhetoric of Hugh Blair, which, imported from Scotland, was the predominant influence on 19th-century American compositional pedagogy. Still, the myth that American English is rooted in an egalitarian popular speech creates a suspicion of big words and "highfalutin" phraseology. The influence of rhetorical brevity is deeply embedded in the development of narrative technique,
especially in the transformation from digressive narrators who tell stories to omniscient narrators who render them. Percy Lubbock, one of the earliest critics to promote narratorial reticence, describes the transition in Henry James as an American rebellion against Englishmen like Thackeray (156-87). More recently, Cecelia Tichi has linked the early 20th-century "efficiency movement" (also known as Taylorism, after Samuel Taylor) to the imagistic styles of Pound and Hemingway (75-96). By defining brevity within this rhetorical tradition, Tuckerman points to an historical matrix in which the measure of shortness will vary according to the cultural temper.

"Economy" has a second meaning vital to my approach. It also evokes trade, a circulation of goods and services, and it reminds us that narratives are first and foremost currency in a transaction between a storyteller and an audience. Walter Benjamin employs this metaphor when he describes storytelling as "an ability to exchange experiences" that establishes community. Shorter narratives are social events: a storyteller "takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (87). "The Storyteller" is a nostalgic, often bitter dirge for the passing of this communal intimacy in the face of industrial alienation, which the novel embodies. According to Benjamin, the novel precludes exchange because its length forces attention to subject matter. Packed with information and explanation, it allows little opportunity for the audience to reflect and assimilate the narrative within its own experience. In this way, a longer narrative destroys a reader's talent for listening. Nor is the audience inspired to circulate stories; when the covers close, a novel is over and we reach for another. For Benjamin, "storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained" (91). The communal value of experience diminishes as audiences are transformed into solitary consumers who "destroy" and "swallow up" texts like "the fire devours logs in the fireplace" (100). Simpler stories, by contrast, are the broken bread of experience. Though
passed from lip to lip, they are never fully consumed but always replenish themselves through the solemn, social gesture of sharing.

It is fairly easy to dismiss the arbitrary dichotomies that Benjamin establishes in order to write the storyteller's obituary: a preference for the oral over the written, for the rural over the industrial, for the village tiller and journeyman over the consumer bourgeoisie. However nostalgic his notion of storytelling, his emphasis on community and counsel has inspired criticism to refocus on the interpersonal function of narrative after decades of asserting textual autonomy. Peter Brooks has written a persuasive defense of "The Storyteller" in which he suggests that Benjamin's nostalgia is only a "strategic" device: it "points the way less to an impossible return to the past than to a new attention directed toward the most subtle signs of context in the most highly elaborated texts, those that are the most self-conscious about their communicative situation and status" ("Tale" 290). As evidence of this self-consciousness, he refers to narrative frames that evoke specific storytelling situations, and though his examples are French, his argument is perfectly applicable to American works. James stages The Turn of the Screw, for example, as the oral recitation of a written text. The preface enhances the ghostly quality of the story proper by dramatizing its effect on a specific audience. Obviously, storytelling frames are not unheard of in the novel, but the short story may claim an authentic affinity with oral communication, precisely because its folkloric roots predate the industrial rattle and hum that spawns the novel. Early attempts at defining the genre explicitly link its popularity to oral traditions. Mark Twain claims to speak only of narration "by word of mouth" in "How to Tell a Story" (156); yet the advice that he offers (feigned naivete, casual indifference to the punch line or "snapper," smart use of pauses) is so characteristic of his own short stories, which make abundant use of storytelling frames, that medium is a moot point. Bret Harte stresses the oral roots even more emphatically when he links the story's rise to the tall tale and joke telling: "It was at first noticeable in the anecdote or 'story,' and, after the fashion of such beginnings, was
orally transmitted. It was common in the bar-rooms, the gatherings in the country store, and finally at public meetings in the mouths of 'stump orators.' Arguments were clinched and political principles illustrated by a 'funny story.' It invaded even the camp meeting and pulpit" (201).

Economy offers both a definition of brevity as a rhetorical effect and a metaphor for reading the short story as a social act. What is the relationship between these two meanings? To a certain extent, they work at cross-purposes and create an internal tension in the development of the genre. Rhetorical economy in fiction, as Wayne C. Booth first detailed more than thirty years ago, is manifest in an aesthetic homogenization of representational techniques, best summarized as a movement away from telling (diegesis or description) to showing (mimesis or imitation). 6 This change results in the gradual elision of the narratorial function: whereas an early 19th-century storyteller might openly comment upon his or her own performance, narrators in realist or modernist periods are less likely to address their audience. As for contemporary literature, it is debatable whether mimesis remains the "dogma" it was when Booth's work was first published. The celebrated self-reflexivity of postmodern styles, as Brooks suggests, may "propose a dialogue with the reader, [asking] for the reader's response in exchange for counsel given" ("Tale" 291). And in criticism, deconstruction long ago proved that imitation is a form of description and mimesis merely a more idealized (and unattainable) type of diegesis. 7 Yet a random scan of writing guides suggests that rhetorical economy still means deleting words and expressions that are overly expressive of a writer's presence. However theoretically fashionable it is to point out the impurity of mimesis, aesthetic criticism nonetheless prefers realistic works that reflect "the way that we live now." 8 Derogatory terms like "digression" and "intrusion," which imply that a narrator interrupts the real story, continue to be mainstays of our critical vocabulary.

Because it typically leads to the deletion of references to narrative performance, rhetorical economy is complicit in creating the illusion of textual autonomy. The
storyteller, responsible for establishing a community with the audience, evaporates from the text, and signs of address become less and less obvious. Distance distills the "living immediacy" that Benjamin claimed was the heart and soul of the storyteller's craft (even when the storyteller was only a typographic cipher). 9 It should be noted, however, that no story is completely bereft of narratorial presence. Critics have long been fond of citing Hemingway's "The Killers" as an example of impersonal, unmediated writing. The style is so pared down, so dependent on dialogue between the characters, that many (including Booth) claim that it is a story without a storyteller. Yet there are subtle clues that our access to events passes through an intermediary perception. A simple sentence like "In their tight overcoats and derby hats [the killers] looked like a vaudeville team" reveals an evaluative presence texturing the story; someone is responsible for this analogy. As Susan Snaider Lanser remarks, the fact that subtle "asides" like this do not break with the overall tone of reticence suggests the presence of an "invisible eyewitness" rather than a "wholly effaced recorder of words and deeds" (Narrative Act 269). In an "invisible" narrative stance, signs of address are embedded in linguistic rather than direct, dramatic gestures: modals, tense, forms for attributing speech to characters. What disappears is a specific cultural context in which these gestures indicate a relative degree of control over the meaning taking shape.

Mention of control brings me to the middle terms in my subtitle, "narrative authority." Before outlining more specifically what follows in each chapter, I must clarify my own approach to the dynamics of textual interaction and relate it to brevity and storytelling. To date, most inquiries into narrative authority have been of a decidedly taxonomic bent, with Gerard Genette's Narrative Discourse setting the standard. The result is a diverse, international grammar of descriptive poetics that catalogues types of narrators and readers but pays little attention to the rhetorical exchange between them. 10 More recently, narratology has borrowed from other disciplines in an effort to emphasize the transactive nature of storytelling. Of these disciplines, psychoanalysis has proved the
most popular. In his essay on Benjamin, Brooks invokes Freudian transference as a model for "all that is deployed by modern narrative to signal, to underline, to dramatize the reception and the transmission of the narrated, and of narrative itself" ("Tale" 291). His position is not surprising since he authored one of the most controversial (if not influential) psychoanalytic analyses of narrative, Reading for the Plot (1984). For Brooks, transference is a story "repeated from the past, acted out as if it were present," whose repressed meaning is manifest in repetitions, redundancies, and omissions. Like an analyst, a reader listens "for the design of the story [narration] would tell" (235); we "'intervene' by the very act of reading, interpreting the text, handling it, shaping it to our own ends, making it accessible to our therapies" (234). If "design" suggests formalism, Brooks (in still another essay) insists that the structure of the text is a map of the narrator's unconscious and that, to gain access to these psychic processes, we must "[become] more formalistic" ("Idea" 10). Focusing on the structure of the text, a reader makes him/herself complicit in the transference, and the act of reading generates another story: "Meaning in this view is not simply 'in the text,' nor wholly the fabrication of a reader (or a community of readers), but in the dialogic struggle and collaboration of the two, in the activation of textual possibilities in the process of reading" ("Idea" 16).

Obviously, any attempt to gauge narrative authority will require close attention to the text; in this sense, the focus should be "textual and rhetorical" ("Idea" 6). Yet when Brooks describes the narrative transaction as "tak[ing] place in a special 'artificial' medium, obeying its own rules" (Reading 234), he fails to acknowledge that this "dialogue" also takes place in a cultural medium that obeys codes of social interaction. J. L. Austin describes these codes or norms as "conventional procedures," contexts or situations in which the words of a speaker or listener are accorded greater authority because of social status (14ff). Brooks' own equation of the reader with the analyst illustrates the relevance of conventional procedures. In a transference model, the reader pays little attention to the social status of either the narrator or author because
interpretation takes place under clinical conditions. The text is a patient that we "[make] accessible to our own therapies." But to carry the analogy to an extreme, the reader/analyst can only practice these therapeutic techniques once s/he has been licensed by a more authoritative regulatory body. Brooks posits an ideal reader who is a professional, one who must go to school, earn a degree, and pass state boards; whether such rigorous training is characteristic of most audiences is doubtful. To a hazard another generalization, I would suggest that many (non-academic) readers automatically defer to an author, precisely because publication itself confers social status. A publisher's imprimatur implies that someone, somewhere has decided that these words are worthy of circulation. Even in oral performances, conventional procedures emphasize the speaker's possession of the "floor," subordinating the audience's response: ministers wear robes and stand in pulpits, politicians grip podiums phalanxed by bodyguards, comedians pace stages holding microphones.  

Conventional procedures are only norms, however, and they can be violated. A heckler inspires the thrill of anarchy when confronting a politician blathering platitudes; similarly, a reader has the power to close the book or to avoid even picking it up. An author need only discover his or her work in a bargain bin to know that social status is tenuous at best. What these possible responses illustrate is the dynamic nature of narrative authority and the inherent instability of the reading act itself. In Brooks' model, form develops according to the rhythm of narrative syntax; I would argue that conventional procedures alter the tempo as reading is complicated by constant identification and differentiation on the part of the audience.  

To do justice to this dynamic, one must admit the influence of sociological variables (gender, race, and class, to name but three) on the construction of narrative authority. My own approach then is to locate the storytelling exchange within a cultural context by following the general outline of a methodology that Steven Mailloux calls "rhetorical hermeneutics": reconstructing interpretive processes to uncover the "historical sets of topics, arguments, tropes,
ideologies, and so forth which determine how texts are established as meaningful through rhetorical exchanges" (15). To illustrate how rhetorical economy affects narrative exchange, I must show how the elision of the narrative function transforms addresses (whether direct or embedded) in the short story. To do so, I borrow interpretive models from a diverse body of speech-act theory and discourse analysis. These models allow me to characterize the dynamic nature of narrative authority as a drama of "turn-taking" relations (Pratt *Speech Act* 113). Narrative conventions signal a storyteller's willingness or unwillingness to relinquish control over the meaning taking shape.

To emphasize the historical origins of this tension between stylistic brevity and storytelling, I organize my chapters around four prominent "modes of writing" that develop between the early 19th century and the 1980s: romanticism, realism, modernism, and minimalism. In each chapter, I focus on a specific narrative convention that is either endemic or inimical to the storytelling styles. The stories discussed were selected for their stylistic features as well as thematic relevance to a particular rhetorical debate embedded in the modes. In the first chapter, I explore how tensions between orality and writing influence the storytelling frames of three tales: Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," Hawthorne's "Wakefield," and Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener." These tensions, I argue, are indicative of an emerging 19th-century sensibility in which writing is a pedagogical tool charged with disseminating moral instruction. This imperative is manifest in morals and maxims attached to stories that explicate the "lessons" that they illustrate. As a result, interpretive strategies cast the reading act as the type of consumption that Benjamin saw as destructive of community. As writing assumes a greater cultural authority, orality is devalued as ephemeral and specious, the discourse of legends, rumors, and other untruths. To different degrees, Irving, Hawthorne, and Melville react against this perception; evoking oral discourse allows them to undermine the authority conferred to the written word.
Chapter Two focuses on the relationship between direct addresses and gender in the realist era. The stories discussed, Rebecca Harding Davis's "Life in the Iron Mills," Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron," and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," illustrate different reactions to the growing realist imperative of objectivity. Objectivity increasingly precluded the negotiation of narrative authority through emotional appeals to the reader; brevity, in this case, refers to the emotive timbre of the storyteller's performance. I relate this critical prejudice to the phenomenon of professionalization in the latter 19th century and suggest that narrative strategies that stressed the interpersonal function of storytelling were associated with feminine communication styles.

My third chapter relates brevity to the representation of speech and thought in the modernist short story. Modernism typically obscures the figure of the storyteller in order to immerse the reader in a polyphonic panorama of voices; narration moves from a "teller" function to an "author" function. Figural voices may echo in indirect speech (as in Gertrude Stein's "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene"), or seem more audible in direct dialogue (as in Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"); more complex yet, they may combine with the narrative voice in free indirect speech (as in Djuna Barnes's "Run Girls, Run" and Richard Wright's "Almos' a Man"). I explore what happens when these representational techniques become mannerisms expressing an authorial ethos or public identity. I suggest that literary celebrity (always a preoccupation with modernists) links prose style and public persona so that storytelling techniques become personal property. As a result, the authorial voice speaks louder in the reading act, even while remaining a relative whisper in the text.

The final part of the book deals with the influence of the present tense on narrative authority in minimalist stories by Bobbie Ann Mason and Raymond Carver. Critics, until recently, have attacked minimalism, complaining that it does away with depth and craft, offering only a "catatonic" or nihilistic perspective on contemporary life (Wilde 143). I argue that minimalism foregrounds the oral stand that Irving, Hawthorne, and Melville
employed more surreptitiously in the tale; Mason and Carver often delete drama in favor of narration, creating an ambiance of secular confession. The present tense, I suggest, is a metalinguistic form of address: it closes the temporal gap that traditionally separates a story and its telling and substitutes perception for retrospection, radically redefining narration. The lack of a backward glance capable of reconstructing events in a chronology or causal chain influences narrative structure: the typical evaluative process by which a storyteller decides what information is most important (what linguists call "grounding") is deferred to the audience.

Some readers will be astonished to find little discussion of writers traditionally associated with the short story: Poe, Rose Terry Cooke, James, Constance Fenimore Woolson, Twain, Crane, Chopin, Wharton, Cather, Anderson, Fitzgerald, Ellen Glasgow, Caroline Gordon, Toomer, Porter, Dorothy Parker, Faulkner, Eudora Welty, O'Connor, Updike, Paule Marshall, Alice Walker—my only justification for these exclusions is that I have combined texts to ensure thematic consistency in each chapter. In choosing individual works, my intent has been to offer new readings of canonical stories like "Bartleby" and "Hills Like White Elephants" while including less celebrated pieces like "Life in the Iron Mills" and "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene." Twelve tales is too small a sample to claim that the heterogeneity of the American short story is fully represented. What follows aims to be more illustrative than comprehensive. It surveys the protean forms that storytelling has assumed over the last two centuries.

Notes

1 Ruland's *The Native Muse* offers a convenient potpourri of this attitude, beginning roughly two-thirds through the first volume with excerpts from DeTouqueville, Emerson, and Melville. Even more important, the selections illustrate the prevalence of the rhetorical economy tradition, stretching back long before Franklin. For a bizarre recent example of "bigger is better," see Wolfe, who offers his own novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, as a model for capturing the American panorama.

2 Pattee's work may be the earliest "history"; Lieberman's 1912 study covers the post-Civil War local color writers. Williams's 1920 book focuses on "living or at least
contemporary writers," though her definition of "contemporary" is ambiguous. She excludes James but includes Richard Harding Davis (both died in the same year). Other historical surveys include O'Brien and Voss. West focuses on the 20th century; Peden's book, by far the best of the lot, covers 1940-63. Four of the Twayne volumes deal with the American short story: Volume One (Current-Garcia) covers the colonial era up to 1850. Volume Two, edited by Crowley, covers 1850-1990. Volume Three, edited by Stevick, covers 1900-1945, and the final volume, 1945-1980, is edited by Weaver. Strictly theoretical discussions include Rohberger and Burns, Lohafer, and Gerlach. One of the few calls for an historical approach to brevity is Pratt's "The Short Story."

3 An excellent example is Beegel's study; the book details how Hemingway arrived at strategic omissions in stories like "Fifty Grand" and "A Natural History of the Dead."

4 I quote the word "indigenous" fully recognizing that Bridgman uses it without irony; a more contemporary study would have to account for the influence of ethnic cultures (whether Native-, Afro-, Chinese-, or Chicano/a-American) on "American English."

5 Kroeb er eloquently shows how criticism favors universal and "metacultural" aesthetics that transcend specific social practices thanks to the "intellectual heritage of modernism." Retelling/Rereading makes a convincing case for viewing stories as "phenomena so profoundly cultural that all explanatory analogues to natural processes, including those emphasized in Freudian psychology, are destructively misleading. Until we give up Causaubon-like faith in a single, universal (because organically founded, "natural") plot as the key to all storytelling we undervalue not merely the diversity of stories in themselves but also the significance of the diversity of response that stories call forth" (9).

6 Booth's first three chapters detail the standard arguments for eliminating the narrative context; he offers an exacting critique of their inconsistencies that is still valid. As he suggests, "Everything [that] shows will serve to tell; the line between showing [mimesis] and telling [diegesis] is always to some degree an arbitrary one... the author's judgment is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it" (20).

7 The quintessential statement is Derrida's "Economimesis."

8 See, for example, Hills, who, as fiction editor at Esquire, is responsible for rejecting thousands of manuscripts in any given year. He encourages amateur storytellers not to be too "talky." For an example of aesthetic criticism, see Aldridge.

9 Formalist critics tend to misunderstand the function of narrative interventions. Roh berger and Burns, for example, recognize the elision of the storyteller is a defining feature of the form. I differ with them on the effect of this disappearance, however: "As the form evolves...the reader is increasingly required to participate in a kinship relation with the author that is even more active than the one Poe suggests. The underlying line of development is evident not only in the evolution of the narrator's role, but also in the transformation of plot into pattern, and consequently in the total transformation of the 'real' into the world of dream" (4). As "more active" implies, the authors assume that direct addresses pacify the reader by telling him/her how to respond; for an alternative
position, see Kroeber, who argues that narrative interventions mark a narrator's willingness to negotiate his/her authority by connecting diverse audiences (99).

10 A note on terminology: throughout this study, "reader" refers to the fictional audience, whether dramatized or implicit, addressed by the storyteller. I use the word in place of "narratee," or the several types of fictional audiences that Phelan distinguishes (5-20). "Audience," by contrast, refers to the real-life consumer of the story. This distinction was prevalent in the 19th-century and offers, I think, a fairly simple scheme for distinguishing fictional and actual addressees.

11 For a discussion of conventional procedures in shaping author-audience relations, see Pratt, Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literature (120). Though he does not mention her work, Rabinowitz applies a similar argument to reading conventions to illustrate the influences shaping a reader's perception of narrative authority even before s/he opens a book.

12 My definition of reading is comparable to the definition of authority that Holzner and Robertson establish: a "social structure [that] emerges as an interaction and reflexive phenomenon from identifications and differentiations" (20).

13 While gender, class, and race have preoccupied literary critics for nearly twenty-five years now, with the turn away from New Criticism in the late 1960s towards sociocultural interpretive schools like feminist, Marxist, and New Historicism, narrative studies remained relatively isolated until the mid-1980s. When the introduction to Lanser's Fictions of Authority was published in Style in 1986, traditional narratologists decried the intervention of non-descriptive models, arguing that feminist criticism appropriated narrative studies for political (and therefore suspect) ends. The first chapter of Warhol's Gendered Interventions traces resistance to sociocultural narrative models, including, surprisingly enough, the work of feminist critics like Susan Suleiman, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and even Lanser's The Narrative Act (1981). See 3-24.

14 The term "modes of writing" comes from Annette Lavers and Colin Smith's translation of Barthes' Le Degré Zéro de L'Écriture: "A language and a style are blind forces; a mode of writing is an act of historical solidarity. A language and style are objects; a mode of writing is a function: it is the relationship between creation and society, the literary language transformed by its social finality, form considered as a human intention and thus linked to the great crises of History" (14).
"Washington Irving," as an early biographer adroitly commented, lived "always a little in the past tense" (Warner Irving, 184). Suspicious of the business class to which his family aspired, fearful that his temperament was antipathetic to the responsibilities of a profession, he sought escape from the "common place realities of the present" by celebrating the simplicity of pre-revolutionary America. His nostalgia often surfaces in a curious bias against writing: books are the province of the pedantic political elite that manipulates print to maintain its self-serving authority. Speech, by contrast, is the medium of honest human contact, conveying intimacy and fellow-feeling while creating a comforting sense of community. Early burlesques like Salmagundi (1807; co-authored by his brother William and James Kirke Paulding) and A History of New York (1809) parody writing as a satanic apple that tempts an Edenic new world. The later sketches and tales manifest a more subtle and intriguing ambivalence toward print culture, especially his masterpiece, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1819-20). Fore­ shadowing Benjamin's "The Storyteller," the sentimental, nostalgic Geoffrey Crayon laments the loss of community fostered by oral narrative and associates "the art of book-making" with impersonal commerce. In one selection, Crayon is ejected from the British museum's reading room for not carrying an admission card: "At first I did not comprehend...but I soon found that the library was a kind of literary 'preserve,' subject to game laws, and that no one must presume to hunt there without special license and permission" (814). Elsewhere, he complains to a musty old Renaissance quarto (which has mysteriously come to life) that "the inventions of paper and the press...have made every one a writer...the stream of literature has swoln into a torrent—augmented into a river—
expanded into a sea" (861). The smug quarto, speaking in "intolerably antiquated terms,"
confirms Crayon's suspicion that print cannot accommodate the changes that time subjects
upon language. In "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (putatively narrated by Diedrich
Knickerbocker, the persona of the New York history), Irving contrasts the supernatural
tales of the Tarry Town residents to the witchcraft stories that Ichabod Crane recites from
an edition of Cotton Mather. While the villagers enjoy the legends as entertainments,
Crane assumes that his ghost stories must be true if they have been printed, his credulity
allowing the Headless Horseman to scare him from the valley. Significantly, Crane
disappears from Tarry Town without his books, which his landlord promptly burns
because "he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing" (1086).

In parodying print culture, Irving ignores a rather obvious fact: he writes books.
Indeed, not only was he the literary celebrity of his generation, but he manipulated the
"book-making" industry with a deftness that only a handful of successors would emulate.
Before the establishment of international laws that curtailed commonplace literary piracy,
Irving secured copyrights in both America and England. At a time when authors were
routinely robbed by publishers, Irving oversaw the production of his works, inde­
dependently contracting (through his ever supportive brothers) printers, distributors, and
booksellers. The Sketch Book first appeared in America as a series of seven pamphlets
costing an inflated seventy cents a piece. It is a credit to Irving's diffident persona that his
price gouging generated little backlash: each edition sold out within a month of its
appearance. 1 But his most impressive achievement was establishing a secondary market
for short narratives. Formerly circulated in penny papers and periodicals, they could now
be packaged in book form as "twice-told tales" (as Hawthorne would dub his 1837
collection). As intellectual property with a profit potential comparable to the novel, the
tale enjoyed a newfound popularity. Unfortunately, the status was short-lived.
Imitations soon diluted the novelty of The Sketch Book form so that, by the mid-1830s, a
Crayon-like unifying device no longer guaranteed publication. Neither Poe's Tales of the
Folio Club nor Hawthorne's The Story Teller, both probably modelled on The Sketch Book, were published in collected form. Still, as briefly as Irving set literary fashion, his influence on the "book-making" business was profound. Despite what his biographer might claim, he lived very much in the present tense of his times. The question remains: why lampoon his own industry? Upon closer inspection, a certain superficiality even permeates his nostalgia for pre-print culture. While parodic allusions, lavish descriptive passages, and epic catalogues allude to the oral tradition of the tale, the style is far from vernacular. In what minimal dialogue there is, characters speak the same impeccable Addisonian prose as the storyteller, without the dialectical variation or regional neologisms ("Americanisms" as they were called) with which Irving's contemporaries hoped to establish a national language distinct from British English. One need only compare the Crayon/Knickerbocker voice to the narrators of "The Tell-Tale Heart" or "The Black Cat" (where extemporaneous speech is evoked by ellipses and dashes) to recognize that orality is more a thematic than stylistic issue in The Sketch Book.

Irving's adherence to an old-world, "composed" style led R. H. Dana, Sr. to describe the prose as "feminine, dressy, elegant, and languid," an assessment that only partly conveys the era's gendered assumptions toward print and orality (348). Like many readers, Dana overlooked the editorial apparatus that explains the transcription of "Sleepy Hollow" into that style: a brief parenthesis, presumably affixed by Crayon, notes that the legend was "found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker," followed by an epigraph, again the signature of Crayon, who introduces each Sketch Book selection with a fragment of poetry. A postscript also "found in the handwriting of Mr. Knickerbocker" describes how the historian first heard of Ichabod Crane: "The preceding Tale is given, almost in the precise words in which I heard it related at a corporation meeting of the ancient city of Manhattoes...The narrator was a pleasant, shabby, gentlemanly old fellow...whom I strongly suspected of being poor, he made such efforts to be entertaining" (1087). Simply put, "Sleepy Hollow" is a thrice-told tale. Casting it as a
verbal performance transcribed into print, Irving implicitly justifies the absence of "oral residue" in his style. 2

As a rhetorical fiction, transcription resolves cultural tensions between orality and writing that shape narrative authority in antebellum fiction. As distinct from the later short story, the tale is defined by the prominence of its "enunciative posture" or storytelling frame. The narrator typically exhibits a level of "interested language" or rhetorical presence through which s/he can "suggest how the reader is to take things" (Penn 234-35). Because the frame is so foregrounded, the storyteller's social authority is vital to establishing an interpersonal dynamic with the audience; the particular medium associated with that authority (speech or print) places different emphases on the method of presentation. Oral traditions chronicle family genealogy and community history. Tall tales may exaggerate the features and feats of a single body, with the individual (John Henry or Paul Bunyon) often literally larger than his or her surroundings, but the narrative itself concerns a fairly circumscribed community. Print, as mass communication, serves broader interests by making that self a synecdoche for larger social welfare. Individuals are valued for the exemplum that they might represent, so the message carries more authority than the speaker. What Michael Warner writes of the post-colonial era held true in Irving's time: "the republican ideology of print arranged the values of generality over those of the personal. In this cognitive vocabulary the social diffusion of printed artifacts took on the investment of the disinterested virtues of the public orientation, as opposed to the corrupting interests and passions of particular and local persons" ("Textuality and Legitimacy" 74). 3 As evidence of this "public orientation" in the tale, one need only look at the morals and maxims typically affixed to it. Generalizing the experience of a fictional hero or heroine into a universally applicable ethical lesson was perhaps the only avenue for legitimating the social value of the tale as it became one of the most popular but least respected forms of public discourse. 4
As Warner implies, the investment of "disinterested virtue" in writing confers to it a stability and reason denied oral discourse. This presumed stability led to a profusion of diverse forms of textuality in the first half of the century. Pedagogical books like dictionaries and grammars are only the most obvious incarnation; land deeds and even the institution of the gold standard (a subtext of Poe's "The Gold Bug") likewise suggest how extensively paper authority symbolized permanence and durability, though the artificiality of these semiotic systems is obvious from the rigorous government controls imposed to regulate their value. The authority invested in writing devalues discourses of questionable truth (legends, rumor, gossip, and fiction) and presupposes strict stylistic guidelines on language use. In *The Influence of Literature Upon Society*, a popular polemic from its first American publication in 1813, Germaine de Staël associates literary language with oratorical deception, undoubtedly because public speakers, from evangelists to political "stumpers," were returning to a self-consciously imaginative eloquence after decades of rational argumentation. If the new country is to be a true democracy, de Staël argues, its writers should avoid this literary style in favor of a "manly eloquence" in which "simple truths and pure sentiments" are expressed without ornament, as in judicial declaration (13, 68). Whether Irving was familiar with de Staël's argument is unclear, but his response is not unimaginable given a well-documented disdain for barristers. (He wrote *A History of New York* during a tedious nine-year stint as a Philadelphia law clerk, a career he gladly abandoned). The strictures of public writing offered storytellers little leeway in establishing their cultural authority: they could either abide the compulsory didacticism of print culture or be recognized as "story-book" writers. As Hawthorne's custom-house colleague puts it, "What kind of business in life, what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation?" (*CE* I, 10). At the height of the popularity of *The Sketch Book*, Irving struck self-deprecating poses all the way to the bank. Even to ardent admirers, he spoke of his talents as "merely literary" (*Letters* S20) and his writings as "light and trifling"
(Brevoort II, 87). But when his third miscellany (Tales of a Traveller [1824]) proved a critical and commercial failure, he opted for more prestigious prose genres like history and biography. Significantly, his later works reveal a growing suspicion of the imagination. 6 Hawthorne alternated between Irving's early diffidence and an outright disdain for the literary market. He wrote his last tale in 1852 ("Feathertop"), hoping that the romance would afford both more creativity and remuneration. Melville, by contrast, composed short stories only when his longer works were misunderstood, ridiculed, or otherwise ignored. Though he hotly protested any restrictions placed upon him by book publishers, his periodical pieces reveal a sudden willingness to tailor his style to editorial tastes. What "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," "Wakefield," and "Bartleby, the Scrivener" share is the subtle evocation of the spoken word as an antidote to the authority conferred to writing. If print promises a mechanical reproduction of meaning, the oral strand marks what Benjamin calls the aesthetic "aura," the "unique presence [of the work] at the place where it happens to be" (220). It offers a subversive, interpersonal alternative to the public orientation of print culture. Even when maxims do appear (as in Hawthorne's tales), resonances of speech dramatize the subjectivity of perception, redirecting attention away from the propagation of universal virtues toward the recognition of personal significance and meaning.

The locus of tensions between orality and writing is a rhetorical stance personified by the bachelor narrator. For all three authors, of course, bachelorhood carries important biographical resonances. 7 The bachelor is also a popular figure in pre-Civil War tales, epitomized in Reveries of a Bachelor by Ik Marvell, the pen name of Donald G. Mitchell, the co-editor of Harper's responsible for publishing many of Melville's short stories. Ann Douglas describes these personae as "teases, loiterers, given to disappearing around corners, gently dodging shadows of their own making, men with a vanishing act. Their evaporation complex seems a sign of self-effacement...it is also a covert and self-congratulatory manifesto of irresponsibility" (238). The irresponsibility extends beyond
domestic and professional commitments to the very act of authorship itself, resulting in a smoke-and-mirrors construction of narrative authority whose ambivalence is a particularly masculine privilege. Writing for a public audience becomes one more self-made shadow to dodge. The bachelor may announce, for example, that his narrative is not an original composition but a retelling, a strategy meant to excuse him from the didactic responsibilities imposed by print culture. (Only the lawyer-narrator in "Bartleby" insists on the veracity of his tale). The influence of gender on narrative authority is manifest as well in the storytelling frames. In many Sketch Book-styled collections by women writers, narratives are cast in private modes of written communication. While Irving embeds his oral tale with editorial apparatuses associated with publishing, authors like Alice Cary, Eliza Leslie, and Lydia Sigourney employ the diary and epistolary form. Unlike Geoffrey Crayon, who self-consciously addresses an anonymous mass audience, many women narrators are a priori excluded from public discourse. Writing and orality for them are both media of personal communication. 8 Like Benjamin's storyteller, the bachelor narrator's self-dramatization provides the transitional link between the scene of performance and his fictional world. But unlike the oral performer, the bachelor narrator has no community. The distance that public writing imposes on the rhetorical situation fosters a suspicion of the reader, whose demands are projected in the greedy appetite of Ichabod Crane, the wifely devotion of the abandoned Mrs. Wakefield, or the bafflingly indifferent responses of Bartleby. Lamenting their alienation and then using it as an excuse to deviate from the perceived limitations of audience expectations, these narrators take refuge in their outsider status. The bachelor metaphor thus suggests choice and condition, both a self-conscious exile and a matter of circumstance.

Different rhetorical strategies embody the contradictions in this stance. In "Sleepy Hollow," the transcription implied by the editorial frames points to the embedding of multiple scenes of narration: the written is superimposed upon the oral. Each scene bears traces of its speaker's "frame of reference," the spatial perspective that indicates a relative
distance from the reader. The resulting modulations effect a spatial displacement on the audience. In "Wakefield," Hawthorne plays metafictional rather than metatextual games. While explicitly referring to his private scene of writing, he addresses his reader in a style popularized by oral performers during the 1830s. If Irving superimposes the written upon the oracular, Hawthorne juxtaposes them. The oral strand offers an alternative context for interpreting the concluding moral, which, in a written rhetorical situation, seems to flaunt its own insufficiency.

Rather than locate tensions between orality and writing in narrative performance, Melville embeds them in the surrounding social context. The narrator is a lawyer whose entire belief system is rooted in the authority of the written word, embodied by the law. He draws his interpretive authority from the social authority conferred to him. Once confronted with the bizarre recalcitrance of his newest scrivener, however, he finds his faith irrevocably challenged. A possible cause of Bartleby's indifference is discovered only through a rumor whose truth or meaning cannot be verified. In this way, the scrivener himself embodies the oral strand. The narrator's subtle puns on legal terminology dramatize Bartleby's effect on his own attitude toward print culture. Just as the scrivener undermines the professional authority of his employer, the narrator invites the audience to undermine his and circulate its own rumors regarding the meaning(s) of the story. In all three texts, the chatty, grandiloquent self-dramatization so typical of early tale writers is a deceptive strategy. Beneath the straightforward presentation is an anxious attempt to overcome the impersonality of address inherent in writing for an anonymous audience.

Irving's "Sleepy Hollow" and the American Reader

Few stories in The Sketch Book, "Rip Van Winkle" and "Sleepy Hollow" most famously, draw upon American materials, but those that do manifest a preoccupation with the identity of his native audience. The correspondence that post-dates his 1815 exile to
Europe reveals a muted but self-conscious rebellion against American literary standards, in particular to the pragmatic ends of didactic fiction. He dismisses the plot of "Sleepy Hollow," for example, as "a mere whimsical band to connect descriptions of scenery, customs, manners, & co." (Letters 570). A miscellany of observations, narration fails to coalesce into a template of universal virtue. As Fred Lewis Pattee suggests, the word "sketch" itself conveys the disorganization and randomness of "first impressions...collected for work" but not meant to stand as "the work itself" (Development 6). Crayon is a writer, but his writing is forever unfinished business, unfit for anything other than diversion. By emphasizing the spontaneity of insight and observation, Irving contrasts sharply to the predominant written rhetorical stance of the age, personified by Benjamin Franklin, whose Autobiography, reprinted in America in a popular 1818 edition, rivaled the sales of The Sketch Book. Franklin was a printer, of course; his model of self-making, replete with all-purpose maxims and a chart of essential virtues, both literally and figuratively embodies print ideology as the textuality of life and life of textuality intertwine. The pressure of measuring up to Franklinian standards creates something of an intertextual headache for Crayon, who begs forgiveness repeatedly for his lack of polish and perfection. Other allusions to Franklin are less apologetic. Rip Van Winkle, who feels an "insuperable aversion to profitable labour," is a colonial couch potato, his twenty-year nap the very antithesis of industrious self-perfection. Indeed, Rip only becomes a productive member of the community when he assumes the role of village storyteller.

Print ideology reverberates in the postscript of "Sleepy Hollow" when an incredulous old man puts a halt to the "laughter and approbation" by challenging the storyteller to account for the morality of his tale. "He was one of your wary men, who never laugh but upon good grounds," Knickerbocker writes, "—when they have reason and the law on their side" (1087). Unlike the deputy aldermen who can enjoy the story despite dozing off through large portions of it, the old man has listened intensely, his face "grave and rather severe," often "looking down upon the floor, as if turning a doubt over
in his mind." Intense introspection characterizes the reader who, incapable of laughing because of a bookish, pedantic mind, only appreciates the didactic value of a narrative. Pressed to provide a sententious moral, the storyteller oblige with an absurd syllogism whose intellectual pretension mocks his audience's high seriousness:

The cautious old gentleman knit his brows tenfold closer after this explanation, being sorely puzzled by the ratiocination of the syllogism; while methought the one in pepper and salt eyed him with something of a triumphant leer. At length he observed, that all this was very well, but he still thought the story a little on the extravagant—there were one or two points on which he had his doubts.

"Faith, sir," replied the story teller, "as to that matter, I don't believe it one half myself." (1088)

The narrator summarily dismisses truth (and, by implication, its moral import) as a criterion for good fiction. Moral conclusions turn stories into commerce, making them consumable goods that discourage dreaming and even laughing. As a minor character, the old man is little more than a foil for the punch line. Irving creates a far more complex portrait of print ideology in Ichabod Crane, the pedagogue and would-be entrepreneur. As a Yankee sent to the Hudson Valley as a "pioneer of the mind," Crane symbolizes the dangers of an imagination interiorized by reading. He studies his volume of Mather's supernatural lore, alone, "until the dusk of evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes." Even when he participates in the local storytelling sessions, recounting his "anecdotes of witchcraft," he is distinguished by metaphors of textuality. The villagers think of him as a "traveling gazette," a local newspaper, "carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house." He memorizes epitaphs from the local tombstones to woo the county damsels, scribbles romantic verse on foolscap, and even repeats Franklinian maxims like "spare the rod and spoil the child" to his students. He mixes his "direful omens" with science, terrifying the villagers with "speculations upon comets and shooting stars, and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn around, and they were half the time topsy-turvey!" (1065). "Fact" is a strategic word
choice here; one can assume that the schoolmaster learned these "speculations" from his books, accepting them as truths, much as he accepts the witchcraft stories as fact. What finally makes Crane susceptible to the Headless Horseman legend is the simple belief that stories never lie. As a reader, he draws his interpretive authority from Mather's social authority as an author. Though described as "a perfect master" of the text, Crane is, in fact, mastered by the book. When Brom Bones and his gang of rough riders break into his elaborately secured schoolhouse, turning it "topsy-turvy," the schoolmaster never wonders whether he is the victim of a practical joke. He simply concludes that "all the witches in the country held their meetings there" (1071-72).

Crane is more than a one-dimensional dupe, however. His bookishness manifests a maliciousness destructive to community, symbolized nicely by his voracious appetite: "No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow" (1064). Irving's image is by no means original, of course. Eating as a metaphor for reading dates back at least to the Scriptures. In 19th-century America, it served a pedagogical function: consuming books meant that the moral was "taken in," absorbed, and digested. Irving twists the trope to symbolize greed. In Crane's "devouring mind's eye," the village is a feast awaiting consumption. He cannot see a pig without imagining "a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth...in the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon" (1067). Weaned on books, his imagination serves no one but himself as he plots to win the affections of Katrina Van Tassel and populate her father's spacious farm land with "shingle palaces."

If Crane represents a readership ill-equipped to accept fiction as entertainment, the villagers symbolize Irving's ideal audience. Most important, they act as a community: Baltus Van Tassel hosts a "merry making" (where the schoolmaster plans to conquer the coquette), sharing the spoils of his fortune in a sumptuous banquet. Crane arrives "chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendour" (1076). While Van Tassel welcomes his guests with
a loud, boisterous laugh, Ichabod keeps his greedy giggles to himself. Even his rival for Katrina Van Tassel's affections exudes communal mirth and gamesmanship: Brom Bones has "more mischief than ill will in his composition; and with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humour at bottom" (1069). He is a consummate storyteller, able to perform a "thrice marvellous adventure," as Crane learns when talk on the Van Tassel piazza turns to the headless Hessian. The storytelling scene reveals just what an outsider he is. While his hunger is linked to print, the Dutch community comes to life through analogies to oral discourse. The townsfolk "gossip" about the past, "drawing out long stories," freely tailoring their narratives: "Just sufficient time had elapsed [since the Revolutionary War, which provides the setting for most of the stories] to enable each storyteller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and in the indistinctness of his recollections, to make himself the hero of every exploit" (1077-78). On Van Tassel's piazza, truth and fiction are indistinct. Stories of the White Plains, where the British were defeated, and the hanging of Major André, a conspirator of Benedict Arnold, exist only in villages that resist the commercial progressivism that Crane represents: "There is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarce had time to finish their first nap, and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have travelled away from the neighbourhood, so that when they turn out of a night to walk the rounds, they have no acquaintances to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long established Dutch communities" (1078). Community is vital to the preservation of legends. Swapping stories on Baltus Van Tassel's piazza, the villagers do not fashion anything as pretentious as history; they merely share a sense of place and identity. When the merry making concludes, they return home, "their light hearted laughter mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter until they gradually died away." Crane, by contrast, is too haunted to laugh: the legends have "sunk deep" in his mind. After his disastrous interview with Van Tassel's daughter, the
schoolmaster ventures home, but "all the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon, now came crowding upon his recollection" (1081). Needless to say, the Headless Horseman has little difficulty terrifying the hapless schoolmaster back to the city. Whether the pumpkin that pelts Crane at the conclusion of the chase scene rattles his faith in writing is less clear. The "unfortunate pedagogue" apparently returns to a career in the bureaucracy that paper authority creates, first as a lawyer, then as a journalist, and finally as a justice in the small-claims court. What is clear is that the life of print textuality that he represents is transformed back into oral discourse: the villagers know of his fate only through rumors.

Both greedy and gullible, Crane parodies Franklin's common reader, that anonymous symbol of a mass audience constituted not by religion, class, or geographical proximity but by the power of technology to disseminate information. If print depersonalizes discourse by homogenizing its readership, Irving foregrounds the issue of interpersonal address by peopling his story with an audience that (ostensibly) appreciates imaginative literature as much as the villagers: the Manhattoe aldermen. Their presence is not limited to the postscript. The ingenuity of the Knickerbocker/Crayon framing device rests in its ambiguity. Because the "authentic historian" transcribes the story "almost in the precise words" in which he heard it told, we have no way of determining the identity of the narrating "I." Critics routinely attribute the narration to Knickerbocker, arguing that Crayon merely "includes" the tale in his portfolio, while ignoring the salt-and-pepper storyteller completely. 11 This is a vast oversimplification, however. The "I" who announces that "many years have elapsed since I trod down the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow" might be Knickerbocker, but it just as easily might be Knickerbocker transcribing the words of the oral storyteller. The frame places the issue of attribution in a mise-en-abyme. One word, "almost," highlights the ambiguous difference within repetition that makes each storytelling event a singular experience.
The frame is part of a self-reflexive narrative strategy that calls its own credibility into question. There are several more obvious signs of what Haskell Springer calls the "imaginative reality" that the storyteller(s) creates (17). Irving's original audience, for example, would have been struck by the sight of New York City municipal officials trading tales. Predominantly merchants, the aldermen were caricatured throughout the early 19th century as humorless, greedy, uneducated, the very antithesis of literary culture; Irving himself had already satirized them as "tinkers" who fuss endlessly with self-serving statutes. By portraying them as cheerful, lazy, and appreciative of storytelling, he transforms the same class that threatened his identity as an American writer into an ideal readership. The portrait of Sleepy Hollow, with its land-before-time ambiance, also flouts verisimilitude. The description of its "customs, scenes, and manners" conveys a faint exaggeration that, as the old man in the postscript complains, inspires doubt. In both cases, the word "legend" emphasizes the "could-be" ambivalence of the narrative stance. Whether this story is "real" or "make-believe" is a decision that the audience must make. But Irving's title also houses a pun that more specifically highlights the effect of transcription on interpretation. A legend is a key or title on a map that allows a reader to locate him/herself in symbolic space. Transcription, by superimposing the written upon the oral, makes the narrative addresses exceedingly difficult to fix in space and time: it leaves us wondering where the narrative voice is coming from—literally. The presence of two addressees (the original storyteller's oral audience and Knickerbocker's more anonymous readership) creates a conflicting sense of proximity to the scene(s) of storytelling. The resulting spatial displacement effected on the audience precludes any effort to assume the role of a common reader.

These reader roles are distinguished most obviously by their relative distance from the storyteller(s), a distance figured into each narrator's "frame of reference," a matrix of prepositions and adverbs that creates a particular spatial relationship between a speaker and an audience. Émile Benveniste calls these spatial markers "indicateurs" (commonly
translated as "shifters") because they indicate or index certain words whose meaning depends upon a point of reference implicit in the conversational context (258-66). If, for example, I say "Please turn right," you may need to ask "My right or yours?" to know which direction I mean. In oral (face-to-face) conversation, an ambiguous "indicateur" is easy to clarify, simply because the possible realm of reference is constricted. In a written medium, however, a frame may cross oceans and continents to unite author and addressee in an imagined community or "shared domain." According to Emanuel A. Schegloff, a frame of reference centers upon a "common sense geography" in which a speaker's formulation of place names functions as map coordinates. How s/he refers to a specific location reveals where s/he assumes we are located (85). Place names also indicate how the speaker identifies an audience: the more specific the geographical proximity, the more likelihood that both share membership in a particular ethnic or religious group. If the ethnic make up of the New York municipal government is any indication, the oral storyteller and the aldermen are descendants of the New Amsterdam Dutch. How the storyteller describes the area will reveal assumptions about their mutual knowledge of Dutch folklore. Knickerbocker, addressing a more heterogeneous readership, will presumably explain or contextualize the stories. 13

The first sentence demonstrates how "shifters" place us in spatial proximity to the narrator(s): "In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappaan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail, and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburg, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town" (1058). Two pronouns in particular suggest a storyteller who presumes a reader already familiar with the landscape: both "one of those spacious coves" and "at that broad expansion of the river" assert rather than introduce a shared geography. As relational terms, those and that are meaningful only to
someone who knows the relative value of "spacious" or can pinpoint the river expansion on a map. Phrases like these, according to Schegloff, evoke "landmarks... object[s] recognizable from description ... [that are] capable of being seen" from memory (100).

The references to Dutch folklore likewise presuppose familiarity. Why the ancient sailors were "prudent" to drop their sails and pray to St. Nicholas is a question only a specific, limited readership could answer. Tappaan Zee serves here as a "course of action place": it defines a region by the particular activities that take place within it (101). The speaker addresses a reader who has seen the Hudson River and who knows the history and myths surrounding its settlement. This is still a general acquaintance, however, for the main clause defines what the reader does not know: the specific village in which the tale will take place.

The difference is conveyed by the more general frame of reference that appears: "Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley, or rather lap of land among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose" (1058; emphasis added). The difference between one of those spacious coves and a little valley or a small brook helps reconstruct the storyteller's frame. Though both phrases define a shared space, those does so from the speaker's perspective, because it presumes foreknowledge. The indefinite article, on the other hand, defines the relationship from the reader's perspective because it introduces the valley and brook as unfamiliar territory.

But an even more general image of the reader shortly appears: "I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud; for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great state of New York, that population, manners, and customs, remain fixed, while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water, which border a rapid stream, where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in
their mimic harbour, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current" (1060). This peaceful spot maintains the spatial relationship established in the first paragraph. In the sentences that follow, however, the assumptions about the reader's knowledge change. The frame becomes more general, using the village as an example of the region's characteristics. Such little retired valleys introduces a contrast between the villages and the rest of the nation; this restless country is the referential anchor. The simile used to illustrate the contrast (those little nooks of still water, which border a rapid stream) does not pinpoint the Hudson River area (which would make it a "landmark"); instead, it is generic, its resonance depending on the reader's ability to imagine any nook and stream, not just one in the Hudson Valley.

Numerous "shifters" convey an uncertainty about the audience's identity. They appear most frequently within clauses that clarify or elaborate upon the region's peculiarities. Describing Crane's habit of lodging week-by-week with different families, "according to country custom in those parts," the narrator(s) adds: "That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burthen, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable" (1062). Here the article imposes an odd spatial distance from the region. "These parts" would better convey the territorial familiarity that the speaker claims by placing the reader in the region. Yet the distance from Tarry Town implied by that those justifies inclusion of the details about the rustic patrons: the prejudices that the Dutchmen hold against Crane need to be articulated, else we miss the conniving nature of the schoolmaster's plan to dupe them.

Equally indicative of this general reader are passages that lecture or pontificate, running the risk of telling the audience what it already knows. While describing Crane's status in the village, for example, the storyteller identifies the reader with a new, alien membership: "The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighbourhood, being considered a kind of idle gentleman like personage,
of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson" (1063). A rural neighbourhood, as opposed to one of these rural villages, redefines the frame of reference: the reader is no longer even familiar with rural customs on the universal or abstract scale that made one of those little nooks of still water an appropriate simile. The speaker assumes an urban readership that not only needs specific information about Tarry Town but all rustic life in general.

These reader-oriented frames of reference are far more abundant than the speaker-oriented shifters. Yet there are indications of the oral audience in the phrases that evoke a closer proximity to the Hudson River Valley. The Van Tassel farm is "situated in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling" (1066). Both those and so fond intensify the assumption that the audience is familiar with the area and the community's affection for it. Van Tassel's home is "one of those spacious farm houses, with high ridged, but lowly sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers" (1067-68). As with one of those spacious coves in the opening sentence, the description presupposes a reader able to draw up from memory the prototypic Dutch farm house. Even more obvious traces of a specific audience cluster around the unelaborated references to Dutch myth and culture that speak little to contemporary readers: St. Nicholas, Yost Van Houten, the architect of Crane's rickety schoolhouse, the sloop seemingly suspended in air on the Tappaan Zee that Crane sees on the path to the merry making (a vague allusion, perhaps, to Hendrick Hudson's mythical ship, which plays an important part in "Rip Van Winkle"). As Schegloff writes, "name dropping" is inevitable in discourse; if a speaker assumes his audience will be unfamiliar with the term, s/he supplies further attributes (93). Such is the case when Dutch slang is defined, or when a reference to Saint Vitus is amended with "that blessed patron of the dance" (1077). But folklore often goes unexplained, suggesting a smaller membership category: an audience that already knows Dutch mythology. Obviously, this ethnic folklore is not as broadly recognizable as the "knight-errant" analogies that surround
Crane with the "the true spirit of romantic story." References to Greek myth are presumably recognizable to a larger membership group (Western civilization) and therefore need no further explanation. But the absence of more information on these obscure references limits the reader role that the audience can assume to the aldermen.

In many cases, determining what frame of reference surfaces is impossible. A synchronous, dual address occurs. One of the more curious use of names, for example, occurs in the storytelling scene on the Van Tassel piazza: "There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large, blue bearded Dutchman...And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who in the battle of Whiteplains, being an excellent master of defence, parried a musket of ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whiz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt" (1078). Why can the speaker afford to mention Doffue Martling by name but not the old gentleman? He implies that this "rich mynheer" is too influential to impugn the veracity of his story. To suggest that he has made himself the hero of this exploit by "the indistinctness of his recollection" is to provoke some immediate consequence. Could the old gentleman be present in the salt-and-pepper storyteller's audience? Venturing an answer is highly speculative, of course, but the speaker's unwillingness to "lightly mention" the name heightens our sense of immediacy. By evoking the repercussions of storytelling, the narrator "places" the audience nearer to the action.

Subsequent "shifters" likewise suggest a dual address: "This neighbourhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly favoured places which abound with chronicle and great men" (1077). One of those highly favoured places can be read from spatial perspective of either the speaker or hearer. The "one of those" construction has previously signified a speaker-centered frame, as in "one of those spacious coves." Places may refer to places in Northern New York or it may refer to a broader geographical area, as this restless country did. In both cases, the reader is presumed to be familiar with a similar area that abounds with legendary chronicles. Using a "course-of-action place"
formulation in an exceedingly ambiguous manner, the storyteller relocates that place out of topographic reality into an imaginary realm where the audience decides the relevance of "one of those."

A few years after returning to America, Irving revised the frame of "Sleepy Hollow" in a sketch printed in *Knickerbocker Magazine* in May 1839. Geoffrey Crayon recalls traveling to Tarry Town with Knickerbocker and hearing, for the first time, the legend in a "goblin-looking mill" from an "African sage" and an old woman at a spinning wheel, both of whom possessed "that invaluable kind of information, never to be acquired from books": "I verily believe it was to his conference with [them] that we are indebted for the surprising though true history of 'Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman'" (*Biographies* 434). There is no mention of the salt-and-pepper storyteller or the aldermen, no effort to justify or excuse the claims made in the original frame. The fiction takes shape without regard for the reality it previously portrayed.

By ignoring his original ideal readership, Irving admits the loss of the audience that he hoped to cultivate. He also dramatizes the public reorientation of his own fiction by allegorizing his return to America. Crayon is shocked to discover that Tarry Town is no longer a rural village but a burgeoning commerce center. Gone is the Dutch architecture, replaced by "Grecian and Gothic styles"; the town has been organized into parcelled lots with a fancy hotel as its centerpiece. Worse yet, the villagers are now wealthy merchants, the farmers having abandoned their fields to become "bank directors [who] drink claret and champagne." The "slumber of ages" has ended: Irving allows his Edenic village to fall into history, "the trill of the Italian opera [succeeding] the nasal quaver of Ichabod Crane" (438-39). (What he does not admit is that the changes wrought upon Sleepy Hollow are nothing less than Crane's own entrepreneurial schemes). But more important, the final sentence finds him placing his work in a new genre: "the antiquarian visitor to the Hollow may pronounce all that I have recorded of that once spell-bound region a fable." The distinction is important. A legend courts credulity,
requiring only belief to be true. A fable, however, makes no pretense toward truth. It is a moral fiction, exactly the type of narrative that the salt-and-pepper narrator denounces in the original frame.

"Food for Thought" in Hawthorne's "Wakefield"

Like Irving, Hawthorne used metatextual devices to distance his private and public selves. Before 1837, his tales were printed in magazines and gift-books without attribution, frequently at his insistence; as rumors of his authorship began circulating through hometown Salem, he denied them, creating an elaborate web of lies. When the first edition of *Twice-told Tales* was published, his anonymity was so profound that the *Boston Courier* wondered "whether ["Nathaniel Hawthorne" was] a true or fictitious name, we know not—probably the latter" (qtd. in *CE IX*, 513). Like many of his contemporaries, he assumed various pseudonyms in periodicals: "The Devil in Manuscript" (1835) was ascribed to "Ashley A. Royce," and the "Rev. A. A. Royce" took credit for "John Inglefield's Thanksgiving" (1840). Perhaps the closest that he comes to the complexity of Irving's Knickerbocker/Crayon frame is the preface to "Rappacini's Daughter" (1844), which stages the story as a translation from the works of "M. de l'Aubépine," author of *Contes deux fois racontées*. One need not speak French (aubépine is a species of hawthorn tree) to recognize the ironic self-characterization of a writer who, unlike "the great body of pen-and-ink men," is incapable of "address[ing] the intellect and sympathies of the multitude."

This preface is a rarity, however. Hawthorne more frequently opts for meta-fictional ruses to convey his ambivalences toward storytelling. "Wakefield," for example, at once embraces and disappoints the expectations for a didactic tale. The storyteller spins fiction from a printed source, as if oblivious to the doubts a reader like the old man in Knickerbocker's postscript might voice: "In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story, told as truth, of a man—let us call him Wakefield—who absented himself for a
long time from his wife" (130). The appeal of this germinal anecdote (discovered not in a magazine or newspaper but in William King's *Anecdotes Personal and Political* [1818]) is its utter credibility: Wakefield's story is a "fact," "the strangest incident on record," a narrative "of the purest originality unexampled, and probably never to be repeated," so unique and original, in fact, that "it has often recurred, always exciting wonder, but with a sense that [it] must be true" (91). However compelling its *vraisemblance*, the storyteller freely invents details, expressing little concern about violating the spirit of this "abstractly stated" kernel: "We are free to shape out our own idea [of Wakefield's character], and call it by his name" (91). What licenses this creative freedom? "Whenever any subject so forcibly affects the mind, time is well spent thinking of it," he declares. "Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral." Accordingly, "there will be a pervading spirit and a moral, even should we fail to find them, done up neatly, and condensed into the final sentence" (91). Irving dismissed truth and morality, lampooning his reader's expectations. Hawthorne's narrator claims them as the motive for his project: fiction is a vehicle to arrive at a sententious, comforting aphorism.

Or does he? The bizarre assurance that a moral will be delivered "even should we fail to find [one]" exposes a teleological compulsion that makes the story anything but a "ramble." As the vagrant husband enters his home for the first time in twenty years, the narrator declares that "we will not follow our friend across the threshold" and pronounces judgment on the meaning of his "whimwham": "Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another, and to a whole, that by stepping aside for a moment a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the outcast of the universe" (99). Those hoping to glimpse Mrs. Wakefield's reaction will be disappointed. Hardly the "meditation" originally proposed, the conclusion stops short of answering why Wakefield's absence might "appeal to the general sympathies of mankind" (91). So abrupt, so at odds with the investigative vigor of the opening paragraphs, the
moral implies that simply pondering Wakefield's perverse self-absorption risks exile from the system. With its placebo-like invitation to complacency and conformity, the conclusion functions as a good maxim does: it assures the audience that complexities can be distilled into simple grammar, that palatable answers never stale when refrigerated in the gnomic present tense. If the beginning of the story tempts us with the opiate of imagination, the conclusion insists that we "just say no."

This is not the most egregious inconsistency in his narrative stance, however. Throughout the story, one feels slightly manipulated, coerced even, by the contract that he offers at the outset: "If the reader choose, let him do his own meditation. Or if he prefer to ramble with me through the twenty years of Wakefield's vagary, I bid him welcome." The drama is staged as a collaborative effort: "we must hurry after him," "we find him comfortably established by the fireside of a small apartment," "we may suppose him...buying a new wig of reddish hair." At two key moments, however, he drops the pretense of co-authorship to dramatize his private performance: "Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world! No mortal eye but mine has traced thee!" Later he halts the story to lament restrictions on his creativity: "Would that I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages! Then I might exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do" (96; emphasis added). Not only is "we" a presumptuous fiction; by wishing that he could write a book rather than an article, he implies that the narrative is shaped as much by market exigencies as any "pervading spirit or moral." The confession is even more startling in the original periodical version, which reads "a brief article in the New-England!" (The tale first appeared in the New-England Magazine). By admitting the pressures of writing for publication, he presents "Wakefield" as a tale-in-progress. It was this metafictional quality of Hawthorne's writing that led Emerson to complain that he "invites the reader too much into his study, opens the process before them. As if the confectioner should say to his customers Now let us make the cake" (405).
Rhetorical cookery continues to confound many Hawthorne critics, who debate whether "Wakefield" is properly a sketch, a tale, or an essay. Structurally, it resembles yet another popular form that evokes oral performance: the New England sermon. It begins with a brief recitation of the text (the anecdote), followed by a "proposition" or statement of purpose (the invitation to "ramble"), an illustration (the narrative body), and a peroration (the moral). By the 1830s, this structure, the standard for more than a hundred years, had grown less rigid with the incorporation of poetic devices that blurred the line previously distinguishing homiletics from secular oratory. Still, the basic four parts predominated, even as ministers addressed non-Scriptural subjects. Stock phrases like "let us now..." marked the transition from section to section. Hawthorne did not attend church regularly (as he admits in "Sunday at Home"), but he was fascinated by reform oratory, which found the sermon an eminently suitable means to its ends as preaching reached beyond the pulpit to the "stump." As biographers note, he cultivated a fascination with the reformer and the power of oratory to sway a large crowd. A journal entry dated September 1835 (four months after "Wakefield" was published) finds him proposing "a sketch of a modern reformer...[who] goes about the streets haranguing most eloquently," only to be confronted by the keeper of the sanitarium from which he has escaped. For Hawthorne, the orator was a case study in the bosom serpent of egotism: Dimmesdale, Pyncheon, Hollingsworth, and Westervelt all mesmerize audiences (and often themselves) into a moral hypnosis.

The link with the sermon becomes even clearer when we recall that "Wakefield" was written for inclusion in The Story Teller, Hawthorne's unpublished narrative cycle. Its introductory sketches (abridged as "Passages from a Relinquished Work" in Mosses from an Old Manse) contrast the appeal of oral storytelling to two contemporary preaching styles, one that was quickly falling out of fashion and another that was quite popular: Biblical exegesis (Hawthorne calls it "pounding and expounding") and Romantic theology. The narrator (who, had The Story Teller been published as intended, would be
the "I" in "Wakefield") grows up under the patronage of Parson Thumpcushion, a dogmatist who preaches as though he holds "some Unitarian infidel at bay." For conservative Protestant sects, Unitarians were "infidels" in part because their eloquence replaced "moral instruction [with] moral impression" (Walker 7). That is, they substituted the Word of God with words of feeling meant to inspire, as humanly possible, divine sublimity. The storyteller abandons the "old Pilgrim" because he feels an affinity with "wandering orators and poets"; like them, he cultivates a "narrative faculty" or "flow of fancy [whose] indulgence [becomes] its own reward." He soon meets an itinerant minister, Eliakim Abbott, a pious but exceedingly inept orator. Though his denomination is ambiguous, Rev. Abbott is a parody of the Romantic theologian: while wholly sincere in his evangelical mission, his poetic sensibility renders him a figure of derision among the tavern-goers who crowd to hear the storyteller. Eliakim is so sensitive that the sound of his own voice embarrasses him. While his "address [to] sinners on the welfare of their immortal souls" draws a crowd of "about fifteen...mostly females," the storyteller's performance solicits "bursts of merriment" from a high-spirited, overflow audience. His success is as immense as the preacher's failure. The sketch echoes Knickerbocker's postscript in celebrating imaginative stories over didactic literature, but with one important difference: the storyteller re-evaluates his triumph. Writing later in life as a "bitter moralizer," he views the scene as "the meed of what our better nature blushes at...how much bestowed on mistaken principles." He wonders whether his words have redeeming moral value, as Eliakim's would were he better at appealing to his audience. This concern undoubtedly informs his earlier pledge to "write the book [The Story Teller itself] for the sake of its moral, which many a dreaming youth may profit by, though it is the experience of a wandering story teller" (CE X, 408). Reading "Wakefield" in light of Hawthorne's "relinquished" project, one can plausibly suggest that the baroque eloquence of the maxims and moral represents the storyteller's effort to fuse the "two such different errands" that separate him and Eliakim as oral performers.
The King James style ("Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world!") voices the aphorisms in the imaginative language of those "wandering orators and poets" who inspire him to abandon Thumpcushion. 19

Reconstructing this frame suggests just how indebted The Story Teller would have been to Irving's Sketch Book model. If "Sleepy Hollow" is an oral tale transcribed into writing, "Wakefield" is a tale written as the storyteller wishes that he would have performed it. If Irving superimposes the written upon the oral with editorial frames, Hawthorne juxtaposes them with a metafictional twist, though admittedly at a far less obvious level. Still, the formality of the eloquence should clue us that Hawthorne aims for something other than the conversational style of sketches like "Little Annie's Ramble" and "A Rill from the Town-Pump," between which he placed "Wakefield" in Twice-told Tales. Recognizing the sermonic language as an ersatz oral strand allows us to sidestep the question of authorial sincerity or irony (the focus of much extant criticism) and explore the rhetorical effect. The evocative eloquence is meant to excite us to poetic revery: like much 1830s oratory, its purpose is to elevate sentiment into insight by mingling ethics and aesthetics. Interpreting the moral literally makes reading an exegetical act, turning readers into Thumpcushions, dogmatists who "pound" and as they "expound." David Leverenz has suggested that Hawthorne often tricks his audience into this posture "by inducing an acute desire for premature interpretation," a desire explicitly invoked in "Wakefield" when the storyteller, at the outset, promises a moral "done up neatly" and "condensed." Intimating that a grasppable secret lies just beneath the surface, Hawthorne (according to Leverenz) then parodies the same "aggressive...self-revealing gaze" that he encourages: "As detectives sniff and snoop through the underbrush of his tales, he lures them into the open, then humiliates them with their own intellectual prurience." To assume a secret, inscribed meaning is to run the risk of feeling "vaguely like a rapist" (231-32). The violent imagery is Hawthorne's own, drawn from the preface to The House of Seven Gables, where he complains of readers who want him to
"relentlessly...impale the story with its moral...as by sticking a pin through a butterfly—
...causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude" (CE XII, xvii). Hawthorne's
ambivalence toward the antebellum "ideology of manhood," with its joint emphasis on
economic and ethical industry, shapes the storyteller's stance, though, in the case of
"Wakefield," it is the character, not the reader, whose intellectual prurience is parodied.

Again, "Passages" illuminates the gender preoccupations that inform the stance.
The vagabond narrator approaches his craft like the very entrepreneurs whom he disdains,
practicing and selling himself "with the firmness and energy of a man" (416). Eliakim
labors "with tears, to convince [him] of the guilt and madness of [his] life," but the
storyteller sees piety as effete: "I never knew a person, not even a woman, so unfit to
roam the world in solitude, as he was" (415). Yet entrepreneurial storytelling can be an
oddly androgynous enterprise. As he prepares to deliver his tale ("Mr. Higginbotham's
Catastrophe"), the narrator focuses on a fellow performer, a "young person of doubtful
sex" named, provocatively enough, "Little Pickle": "If a gentleman, how could he have
performed the singing-girl, the night before, in No Song No Supper? Or if a lady, why
did she enact Young Norval, and now wear a green coat and white pantaloons...in either
case, the dress was pretty" (419). The real source of his anxiety, however, is old
Thumpcushion, whom he imagines appearing "with the gentleness of sorrow, softening
his authority with love, as a father might, and even bending his venerable head, as if to
say, that my errors had an apology in his own mistaken discipline" (421). The storyteller
longs to be addressed by the old man "in a style of paternal wisdom." He knows that
Thumpcushion is incapable of distinguishing his ecclesiastical authority from his paternal
affection, and he promptly burns a letter from the old man.

As ministers, Thumpcushion and Abbott thus offer two gendered extremes that
the narrator must negotiate in his storytelling: paternal and "feminized" authority. The
polarities surface in the presentation of "Wakefield." Critics often read the husband as a
projection of the storyteller himself: just as Wakefield presumes to observe his wife from
an invisible vantage point, so the narrator observes him. In hypothesizing about Wakefield's motives, he makes narration an act of empathy. Yet there is a vast difference between the spectatorial stances that Wakefield and the narrator assume that centers on social authority. At first, the husband's craft is an idleness even more unproductive than the storyteller's own in "Passages": his "mind occupied itself in long and lazy musings that tended to no purpose...his thought were seldom so energetic as to seize hold of words" (91). Even after Wakefield resolves to perplex his wife by disappearing, he fails to articulate what he hopes to accomplish: "Such are his loose and rambling modes of thought that he has taken this very singular step with the consciousness of a purpose, indeed, but without being able to define it sufficiently for his own contemplation" (93). But as he grows obsessed with knowing how his absence affects her, he transforms into an exegetical interpreter, trying to find meaning in signs: "he detects a portent of evil entering the house, in the guise of an apothecary. Next day, the knocker is muffled. Towards night-fall, comes the chariot of a physician, and deposits its big-wigged and solemn burthen at Wakefield's door...perchance the herald of a funeral" (136). The ultimate scene of his self-centered reading occurs one cold night as he stares into his wife's parlor windows: "On the ceiling, appears a grotesque shadow of good Mrs. Wakefield. The cap, the nose and chin, and the broad waist, form an admirable caricature, which dances, moreover, with the up-flickering and down-sinking blaze, almost too merrily for the shade of an elderly window." Wakefield ignores the hints that his wife has adjusted to her widowhood and reclaim his place as the head of the household. Why? A simple answer is that he is cold; an even simpler reason is because he can. The storyteller's disdain for paternal authority surfaces as he describes the husband's assumption that his wife "will run to fetch the gray coat and small-clothes, which, doubtless, she has kept carefully in the closet of their bed-chamber" (139). The reassertion of domestic authority reveals that the self-infatuation of Wakefield's craftiness, much like Ichabod Crane's, is rooted in a social status that only he recognizes.
As much as her husband, Mrs. Wakefield is an enigmatic character. While Wakefield is incapable of pinpointing his motives, she recognizes in him "a quiet selfishness that had rusted into his inactive mind—of a peculiar sort of vanity...of a disposition to craft, which had seldom produced more positive effects than the keeping of petty secrets hardly worth revealing" (91-92). While the storyteller never clarifies just how Mrs. Wakefield is affected by her husband's disappearance, he does imply that her imagination is keener: during the years that she is "more widow than wife," she sees his smile flickering "across all her reminiscences of Wakefield's visage...she surrounds the original smile with a multitude of fantasies, which make it strange and awful." Whether in a coffin or in heaven, he wears this "quiet and crafty smile"; the persistence of the image leads her to doubt "whether she is a widow." It is fancy, the images inspired by daydreaming, that leads her to the truth of the situation.

But for Wakefield, the imagination is opaque and impenetrable. Early in his adventure he passes by his abandoned home, anxious to see how he is missed yet afraid to be spotted. "He gathers courage to pause and look homeward, but is perplexed with a sense of change about the familiar edifice, such as affects us all, when, after a separation of months or years, we again see some hill or lake, or work of art, with which we were friends, of old." According to the storyteller, what effects this change is "the comparison and contrast between our imperfect reminiscences and the reality," a difference that Wakefield fails to perceive: it is "a secret from himself." By distinguishing "us all" from Wakefield, of course, the storyteller neatly presumes to speak for everyone but the husband. Significantly, the same comparison between memory and reality appears in "Passages," just after the narrator abandons Thumpcushion's patronage. He gazes back, but his home strikes him as "more memory than reality. I would have imagined that years had already passed, and I was far away, contemplating that dim picture of my native place" (CE X, 410). This "singular...visionary" moment creates a "delicious excitement," confirming the richness of his sensibility and encouraging him to take to the
road as a vagabond performer. Side by side, the three daydream scenes hint at what he means by "imagination, in the proper sense of the word": an "exciting [of the] wonder." Both the storyteller and Mrs. Wakefield allow the imagination to "forcibly affect [the] mind," but all Wakefield can cultivate is "something like the energy of feeling."

Allowing fancy to overshadow "reality" is a conventional romantic past time, of course; yet the implicit identification between the narrator and Mrs. Wakefield (which would have been more apparent in the context of *The Story Teller*) implies a regard for the reader absent on the dramatic level. If Wakefield's craft is employed to rig an effect on his captive audience, the storyteller suggests that his reader must share in the imagining. (This, apparently, is what Eliakim fails to inspire). Again, staging the narrative as an inspirational oration allows him to incorporate the reader into the fiction-making with recognizable conventions like the "let us now..." transitions. Alexander Gelley points to one particular sentence to show how syntax positions "us" vis-à-vis the dramatic scene. In a sentence like "amid the throng of a London street we distinguish a man," "amid" may modify either "we" or "man": "a situational determination of the reader in relation to the scene is both implied and blocked" (169). Just as Irving's prepositional and adverbial "indicators" evoke an uncertain spatial distance from the scene(s) of storytelling, Hawthorne's syntax creates an ambiguous perspective upon the fiction. For Gelley, syntax is but one "form of access" to the drama that parallels the structure of fantasy that psychoanalysis posits, the *meconnaissance* in which the gaze is reflected back upon itself, radically undermining the autonomy of the viewer. What he does not suggest is that the ambiguity of "amid" would not occur were the storyteller not striving for formal eloquence. The resulting stylistic structures dramatize the effect of the imagination on the characters. The varying syntactic slots in which noun phrases appear play different functions or roles according to the action or state expressed by the verb. That is, these noun phrases signal a relative degree of agency or passivity. Action verbs imply volition, while stative verbs convey a more experiential, affective quality. 21 The
poetic devices employed by the storyteller (metaphor, passive voice) transform the volition implied by action verbs into the affectivity projected by stative verbs, or vice versa. The collaboration that the storyteller calls for, in fact, relies on evoking a mixture of the two qualities.

Much of the humor concocted at Wakefield's expense rests in the dramatization of his "convulsive effort": the husband does not merely think, he "sifts his ideas." Mental activity is transformed by metaphor into a physical activity; in substituting an active verb for a stative one, he dramatizes Wakefield's search for some volitional excuse for his actions. More often than not, however, his convoluted thinking becomes a separate force that acts upon him, creating an odd alienability between mind and body. Wakefield is not simply curious, he "finds himself curious" (94). He does not simply return to his new home but "finds himself by the coal fire of his lodgings" (95). Reflexives here dramatize both his self-preoccupation (how the experience of looking inward turns him into the thing looked at) and his passivity: his imagination acts upon him. The reflexives syntactically convey the meconnaissance of the spectacle that Gelley describes. The image of Wakefield "finding himself" captures the tautology of his self-absorbed gaze.

In some cases, the alienable quality of Wakefield's imagination is conveyed by a corporeal synecdoche: "he is aroused by the scraping of his foot upon the step." The passive voice heightens Wakefield's separation from his own body. His foot scrapes, but he is only aware of the motion of the limb, not of instigating it. This is the psychological dismemberment of meconnaissance, a wedge between consciousness and the body that Poe more grotesquely exploits when Psyche Zenobia's freshly decapitated head describes her body in "How to Write a Blackwood Article." But the storyteller also portrays the split from the other perspective, the body aware that it is acted upon by psychological traits: "Habit...takes him by the hand and guides him, wholly unaware, to his own door" (94). Or "ideas...render him indistinctly conscious that an almost impassable gulf divides his hired apartment from his former home" (96). Passive voice constructions also mark
the split: he "is perplexed with a sense of change" (94). The source of the perplexity would normally be indicated with a "by" clause ("perplexed by a sense of change"), but change is transformed into a quality or trait that he possesses. His concentration is directed not at the whims that drive him, but at their effect.

The syntactic complexity that conveys Wakefield's self-absorption is absent in the characterization of the narrator and reader. Instead, a more ambiguous blend of active and stative verbs convey the collaborative effort. Describing his recollection of the "outline" and evaluating the appeal of Wakefield's "incident," the storyteller evokes the affectivity of imagining: "I recollect," "I remember," "I think." But as he instigates the narrative, he assumes more agency: "I bid [the reader] welcome." More complexly constructed sentences reveal how imagination affects the subject: "To my own contemplations, at least, it [Wakefield's "frolic"] has often recurred, always exciting wonder, but with a sense that the story must be true." Function here is a product of interpretation. The preposition "to" typically marks the direction or goal toward which something moves, as in "He hurries to his lodgings," but this makes little sense here. Instead, the sentence reads "recurred in," establishing imagination as a location or place. The statement is the first inkling of the storyteller's own meconnaissance. Just as Wakefield perceived different parts of his body acting upon him, the reflexive "himself" marking his identity as subject and object of his gaze, the narrator's contemplations are detached, oddly separate from his consciousness as an agency. Imagination, though "in" us, is an alienable force, thereby impugning claims to that agency. "To" further implies an "acting-upon" that makes him the object of the imagination: "It happens to my thoughts." Reflexivity, the act of trying to access thought, is a strangely disembodying practice.

He continues, when speaking in the first person, to dramatize storytelling as a volitional activity: if he only had more space, he might "exemplify" how our actions are determined by the "iron tissue of necessity." Typically, "exemplify" conveys characteristics, not volition. In the case of a sentence like "He exemplifies stupidity,"
"he" would presumably not choose to embody that standard. Yet the narrator uses the word as a metaphor for "describe" or "detail," thus assuming agency. Later, he announces that he "conceive[s]" that Wakefield would hardly be aware that two decades have passed, the function is likewise ambiguous. "To conceive" means, most obviously, "to think," but it also implies agency. In declaring "I conceive," the storyteller creates his text. Conceive has connotations of birth-giving wholly appropriate to his actions; his imagination is a womb for engendering the story's specifics. Again, the metaphorical use of the word allows him to assume an agency without losing the affectivity that it conveys.  

The reader, meanwhile, is limited to experiential verbs: "We know...that none of us would perpetrate such a folly..." (91). When we are allowed more volition, it is only in the conditional tense: "If the reader choose...or if he prefer." Throughout the text, "we" may experience or even possess a vision, but we do not create it. As Wakefield steps into his home, we "have a parting glimpse of his visage"; as a result we "recognize [his] crafty smile" (98). We "find" Wakefield in his lodgings, but the word refers less to discovery than to witnessing. We experience the sight of Wakefield in his hermitage; we do not conceive it. Even the "let us now" phrases hedge agency in two ways. First, they are always actions on the verge of taking place: we do not follow, but are asked to follow. These constructions are properly imperatives, their subjects implied: "You let us now." Imperatives appear as well in an important section of the story when we glimpse Wakefield ten years into his whimwham. Again, agency is located with the narrator: "Now for a scene!" he announces, and "we distinguish" Wakefield, experiencing the sight of him, the object of a glance:

He bends his head and moves with an indescribable obliquity of gait, as if unwilling to display his full front to the world. Watch him long enough to see what we have described, and you will allow that circumstances—which often produce remarkable men from nature's ordinary handiwork—have produced one such here. Next, leaving him to sidle along the footwalk, cast your eyes in the opposite direction,
where a portly female considerably in the wane of life, with a prayer-book in her hand, is proceeding to yonder church. (96)

Imperatives are typically interpreted according to tone: they are commands, requests, entreaties. The response that they provoke depends upon how one feels about being told to act. Here the storyteller has an agenda, so he tells us where to look, where to focus our perception so the salient details will not be missed. As a direct address, imperatives can alienate an audience by being too directive; as I argue in the next chapter on narrative interjections, imperatives often signal a superior stance, a talking-down to the addressee. But the interpersonal function obscures an important point about predicates in imperatives: they are generally action verbs rather than stative verbs. Imperatives do not tell someone to enter a "state," but to do whatever is necessary to enter that state. Despite the sometimes uncomfortable tone of their address, they convey agency rather than affectivity. This is obvious in the passage above. "Watch," unlike "see" or "observe," implies volition. "Allow" and "cast" more obviously project agency; "casting" even dramatizes the separation of consciousness and body.

Imperatives further mark an important connection between the reader and Wakefield. Shortly after the "whimwham" commences, the narrator interjects one of his more baroque statements: "Poor Wakefield!...Go quietly to thy bed, foolish man; and, on the morrow, if thou wilt be wise, get thee home to good Mrs. Wakefield, and tell her the truth. Remove not thyself, even for a little week, from thy place in her chaste bosom" (93). Significantly, this is the one passage where the narrator conceives of Wakefield solely as an agent. The imperative thus offers a grammatical correlate of Gelley's gaze structure: as the narrator addresses Wakefield, telling him what to do, he projects what he desires to see onto the man, volition. By extension, the imperatives addressed to the reader not only "stage" the scene but project his own desire for an active, collaborative audience, one that participates in the fictional process.
The doubling nature of speaker-addressee relations in the imperative is even more pronounced in the "let us now" constructions. C. L. Hamblin argues that "let us" imperatives are two-faced: they refer to the "proposed joint action" of I and you. But because let us "represents a commitment on the part of the speaker to cooperate, it is more like a first-person imperative of the let me quality" (60). When a speaker says "let us now," he does not necessarily ask permission or invite us to jointly act but begs the audience not to interfere: let us means don't stop me now. An ambiguous transfer of agency is traceable because imperatives require an active rather than stative verb; yet underneath this transfer is the maintenance of the storyteller's own agency as a distinct, separate force. If imperatives provide a frame or aperture into the text, they are two-way mirrors: the audience sees its actions performed but suspects an invisible presence on the other side, manipulating the vision. Narrative agency is complicated by the very desire for it, for the power to control the text. Like Irving, Hawthorne offers multiple reader roles grounded in different rhetorical contexts, but, far from overspecifying or overgeneralizing their identity, he refrains from articulating them. Instead, the audience finds itself stranded between volition and affectivity, caught in the act of staging the spectacle.

Again, the interpretive ambiguity of this stance was far more indicative of oratory than print in the 1830s. The performing or staging of a sermon foregrounded the interpersonal function of language, connecting speaker and addressee in a viable community whose differences were most visible in the fruition of multiple responses (which are explicitly dramatized in "Passages from a Relinquished Work" in the contrast between the storyteller's and Eliakim's performances). The evocation of this oral strand offers a new interpretive context for the concluding moral. Though one of Hawthorne's most quoted passages, its assertive tone often overshadows its introduction: "[Wakefield] has left us much food for thought, a portion of which shall lend its wisdom to a moral; and be shaped into a figure" (140; emphasis added). Unlike Ichabod Crane, who
"swallows" tales whole, Hawthorne's storyteller leaves much "food for thought" unspoken. Its leftovers furnish an infinite number of feasts for subsequent rereadings.

Melville and the Rumor about Bartleby

Echoes of oral storytelling add an interpretive uncertainty to the tales of Irving and Hawthorne, undermining the endless dissemination of content that print promises. At first glance, Melville's "Bartleby" focuses solely on this mechanical reproduction. The narrator is an "unambitious" lawyer "who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause," preferring to do "a snug business among rich men's bonds and mortgages and title-deeds" as a "conveyancer and title hunter, and drawer-up of recondite documents" (14, 19). As a scrivener hired to copy the lawyer's documents, Bartleby, too, is associated exclusively with the written word. The meaning of his bizarre abjuration is delivered in a postscript: once a clerk at the Dead Letter Office in Washington, Bartleby was responsible for burning undelivered correspondence. "Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men?" the narrator asks, and then as now, the Dead Letter Office is a powerful metaphor for the desires that go disappointed in communication, for the significance that somehow fails to circulate as hoped. Bartleby's life is a dead letter because no one read his message of despair. The narrator recognizes in that miscommunication the secret of his own life. Just as Bartleby was dismissed from his clerkship "by a change in the administration," he, too, has been displaced: "I must be permitted to be rash here and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent abrogation of the office of the Master of Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a —premature act; inasmuch as I had counted upon a life-lease of profits, whereas I only received those of a few short years" (14). The "fraternal melancholy" that the narrator shares with Bartleby, quite simply, is a life lost in the mail.

Circulating letters evoke circulating stories. Significantly, "Bartleby" marks Melville's anxious entry into the periodical market, the first of fifteen short stories
published between late 1853 and 1856 in *Harper's* and *Putnam's* and collected as *The Piazza Tales* (1856). The abundant metaphors of textuality, coupled with Melville's precarious emotional health in the wake of the critical and financial disaster of *Pierre* (1852), have led many critics to read "Bartleby" as an allegory of frustrated authorship. Lawrence R. Schehr, for example, claims that Melville "writes 'Bartleby' as the story of the truth of writing: he is not sure of being read, but only of having written," implying that language is "wholly dead if the senders and receivers are absent" (103). For Michael T. Gilmore, "dead letters" suggest more than an unreceptive audience: they bespeak Melville's desire to reject the reader before he can be rejected. Rather than "achieve immediacy by putting the inner workings of the text on display...he positions himself vis-à-vis the reader much as Bartleby stands with respect to the lawyer: as an absence, an inscrutable blank wall" (145). Both arguments undoubtedly capture Melville's suspicions of the American mass audience, yet they overlook the fact that he willingly catered to the periodical market by scaling back what a reviewer of *Pierre* called his "maniacal" style, the "mowing, gibbering, screaming" that evoked an "incurable Bedlamite" (qtd. in Leyda 477). Indeed, by effacing the authorial persona that he had cultivated since his earliest novels, Melville reveals his awareness of the conventions that, within the decade, would distinguish the short story from the tale: in particular, the observer-narrator who delineates plot with a minimum of exhortative commentary. Hiding his "inner workings," Melville does not change his storytelling strategy so much as he embeds its dramatic tensions in the social context of his Wall Street setting.

These tensions center on a subtle oral strand that is manifest at the stylistic level. Dan McCall has pointed out the "profoundly spoken quality" of the narration, especially comments that reveal the narrator organizing and revising the direction of the story: "it is fit I make some mention," "I should have stated before," "here it must be said" (116-120). The lawyer also describes his narration as a "meagre recital," the latter word evoking the lyceum. Perhaps most important, the story of Bartleby's employment at the
dead letter office comes "to [his] ear a few months after the scrivener's decease" in the form of a rumor (45). Like Ichabod Crane, whose fate is known only by the Terry Town villagers through gossip, an explanation for the scrivener's behavior is voiced in a socially devalued discourse. I would add, however, that at other points, the lawyer does resort to a written rather than spoken style meant to suggest legal documentation: "The conclusion of this whole business was, that it soon became a fixed fact of my chambers, that a pale young scrivener, by the name of Bartleby, had a desk there; that he copied for me at the usual rate of four cents a folio (one hundred words)" (25).

An explanation for this stylistic confusion rests within the American legal reform that prompts the lawyer's dismissal. Several critics have identified the "new Constitution" as an understated reference to the 1848 New York Field Code, which incorporated common law and the chancery into one legal system, making the Master of Chancery an obsolete office. The code took its name from David Dudley Field, a prominent New York attorney who chaired the committee charged with implementing the state's judicial reform. Besides being an important figure in legal history, Field is noted for his influence on American literature: he hosted the Berkshires party where Melville first met Hawthorne in August 1850. 23 Before the Field Code reform, common law and Chancery courts (also known as equity) operated concomitantly. Common law derived its authority from written precedent, while equity courts adjudicated gaps in that precedent through the oral arguments of contesting parties. The distinction between the two broke down almost immediately, however, as the courts presided over so many cases that decisions were transcribed into written precedent. 24 The Master symbolizes this compromise. Taking testimony, certifying transcripts, storing court records, he proliferates the authority of the written word.

The distinction between common law and equity is analogous to J. L. Austin's theory of performative and constative language. In each, the question of the referent, the thing that the word names, is similar. A performative utterance, one in which the
"issuing...is the performing of an action," contains its own referent (7). It does not describe an existing situation but enacts or at least creates the impetus for an effect, which Austin calls its "illocutionary force." In the same way, Chancery, at least in its ideal state, refers not to pre-existing documentation, but enacts or creates law through the performance of pleading and judgment. In a constative utterance, the referent predates the utterance so the locution describes or refers back to the anterior condition, just as common law refers back to existing legal documents. Like common law, constative utterances represent or describe a reality that (supposedly) exists independent of language. 25

The illocutionary force of a performative utterance depends upon "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect" (25): its power is circumscribed by the social distribution of authority. Conventional authority may seem obvious in the case of a minister, who has no inherent right to "pronounce" a couple husband and wife. Yet the authority of law is traditionally grounded in ontological rather than organic right. For many, the mythology of truth, "the letter of the law," exerts a strict (and often comforting) literalness that delineates right from wrong. 26 Bartleby's prefer not to demonstrates what happens when language operates outside the constraints of this conventional procedure. What Austin calls a "misapplication" ("the procedure—uttering certain words, &c.—was O.K. and accepted, but the circumstances in which it was invoked or the persons who invoked it were wrong" [28]) influences how the narrator chooses to tell Bartleby's incomplete biography. The lawyer, emblematic of social authority conferred by paper authority, recognizes the scrivener as a type of figurative language that speaks outside the confines of the letter. 27

What the lawyer admits about his character reveals a susceptibility to Bartleby. At first, he never questions the origin of his authority. When Turkey claps a ginger-cake on a mortgage, he merely rolls his eyes at the eccentricity of his employee, not recognizing that a ginger-cake is just as arbitrary a symbol as an "official" seal (19). Yet he does not zealously covet his position. His other clerk, Nippers, manifests "a certain impatience
with the duties of a mere copyist" and frequently indulges in "an unwarrantable usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal documents" (16). Nipper's documents are an "unwarrantable usurpation" only because, unlike the narrator, he has not been granted the authority to produce them. But the lawyer tolerates this usurpation; in doing so, he undermines his own authority. By admitting that Nipper's documents possess illocutionary force, he inadvertently acknowledges that the procedure engendering the pragmatic effect of his own documents is conventional, not natural.

Bartleby's employment is precipitated by the conferring of the Master's seal: "Now my original business...was considerably increased by receiving the master's office. There was now great work for scriveners" (19). This work consists of copying texts, of using language solely in its constative function. In his first days on the job, Bartleby works without complaint. Indeed, his productivity is so efficient that the lawyer is highly impressed. Unlike Turkey and Nippers, who suffer digestive irregularities on a regular basis, Bartleby "gorges" himself on documents without "pause for digestion" (19). But his productivity unsettles the lawyer. Were Bartleby "cheerfully industrious," he would not be bothered, but the scrivener writes "silently, palely, mechanically" (20). Bartleby's writing symbolizes the smooth proliferation of law, suggesting that this "dry, husky sort of business" governs human life without humanity. Melville's tone evokes Irving's attitude in The Sketch Book: writing expresses none of the community values that orality does. Ichabod Crane's ever-hungry imagination sates only himself; Bartleby's mechanical productivity, meanwhile, embodies the gap between the Chancery as a remunerative business and its ideal function of supplementing precedent. At this subtle moment in the narrative, the lawyer experiences his first bit of discomfort, not with Bartleby, but with his own complicity in the system of paper authority.

The discomfort increases, obviously, when Bartleby begins announcing his preferences. The sequence of tasks that he prefers not to perform is important. On his
third day, the lawyer asks him to help verify a document, a common if "wearisome" practice that ensures the uniformity of all copies. Whether this paper concerns common-law or the Chancery is unclear, but it is not Bartleby's handiwork: the need to verify the copy arises "before any necessity had arisen for having his own writing examined." The request occasions the first refusal: ". . . without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, 'I would prefer not to'" (20). The lawyer is shocked, but refrains from firing his employee because Bartleby's productivity goes uninterrupted: "I stood gazing at him awhile, as he went on with his own writing" (21). Bartleby refuses his employer's authority to "compare" the documents. By referring to Bartleby's "own writing," the lawyer indicts his authority as well: own confers propriety, implying that writing contains traces of its author and therefore can never truly be a "copy." The figural level of the text reinforces the propriety issue: if Bartleby's copies are his "own writing," he must "own" them in some sense.

The second abjuration scene specifies the documents that the scrivener must verify: "A few days after this, Bartleby concluded four lengthy documents, being quadruplicates of a week's testimony taken before me in my High Court of Chancery." The lawyer plans to distribute the four "copies" to his employees while "I should read from the original" (21). Bartleby again refuses. The lawyer is struck by how deeply the scrivener weighs his response. Obviously, he has a motive for violating his employer's authority: "It seemed to me that while I had been addressing him, he carefully revolved every statement that I made... but, at the same time, some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did" (22). If the lawyer "revolved" his own statements as intently as Bartleby does, he might question whether his document is an original if it is "testimony taken before me." The original is itself a copy, a transcription of an oral performance. It is considered an original only because it is the copy from which subsequent transcriptions are produced. The lawyer assumes that he is the origin of writing, that he controls its meaning, because of his authority in the office. Yet his own
preference for proprietary pronouns undermines this assumption, not only "Bartleby's own writing," but subsequent assertions as well: "Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut had taken their seats in a row, each with his document in hand"; "These are your own copies we are about to examine," he tells Bartleby (21-22; emphasis added). The casual references to "his writing" and "his documents" blur the hierarchies of authority that the law institutes, hierarchies that differentiate copies from originals and scriveners from authors. The figural level of language points to the arbitrariness of the lawyer's authority.

In the third scene, the lawyer decides to test the limits of Bartleby's "mulish vagary" to discover just what duties he will perform. He asks the scrivener to compare copies, then to walk to the Post Office. Finally, he asks the young man simply to fetch Nippers from the other room. Each time, Bartleby declines: "I prefer not to,' he respectfully and slowly said, and mildly disappeared" (25). McCall emphasizes the importance of these adverbs, noting that "respectfully," "slowly" and "mildly" allude to the narrator's assiduous effort to detail Bartleby's abjuration as specifically as possible (142). The adverbs also emphasize the often overlooked fact that the refusal is never aggressive, confrontational, or even physical: it is always a speech act. In fact, "I would prefer not to" almost fits Austin's definition of the explicit performative utterance: verbs in the "first person singular present indicative active" (56). (Would makes Bartleby's utterance subjunctive not indicative; as Schehr notes, it makes the statement all the more curious, since English associates should with the first person [100]; mood here heightens sensitivity to the moment that language is on the verge of enacting an illocutionary force). What makes the effect so mysterious? The answer lies not, as the lawyer believes, in the motives that compel it, but how he interprets it.

The more beguiling Bartleby's preference, the more obsessed the lawyer becomes with finding an explanation. The word prefer itself begins to haunt him: "Somehow of late I had got into the way of involuntarily using this word 'prefer' upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. And I trembled to think that my contact with the scrivener had
already and seriously affected me in a mental way. And what further and deeper aberration might it not yet produce?" (31). The narrator is not alone here. Nippers likewise takes to repeating the word. "He did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled from his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks" (31). Bartleby is indeed a "tongue twister": prefer is a legal term, defined by Black's Law Dictionary as "to bring before; to prosecute; to try; to proceed with" (1342). As Herbert F. Smith argues, "the word itself is exquisitely chosen by Melville to suggest the human and existential condition of 'bearing before' or 'setting before' in the matter of consequential choice" (740). A reader without some knowledge of the law might be forgiven for not making the connection. For a lawyer, even one who prefers not to "prefer" cases before a judge and jury, not to catch the implications of the word signals a major clue to his mind-set (and to narrative strategy). In a courtroom context, to prefer, as a performative utterance, signifies the commencement of a proceeding or a prosecution. Yet the illocutionary function of I prefer would only be completed, according to the constraints of the conventional procedure, if the speaker were authorized to try a matter, an authorization that Bartleby obviously does not possess. As Austin would say, Bartleby's utterance is a misapplication. The lawyer misses this pun or figurative use of the word at that moment because he can only interpret "I would prefer not" as a literal refusal to work, a refusal whose illocutionary force would normally be circumscribed by an employer's authority in the office. 28 Much as Nippers erodes the lawyer's authority by flagrantly "forging" documents, so Bartleby, merely by uttering three words, undermines the institutional authority.

Inevitably, Bartleby prefers not to copy at all, withdrawing into a "dead-wall revery" that signals the slow, tragic progression toward his final preference not to live. He refuses to recognize the value of money and refuses to deliver letters to the Post
Office, not once but three times (25, 32, 36). Bartleby's abjurations center on conflicts of authority in the era that Melville wrote. The change from hard currency to paper money had been a major controversy in the late 1840s, as many distrusted the government's faith in regulating its value. Similarly, the Post Office was mired in legal battles with New York state over its authority to institute postage increases and modify delivery routes. Bartleby's withdrawal can be read as a retreat from an imposed system of signification.

At wit's end, the lawyer tells Bartleby that he must quit the office, promising to assist him in any possible way: "If hereafter in your new place of abode I can be of any service to you, do not fail to advise me by letter. Good-bye, Bartleby, and fare you well."

Leaving the pale copyist without further word, he exits his chambers, congratulating himself for the propriety maintained during the exchange: "I could not but highly plume myself on my masterly management in getting rid of Bartleby. Masterly I call it, and such it must appear to any dispassionate thinker" (33). This mastery (as Smith suggests, another pun on the lawyer's professional authority) lies in the perfect reason of his actions: "I assumed the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say" (34).

Despite his belief in assumptions, the lawyer has begun to interpret the world differently. If he once assumed an organic or natural connection between the word and the thing it names, he now discovers one word signifying diverse phenomena—the word **Bartleby**:

At the corner of Broadway and Canal-street, I saw quite an excited group of people standing in earnest conversation.

"I'll take odds he doesn't," said a voice as I passed.

"Doesn't go?—done!" said I, "put up your money."

I was instinctively putting my hand in my pocket to produce my own, when I remembered that this was an election day. The words I had overheard bore no reference to Bartleby, but to the success or non-success of some candidate for the majority. In my intent frame of mind, I had as it were, imagined that all Broadway shared my excitement, and were debating the same question with me. I passed on, very thankful that the uproar of the street screened my momentary absent-mindedness. (34)
As if resisting Bartleby's influence, he falls back upon his assumption of authority, though he secretly recognizes that, for his assumptions to be effective, his scrivener must share them, an admission that interpretation depends on a conventional procedure. The lawyer knows that Bartleby is a man of preferences. His worst fears are confirmed upon arriving at his office door the next morning when he discovers that Bartleby has yet to depart. Just as the word prefer had possessed him, assumptions now haunt him: "before I had prospectively assumed that Bartleby would depart, so now I might retrospectively assume that departed he was. In the legitimate carrying out of this assumption, I might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all, walk straight against him as if he were air.... It was hardly possible that Bartleby could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions. But upon second thoughts the success of the plan seemed rather dubious" (35). "Preferences" and "assumptions" symbolize the epistemological dichotomy between performative and constative utterances. For a man of assumptions, language is a medium for communicating truth by representation: it assumes a clear distinction between the literal and figurative. For a man of preferences, however, language is not a medium for knowing but doing; as such, its value lies not in making truth available, but in successfully or unsuccessfully enacting social conditions that create it. The subtle way that Bartleby's preferences undermine his employer's assumptions is dramatized nicely when the lawyer imagines walking into his office and, by pretending not to see his scrivener, "walk straight against him as if he were air." The plan is a performative attempt to create one's reality; the lawyer momentarily fancies that, simply by promising himself that Bartleby is gone, he will be. His assumptions will not allow him that luxury, however, and the performative power of language to act is again subordinated to its constative function.
Smith identifies a pun in "assumptions" as well: "Instead of engaging in 'vulgar bullying...bravado...[or] choleric hectoring,' [the lawyer] simply asserts the principle of *assumpsit*, a chancery writ issued in cases of nonfeasance (non-performance) in the fifteenth century and later" (740). He ascribes the word play solely to Melville's "bravura punning performance," arguing that the lawyer remains confounded by literal interpretation. The legal puns can also be said to index a profound change in his orientation toward language: Bartleby's "I would prefer not" teaches him to read figuratively, a lesson that he communicates not through testimony, which would prompt only a literal interpretation, but with stylistic gestures like punning. The polysemic nature of language inverts the literal meaning of his testimony, dramatizing his ultimate inability to articulate the significance of Bartleby's existence in words. Puns free the performative function of language from the compulsion of the constative, the idea that all statements must describe reality. In fact, puns make nonsense out of that reality, undermining the monolithic pretense of the constative.  

Again, the argument is vital to understanding the narrative stance. In writing of his encounter with Bartleby, the lawyer is essentially testifying about "true" events. Austin claims testimony would be considered a performative utterance: "A report of what someone else said is admitted as evidence if what he said is an utterance of our performative kind: because this is regarded as a report not so much of something he said, as which it would be hear-say and not admissible as evidence, but rather as something he did, an action of his" (13). I think, however, that he violates his own distinctions between performative and constative language here. Testimony, as a "report," describes a previous situation. Because the referent is anterior to the speech act, it must be a constative utterance, regardless of whether the testimony concerns "something said" or "something done." Indeed, the constative function of such speech acts is rooted in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where testimony is defined as a non-artistic proof: it carries its own persuasive force and does not require "artistic" proof (i.e. rhetoric) to be convincing.
Though he claims to be testifying, several contradictions arise that demand cross-examination. The third time that Bartleby states his preference, as previously noted, the narrator says that he speaks "respectfully," "slowly," and "mildly," all of which enforces the "mild effrontery" with which Bartleby abjures. Yet when the narrator stops to summarize the "conclusion of the whole business," rallying his command of the facts, he concludes that Bartleby would "refuse point-blank" (25). The passage sounds like a legal document with its succession of subordinate clauses that summarize the conditions under which Bartleby will work. Yet the contradiction between the way the lawyer describes Bartleby's preference (respectfully, slowly, mildly) and the way he interprets it ("point-blank") implies a growth in perception, a deeper appreciation of linguistic subtleties. As a character, he can only read the scrivener at the literal level, summarizing the facts and organizing conclusions about a reason or cause in Bartleby that explains his mystery. As a storyteller, he can narrate with an awareness of figuraiity that more fully complements the scrivener's effect on others. Several more puns highlight this change in perception.

Shortly after Bartleby refuses to go to the Post Office, the lawyer discovers that his clerk has been living in the law offices. Again, the "mild effrontery" of Bartleby's preference not to allow him into the office at that time bears a strange, indescribable effect on the lawyer: "It was his wonderful mildness chiefly, which not only disarmed me, but unmanned me, as it were. For I consider that one, for the time, is a sort of unmanned when he tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises" (27). A common nineteenth-century synonym, "unmanning" has particular connotations that Melville (ever sensitive to the sexual pun, as the hilarious "archbishopprick" chapter of *Moby-Dick* demonstrates) would appreciate. In fact, the word suggests a gender reversal of metaphors for the rhetorical situation. Melville describes reading as a different type of "taking in," as when, in "Hawthorne and His Mosses," he writes of the "germinous seeds" that "take root in [his] soul" (*Writings 250*). Here the reader is penetrated by the text. The reference in "Bartleby" calls attention to the
phallocentric pretensions of interpretation, the idea that meaning is in the word. When Bartleby unmans the lawyer, he divests him of his belief in the letter of the law; that this point is expressed via a pun suggests the narrator is attempting to bring about a similar reorientation in his reader.

Two more mild, wonderful examples of word play that Melville had to recognize when he wrote the passage also enforce this reorientation of the reader toward the text. The image of Bartleby "dictating" to the lawyer illustrates the inversion of authority so employee now controls employer. But it also inverts the notion of original and duplicate so foregrounded in Bartleby's second abjuration. If Bartleby does indeed dictate to the lawyer, the Master of Chancery is now the scrivener, in a position of "copying," which, as a narrator, is exactly his condition: he "copies" or "testifies" to his true encounters with Bartleby. Just as Bartleby's refusal to authenticate his copies displayed a possible disregard for the mimetic relationship between an original and a copy, this inverted image suggests the hierarchy itself is dissolved. "Premises" functions both literally and metaphorically here, dramatizing the erosion of his social authority: he is physically displaced from his Wall Street office, the site of his authorization, but he is displaced, too, from his conceptions, his set of legal premises about his professional identity and its hierarchical rights to govern. "Premises" refers back to the assurance with which he introduces himself: "Imprimis: I am a man, who, from his youth upward, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best" (14). The lawyer's description of his feelings speaks more than he admits.

What brings the lawyer to a more developed, though wholly inexpressible understanding of Bartleby's meaning is the Post Office rumor. The Post Office is an authority only because it has no competition. As a state monopoly, it regulates the delivery of letters because the law has awarded it that authority. Dead letters prove that the system of communication it maintains is instituted, not natural or organic. Yet as poignant a metaphor as the dead letter office is, the type of discourse that sparks this
realization is equally important. Jean-Noël Kapferer's thoughtful commentary on the desires that circulate rumors is illuminating in this context: "Rumors flourish wherever we find secrets. Secrecy, like censorship, increases the value of information and leads to an exacerbation of 'desires to know more.' As is classic in every market economy, a shortage leads to a black market, here one of information, a circuit of unofficial, unguaranteed and unvalidated information, that is nevertheless immediately consumed and spread to the degree that the need to be informed has been frustrated" (183). Rumors are one type of discourse in which the performative function can never be subordinated or obscured by the constative. A rumor can never represent the truth and remain a rumor: it gains a life of its own outside the imposed system of truth and falsity. No authority, not even narrative authority, can validate a rumor without changing it. To the institutional system of meaning making, a rumor should be of little consequence, a dead letter within official interpretive contexts. But because, as Kapferer argues, its uncertifiable essence is the catalyst of its circulation, rumors challenge the integrity of that system. Embodying discourse that can never be verified or authorized, Bartleby is a gentleman forger, as the grub-man at the Tombs suggests (72). Consequently, the meaning of his death, the conclusion of the biography that can never be fully written, must remain suggestive rather than conclusive. The storyteller's growing sensitivity to language puts him in the paradoxical position of not being able to announce it. To do so would be to overinsist on the connection between the signifier Bartleby and all that the scrivener evokes.

Toward the Realist Short Story

Roland Barthes describes the transformations effected on language in the passage from speech to print: "Wherever there is a concurrence of spoken and written words, to write means in a certain manner: I think better, more firmly; I think less for you, I think more for the 'truth.'" Evoking resonances of orality, Irving, Hawthorne, Melville strive to maintain what Barthes calls the rhetorical "innocence" lost in this desire to capture
truth, "our blunders, our self-sufficiencies (or our insufficiencies), our irresolutions, our
errors, our complacencies...in short, all the watered silk of our image-repertoire" (Grain 4-
6). In the tale, these signs of contact between a storyteller and an audience establish an
imagined community that resists the anonymity of print. Even in "Bartleby," where the
embedding of narratological issues reflects the realist agenda taking shape in the early
1850s, the oral strand marks an intensely personal recognition. As such, Melville
appropriates the realist device of the narrator-observer to posit an essential thesis of
romance: the only truth that the lawyer can articulate is his rhetorical innocence. As the
short story continues to emerge from the tale, however, the oral strand is typically limited
to pseudo-conversational styles, whether colloquialisms or regional dialects. The overt
relationship between a storyteller and the audience does not establish contact but
reinforces the verisimilitude of the representation. The pivotal difference between the tale
and the short story rests in the cultural authority of the storyteller. The ambivalence
projected by the bachelor narrators arises from their liminal status in a culture where
imagination and fancy are idle leisures. Realists, however, assume greater social
authority by claiming to represent the "real" or "true" workings of their world. Rather
than promote an escape from reality, they uphold its norms. This authority is not
universally distributed, however. The next chapter explores how three women realists,
Rebecca Harding Davis, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, negotiated
their vision of the "real" without alienating the audience.

Notes

1 Both Mott (70-73) and Charvat (38-55) offer concise publication histories of
The Sketch Book.

2 Ong describes oral residue as the resonance of spoken language that certain
linguistic features signify (153).

3 Orality was not without its champions, of course. Philosophical and rhetorical
pedagogy celebrated speech as the medium of linguistic immediacy whose truth was self-
evident; writing, as a copy or reproduction, distorted meaning because it was more prone
to misinterpretation. Hawthorne's work resonates with this teaching. While a student at
Bowdoin College in the 1820s, he studied with Samuel P. Newman, whose treatise, *A Practical System of Rhetoric*, grounded in Hugh Blair's common-sense rhetoric, warns against the speciousness of writing. Echoes of this bias run throughout Hawthorne's work (*The Scarlet Letter*, with its polysymbolic scriptic A), but its most explicit rendering occurs in the love letters written to Sophia Peabody in the late 1830s: he refers to speech as "the soul of my thought" that cannot be easily dressed in writing, the "earthly garments" of language. (See *Centennial Edition* XIV). This attitude, however, was fairly restricted. More typically, writing represented "an advance over the spoken, in that it solidifies by publication what might otherwise remain merely reported and distorted, and in that it appeals coolly to reason while the spoken, in its very immediacy, is all to prone to inflame the passions and the desires" (Simpson 56). I should clarify, as well, that when I speak of "writing" and "textuality" I speak of printed discourse, fully recognizing that deconstructive critics have dismantled the philosophical differences between speech and written discourse. Again, I allow the distinction to stand because the differences were operative in early 19th-century culture. As Ziff argues, Irving identified with "literate culture," the transitional stage between oral and print culture. In literate culture, a writer's social authority is a consequence of "rank, learning, or office"; it is "a position of authority relative to his readership," which is "a determinate body of interested persons." By valuing ethos, literate culture treats writing as an extension of the oratorical rhetorical situation. In print culture, however, discourse is depersonalized, "transferring authority from the speaker to the spoken." The discourse addresses an "indeterminate" audience "made up of individuals who, by and large, neither know nor live in proximity to one another" (90-92).

4 One must be careful not to overstate the suspicion of imaginative literature, however. Pattee claims, for example, that between 1830 and 1850, *The North American Review*, one of the country's most prestigious journals, reviewed exactly two story collections, Harriet Prescott's *The Amber Goddess* and Sarah Josepine Hale's *If, Yes, and Perhaps* (*Development* 146). Astonishingly, he overlooks reviews of Hawthorne's two editions of *Twice-told Tales* in the July 1837 and April 1842 issues, to name but two obvious examples.

5 As de Stael's equation of "manly eloquence" with writing implies, gender distinctions likewise permeate these traditions, though the associations are by no means consistent. We find the feminine alternately mythologized as the truth that orality embodies and as the figural sophistry of writing. (In Hawthorne's love letters, for example, Sophia Peabody symbolizes the plenitude of speech). Similarly, masculinity is at once associated with orality's material presence and with the unemotional reason of the written word. In "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," the varying associations can create opposing readings. Does Ichabod Crane, the idle "man of letters" who loathes farming and is easily agitated by the tales of the "old Dutch wives," project Irving's anxiety that authorship is an effeminate profession because its "product" contributes little to his ideal colonial village? Or does this voracious "genius of famine" who devours tales symbolize a masculine principle of commercial consumption whose aggressive individuality is at odds with the communal identity that orality establishes? The viability of both interpretations speaks to the historical concurrence of these two traditions.

6 See Michael Davitt Bell (71-77).
Miller's biographies of Melville (eponymously titled) and Hawthorne (Salem is My Dwelling Place) devote a great deal of attention to each writer's bachelorhood. Banks's article offers the most concise analysis of Irving's pseudo-flâneur persona.

Hamilton argues that "sketch writers often elected to emphasize or, at least, declare a preference for one sort of authority over the other and that these decisions were a function of the writer's gender, regional affiliation, race and ethnicity" (299). She discusses many collections of tales, including Alice Cary's Clovernook Sketches, Fanny Fern's Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio, Caroline Kirkland's A New Home—Who'll Follow, and Alice B. Neal's The Gossips of Rivertown. She does not discuss storytelling frames, however.

Rubin-Dorsky suggests that the doubtful old gentleman might just be Ichabod Crane, some years after his encounter with the Headless Horseman: "Having turned into a curmudgeon, and disturbed to learn both the real events of that fateful night and that he has now become a figure of comic derision, he insists that the portrait of himself must be a fiction. Ironically, having once believed in magic and the imagination, he now insists on law and logic. Yet he is still the victim of a joke" (119). Though no textual evidence substantiates the claim, Rubin-Dorsky makes an imaginative connection that Irving would appreciate.

Ross surveys these metaphors, showing how they influenced library purchases (149). Mallioux shows how the metaphor influenced readings of Little Women and Huckleberry Finn in the postbellum decades ("Eating Books" 132-51).

Hedges, for example, complains of this "technical inconsistency" that nevertheless does not break the "unity of interest and feeling" in The Sketch Book so the audience "finally wants to read 'Rip Van Winkle' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,' if not as stories told by Crayon instead of Knickerbocker, then at least as stories that have touched Crayon almost personally." For Rubin-Dorsky, Knickerbocker reflects different aspects of Crayon's persona: "Like so many of Crayon's views and notions, the tales have been picked up along the route of his incessant travels...they assume importance in The Sketch Book because they are fundamentally expressive of Crayon's concerns. Above all, they address the question of what role the imagination is to play in the life of an early-nineteenth-century American author" (101). Neither explanation takes into account the third voice, the salt and pepper storyteller.

See Salmagundi, where Irving's fictional British traveler Lancelot Langstaff wonders aloud whether "it takes greater ability to mend a law than a kettle...[especially] laws that are broken a hundred times a day with impunity" (211). For background on New York's municipal government during the Irving era, see Hodges' New York City Cartmen, 1667-1850, especially Chapter 9, "Creating Security within the Municipal Government, 1801-1818" (108-128). Irving's interest in the city itself is traced lightly but informatively in The Knickerbocker Tradition.

Schegloff breaks these operations into three types of interpretive activities: 1) the geographical analysis, 2) the membership analysis, and 3) the "topic" or "activity" analysis in which consideration of "the activities being enacted in the utterance" determine the frame of reference. The analysis is 'relevant to a speaker in building or assembling 'a topic,' and relevant to a hearer in analyzing what is being talked to, what the focus is...as a hearer must analyze place formulations to find their relevance, place formulations can be
used to focus [the] analysis" (105-106). Topic-activity analysis determines whether a frame of reference is constructed from the speaker or audience's perspective. Because location formulations are generally used with some consistency, this analysis helps us establish points of reference to determine the meaning of shifters. Schegloff describes a number of formulation types: the geographical, such as addresses; the landmark, such as "beside the school"; and the "course of action place," as in "where the school bus picks up the kids" (97-99). The most common formulation, however, is based on "relation to members": "my place" deictics like home, office are examples. These not only suggest possession but possessiveness: they "have the special character not only of 'belonging to' the member...but such a place is for a member 'where he belongs'" (97). Again, what topic analysis reveals in "Sleepy Hollow" is an inconsistency in the co-referencing of these formulations. The shifting frames decenter our sense of speaker- and hearer-shifters until we find it difficult to position ourselves in one or the other frame. Given two images of the reader, we must split the difference.

14 See, for example, Monteiro, who discusses the sui generis quality of "Wakefield" and relates the structural function of the moral to the Jamesian revelation in "The Beast in the Jungle."

15 For background on the New England sermon, see Buell, Literary Transcendentalism (104-40) and New England Literary Culture (137-92); Gura's introduction to The Wisdom of Words also relates oratorical discourse to literary culture (15-74).

16 Reynolds explores Hawthorne's interest in reform oratory, relating it to his interest in popular fictions (225-42).

17 Exactly why The Story Teller went unpublished remains a mystery. After failing to find a book publisher for the project, Hawthorne (through an intermediary, Samuel G. Goodrich) placed it with the New-England Magazine for serialization. "The Story Teller. No. 1" and "The Story Teller. No. 2" (now titled "Passages") appeared in November and December 1835, but the succeeding fifteen pieces appeared without the intended storytelling frame. Hawthorne later blamed editor Park Benjamin for fracturing the unity of the collection; as Elizabeth Peabody would write, her brother "cared very little for the stories afterwards, which had their original place in The Story Teller a great degree of significance" (Conway 32). Adkins and Gross were the first critics to attempt to reconstruct the unity of the aborted collection. More recently, both Baym (39-50) and Colacurico (496-522) have attempted to analyze its thematic consistency in relation to Hawthorne's early career. Because the narrator speaks of writing "Wakefield" while the Story Teller tales were to have been orally performed, some critics have argued against its inclusion in the cycle. I think they overlook the point that, as "Passages" reveals, the narrator is writing the tales some time after they were performed. What is missing is the scene of the story's performance, the contextual link, that would have incorporated the tale into the frame. My own reading is indebted to Swann, who reads the performative aspect of "Wakefield" in relation to Benjamin (185-202).

18 The character is exceedingly sketchy in "Passages," but Hawthorne later claimed that the Unitarian evangelist Very Jones was the embodiment of everything that he hoped to achieve in Eliakim Abbott.

19 Cmiel's chapter on the influence of the Biblical style on Romantic language during the 1820s and 1830s reveals that King James archaisms were considered the
"epitome of democratic eloquence" because they are derived from Saxon rather than Latin roots. The style was a controversial topic throughout the first half of the century as revisionists like Noah Webster and Leicester Sawyer produced "modernized" versions of the Bible that met with heavy resistance (94-122).

Perluck describes "Wakefield" as Hawthorne's "half-serious self-appraisal both as man and artist" that exposes "a wry awareness of...the public's smirking derision, from the perspective of redoubtable middle-class sanity, of the artist's extravagance" (181-96). His reading is complex and insightful, but he ignores Mrs. Wakefield's role as the captive audience.

My approach here is based on Charles Fillmore's theory of "case grammar." As Fillmore and his successors argue, noun phrases serve various roles determined by the verbs that they modify. An "agent" instigates the action expressed: "Wakefield lies down." An "experiencer" conveys emotions taking place within a subject: "Wakefield...discerns..." A "patient" is the thing acted upon: "Wakefield is excited by...." All noun phrases can be assigned a role, not just the subject of the sentence. A "source" is a location from which something emerges ("In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story"), while a "goal" is the direction that a noun phrase moves toward ("He hurries to his lodgings"). These are deceptively simple examples, however. As "Wakefield is excited" suggests, role relations are determined by transformation from deep to surface structure: passive voice turns the agent (sentence subject) into a patient (object). Similarly, figures of speech like metaphor and hyperbole manipulate roles—inanimate objects may suddenly possess volition or desire as agents, while humans may become dumb "forces" that act without conscious will. Fillmore's original terms for the various roles are by no means universal; mine are drawn from Pratt and Traugott (192-94).

M. A. K. Halliday links the ambiguity separating the agent and experiencer roles to the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs: "the most generalized pattern of transitivity...is one that is based not on the notions of actor and goal but on those of cause and effect...there is one central and obligatory participant—let us call it the 'affected participant'—which is inherently involved in the process...an intransitive clause is one in which the roles of 'affected' and 'agent' are combined in one participant" (353).

Neither of the two existing biographies of Field discusses his acquaintance with the Pittsfield literary set, which included not only Hawthorne and Melville but Atlantic Monthly editor James T. Fields and Oliver Wendell Holmes, as well as their wives. Henry M. Field includes a chapter describing his father's vacation adventures in eastern Massachusetts, but mentions none of the area's famous neighbors (108-18). For a more current analysis of Field's life and work, see Van Ee.

Herbert F. Johnson describes the Master's responsibilities: "Chancery proceedings were commenced by filing a bill in chancery with one of the clerks [a term, significantly enough, synonymous with master]. Precisely how one was appointed to this office is difficult to determine. It is obvious, however, that the leading attorneys of the Province of New York functioned as clerks in chancery...[the lawyer] was not counsel or solicitor for either party to the suit, but all papers in the suit were filed with the same clerk, who would provide certified copies at a fixed fee per folio page. One is compelled to conclude that the clerk in chancery was a member of the Bar who made his office available as a repository for papers in chancery litigation." For a more recent analysis of equity reform, see Hoffer (91-102).
Austin illustrates his arguments with judicial examples: "it is worth pointing out...how many of the 'acts' which concern the jurist are or include the utterance of performatives" (19). He is also interested in how written law enacts an illocutionary force: "the word 'hereby'...serves to indicate that the utterance (in writing) of the sentence is, as it is said, the instrument effecting the act of warning, authorizing, &c. 'Hereby' is a use criterion that the utterance is performative" (57).

This myth has come under intense scrutiny by the critical legal studies movement, which applies post-structuralist theories of interpretation to the law. For an overview of the intersection between literary and legal studies, see Thomas, "Reflections on the Law and Literature Revival."

Ramón Saldívar applies Austin's theories to Moby-Dick, contrasting the constative nature of Ishmael's narration with the performative quality of Ahab's soliloquies in a fashion analogous to my approach. Of special interest is his interpretation of "The Whiteness of the Whale" chapter, in which Ishmael juxtaposes the beautiful and horrific connotations of the word "white" in a quest for the source or origin of its meaning. Saldívar argues that only through contradiction and paradox can Ishmael recognize a meaning: "The reason...can only be given, it seems, in terms of the symbolic imagination and its vocabulary of contradiction, of oxymoron. But this language of oxymoron forms an impasse beyond which constative knowledge cannot proceed. What we are offered here is the notion of whiteness as of something like a free signifier—it does not itself refer, but forms the constative essence of signification. Upon its pure surface, imagination projects the possibility of meaning" (110-55). In my argument, Bartleby is also a "free signifier." Like Ishmael, the lawyer realizes that meaning is not "in" a substance but reflected off its surface, a realization that nullifies the socially imposed distinction between literal and figurative language.

The performative utterance and concomittant illocutionary force are the subject of a famous critique by Derrida, who claims that Austin defines them as an express desire so that "performative communication once more becomes the communication of an intentional meaning, even if this meaning has no referent in the form of a prior or exterior thing or state of things" ("Signature" 322). Austin's text, compiled from lecture notes, does imply a governing intention shapes illocutionary effect, yet it also establishes that performative and constative utterances are shaped by a social context in which the individual is but one constituent. For a critique of deconstructive readings of Austin, see Petrey's Speech Acts and Literary Theory (111-30).

For background on disputes between state legislatures and the Post Office, especially as they affected the delivery of newspapers and magazines, see Kielbowicz. As his bibliography reveals, periodicals in the early 1850s often reported these conflicts (not surprising, since their circulation was affected by postage increases). Melville subscribed to at least one of those periodicals, Harper's, which would subsequently published many of the tales that he wrote between 1853-56.

Felman explores the relationship between puns and performative language in The Literary Speech Act.
CHAPTER 2
HABITS OF STORYMAKING:
WOMEN WRITING REALISM, 1860-1900

As a transitional story, "Bartleby" reveals Melville working the formative convention of realism to satisfy his romanticist aesthetic. "Life in the Iron Mills" dramatizes the tensions between the tale and the emerging short story from the opposite perspective: Rebecca Harding Davis uses a romanticist device, the emotional appeal, to achieve a realist's vision. Davis died in 1910, barely two months before the December day that, as Virginia Woolf would later claim, human character irrevocably changed and the modernist era began. As a woman writer whose work spans the rise and ebb of 19th-century realism, she offers a logical starting point for exploring the influence of gender on storytelling. Her obituary in The New York Times captures the pervasive ambiguity surrounding "Life in the Iron Mills": "It attracted attention from all over the country. Many thought the author must be a man....The stern but artistic realism of the picture she put alive upon paper, suggested a man, and a man of power not unlike Zola's" (13). The analogy is anachronistic: when Davis debuted in the Atlantic Monthly in April 1861, Zola was unknown in America. Nor does The Times reveal just who was confused about her sex. While the story was published without attribution at Davis's request, Atlantic editor James T. Fields, with a characteristic penchant for publicizing his authors, leaked her name to the Boston papers. Within a month, Hawthorne had sent a congratulatory letter, and both Emerson and Bronson Alcott expressed interest in meeting her. 1 The real curiosity of the obituary, however, can be narrowed down to one word: the conjunction that separates "stern" from "artistic realism" and "man of power." If but appears to bifurcate her achievement, it is because "Life in the Iron Mills" is an oddly divided work. By "artistic realism," The Times presumably refers to the powerful exposé of working conditions in Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia), the steel town on the Ohio River

73
where Davis spent most of her life. By welding documentary details into long, iron-hard descriptive passages, she forges a startling, sparse style: conjunctive images like "the pig-pens, the ash-heaps covered with potato skins, the bloated, pimpled women at the doors" foreshadow the clarity and focus of Walker Evans's Depression-era photography (48). Surrounding these images, however, are ornate, emphatic direct addresses characteristic of moralistic tales: "Stop a moment. I am going to be honest. This is what I want you to do. I want you to hide your disgust, take no heed to your clean clothes, and come right down here with me,—here, into the thickest of the fog and mud and foul effluvia. I want you to hear this story" (13). The conjunction that qualifies the description of "Life in the Iron Mills" in *The Times* prompts a question: if artistic realism is a powerful, masculine style, might "stern" imply a woman?

Robyn Warhol has argued that, during the Victorian era, didactic direct addresses became "gendered interventions," derided as a "woman's strategy, to be applied at moments when [the audience's] emotional receptivity should be most sensitive, and to be avoided by practitioners of self-referential 'high art'" (205). By "practitioners" she refers to William Dean Howells and Henry James, whose storytellers often do openly stage their narratives. The key phrase is "emotional receptivity": Davis's addresses are emphatic, while Howells' and James's are rigorously analytical, whether sociologically or psychologically oriented. Economy here refers to the affective timbre of the address, not necessarily the convention itself. As Warhol suggests, the gendering of the strategy is rooted in a distinction between literary and nonliterary language: the former is representational, the latter pragmatic. Poetic language paints a picture; non-poetic language is "rhetorical" in the narrow sense that it is the medium of mundane human communication (192-94). The distinction illuminates the divergence of the short story from the tale. Throughout the 1850s, editors and critics celebrated realism as artistically superior to the didactic fiction published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, the *New York Ledger*, and other popular periodicals. The tale had been corrupted by "stereotyped incident" and
"hackneyed plots," but most of all by "unnatural language" that appealed to "uncultivated instincts." According to critics, moral edification had severely limited artistic expression. An entirely new form of short fiction was necessary, one that valued verisimilitude above all else.  

While Howells called storytelling "the old trade of make-believe," the province of minors and "semi-fatuous persons of both sexes," the critical vocabulary more often draped "unnatural language" in feminine garb. Envisioning his realist advocacy as war, Howells claimed he was "banging the babes of romance" (qtd. in Cady 1; then as now, "banging" carried sexual connotations). Yet as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* after 1869, he solicited and published stories by Rose Terry Cooke, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Harriet Prescott Spofford, all of whom directly addressed their audience. He also claimed that the stories of Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman were "faithfuller and more realistic than those of the men" ("Editor's Study" 640).

If narrative styles did not reflect sexual difference, the gendering of realism must lie in the articulation of its aesthetics. In the *Atlantic*, the mode is repeatedly defined as rhetorical economy: "telling a thing is enough and explaining it too much." By the mid-1880s, Turgenev embodies the ideal; he is "a realist in the sense of hiding himself." Yet realism involves more than simply transcribing events and manners. What makes it artistic is the "the glamour of romance...with which realism does not discord." According to James, a writer should explore "the relation between the cultivated fancy and the visible, palpable facts of the world," one of many early critical comments that reveals Hawthorne's influence. What critics called "photographic" realism (the harbinger of naturalism) violated the same taboo as sentimental fiction: in both, storytellers too visibly manipulated emotions. James twice ridiculed Davis's writing in the late 1860s for its "injudicious straining after realistic effects which leave nature and reality at an infinite distance behind and beside them" (qtd. in Davis 133). The statement points to an intriguing paradox of the era: when stories by women writers lacked "cultivated fancy" or "poetical insight," they were rejected for being *too* realistic. Fields asked Davis to revise
her second submission to the *Atlantic*, "The Story of To-day," because it "assembled the gloom" (qtd. in Yellin 166). Horace Scudder, who replaced Howells as the magazine's editor in the early 1880s, returned "The Yellow Wallpaper" to Charlotte Perkins Gilman with a terse note: "I could not forgive myself if I made others as miserable as I have made myself!" (qtd. in Ammons *Conflicting Stories*, 35). Howells complained of audience emotions being "rasped and twanged like fiddle-strings by the hysterical performances of some of our authoresses."  

"Hysterical" is a telling word choice; as a diagnostic judgment, it alludes to the emergence of a critical vocabulary rooted in occupational "discursive practices" rather than the religious institutions from which didactic fiction drew its moral authority. Professionalization created a culture of experts charged with upholding cultural norms of reality, whether in science, medicine, law, or journalism. Writing was one of the few occupations open to women (teaching being the other), yet their absence from other fields denied them the authority of expertise, which conferred a certain speaking privilege in the post-bellum decades. Writers may never have enjoyed the prestige or lifestyle accorded physicians and lawyers, but they claimed the "cultural authority both to possess and to dispense access to the real" (Kaplan 28). Romanticists like Irving, Hawthorne, and Melville expressed their ambivalence by cultivating liminal bachelor personae; (male) realists aspired to the status of cultural arbitrators. As Howells would claim, a storyteller need not "[account] in any way for his knowledge of the facts" (*Double Billing* 6). The effect on narrative authority is immense. When realism becomes "a reading for content that is modeled on reality at the expense of awareness of the signifying system of which the work is constructed" (Bal 506), the audience is subordinated *a priori* to the narrator's vision. Any deviation from the economical norm risks being labeled "supernatural," "fanciful," or, more extremely, "hysterical." Because masculine values predominantly define this model of reality, pejorative terms become associated with feminine communication styles.
"Life in the Iron Mills," "A White Heron," and "The Yellow Wallpaper" were all written for the Atlantic Monthly, the most active promoter of realism during the second half of the century. Of the three stories, the Atlantic published only "Life in the Iron Mills," a fact that alludes to the subtle conflicts between their style and the aesthetic imperatives shaping the magazine's editorial tastes. With different degrees of openness, Davis, Jewett, and Gilman confront the gender bias separating the "real" from the fanciful; in doing so, they illustrate the interpersonal function of the direct address. Far from being an aesthetic lapse, the convention allows storytellers to attract the widest possible audience, one "having diverse occupations, prejudices, and life experiences, so that their 'community' depends on the acceptance of their acknowledged differences."

Rather than proliferate a specific vision of reality, these storytellers "connect differentiated groups and individuals. This makes the reading of [the stories] a different imagining process from one of reading most modern [texts] 'addressed' to readers undefined, anonymous, and conceived as responding in purely aesthetic terms" (Kroeber 99). Direct addresses reveal how a storyteller negotiates rather than assumes narrative authority.

In "Life in the Iron Mills," the narrator interweaves two styles of address indicative of contemporary masculine and feminine narratives. By "cross-gendering" the text, s/he links a broad middle-class audience in a communal vision of social progress. In "A White Heron," the storyteller obliquely addresses the reader but stops short of invoking the first- and second-person pronouns. Instead, with a variety of more subtle intrusive techniques (questions, modal hedges, and descriptive detail, devices generally associated with women's conversational style), she creates a "suggestive" narrative whose reticence invites the reader's response. "The Yellow Wallpaper" offers the most complex take on gender and realism due to its founding paradox: it "realistically" dramatizes a non-rational point of view. Emphasizing a woman's struggle to resolve her "habit of storymaking" with her husband's restrictive, rational perspective, Gilman fashions an increasingly unrealistic style that implicitly critiques the assumptions of
associative logic and reason underpinning rhetorical norms of representation. She addresses her audience indirectly, provoking a series of interpretive inferences or "implicatures" through which her voice must be abstracted from her character's.

**Rebecca Harding Davis and the Cross-Gendered Text**

Patricia Yaeger calls attention to the various sociolects in "Life in the Iron Mills" that dramatize class differences. Representing the pocket, the heart, and the head of the world, three middle-class men stroll the mill debating the deplorable condition of the workers' lives. They speak in "several rhetorical modes to dissemble economic distances that would otherwise be unbearable" (268). Kirby, the son of the owner, exemplifies the language of laissez faire: "Ce n'est pas mon affaire... The Lord will take care of his own; or else [the laborers] can work out their own salvation." Dr. May offers Scriptural aphorisms in a philanthropic spirit. He believes that "much good was to be done... by a friendly word or two," but his maxims are compromised by his social status: he "talk[s] down to the capacity of his hearer." Mitchell, a "thoroughbred gentleman," is the most problematic, precisely because he resembles the middle-class audience of the Atlantic Monthly. Educated, artistic, contemptuous of "one-idead men," his "taste, culture, [and] refinement" allow him to view morality as aesthetics, an intellectual rather than social issue. He alone recognizes what Hugh Wolfe tries to express in the statue of the kohl woman, but he refuses to articulate the connection that he feels. When pressed by May to offer the sculptor a pittance of hope or encouragement, he says, "I am not one of them.... Reform is born of need, not pity" (38-39). According to Yaeger, Davis uses the debate between the three men, which runs roughly a third of the story, to dramatize the "subterfuge" of middle-class language: she "points to the ease with which well-to-do men and women create figures of speech, and contrasts this glibness with the laborious speech and the wage labor of the iron workers" (270).
To not succumb to this "glibness," Davis's storyteller must qualify the narration. Yaeger argues that s/he "breaks her own metaphors" and other "rhetorical flourishes," ending with an image of the korl woman, the symbol of "the terrible silence within speech, [of] the blasphemous exclusion [from language] of those who need it most." Yet Yaeger's own words imply that Davis's "flourishes" have not been broken completely: the story, she claims, "ends drenched in sentiment, but..." (273). As with The Times quote, a conjunction is called upon to excuse the style. Other critics have been more blunt. Robert F. Marler calls "Life in the Iron Mills" "depressing but overwritten" ("Tale" 169), while Josephine Donovan suggests that Davis was susceptible to the "weakening indulgence" of "romantic hyperbole" (New England33). Sharon Harris, in the most extensive study of Davis's career to date, argues that the direct addresses are ironic: rhetorical "exaggeration" is meant to dissuade, not encourage, a sentimental identification with the laborers. The instinct to justify emotional appeals illustrates how deeply reading tastes are saturated by realist aesthetics. What goes unexplored is the effect that these "rhetorical modes" might sway on an Atlantic Monthly readership, which, since the founding of the magazine in 1857, had been exposed to numerous abolitionist and suffragist appeals. While these modes may "dissemble" economic differences, they also allow the storyteller to connect the widest possible audience within a class-circumscribed readership. In other words, if the message is restricted to a single social group, the narrator does not allow gender to further limit its circulation. S/he creates what Warhol calls a "cross-gendered" text by mingling narrative styles culturally coded as masculine and feminine.

Indeed, much of the critical confusion surrounding "Life in the Iron Mills" (its "stern but artistic realism") can be resolved by suggesting that it tells two stories necessitating two styles of address. On the one hand, it is about Hugh Wolfe, an iron puddler-artist who is wrongly accused of stealing Mitchell's wallet and commits suicide in prison. His story is a stereotypically masculine narrative of an individual's struggle
against averse social circumstances to realize "a consciousness of power...free to work, to live, to love! Free! His right!" (47). The korl woman, with its "wolfish" face, is his self-portrait. The narrative interjections that characterize his tragedy are aggressive and reprimanding: they rebuke the fictional reader, who becomes a character much like Mitchell, for ignoring the conditions of the workers. According to Warhol, this narrative stance distances the actual reading audience from the fictional "you": by "[providing] so much information about the [reader] that the addressee" assumes the dimension of a character, the narrator "necessarily places a distance between the actual [audience] and the inscribed 'you' in the text" (29).

Another story deserves telling, however: it centers on Hugh's cousin Deborah, a hunchback whose unrequited love dehumanizes her. She looks to Wolfe "as a spaniel [looks to] its master" (23); elsewhere, she is described as a witch, one of the "fierce devils [that] whisper in [Wolfe's] ear," tempting him, like a deformed Eve, to snatch the delusive apple of a better life. (She steals the wallet that lands him in prison). Yet the korl woman is a symbol of her longing and desire, too: both possess a "thwarted woman's form." Wolfe's struggle is a social narrative in which the "vigor of a man" degenerates into "a meek woman's face" (24). Because Deborah's tale concerns romantic love, some critics have criticized it for stereotyping femininity by ignoring women's economic status. Yet inasmuch as Deborah does embody emotions traditionally associated with femininity, sympathy in particular, she serves an important function: she acts as the nexus for an "engaging" narrative strategy that encourages us to assume the role of the fictional reader. As Warhol suggests, "Using narrative interventions that are almost always spoken in earnest, [an engaging] narrator addresses a 'you' that is evidently intended to evoke recognition and identification in the person who holds the book and reads, even if the 'you' in the text resembles that person only slightly" (29).

As Warhol suggests, these strategies were not sex specific in the 19th century, but she does argue that men tended to distance their audiences while women writers engaged
theirs (33). There is another sign of "cross-gendering," however: the narrator's identity. Nowhere is her or his sex announced, which is why I speak throughout of "s/he." Most contemporary audiences assume the narrator is a woman, much as, according to The Times, readers in 1861 assumed s/he was a man. Rather than argue whether Davis writes more like a man or a woman, however, an inquiry into the style of "Life in the Iron Mills" should center upon the very gender ambivalence that makes it interpretable in the context of "artistic" (masculine) realism and "stern" (feminine) didacticism. The tonal expression of this ambivalence can be located in what George L. Dillon calls rhetorical "footings," the relative degrees of engagement between the storyteller and the reader that various linguistic features create. The distancing strategy conveys superiority, formality, and directness while the engaging mode projects equality, informality, and obliqueness. 9

The tale begins with an aggressive challenge: "A cloudy day: do you know what that is in a town of iron-works?" (11). S/he then opens a window to document the tragedy, constantly begging the reader's response: "What do you make of a case like that, amateur psychologist?...You call it an altogether serious thing to be alive: to these men it is a drunken jest, a joke—horrible to angels perhaps, to them commonplace enough" (12). As an "amateur psychologist," and later as an "Egoist, or Pantheist, or Arminian, busy in making straight paths for your feet on the hills" (14), the fictional reader is at worst indifferent or at best unsympathetic to the characters. According to Dillon, the more a reader's role is "scripted" in this manner, the less likely the audience feels invited to "form [its] own conclusions on the matter at hand" (29). Yet the narrator admits uncertainty about how to tell the story that undercuts the superiority of this initial stance. Three times in the opening frame s/he characterizes the narration as "idle," a notion that "comes to me to-day, when from the street-window I look on the slow stream of human life creeping past" (12). The enslaved flow of the "negro-like river" outside parallels the "slow stream" of the workers' repetitive lives. But the analogy is too fanciful: the river "knows that beyond there waits for it odorous sunlight,—quaint old gardens, dusky with
soft, green foliage of apple-trees, and flushing crimson with roses,—air, and fields, and mountains. The future of the Welsh puddler passing just now is not so pleasant” (13). The river can escape the ecological devastation of the steel town simply by flowing on; the workers cannot. This self-consciousness about technique establishes equality with the audience. As Dillon suggests, "a Writer's reference to his own performance can be equalizing in that he accepts the Reader's judgments and right to criticize" (29). By admitting uncertainty about the performance, opening the technique to evaluation, the narrator is vulnerable to the same criticisms applied to the reader.

Sharon Harris reads the references to idleness as evidence of the narrator's naivete: s/he is "a symbol of the idle lives of those who need not go down into the hellfires of the mill" (31). Elsewhere, however, the narrator assumes an unexpected solidarity with the workers: describing the mounds of ore refuse that litter the furnace rooms, s/he says, "Korl we call it here" (24). Obviously, such a blatant identification with the characters' world flies in the face of the narrator's actual situation. S/he, like the reader, is an outsider. Distance is symbolized by the fact that, throughout the narration, s/he never leaves the house. The window opened in the first paragraph offers the sole perspective to observe the laborers. If the sudden assumption of the editorial we seems oddly transparent in its effort to distance the fictional reader from the workers, the engaging strategy fills the vacuum by establishing equality with the audience.

As the storyteller invites us to descend into the pits, s/he reveals the purpose of the story: "I want to make it a real thing to you" (13-14). Making the story real, however, depends on the reader's ability to "see it clearly," and that implies a recognition that the narrator cannot control. S/he must exhort the reader to "look deeper"; this imperative implies that discovery requires collaboration to sculpt meaning from the fragments of this "half-forgotten story." The rhetoric of "looking deeper," repeated throughout the story, can be contrasted to the "eagle-eyed reader" that Melville celebrates in "Hawthorne and His Mosses." Melville's "deep diving" reader relies less on collaboration than the
discovery of deep significances hidden by the storyteller to deceive the "superficial skimmer of pages." The deep diver is an ideal reader who is "capable of fully fathoming" a type of writing "insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it."

For Melville, literature "is not to obtruded upon every one alike" (Writings 239-53).

Reading "Bartleby," the superficial reader discovers an incomplete biography, but a deep diver perceives gaps in the lawyer's testimony from which symbolic conclusions emerge. Davis's narrator, on the other hand, insists that writing should be obtruded upon by every one alike, for what is at stake is a communal vision of reality.

The need to negotiate the real becomes more explicit as Wolfe is tempted to keep Mitchell's stolen wallet. The direct addresses here assume a sermonic tone, appealing to a Christian base of authority through Biblical allusion. The power of observation is linked to spiritual perception: "whatever muddy depth of soul-history lies beneath [the surface] you can read according to the eyes God has given you " (23). Subsequent addresses are even more emphatic: "Be just when I tell you about this night, see him as he is. Be just,— not like man's law, which seizes on one isolated fact, but like God's judging angel, whose clear, sad eye saw all the countless canker days of this man's life, all the countless nights, when, sick with starving, his soul fainted on him, before it judged him and this night, the saddest of all" (25-26). Just, judging, judgment, these cognates form the vocabulary of the distancing strategy. The particular rhetorical practice invoked here is the jeremiad, a "mode of public exhortation," according to Sacvan Bercovitch, "designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting 'signs of the times' to certain traditional metaphors, themes, and symbols" (xi). By 1861, the American jeremiad had long evolved from a Puritan sermon into a mode of middle-class social prophecy. While at best pseudo-theological as it was absorbed into secular discourse, it nonetheless offered a profoundly emotional style of address for abolitionists, evangelists, and politicians. Bercovitch describes its persuasive force as "a movement from promise to experience—from the ideal of community to the
shortcomings of community life—and thence forward, with prophetic assurance, toward
a resolution that incorporates (as it transforms) both the promise and the condemnation."
The jeremiad is a "ritual of consensus" because it negotiates a vision of reality according
to an ideal grounded in (presumably) shared values. Its strategic maneuver is "affirmation
through lamentation" (203). As part of a distancing strategy, it convinces the audience
that the storyteller preaches to the choir. It is the fictional reader, not us, who has failed
the moral standard. The more the textual "you" is characterized as transgressing these
shared values, the less the real audience is compelled to identify with it. Though the
narrator assumes a superior footing, the distance between the reader and the audience
exonerates the latter from the address. S/he is speaking for rather than to us.

At certain points, the storyteller distances the audience from the reader by
identifying the textual "you" with Mitchell or May. After Wolfe's trial for stealing the
wallet, the doctor reads the report of the iron puddler's nineteen-year sentence to his wife:
"'Scoundrel! Serves him right! After all our kindness that night! Picking Mitchell's
pocket at the very time.'" Mrs. May promptly denounces the "ingratitude of that kind of
people." The storyteller laments the sentence: "Nineteen years! How easy that was to
read! What a simple word for Judge Day to utter! Nineteen years! Half a lifetime!" (51).
"Judge Day," who presides over Wolfe's trial, echoes both "judgment day" and "May,"
equating the doctor's offended philanthropy with blasphemous egotism: he delivers a
sentence that only God can rightfully make, which is precisely what the narrator warns
the reader not to do in the passage previously quoted. May does not "see [Wolfe] as he
his"; he fails to examine the "crime" in the larger social context.

But it is Mitchell who, by sparking the iron puddler's temptation, offers the most
consistent model for the "you." After the three men leave the mill as the furnaces tem­
porarily shut down for Sunday morning, Wolfe remains on the cinder-road outside the
works, struggling to understand why he cannot rise above his grimy existence. The
narrator expresses the pain of his situation: "Do you remember rare moments when a
sudden light flashed over yourself, your world, God? when you stood on a mountain-
peak, seeing your life as it might have been, as it is?" (40). Rhetorical questions, as
Dillon remarks, are ambiguous devices. They simultaneously enact superiority and
solidarity: superiority because the narrator is not interested in the question's answer, only
in asserting that Wolfe's confusion is an emotional experience as profound in a laborer as
in an educated, reflective audience. But rhetorical questions also enact solidarity by
appealing to the cultural value placed in that moment of revelation, the Pisgah vision of
instant awareness central to the middle-class Bildungsroman, the narrative of development
(29). Its power lies in the positing of typological experience (as Bercovitch notes, Pisgah
is a central symbol of the jeremiad tradition [8]). Wolfe's vision raises a new
consciousness of his "squalid daily life": the coarseness, the ashes, "tonight they were
reality." He sees a vision of Mitchell, "all-knowing, all-seeing, crowned by nature,
reigning,—the keen glance of his eye falling like a sceptre on the other men," and he
recognizes that he, too, shares those qualities. They are not vague ambitions but practical
knowledge: "Through the years he had day by day made this hope a real thing to
himself,—a clear, projected figure of himself, as he might become" (40-41). His vision
is nothing if not the American dream of self-making. Linking Wolfe with Mitchell
through a revelation, the storyteller casts his struggle not as a threat to the middle class but
as a longing for assimilation within it. Describing Wolfe's ambition as "a real thing"
recalls earlier promises to "make [the story] real." What is posited here is not a
documentary reality, not a transcription, but the subtle negotiation of a social reality that
has failed its promise. "Look at me!" Wolfe cries to Deb. "Is it my fault I am no better?"
His frustrated individualism is indicative of the lament. As Bercovitch notes, mid-century
jeremiads typify individualism as "an exemplum of American enterprise" rather than
"something unique [like]...a Byronic of Nietzschean assertion of superiority." The
individual is "a model of progress and control that typifies the society as a whole" (156).
As an artist trapped in an inhuman environment, Wolfe marks the stalling of that social progress. The vision of American destiny has failed.

Critics often characterize Wolfe's temptation as a fall into bourgeois values: in deciding to keep the stolen money, he abandons his class in a desperate attempt to escape the "social riddle" of his reality. According to the jeremiad model, however, he fails the ideal vision of middle-class values. His reality no longer aims toward its providential promise, but remains static and self-content, grounded in pragmatic justifications. The conflict between human and divine law at the core of Wolfe's dilemma recalls the debate over eternal and temporal justice that Melville explores in *Pierre*. In the fictional pamphlet "authored" by Plotinus Plinlimmon, Melville laments the "virtuous expediency" that arises in negotiating the distance between the ideal and the real. But as Bercovitch suggests, the conjunction in Plinlimmon's title, "Chronometricals and Horologicals" implies that "we have access to both worlds, providing that we embrace the realm of experience while giving priority, in rhetoric and imagination, to the realm of the ideal" (30). The key phrase in the pamphlet ("by their very contradictions they are made to correspond") marks Melville's romanticist imagination. The narrator in "Bartleby" does give priority in the postscript to the ideal, and he gains an intuitive insight (however unspeakable) into the scrivener's tragedy. The difference between Melville and Davis again rests in their orientation toward romanticism and realism. For him, "virtuous expediency" embodies the individual's ethical commitment to an ideal truth that the pragmatic world makes flee "like a sacred white doe in the woodlands" (*Writings* 244). For Davis, however, the ideal represents a civic commitment to the social construction of reality. In terms of the artist's narrative, two typological experiences are interwoven. First, we witness what might be called the last temptation of Wolfe, which illustrates what happens when expediency offers resolution to a personal dilemma by sacrificing the ideal; and second, the reading of this story, through which the narrator warns against repeating Wolfe's error through the distancing strategy. In both, the drama rests on the inexorable gulf between divine
and human justice. Wolfe recognizes that keeping the wallet does not violate God's law; as Deborah tells him, it is his right. The recognition arrives "veiled by no sophistry," but the line is ironic because the storyteller shows the "sophistry" of Wolfe's own thought creating a private reality. He is blinded by an image of himself "as he might be, strong, helpful, kindly.... What wonder if it blinded him to delirium,—the madness that underlies all revolution, all progress, and all fail?" The question leads to the most complex direct address in the story:

You laugh at the shallow temptation? You see the error in its argument so clearly,—that to him a true life was one of full development rather than self-restraint? that he was deaf to the higher tone in a cry of voluntary suffering for truth's sake than in the fullest flow of spontaneous harmony? I do not plead his cause. I only want to show you the mote in my brother's eye: then you can see clearly to take it out. (46)

The terms of the lament (full development vs. self-restraint, higher tones vs. spontaneous harmony) are exceedingly vague, but they posit a subtle contrast between individual and social progress. The narrator's own tone suggests that such a contrast is too easy, too "shallow," implying that the audience must look deeper to resist forming a judgment on Wolfe's temptation. The last line paraphrases Matthew 7:4-5, again dramatizing the reception of the story as a typological experience: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Distance here is an ethical imperative. To "see clearly" we must see Wolfe's tragedy as a symbol of a larger social failure in which progress is defined as "fancied rights" and "dreams of improved existences."

The divergence of the ideal and real is dramatized as Wolfe wanders through the backyards of the laborers, indulging in a new superiority. This feeling "left him but once during the night, when, for the second time in his life, he entered a church" (48). For many readers, the passage marks an explicit rejection of Christianity because a reformer preaches, "his words pass[ing] far over the furnace-tender's grasp, toned to suit another
class of culture" (49). His sermon addresses "the incarnate Life, Love, the universal man: words that became reality in the lives" of his congregation, showing how a community negotiates and collaborates on its vision of the real. Wolfe discovers that these "light-laden words" are ineffectual; the congregation's reality is corrupt because it offers no space to him. But before the reformer speaks, Wolfe is moved by the ideal that the church represents: he "forgot himself, forgot the new life he was going to live." It is the reformer's practice that enforces the class differences.

Significantly, after the scene where May offers his judgment, the distancing strategy disappears; the narrator does not criticize the reader's judgments. Instead, the addresses move toward equality by qualifying the narrator's own perspective. This rhetorical "softening" occurs at an important thematic juncture where Wolfe, imprisoned, recognizes his own separation, both from Mitchell and, more important, from his fellow workers and Deborah. One of the most tragic moments occurs when he calls out to the laborers in front of his cell, only to be ignored: "A longing seized him to be spoken to once more" (59). Sensitive to this sudden need for contact, the narrator's own language softens: "he thought it was to be for the last time. For the same reason, it was, I suppose, that he strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of each passer-by, wondering who they were, what kind of homes they were going to, if they had children" (58). Wolfe struggles to make connections, not with people like Mitchell, but with people like himself. The narrator, too, must make connections; by relaxing the assurance with which s/he claims to know Wolfe's motivations ("I suppose" as opposed to "I know"), s/he opens a space for the audience to step in and enact its own identifications. As Wolfe cuts his wrists with a rasped slice of tin, the narrator tentatively characterizes his thoughts: "I think in that one hour that came then he lived back over all the years that had gone before. I think that all the low, vile life, all his wrongs, all his starved hopes, came then, and stung him with a farewell poison that made him sick unto death" (60). The emphasis here is on the narrator's own ability to imagine Wolfe's final thoughts. By not characterizing
the reader, s/he makes narration an act of empathy, subtly negotiating a joint perspective on the action.

As Jane Tompkins notes, women writers like Stowe, Maria Cummins, and Susan Warner (among others) incorporated the jeremiad into their style. The "sentimental power" of the address was grounded not in the social authority of Puritan ministers, obviously, but in an emerging "new matriarchy" in which women embodied "the most traditional values—religion, motherhood, home, and family" (139-45). Davis's use of the jeremiad, I would suggest, does not fall into this tradition because she does not reframe its providential sweep into a thematic framework specifically identified with women's culture (i.e. domesticity). Wolfe's temptation takes shape as a stereotypically masculine narrative. Deborah's story, meanwhile, is a romantic drama that pivots upon a variation of the marriage plot central to the sentimental tradition. While other sentimental tales portray marriage as a reward for virtue, Davis inverts its resolution, turning motifs of romance into touchstones for the audience's receptivity. However less dramatic than Wolfe's conflict, Deborah's drama serves as the sympathetic center of the narration. By emphasizing her ability to make connections and transcend what Luce Irigaray refers to as "the subordination of the feminine," the storyteller establishes a subtler, more intimate relationship with the reader (65). When Deborah is first introduced, for example, the narrator focuses attention on her deformed body. She is "even more ghastly, her lips bluer, her eyes more watery" than Wolfe's emaciated father, who slumbers on a nearby pile of hay. Her disfiguration parallels the disfiguration that Mitchell, May and Kirby (as well as the narrator) observe in the figure of the korl woman. The artistic vanity that Wolfe embodies cannot admit connections; from his perspective, feminine emotion disfigures a body. For Deborah, however, the lack of that emotion is disfiguring.

The attitudes of Wolfe and Deborah toward intimacy point to the varying intensity of the two narrative strategies. Whereas the storyteller emphasizes how Wolfe's hunger weakens him, making him woman-like, Deborah's condition is obvious and needs no
elaboration: "She was hungry, — one could see that easily enough" (17). Here there is no command to look deeper. "One" depersonalizes the reader's identity. No longer specifying an amateur psychologist or Egoist, the pronoun admits a broader range of response. By not scripting a reader role, the narrator grants the audience interpretive space to establish its own connections. This movement towards equality is enhanced as the narrator speculates why, unlike many of the other workers, Deborah drinks nothing stronger than ale: "Perhaps the weak, flaccid wretch had some stimulant in her pale life to keep her up, — some love or hope, it might be, or urgent need. When that stimulant was gone, she would take to whiskey. Man cannot live by work alone" (17). According to Dillon, adverbs of uncertainty like perhaps and speculative phrases like "it might be" are narrative "hedges." They bring the reader to an equal footing because the narrator does not dictate the exchange (28). The invitation to speculate about Deborah's character signals the collaborative moment as narrator and audience investigate, together, her motivations. In this sense, the aphorism tacked onto the characterization seems ironic, more indicative of the distancing strategy. As Mary Jacobus has suggested, maxims are particularly masculine speech acts in their reliance on succinct definitions of truth (42). Speaking an aphorism about "man" that sounds suspiciously like something May might say, the narrator dramatizes how authoritarian speech acts distance the audience.

Rhetorical hedges encourage the reader to get beyond Deborah's "thwarted woman's form" and see that she, too, like Wolfe, has a story, and one that a middle-class audience should have no trouble understanding: she is unloved. It is not merely that Deborah's love for Wolfe is unrequited. The point is that Wolfe's pity is patronizing: "It was his nature to be kind, even to the very rats that swarmed in the cellar; kind to her in just the same way." This knowledge, the narrator says, "might be that very knowledge had given to her face its apathy and vacancy more than her low, torpid life" (22). That suggestion, tentatively voiced ("might"), is reinforced as the narrator argues that Deborah's story is only superficially separated by class. The knowledge that gnaws her
face is the same "dead, vacant look" that often overtakes the "rarest, finest of women's faces." Suggesting that her tragedy is unrelated to her class, the narrator can reveal the source of this tragedy: "one can guess at the secret of intolerable solitude that lies hid beneath the delicate laces and brilliant smile" (22). Deborah's environment may deform her more, but the source of that deformity, solitude, is one that threatens all audiences.

This does not absolve the narrator of criticism, of course; love's ability to rectify "the accident of class" in a woman's life remains a stereotypical representation of feminine dependence on man. Rhetorically, however, s/he appeals to the possibility of dissolving class boundaries to recognize a universal humanity and, thus, a stronger potential for a shared reality. This seems true even at the two most problematic points in the text, when Deborah reveals why she stole Mitchell's wallet from his pocket and her conversion, after serving three years as Wolfe's accomplice, to a life of Quaker restraint. In the first case, Deborah struggles to explain to Wolfe why the money will change his life. "She was young, in deadly earnest," the narrator says. "Her faded eyes, and wet, ragged figure caught from their frantic eagerness a power akin to beauty" (43). This "beauty," of course, is a quality that the artist Wolfe fails to recognize until now. Deborah refers to the "witch dwarfs" who haunt the moors. If one gave him money he could go "where t' man lives that talked to us to-night" (Mitchell, in other words) and "Hugh could walk like a king!" She identifies with these creatures: "If I were t' witch dwarf, if I had t' money, wud hur thank me?" Doing so, she represents herself as Wolfe portrays himself in the stature of the korl woman: as deformed by hunger for human connection.

But Wolfe fails to understand the nature of her hunger: "He thought the woman mad, tried to check her, but she went on, fierce in her eager haste" (43). Before he can stop her, the narrator intrudes to redefine Deborah's emotions: "Mad? Yes! Are many of us mad in this way?" Significantly, s/he does not answer the question, though, one senses that s/he wants the reader to answer it, privately. Unlike the opening sentence, this question is not a taunt or challenge. The plural us is a broader, more inclusive
pronoun than in "Korl we call it here." By not characterizing the reader's response, s/he allows the audience to overcome the pejorative connotations of witchery and madness by recognizing the emotional impulse behind Deborah's actions.

The second problematic moment is Deborah's conversion. After her release from prison, she moves to a Quaker estate beyond the city. "I end my story here," the narrator says. "There is no need to tire you with the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul" (63). The statement echoes the unwillingness to complete the story after Wolfe's arrest. Whereas s/he made that point with a rhetorical question ("You wish me to make a tragic story out of it?"), here there is no confrontive footing. S/he obliquely represents the act of storytelling as an encumbrance on the reader. Numerous critics have found the conclusion impalpable, seeing in the implicit Christian resolution a highly suspect conclusion to a story so powerfully grim. Such complaints miss the tentativeness of the narrator's tone: "There may be in her heart some love denied her here, — that she shall find him whom she lost, and that then she will not be all-unworthy. Who blames her? Something is lost in the passage of every soul from one eternity to the other, — something pure and beautiful, which might have been and was not: a hope, a talent, a love, over which a soul mourns, like Esau deprived of his birthright. What blame to the meek Quaker, if she took her lost hope to make the hills of heaven more fair?" (64). The storyteller attempts to identify with Deborah's thoughts. The rhetorical hedges ("there may be," "something," "might have been") permit the audience likewise to speculate. Deborah's long stare at the mountains even recalls the narrator's own long stare at the workers in the opening paragraph. The distance both must overcome is the distance of identification. For Deborah, it is the need to identify with Quaker doctrine; for the narrator, it is the need to understand Deborah's human motivations, to make them real so a reader like Mitchell cannot reject them for not being common.
The story ends with the narrator admitting that the korl woman sits in the library, partially veiled by a curtain: "Its pale, vague lips seem to tremble with a terrible question. 'Is this the End?' they say,—'nothing beyond?'—no more?' Why, you tell me, you have seen that look in the eyes of dumb brutes, — horses dying under the lash. I know" (64). The certainty expressed in this utterance is neither confrontive nor superior; it reveals an awareness of the connections that s/he has made both with and between the audience and the characters, a connection forged out of sympathy for both. The "vague, pale lips" that tremble to speak a terrible question are the narrator's own lips as s/he struggles to tell a story and overcome a dark solitude: "The deep of the night is passing while I write."

Representing both the artistic longing of Wolfe and the emotional longing of Deborah, the veiled korl woman becomes an interpretive symbol that the narrator must represent without fully defining its meaning for the audience. If, as Patricia Yaeger suggests, the statue represents the "terrible silence" within speech, the veil itself represents the subjectivity of perception that must give voice to that void. Wolfe fools himself by believing that he envisions truth "veiled by no sophistry." The concluding frame, by contrast, implies that the truth is created when one strives to look through it. Davis's dual narrative strategy dramatizes what Irigaray calls "mimetism," a "play with mimesis" that uses the dominant mode of discourse (in this case, artistic realism) to recover "a possible operation of the feminine in language" (the I-you relationship between the storyteller and audience). Deborah's story may not be the thematic focus, but her drama allows the storyteller to recuperate narration from negative connotations of femininity to negotiate a vision of a new, "cross-gendered" reality. The final sentences of the story capture this hopeful transition as the sun rises to cast its light across the veiled statue: "Has the power of its desperate need commanded the darkness away?" Its peculiar appeal rests in the way that it both seeks and asserts an answer that, once uttered, should seem obvious and inevitable. The response desired is then less verbal than intuitive. As with many rhetorical devices practiced as the Civil War loomed, the distancing and engaging strategies assure
the audience that cultural unity can be found even in the face of overwhelming differences.

**Sarah Orne Jewett and the Power of Polite Suggestion**

No one ever accused Sarah Orne Jewett of writing like a man. When she submitted the first of her many contributions to the *Atlantic* ("Mr. Bruce" in 1869), the "realistic effects" available to the storyteller had diversified to include *couleur locale*, regional imagery distinct from the urban panorama of the Boston-New York literary axis. While local color now refers predominantly to women writers, the term was less gendered in the 19th century, applied first to George Eliot's *Romola*, then to the stories of Bret Harte, Edward Everett, Stowe (post-*Uncle Tom*), Rose Terry Cooke, Mary Wilkins Freeman, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, among others. What separates this generation of women writers from Catharine Sedgwick, Hannah Lee, and E. D. E. N. Southworth is their freedom from what Josephine Donovan calls the "Cinderella script," in which "the trials and tribulations of a morally pure heroine whose suffering, patience, and endurance are in the end rewarded with Mr. Right" (*New England* 28). Rather than restrict feminine identity to a marriage plot, women local colorists focus on female communities whose dynamics were shaped by the rhythms of domestic ritual. The emphasis on the inner world of the home led to occasional criticism that they wrote about "safe" subjects, but Jewett's generation differed from the Howells-James school of realism more in scope than style. Thus while Jewett's apprentice stories rely on the melodramatic plot twists of the sentimental mode (death and broken hearts abound), the narrative commentary never resorts to moral exhortation. Jewett attributed her storytelling aesthetic to her father: "A story should be managed so that it should suggest interesting things to the reader instead of the author's doing all the thinking for him, and setting it before him in black and white. The best compliment is for the reader to say 'Why didn't he put in "this" or "that"?'" (*Letters* 100). She took the advice to heart and developed a similar disdain for overt,
aggressive narrative authority. Late in life she defined her style as "imaginative realism," in which a "reticence or bravery of speech," relying on the "power of suggestion," allows the audience to express the "unwritable things that the story holds in its heart" (Letters 119). Elsewhere she complains that in Jane Austen's writing "all the reasoning is done for you and all the thinking....It seems to me like hearing somebody talk on and on and on while you have no part in the conversation, and merely listen" (Letters 135).

Conversation is a central metaphor in Jewett's realism; writing for a small, circumscribed readership (mainly "highly critical friends in Boston...mostly people who like to be entertained rather than puzzled" [qtd. in Cary 45]), she establishes reticence as an inviting silence, a signal to her audience that storytelling is an exchange.

Jewett's reticent style should be read in the context of what Caroll Smith-Rosenberg calls the "female world of love and ritual" (53-76), an intimate yet formal realm of mutual support and exchange through which many 19th-century women cultivated their writing and education. Jewett engaged in a number of affectionate, often romantic correspondences, most famously with James T. Fields's widow Annie after his death in 1881. Friendships like this constitute what sociolinguists refer to as a social network, a speech community that, by virtue of verbal or written interaction, develops its own codes of conversational propriety. The female world that Smith-Rosenberg describes developed at a time when scholars, clergymen, and even newspaper editors lamented the failure of American English to rise above its uncouth, frontier origins and assume the grace and fluency of the British mother tongue. Kenneth Cmiel has shown how this debate transformed into a middle-class obsession with politesse. Throughout the post-bellum decades, etiquette books, home encyclopedias, periodicals like Godsey's and Harper's, and even daily papers offered advice on "gentle speech," promising genteel refinement to those fearing the erosion of linguistic norms in the face of immigration, migration, and ambiguous class stratification (191-205). Those suspicious of gentility derided etiquette as a woman's prerogative. Mark Twain, often singled out for his vulgar
use of vernacular, wrote a number of anti-suffragist sketches in the late 1860s that parody politesse as effeminate talk. The most popular etiquette books of the era likewise link gentility with femininity. The influence of politesse on Jewett's narrative strategy is more obvious when compared to Howells's use of the conversation metaphor. For the editor, criticism is a congenial chat, an opportunity to "sit at fine ease, and talk over... such matters of literary interest as may come up from time to time." Yet the reader is "not allowed to interrupt" and "is reduced to silence" (321).

"A White Heron" dramatizes the differences between masculine and feminine speech styles. The standard reading argues that Sylvia rejects the tempting influence of patriarchal values ("violence, voyeurism, and commercialism") to embrace those traditionally associated with feminine or matriarchal culture. Like Deborah in "Life in the Iron Mills," Sylvia represents sympathy; she even comes to Mrs. Tilley's lonely farm from "a crowded manufacturing town" not unlike Davis's Wheeling. Deborah is "deformed" by Wolfe's emotional opacity, his inability to express anything but pity for her. The narrator of "A White Heron" likewise implies that a woman's emotions can turn her into a servant, not a mutual partner. The metaphor of "canine servitude" (Pratt "Women and Nature," 479) appears in both stories: while Deborah looks to Wolfe "as a spaniel to its master," Sylvia feels affection for the hunter as "a dog loves." Yet Sylvia, more than Deborah, perpetuates a world of communicative harmony. She listens "with comfort and companionship to the drowsy twitter of a half-awakened bird" (795). She hears the thrushes "with a heart that beat fast with pleasure" (793). Her relationship with Mistress Mooly the cow also suggests a natural reticence. She "call[s] Co'! Co'! with never an answering Moo," letting the animal play its hide-and-seek game without losing patience. Sylvia's communion with nature is linked to her fear of people. Mrs. Tilley's farm is a world where the stray cats purr louder than humans dare talk; upon her arrival, she whispers her joy at not having to interact with people. The natural world operates according to implicit codes of turn taking. When those codes are ignored or upset, as
when Sylvia inadvertently prevents a toad from returning to its home under the doorstep (794), cooperation is threatened, and communication breaks down. The heron, too, symbolizes conversational propriety. What sends the elusive bird from its perch on the ancient pine is a "company of shouting catbirds," whose "fluttering" and "lawlessness" destroy its contemplative peace.

The hunter threatens the integrity of this realm. He appears in the woods with a "determined and somewhat aggressive" whistle. Though he speaks in a "cheerful and persuasive tone," always kind and gallant, he frightens Sylvia into an "awed silence." Invited to supper, he listens eagerly and sympathetically to Mrs. Tilley until, soliciting sympathy, she tells him about her four dead children and her vagabond son Dan who is "no hand to write letters" from California. When she mentions Sylvia's knowledge of the woods, the hunter loses all empathetic pretenses: "The guest did not notice this hint of family sorrows in his eager interest in something else" (793). He interrupts the old woman, turning the conversation to address his interests: how Sylvia might help him track the elusive white heron. "'So Sylvy knows all about birds, does she?' he exclaimed, as he looked round at the little girl who sat, very demure but increasingly sleepy, in the moonlight."

His agenda becomes more apparent the following morning as he and Sylvia search for the heron. The little girl intuitively walks behind the hunter, refraining from initiating dialogue: "The sound of her own unquestioned voice would have terrified her, — it was hard enough to answer yes or no when there was need of that" (794-95). Sylvia's silence here is far different from her reticence among the thrushes. It is no longer a listening strategy; the power that the hunter embodies has quieted her. In the dominating medium of masculine language, a woman cannot help but be hushed, like the very birds the hunter shoots down.

The semiology of "going gunning" symbolizes this power to silence women. Emily Dickinson's "My life had stood — a loaded gun," a poem that employs much the
same imagery as Jewett's story, offers a functional contrast. In both cases, the loaded
gun, an obvious phallic image, represents the logocentrism of masculine language that
controls and limits expression of female experience. By identifying her life through this
symbol, Dickinson's speaker admits not only the appropriation of her speech ("The
Owner passed—identified / And carried me away"), but how her voice now fires upon
other women figures ("And now We hunt the Doe"). The poem suggests that, for a
woman's expression to carry any authority, she must speak with a man's aggressiveness
so that "None stir the second time / On whom I lay a Yellow Eye." Of course, "gunning"
language robs the female speaker of a supportive community. Masculine language may
offer the power to force a reaction from the world, but it deprives her of truly experi­
encing feeling. She gains "the power to kill" only by sacrificing "the power to die"
(369).

By contrast, Sylvia's ambivalence toward "gunning" prevents that appropriation
of voice. She may feel a "loving admiration" for the hunter so that "the woman's heart,
asleep in the child, was vaguely thrilled by a dream of love," but, unlike Deborah, her
romantic awakening is not dependent upon a man. Sylvia's climb up the great pine tree is
itself an erotic experience: "There was the huge tree asleep yet in the paling moonlight,
and small and hopeful Sylvia began with utmost bravery to mount the top of it, with
tingling, eager blood coursing in the channels of her whole frame" (795). Her silence
may be instinctual or self-conscious, but it wins her independence from the alienating
power of masculine representation. It sends the hunter away, disappointed, leaving the
little girl with a "sharp pang," which lasts only momentarily before she becomes again a
compassionate listener: "She forgot even her sorrow at the sharp report of his gun and
the piteous sight of thrushes and sparrows dropping silent to the ground, their songs
hushed and their pretty feathers stained with blood" (797). As a pun, "sharp report"
evocatively fuses the noise of the fired rifle (a noisiness similar to the industrial
cacophony that Sylvia escapes) with the "piercing" mythos of phallocentric language.
"Sharp report" also alludes to reportage, to the documentary impetus of realism, commenting in turn on the storyteller's own strategy. To prevent hushing the audience, the narrator must speak suggestively. The interpretive freedom that reticence offers is most obvious in the problematic conclusion of the story. Sylvia's silence is announced in a series of narrative intrusions in which the storyteller not only tells us that "Sylvia cannot speak" but adds her own opinion: "No, she must keep silence!" (797). Her presence, far from clarifying how Sylvia's silence should be interpreted, only muddies the waters because she never establishes a "footing" between her perspective and the reader's. While the authority dynamics in the story are apparent, the reader roles that can be abstracted from the drama are not. Many readings of "A White Heron" argue the storyteller fashions a shared perspective with the audience: "The narrative voice... claims to speak for the reader, voicing what should be the reader's thought. This amounts to an assertion of communion between narrator and reader as we contemplate Sylvia" (Heller 187). The very paradox of "asserting communion" suggests that if the storyteller voices "what should be the reader's thought" rhetorical suggestiveness has given way to subtle didacticism. Such generalizations ignore other moments where the reader is invited to identify not only with the storyteller, but with Sylvia, the heron, and even the hunter. The storyteller may tempt us to sympathize with Sylvia without inviting identification with her. Identification, in a reading context, is the process by which the audience chooses which textual personae model the reader's role that the storyteller presumably endorses. By revealing only bits of information while withholding others, she establishes a perspective distinct from the reader's without specifying superiority or solidarity. The multiple roles that result present vastly different implications for construction of an interpretive stance.

Louis A. Renza outlines one possible perspectival relationship. Reading "A White Heron" alongside Jewett's biographical novel A Country Doctor, he provocatively suggests that the narrator assumes a paternalistic stance toward Sylvia. The concluding
lines that characterize Sylvia’s disappointment in failing to satisfy the hunter (she “could have served and followed him and loved him as a dog loves” [797]) allude to the narrator’s own stance toward Sylvia. For Renza, this father/daughter relationship, reinforced not only by a similar reference to “canine servitude” in both the novel and Jewett’s own diary (referring to herself and her father), allows Jewett to “elude would-be feminist and patriarchal ideological conscriptions alike” and produce a self-consciously “minor” literature that defies institutionalized aesthetic codes, including realism (Minor Literature 73-115). If the narrator is indeed a “father” to Sylvia, the storyteller silences both the character and the reader much as the hunter silences Mrs. Tilley and Sylvia. In speaking for the little girl, the narrator does all the thinking, placing the audience in a position of “merely listening.”

This argument is supported by the storyteller’s use of the second-person you when addressing both Sylvia (explicitly) and the reader (obliquely) in the conclusion: "Now look down again, Sylvia, where the green marsh is set among the shining birches and dark hemlocks; there where you saw the white heron once you will see him again; look! look!" (796). The emphatic tone is repeated in the ambiguous final sentence in which syntactic obscurity creates the illusion of a direct address: "Whatever treasures were lost to her, woodlands and summer-time, remember! Bring your gifts and graces and tell your secrets to this lonely country child!" (797). The you is generally assumed to refer to “woodlands and summer-time.” Yet the phrase can also be read as modifying “treasures” so “remember” functions as an imperative whose implied subject is the reader. We are asked to tell our secrets to Sylvia, identifying the reader then as the white heron and, ultimately, recalling the persistent associations between the bird itself and the protagonist (heron=heroine), identifying us with the little girl as well. Sylvia doubles for the reader, while the storyteller’s exhortative tone in those two particular intrusions mimics the parental tone with which the sportsman earlier addresses the girl: "Don’t be afraid,” he added gallantly. ’Speak up and tell me what your name is, and whether you
think I can spend the night at your house, and go out gunning early in the morning"
(792).

Yet the narrator refrains from speaking the "secret" of the story, making the
narrative her own symbolic white heron. Like Sylvia, she "cannot tell the heron's secret
and give its life away" (797). From this perspective, the narrator functions as a
metatextual double for Sylvia, leaving the reader to double for the hunter who,
presumably, is "well worth making happy, and ... waits to hear the story she can tell"
(797). The variety of possible identifications suggests that silence in "A White Heron" is
not an absence of voice. Just as Sylvia's ambiguous motivations are obscured by the
narrative intrusion, so the storyteller's own intentions are obscured. Even when the
narrator speaks, she does not necessarily admit secrets.

The rhetorical devices that create this reticence allow the storyteller to foreground
subtle details that an attentive audience will question. If realism traditionally promotes a
"self-evident wholeness that is not even noticed but merely assumed" (Bal 509), these
devices prevent that assumption of narrative unity. Interrogatives, for example, highlight
inconsistencies in character. In written form, the question is perhaps the most obvious
syntactic device for "displaying connectedness" (Fishman 236). When the hunter asks if
he might spend the night at Sylvia's house to "go gunning" in the morning, the storyteller
poses two seemingly straightforward questions that ostensibly dramatize the depth of the
little girl's fear: "Sylvia was more alarmed than before. Would not her grandmother
consider her much to blame? But who could have foreseen such an accident as this? It
did not appear to be her fault, and she hung her head as if the stem of it were broken"
(792). Significantly, these interrogatives are not rhetorical questions like those in "Life in
the Iron Mills." One senses that an answer is expected; having only met Mrs. Tilley
indirectly, we have no reason to assume that she would blame Sylvia for this "accident."
This question becomes an orienting device that helps us "foresee" the oncoming conflict.
Yet Mrs. Tilley fails to blame the child; instead, the hunter awakens the grandmother's
"long slumbering hospitality." She not only invites him into the house but promptly begins "gossip[ing] frankly" about the intimate tragedies in her life. In fact, Mrs. Tilley only rebukes Sylvia when the little girl fails to help the hunter. These questions misorient rather than orient us. They subtly call attention to the distance between Sylvia's perspective and the storyteller's. Indeed, closer inspection reveals that the sentence is free indirect discourse: the speaker voices the child's point of view without allowing her own perspective to shape the utterance. For whatever reason, the little girl misjudges her grandmother's response, and the questions warn the reader against assuming that the storyteller wants us to identify completely with the child's perspective.

Subsequent interrogatives also defer interpretive authority. Having climbed the pine-tree, Sylvia catches panoramic sight of the world beyond Mrs. Tilley's farmhouse. She sees the church steeples, the villages, and the sails of the ships at sea. The narrator breaks the drama of Sylvia's visual rapture to refocus the girl's attention: "Where was the white heron's nest in the sea of green branches, and was this wonderful sight and pageant of the world the only reward for having climbed to such a giddy height?" (796). The immediate answer is, of course, no, for the narrator tells Sylvia where to look to find the heron perched on his pine bough. The second half of the question is not so easily answered, however. The world's pageant is bound up with the very value system that the hunter represents, namely the "reward" and the promised ten dollars that he will pay if Sylvia leads him to the heron's nest. "Reward" calls attention to Sylvia's expectations toward the bird, which were previously dramatized in her journey through the pasture, where she no longer embodies mutual exchange as she did in the story's beginning. Running from the farmhouse to the pasture path, she jars the perch of a sleeping bird. Although she still listens with "comfort and companionship" to the bird's chirp, she does not realize that her empathetic existence with the landscape has been upset. A squirrel scolds her as a "harmless housebreaker"; sparrows and robins "wake and twitter to the dawn," though Sylvia remains curiously indifferent to them, knowing she must speed up
her climb if she is to reach the top bough and make her "project" useful. The storyteller even voices her own concern in an exclamatory aside: "Alas, if the great wave of human interest which flooded for the first time this dull little life should sweep away the satisfactions of an existence heart to heart with nature and the dumb life of the forest!" (795).

In order to redirect Sylvia's concentration from the reward, then, the storyteller must ensure that the child does not send "an arrow of light and consciousness from [her] two eager eyes" while perched in the bough. To discover the heron's secret, Sylvia must return to the state of congenial sympathy with nature that she earlier possessed. The arrow imagery alludes to the very weaponry that the hunter carries, not only his gun, but the jackknife that he gives the girl. Sylvia's gaze itself is potentially a weapon to earn her reward. Yet when the heron leaves its perch, annoyed by the catbirds, the storyteller describes him as moving "like an arrow presently to his home in the green world beneath" (796). Here the arrow alludes to the solemn bird's natural poise and speed, the very qualities that will be exterminated if the hunter manages to shoot and stuff it. In a standard reading of "A White Heron," the arrow imagery connects the little girl and the bird as symbolic correlatives. Yet the storyteller's disparate use of the symbol, once to imply Sylvia's dangerous attraction to the hunter's values, once to imply the natural world threatened by those values, makes such a connection irreconcilable. Instead, the difference in arrow imagery alludes to the storyteller's subjectivity, undermining the authority of her question as an orienting device, much as the question itself undermines our identification with Sylvia. That is, by alluding to inconsistencies in her own perspective just as she alludes to inconsistencies in Sylvia's, the storyteller warns against expecting a "reward" from the narrative similar to what Sylvia expects from discovering the heron.

Modals also enhance the reticence of Jewett's style, much as they introduced a degree of tentativeness in Davis's engaging strategy. Significantly, in "A White Heron," they appear more frequently after the hunter introduces himself, enhancing the contrast
between the aggressive, "gunning" style of masculine discourse and the more supportive, interactive female style of conversation, which, beside the hunter's language, appears unassertive. In terms of the narrative voice, however, the modals mark the storyteller's willingness to "hedge" her own representation. As Bent Preisler remarks, the "tentativeness signals" that modals send imply "that the speaker is not to be held responsible for the truth of the proposition" (114). Sylvia's struggle to climb up the pine tree is rich in suggestive possibilities:

The tree seemed to lengthen itself out as she went up, and to reach farther and farther upward. It was like a great main-mast to the voyaging earth; it must truly have been amazed that morning through all its ponderous frame as it felt this determined spark of human spirit creeping and climbing from higher branch to branch. Who knows how steadily the least twigs held themselves to advantage this light, weak creature on her way! The old pine must have loved this new dependent. More than all the hawks, and baths, and moths, and even the sweet-voiced thrushes, was the brave, beating heart of the solitary gray-eyed child. And the tree stood still and held away the winds that June morning while the dawn grew bright in the east. (796)

The pathetic fallacy emphasizes the "oneness" with nature that Sylvia's rural values encourage. But the tree's perspective also provides a dramatic correlative of the storyteller's own point of view. Indeed, it reveals the narrator's naivete, implying that she may be an "unreliable narrator." There seems to be no reason, after all, given the equality between nature and humanity previously established, that the tree would love the beating heart of a child "more than" the other animals. The "determined spark of human interest" resonates with the hunter's own project, one that, obviously, is much more scientific than compassionate. The sentence that reinforces the paragraph's "pathetic" thesis ("Who knows") actually subverts it: though the empathetic tone conveys the tree's total commitment to Sylvia's climb, suggesting a maternal, nurturing nature willing "to advantage" the little girl, the sentence is properly an interrogative that emphasizes the subjectivity of the narrator's perspective. In an omniscient narrative stance, the storyteller would know how each twig supported the girl. Cloaking her uncertainty in an
exclamatory utterance, the narrator nonetheless de-emphasizes her authority as she speaks most assertively. She explicitly cues us to her distance from the little girl: "Sylvia's face was like a pale star, if one had seen it from the ground, when the last thorny bough was past, and she stood trembling and tired but wholly triumphant, high in the tree-top."

Sylvia's triumph further indicates that her project has distanced her from nature: her climb is a competition between her and the tree. Similarly, the ascent distances her from the narrator's own perspective. The descriptive features of that empathy lose definition and the little girl becomes a "like a pale star" in the storyteller's eye.

One final component of Jewett's technique can be placed in the context of prospective turn-taking cues: her use of descriptive modifiers like adjectives, adverbs, and shifters, particularly the definite and indefinite article. Again, these modifiers have been characterized traditionally as feminine speech. Their luxuriance raises questions of ambiguous effect. On the one hand, they might limit the audience's responsive space by overdetermining the narrative picture. Indeed, much 19th-century realist criticism, broadly committed to telling "the thing as it is," roundly rebuked writers for breaking narrative economy to indulge in "literary" or rhetorical "flowerings," rebukes voiced in gendered language. Reviewing Jewett's first story collection, *Old Friends and New*, Horace Scudder complained that her style prevented her characters from "act[ing] for themselves ... at present they cling to her skirts and she leads them about with her" (qtd. in Nagel 28). But many of Jewett's descriptive devices actually raise interpretive questions by calling attention to the storyteller's subjectivity. Mistress Mooly is described as a "homed torment"; birds say goodnight with "sleepy twitters"; "nodding" rushes grow in the swamp. Often employed to humanize nature, the adjectives dramatize the curious idiosyncrasy of the storyteller's perspective.

Additional cues appear in the adverbs that modify nearly every piece of direct quotation. Jewett's characters do not merely "speak"; they speak "kindly," "graciously," "frankly," "doubtfully," "eagerly" or "desperately." Again, these modifiers are the
storyteller's evaluation of the speech act; they are descriptive tags that impinge on the mimetic purity of the dialogue by suggesting that the speech is passing through the storyteller's perspective as it is "reproduced" in the act of telling. The audience must reconcile the narrator's interpretation with its own sense of the developing character dynamics. When, for example, the hunter tells Sylvia and her grandmother that he means to "get [the region's rare birds] on my own ground," Mrs. Tilley asks "doubtfully" whether he cages them up. Of course, the birds are not caged, but stuffed and put on display. The adverb subtly suggests that Mrs. Tilley knows the answer to her own question; to some degree, she must be aware that the hunter's presence threatens her farmland values. This hint recalls Sylvia's worry, noted earlier, that the grandmother would blame her for bringing the dangerous intruder into their world. Yet nothing Mrs. Tilley does through the rest of the story is influenced by this realization. She is more eager to please the hunter than her granddaughter. Mrs. Tilley either forgets what the young man represents or is simply willing, in exchange for ten dollars, to compromise her principles. Either way, with one discreet characterization, the storyteller hints at a hidden depth in an otherwise stagnant or flat character.

No element of the story better symbolizes the narrator's suggestive reticence than the white heron itself. Indeed, the incongruous details that invite the reader to fill the textual silences begin and end with the difference between a white heron, as the title insists, and the heron, as it is referred to throughout the story. More than one reader has inadvertently spoken of "The White Heron"; even as scrupulous a critic as F. O. Mathiessen misread the title. 20 The confusion arises because the bird is discussed in decidedly singular terms, as that heron, as it. The hunter initiates the ambiguity: "I caught a glimpse of a white heron three miles from here on Saturday, and I have followed it in this direction. They have never been found in this district at all. The little white heron, it is" (794). Not indigenous to the district, the bird is a refugee, a lonely exile much like Sylvia, pursued by a predator as it struggles to find contemplative peace and
security. Its mythic elusiveness leads Sylvia to think of it as *the* heron. She remembers "that strange white bird" she once approached in the swamp. The storyteller directs Sylvia's attention to "a white spot of him like a single floating feather" that grandly flies with "steady sweep of wing and outstretched slender neck and crested head" (796).

The storyteller then provides one detail that neatly, subtly encapsulates the suggestive nature of her narrative method: "The heron has perched on a pine bough not far beyond yours, and cries back to his mate on the nest, and plumes his feathers for a new day!" (796). There is no further reference to the mate. Neither Sylvia nor the storyteller comments on its presence, so there is no way of determining whether this second bird is also a white heron. (White herons, or snowy egrets as they are more commonly called, occasionally crossbreed with the little blue heron species). Marvelously understated, the detail is a narrative luxury seemingly inconsequential to the thematic meaning: it creates what Barthes calls *l'effet du réel*, a "referential illusion" that substantiates the aura of the "real." The truth could not be otherwise, however: *the* white heron that Sylvy watches may be *a* white heron, for two of them may sit in the pine, one on the bough and one in the nest. Just as, for Barthes, denotation of reality necessarily gives way to connotation in the interpretive act, the presence of the mate is there solely for the audience, a "secret" waiting to be perceived ("Reality Effect" 141-48). As an obvious figure for the text itself, the heron(s) symbolizes the multiple meanings of the story. The difference between "The White Heron" and "A White Heron" is the difference between one story and countless stories, the difference between a Howellsian monologue and a more interactive dialogue. The "secret" that the narrator cannot speak, in as much as secrets can be spoken, is the indeterminacy of the text. The question "Who can tell?" is a gesture of sharing. It encourages the reader to answer, simply and confidently, *I can.*
Charlotte Perkins Gilman: "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Implicature"

Unlike Jewett, Charlotte Perkins Gilman cared little about politesse. She wrote to preach: "If it is literature, that is an accident" (qtd. in Lane 155). In the case of "The Yellow Wallpaper," the didactic impulse is understandable given its autobiographical genesis. In 1887, Gilman (then Charlotte Stetson) borrowed a hundred dollars and entered a Philadelphia sanitarium operated by Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, a neurologist practicing an immensely popular curative for physical exhaustion. Gilman sent the doctor a list of her symptoms: depression, anxiety, and occasional uncontrollable outbursts. Having already treated two of her cousins, he promptly dismissed the letter as "self-conceit." Though the majority of his patients were women, the doctor was neither sensitive nor objective. (Coincidentally, he treated Davis for a similar bout of exhaustion in the mid-1860s). In his major critical treatise, *Fat and Blood* (1877), he describes hysterics as "the pests of many households...who furnish those annoying examples of despotic selfishness, which wreck the constitutions of nurses and devoted relatives, and in unconscious or half-conscious self-indulgence destroy the comfort of everyone about them" (226). His parochial bedside manner was not atypical. While the etiology of hysteria included a wide range of physical ills, symptoms were generally classified by personality traits; even speech patterns that struck a physician as incoherent, impressionistic, or overly emotional were routinely interpreted as nervous exhaustion. According to Gilman, the treatment was designed return the patient to "as domestic a life as possible." She was confined to bed, isolated from everyone except the doctor and his staff, hand fed, massaged, and, in all likelihood, given thrice daily enemas. After a short time, she returned home. "Have but two hours' intellectual life a day," Mitchell prescribed for continued recuperation. "And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live" (qtd. in Lane 120-21).

But Gilman did touch pen, finding in work a routine far more therapeutic than the enforced passivity of the rest cure. After divorcing her husband and moving to
California, she fictionalized her experience in the powerful story of a woman incarcerated by her physician-spouse. Yet if she intended to preach, the resulting story is hardly didactic in tone. Presented as passages from an unabridged diary, the text lacks a storytelling frame that would dramatize its transmission. Unlike James's later *The Turn of the Screw*, whose ambiguities bear a passing resemblance to Gilman's story, there is no fictional audience whose reading offers a model of reception. The only reader addressed is the generic "you," interchangeable with "one," an abstraction that de-personalizes the woman's obsession with the wallpaper: "You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples on you....If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions — why, that is something like it" (518). By deleting all signs of reception, Gilman takes realist objectivity to an extreme: there are no obvious clues of an authorial consciousness through which the representation filters. The diary is a "found" text addressed to no one. The diarist even speaks of writing on "dead paper," evoking the "dead letters" that Bartleby carted to the flames. The contrast is important. "Bartleby" marks a movement toward a realist style by positing a narrator-observer who testifies, without pronouncing judgment, to his true encounters with the scrivener. The meaning(s) of Bartleby's abjuration must be inferred from the lawyer's own struggle to read the scrivener. "The Yellow Wallpaper" foreshadows modernism by immersing us in the perceptual immediacy of the woman's consciousness. In the absence of an overt, objective rhetorical stance, the narration resembles what Barthes calls a "writerly" rather than "readerly" text: interpretation is less an act of decoding than of composing the significance. 22 By deferring so much authority to the audience, Gilman's method would seem to violate her professed intent.

The reception history of "The Yellow Wallpaper" illustrates the consequences of this interpretive freedom, for the story was not widely read as social criticism before its
Feminist Press edition in 1973. As Gilman notes in her autobiography, audiences congratulated her for conveying mental deterioration with such verisimilitude; detractors wondered whether she insulted those struggling "against an heredity of mental derangement" (Living 120; emphasis added). In other words, the woman's breakdown was interpreted as a consequence of her personal pathology. Few recognized that John the husband drove her crazy with his oppressive rest cure. Even an explicit reference to Mitchell went unnoticed. Instead, the story was read as a horror tale. Gilman publicly revealed its autobiographical roots in a 1913 article published in Forerunner, a newspaper that she edited. She wrote it "to save people from being driven crazy," she announced, adding, ironically perhaps, that "it worked" ("Why I Wrote" 20). She repeated her didactic claims several times before her death in 1935, even limiting her ideal readership to a specific audience: "One girl reads this, and takes fire! Her life is changed. She becomes a power—a mover of others—I write for her" (qtd. in Allen 145). But while Gilman herself was recognized as an authority on household management, publishing several works on domestic science and women's economics, "The Yellow Wallpaper" was largely ignored. Howells reprinted it in an anthology of horror stories in 1920, its only appearance in a book for more than fifty years. If Gilman hoped to prompt a debate about the medical establishment's treatment of women, why make the story so ambiguous?

Wai-Chee Dimock has suggested that the story presupposes a reader "whose sanity and rationality are the very credentials by which she can diagnose the ailments of the characters...someone...always granted a clear knowledge, both of the 'reality' of the wife's madness and of the 'reality' of the marital situation." Perhaps then a more explicit storytelling frame would make this reader too visible a presence, allowing the audience to merely mimic rather than assume, without narratorial prompting, this "clear knowledge." The difference between the interpretive postures points to the pragmatic function of the narration. For Dimock, Gilman posits an ideal reader "with a specific and historically
recognizable profile, created in the image of professionalism at its most idealized, endowed with the sacred attributes of specialized knowledge and interpretive competence." As she notes, the identity of this reader hardly matches the historical profile of the "girls" that Gilman aspired to address. The identity gap between the ideal reader and historical audience informs the text with a "transformative agency [that has] the power to produce effects," namely to imbue in the audience the interpretive power that the woman, in the story itself, is deprived. To achieve this, the "literary form... compromises a network of knowledge between author and [audience], a network maintained largely at the expense of the characters in the story" (611-15).

One obvious site of this network are "double-voiced" utterances in which the narrator's explicit meaning seemingly clashes with the values of the implied author that we slowly abstract from the story: "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage." In its fictional context, the confession resonates with defeat and resignation, a stoic recognition that within her marriage the only reward for self-expression is ridicule. Certain audiences, however, will recognize an ironic inflection; many people, after all, do not expect to be laughed at in marriage. (Sadly, some do and will not sense irony). Anyone familiar with the autobiographical background of "The Yellow Wallpaper," in fact, will find it difficult to believe that Gilman would endorse such an assertion. H. P. Grice offers a helpful interpretive model for illustrating how we deduce a meaning only implied by the surface semantics. He argues that conversational interaction is governed by an implicit principle of cooperation: we generally conform to "the accepted purpose or direction of the talk-exchange in which [we] are engaged" (7). When statements violate this contract, we subject them to a general series of cognitive operations, which Grice calls "implicature." The audience resolves the violation by inferring an implicit meaning and assuming that the speaker is willing to continue cooperation. Irony arises when a speaker flouts the "maxim of quality," that is, s/he violates the inherent agreement that s/he will not knowingly say something that s/he does not believe. 23 Grice's model helps
illustrate why Gilman would choose to address her audience through implication: by flouting the predominant norms of associative logic and reason that define late-19th century rhetoric, she undermines the very standards that distinguish "reality" from "fancy," norms in turn employed to diagnose hysteria. If, as Elizabeth Ammons argues, the subject of the story is "writing as a subversive act, as a dangerous move because it threatens the system of control constructed to contain women" (Conflicting Stories 38), Gilman's subversion lies squarely in a paradox: she "objectively" represents a fanciful perspective, collapsing the distinction separating them.

In a literary context where so much interpretive authority is deferred to the audience, implicature blurs the roles between storyteller and reader. This blurring is figured into the thematic unfolding of the story itself, but in reverse. That is, the narration, by prompting continual inferences, encourages the audience to assume the role of the teller, while John pressures his wife to abandon her "habit of storymaking." Extant criticism often argues that "The Yellow Wallpaper" is an allegory of gendered reading: John's authority as both husband and doctor limits the woman's interpretive freedom. But rather than simply "read" the wallpaper, the woman, at least at first, tries to invent a narrative to solve its mysteries. Storytelling is vital to her mental health. As she reveals in one passage, she has long overcome fear by creating fanciful tales: "I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store. I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend. I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe" (515). Narrative is a coping strategy: imagining knobs as eyes and chair arms as kindly hugs allows her to naturalize phenomena and assume responsibility for her reality. In coercing his wife to check her "imaginative power," John demands that she see reality from a far more terrifying perspective: one that she must simply accept.
The eyes formed by the bureau knobs highlight the ocular imagery prevalent throughout the story. The woman first imagines the wallpaper as two bulbous, unblinking eyes that scrupulously stare at her with "impertinence" and "everlastingness." mirroring the intensity of her own gaze. The scene is pivotal for determining how the woman gauges her relationship to the wallpaper, the text that she authors. Richard Feldstein has compared the mirror gazes to the "intrapsychic splitting" of Lacanian *meconnaissance* or miscognition. For Lacan's infant who sees itself in a mirror, the "spectral" or "Ideal I" first envisions itself as an *imago* with "the armour of an alienating identity," an autonomous, unified self, which is a fictional construction sanctioned by the reality of a body. Later that "specular I" is deflected into a "social I" that misidentifies itself with images of other subjects. The mirror stage thus ends in "paranoiac alienation," which, at its extreme, Lacan equates with obsessional neuroses like hysteria (269-79). In the previous chapter, I suggested that the gaze structure illustrates the reader's perspective on the metafictional staging of "Wakefield." The mingling of agency and affectivity that Hawthorne achieves with his oracular syntax dramatizes an ambiguous transfer of narrative authority. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," *meconnaissance* highlights the splitting of the woman's identity into non-negotiable subject and object roles. She identifies the imago on the wall both as herself ("I wonder if they all came out of that wall-paper as I did?" [522]) and as the other ("I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper" [521]). Implied in this second identification (symbolized by *we*) is the woman's imaginary audience, the fictional *you* to whom she narrates. She identifies with *you*: "I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have" (515). As she becomes increasingly incapable of distinguishing *I* from the other, referring to her image in both first and third person, *you* is addressed more frequently: "You see I have something more to expect" or "And I'll tell you why — privately..." As "privately" implies, the narrator imagines her reader as the other, an audience to whom she can *tell* or
narrate events. In the final journal entries, however, you becomes an actor, embroiling her in a narrative that she does not author: "But I am securely fastened by my well-hidden rope — you don't get me out in the road there!" (522). You is a storyteller with the authority to dictate her actions.

The story line that she does gradually concoct for her imago is restrictive and limiting, revealing the strictures placed on her own powers of invention. She is fascinated as the figure becomes many women, yet she is increasingly unable to construct a unified story. The paper controls her: "But nobody could climb through that pattern — it strangles so" (520). The images that she sees are shaped according to the bars on the windows, and she is forced to read rather than author them. Yet, as a subsequent entry makes clear, imagination can slip through the bars. The wife sees the creeping woman outside: "I see her in that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden. I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines."

The scene mirrors an earlier description of the garden and the shaded lane. In that passage, she establishes an implicit contrast between her perspective and John's. One window offers a "lovely" view of the bay and a wharf; the other looks over "mysterious" arbors, "riotous" flowers, and "gnarly" trees, the modifiers highlighting the richness of her imagination. Here she dreams that people walk freely, but in the later entry the escaped woman now hides, "humiliated" at thought of being seen in daylight. She tries to resolve the conflicting perspectives by taking in the entire panorama: "I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once. But turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time" (521). Either she can abandon her perspective and assume John's or she can maintain her own. In the first case she remains imprisoned in a mode of expression that robs her of her meaning-making faculty; in the second, she speaks in a style that her husband deems unhealthy.
She tries to ignore the window ("I don't like to look out the window even — there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast" [522]), then, in an equivocal gesture that frustrates critics, she tears down stretches of the wallpaper. Unlike Davis's storyteller, who veils the korl woman to acknowledge the inevitable coloring that perspective brings to language, the woman denies her linguistic subjectivity. Identifying with the creeping woman, she becomes a character in her own narrative: "I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did? ... I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!" (522). The story ends with what critics typically refer to as a dubious victory. The woman does exert control of her own narrative by forcing John to find her creeping along the smooch in the wall because "I want to astonish him," yet that creeping remains a "humiliating" posture. The extent to which the woman identifies her fictional reader as her author, as John even, is apparent from her final words as he faints from shock: "I've got out at last ... in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back" (513). The line echoes a previous address to you ("you don't get me out in the road there!"), identifying the addressee with the authority who limits her writing.

By portraying a woman denied the right to tell stories because narration, as an exercise of the imagination, deviates from reality ("the old trade of make-believe," as Howells called it), Gilman suggests just how oppressive a rational point of view can be. Far from relaxing the wife, John's treatment exacerbates her nerves by forcing her to face a world robbed of narrative. The woman's transformation from writer to reader is a process that the text rhetorically prevents from occurring to its audience. The secret network established with the implied author centers on certain discourse markers that convey and sanction a communal sense of the "real." The phrase of course, for example, appears in "The Yellow Wallpaper" more than a half-dozen times. Typically, it asserts a non-negotiable statement; the speaker a priori establishes his/her norm of perception as a standard, not allowing an opportunity to disagree. Yet the very need to assert non
negotiability undermines its effect; in this sense, of course conveys vehemence and tentativeness. As M. A. K. Halliday remarks, "The importance of modal features ... lies in an apparent paradox on which the entire system rests — the fact that we only say we are certain when we are not" (qtd. in Preisler 181).

An obvious example of this (un)certainty occurs when the woman questions John's diagnosis. She wants to leave the "haunted house," but he flatly refuses: "I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course, if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know" (517-18). He silences her with the illusion of superiority that of course fosters. It allows him to bind her to his authority, cowing her into agreement: "So of course I said no more on that score," she admits at the end of the journal entry (518). But John's utterance undermines itself. He must "repair" the impression of selfishness by asserting his concern for his wife ("if you were in any danger, I could and would"). The need to qualify his apparent self-centeredness raises the question of whether staying in the rented home is merely a convenience or whether he believes the cloistered environment has improved her condition. The issue is irresolvable, however, because an objective view of John is never offered. The author flouts Grice's "maxim of quantity," by not providing sufficient information to interpret his utterances in the manner that realism demands. He is condescending, authoritarian, and undoubtedly a bad physician, but the central question surrounding his character goes unanswered: is he conscious of the maliciousness of his treatment or does he believe that he has his wife's best interest at heart?

For the diarist, of course is a sign of perspectival confusion: "John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him. Of course, it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!" (514). It signals her tentative self-diagnosis but reveals as well the influence of John's conviction that she creates her own symptoms. In attempting to resolve the two
perspectives, she asserts her opinion less forcefully than she asserts her husband's. Of course reveals an intense attentiveness to the structure of her own talk as she attempts to arrive at some conclusion regarding her health. In this sense, it marks a "self-repair" similar to John's use of of course. Just as that repair called attention to the psychological motives behind John's act, so, too, this one signals the subtlety with which the author portrays the woman's conflict. Her condition is not "only nervousness" because every other detail suggests that her health is in serious danger. Again, the voices of the narrator and implied author clash here as we recognize the statement as untrue; the author is flouting the maxim of quality. Doing so, she alludes to the depth of the conflict in a manner that, were it more explicitly detailed, we would merely witness, not create through inference.

As the story progresses, of course marks a turn away from her perspective toward John's. Significantly, this transformation suggests that she assumes her fictional audience will side with her husband: "I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time," she says. "Of course, I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone" (516). The modal emphasizes her awareness that she can only express herself in private, away from John, who would ridicule or dismiss those tears as nervous agitation. In a subsequent journal entry, she recognizes that because she occupies the nursery, her infant child is spared the misfortune of being haunted by the wallpaper: "I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see. Of course, I never mention it to them any more — I am too wise, — but I keep watch of it all the same" (517). "I am too wise" reinforces the air of superiority that of course rhetorically intones. The woman has learned to keep her thoughts private, but her expression of those thoughts indicates that she has absorbed more of John's style of interaction than she may be aware.

Despite these differing uses of of course in the characters' utterances, the audience recognizes that the author places an ironic stress on the modal that distances her from the
characters, forcing us to infer what she implies. Its final use echoes its first appearance in this sense. When the woman contemplates jumping out the window, she says, "But I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued" (522). Conveying the imprisonment of her limited options for self-expression, the statement sounds too self-aware for the character, especially in a scene where she crouches and creeps endlessly along a smooch in the wall. In the voice of the author, however, the statement intones a wicked awareness of the woman's limited options. Even as drastic a step of self-determination as suicide does not allow the woman the authority to author her life. As a bad reader, John would never recognize his own complicity in the act.

If of course signals the conflict between John's oppressive perception and the diarist's style of self-expression, and but convey the effect of her breakdown. Their usage falls under Grice's "maxim of manner" (because conjunctions structure units of information into sequences) and the "maxim of relation" (because they signal a relative willingness to share "the floor"). Gilman exploits the coordinating function of and through repetition and contrast: "My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. So I take phosphates or phosphites — whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again" (512). In the first sentence, the details form a sequence of accrued information intended to convince her to trust the accuracy of John's diagnosis. Not only does her brother have an immediate personal connection to the patient, he is also a doctor, and also well respected in the community, and if his diagnosis matches John's, she has little reason to question her treatment. This is the basic function of and: it organizes idea units to create the illusion of progressive logic. The author can question the apparent logic behind such sequencing by parodying the form in the second sentence. The ands that link different ingredients in her treatment do not mark any obvious progression but display an appalling randomness; the repetition infuses the utterance with
an air of exasperation that dramatizes her lack of control over both her treatment and self-determination, which is further emphasized by the ironic quotation of "work." The rapid movement from phosphites to tonics to air and exercise reveals how she has been overtaken and acted-upon by the medical diagnosis.

While undermining this coordinating function, she simultaneously exploits the conjunction's interactional function. *And* typically silences an audience by signalling the speaker's desire to continue the unfolding sequence. But as the woman's utterances increasingly fail to conform to a logical order, *and* appears more frequently in her journal: "Of course I don't [cry] when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone. And I am alone a good deal just now" (516). *And* here marks another "self-repair," a clarification of the previous statement that conveys her desperate need to create "a real earnest reasonable talk" that will please John. Increasingly, however, conjoined sentences neither form a sequence nor revise an earlier statement: "It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose. And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head" (517). Linking phrase upon phrase here allows Gilman to create the illusion of a rambling speech style: it dramatizes the woman's frenzied need to get the ideas on paper before John catches her writing. In subsequent passages, this need is projected against the imaginary audience. The conjunction silences the fictional *you* before it can interrupt: "I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!" (520).

Karen Ford has pointed out that *but*, "the conjunction of contradiction," appears in "The Yellow Wallpaper" fifty-six times to symbolize the "unheard of contradictions" that, for her, symbolize the relationship between male and female discourse. Because the wife cannot speak without her husband contradicting her and asserting his diagnosis, she inadvertently begins checking her own imagination, censoring her expression: "every time the narrator speaks, she is interrupted and contradicted until she begins to interrupt
and contradict herself." For Ford, interruptions and contradictions dramatize the narrator's verbal imprisonment in male-dominated language, symbolized by the wallpaper itself, which possesses "the capacity to contradict and immobilize the women who are trapped within it" (311).

The conjunction also performs a number of functions that suggest the diarist does tentatively assert herself. In many passages, but establishes an implicit contrast between John's diagnosis and her own:

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.  
I am glad my case is not serious!  
But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing. 
John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him. 
Of course, it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way. (513-14)

The second sentence is ironic: the storyteller flouts the "maxim of quality" because the audience assumes that the wife's case is indeed "serious." But helps establish that, regardless of what John says, the narrator does indeed suffer. Without but, the contrastive value between the two sentences would be lost. Of course, this subtle self-exertion is immediately lost as of course "hedges" her self-expression. Had a second but been inserted between this sentence and the subsequent confession ("It does weigh on me so"), her self-diagnosis would be more assertive. Without it, however, the contradiction is truly "unheard."

One function of but then is to mark the tension in the character's developing self-conception. By implying this tension, the storyteller signals these complexities without intervening in the text and destroying the realistic illusion. The audience must account for the connections made between sentences. An example occurs at the beginning of the story's third section:

I don't know why I should write this. 
I don't want to.
I don't feel able.
And I know John would think it absurd. But I must say what I feel and
think in some way — it is such a relief.
But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief. (516)

Both conjunctions dramatize the wife's commitment to her self-expression and her
awareness that the commitment itself may be affecting her health. The very energy that it
takes to express her depression makes her sicker.

The most complex functioning of but to differentiate the woman's perception
from John's occurs in the final, climactic section of the story. Here the conjunction helps
dramatize the woman's breakdown between her identity as storyteller and reader. Critics
are often hard pressed at this point to account for the text's production. As the narrator
herself implies, she has stopped writing in her journal, yet the narration continues. This
"unfolding in an impossible form" is linguistically highlighted in the text by tense shifts
(Triechler 73). Moving from a past tense description of events to a present-tense
declaration of action, these shifts generally pivot on the conjunction:

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it
out of pure spite at the vicious thing.
She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not
get tired.
How she betrayed herself that time!
But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me, — not alive!
(522)

By betrayal, the wife refers to her suspicion that both John and Jennie have become as
fascinated with the wallpaper as she has. She does not realize, or does not admit, that
their amazement results from their concern with her fascination with the pattern. By
paraphrasing Jennie's response, the author can install a conventional use of the
conjunction to emphasize the degree to which the wife's usage flouts the maxim of
relation. In Jennie's discourse, the contrastive value functions as a marker of order:
sympathizing with the wife's distaste, she can admit a similar inclination. Recognizing
the extent of the wife's obsession, however, allows Jennie to warn the diarist about
exhausting herself. The narrator's use of *but* in both cases is somewhat different: in this first instance, the clauses do not merit contrast; they are not connected in any cause/effect fashion that would require setting them up against each other. The final use of the conjunction is the most important, however. Again, there seems little contrast value in linking them with *but*. Its use here is a vivid instance of self-revision. It shifts the wife's perception to her present-tense condition, focusing her concentration on her goal: tearing down the paper.

At least three other instances of this last type of flouting occur in the section. In all three cases, the conjunction marks the woman's reorientation from narrating to acting, dramatizing the blurring of roles between storyteller and reader. As if denying the richness of her imagination, she provides a sequence of unconnected, stark descriptions of the room whose contents have been removed as the family prepares to leave the ancestral halls:

> I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.  
> How those children did tear about here!  
> This bedstead is fairly gnawed!  
> But I must get to work.

Her work—throwing the key to the locked door out the window, tying herself to the bed and then attacking the wallpaper—is a vivid inversion of the constructive work of writing that John denies her. Instead of imagining her fancies, she now acts them out at the same moment that she narrates them. *But* marks her reorientation away from the job of describing to the job of acting.

The conjunction appears one final time in the narrator's closing words to emphasize the author's flouting. John breaks into the room and promptly faints when he finds his wife creeping: "Now why should that man have fainted?" she asks. "But he did, and right across my path, by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!" (523). "But he did" is realist reporting at its most economic, and the transition into that
stance from the narrator's question reveals an author flouting the distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity. Quite simply, John has become the object of his wife's diagnosis. The final words of the story suggest that, far from being a stable norm against which fancy might be defined, realism itself is a form of hysteria, arising out of a desperate need to authoritatively document the world without admitting subjectivity.

**Toward the Modernist Short Story**

By eliding signs of an authorial consciousness telling a story, Gilman foreshadows the perceptual impressionism that, in the early 20th century, becomes the hallmark of modernist storytelling styles. What links her to realism is the pretext of diary writing, which stages the unfolding of the text as a document intended for transmission. The fictional *you* addressed by the wife dramatizes the situation of all storytellers who appeal to an audience existing only in the imagination. Like Davis and Jewett, Gilman manipulates this second-personal pronoun to renegotiate the prevailing norms of the real, norms that limited female expression in the late 19th century. Davis and Gilman conceive of storytelling as a political enterprise, an exchange meant to effect a particular change. Jewett is less of an activist, but the metaphor of conversation by which she defines her vision of narrative is equally at odds with the objective imperative of realist aesthetics. For all three writers, representing the real involves more than transcribing the world into words. Reality requires consensus.

Gilman presages modernism in another important way. When she revealed the autobiographical origins of the story in "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" in 1913, publicity had become an accepted form of news, creating celebrities out of public figures whose personality merited detailed analysis. That same year, Gertrude Stein was the subject of a "profile" in a magazine called *Arts and Decoration*, published to commemorate the Armory Show, the controversial exhibition that first exposed modernism to American audiences. The article draws an extended analogy between Stein
and artists like Picasso and Matisse whose work she collected: "She has taken the English language and, according to many people has mis-used it, or has used it roughly, uncouthly and brutally, or madly, stupidly and hideously, but by her method she is finding the hidden and inner nature of nature" (qtd. in Mellow 172). The threat posed by Stein's "method" is greatly exaggerated in the article, for at the time she was better known as an art collector than an artist. Her short-story cycle Three Lives (1909), whose publication she had financed, generated lukewarm reviews, with one critic referring to her as a "fine realist," perhaps the only time in her career she would be accused of that. The "many people" who claimed that she abused the language refers mainly to her brother Leo, with whom she shared the increasingly famous atelier at 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris until the previous year. Written by her good friend Mabel Dodge, the article was conceived specifically to publicize Stein, and it worked. A New York Times reporter, Carl Van Vechten (who would become a crucial supporter), quickly dispatched an article on her, and within the year, both the Chicago Tribune and the publishing house Putnam's satirized her style—this at a time when her work was virtually unavailable. Stein called the publicity "la glorie," thinking it would attract commercial publishers and a wide audience. Instead, more than twenty years would pass before her readership approached the disproportionate amount of press that she received. The next chapter explores how the publicity phenomenon influences an audience's interpretation of a story. As interviews and profiles popularize an authorial persona, style becomes less an expression of community experience than a manifesto of singular consciousness. The result is a prevailing paradox of modernism: in stories by Stein, Ernest Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, and Richard Wright, the authorial ethos offers an abstract substitute for the narratorial function that modernist styles typically elide.
Notes

1 Davis's memoirs of meeting the Concord literary coterie are uncharacteristically humorous: she recalls Hawthorne rolling his eyes at Alcott's "orotund" talk and Oliver Wendell Holmes's affection for tombstone inscriptions (Bits 30-31).

2 Both of Marler's articles explore the emergence of a realist aesthetic in the era of the didactic tale. "From Tale to Short Story" offers an important survey of the critical patterns generated in the rise of the mode. Unfortunately, his own distaste for the "decadence" of sentimental and didactic literature does not allow him to evaluate fairly the contemporary social function of these modes.

3 Women realists frequently satirized the didactic tale because its exhortative narrative stance perpetuated insuperable sexual stereotypes by idealizing femininity as virtue incarnate. Rose Terry Cooke, a leading local-color writer, parodies this moral pragmatism in "Miss Muffett and the Spider" (1860). Writing "in the author-itative plural," the editorial "we" recasts the Mother Goose nursery rhyme as a didactic allegory on proper female behavior. The satire is as acid as Twain's portrait of Emily Grangeford's poetry, replete with exclamatory declarations of intent: "I am going to write a story, instead of a treatise solemn and staid, a story illustrative of a distich of Mother Goose—not, oh! not after the faithless fashion of 'him who told the wondrous tale' of Mother Mary—a prophecy that indicates to the philosophic mind the reign of that sensational periodical, The Daily Ledger..." (764-71). The analogy between typological narratives (a common variety of the tale) and nursery rhymes reveals just how tenuous the religious authority that informed didactic storytelling was in the eyes of many realists.

4 Quotations not parenthetically cited are from the Atlantic Monthly and, unless otherwise noted, are drawn from Helen McMahon's study, which remains the best survey of the magazine's critical tastes. As her index reveals, the magazine reviewed a disproportionate amount of novels compared to short-story collections.

5 Definitions of 19th-century realism are notoriously diverse and varied, denoting either a style or a school. Though objectivity has long been associated with Zola and scientific detachment, American realism defined itself against the sentimental tradition before discovering continental models like Flaubert and Zola in the 1870s. See Habegger, for example, who argues that James and Howells suffered a "sissy" self-consciousness as male writers in a profession dominated by woman. Their rigorous aesthetic declarations thus mark an attempt to make literature a more masculine enterprise (103-12). Coultrap-McQuin's Doing Literary Business examines the cultural status of the professional woman writer in the postbellum era, focusing on authors all but ignored in the 20th-century, including E. D. E. N. Southworth, Sara Parton ("Fanny Fern"), and Mary Abigail Dodge ("Gail Hamilton").

6 Felman offers an illuminating description of the patriarchal assumptions that circumscribe the real from the fantastic: "realism postulates a conception of 'nature' and 'reality' which seeks to establish itself, tautologically, as 'natural' and 'real'...nothing is less natural than this frontier that is supposed to separate the 'real' from the 'unreal' and
which in fact delimits only the inside and outside of an ideological circle: an inside which is inclusive of 'reason' and men, i.e. 'reality' and 'nature'; and an outside which is exclusive of madness and women, i.e. the 'supernatural' and the 'unreal.' For Felman, realism not only exiles women from reason to the supernatural; it also reduces her to "a spectacle, to an object which can be known and possessed" ("Women and Madness" 6, 9). In a similar vein, Wilson examines the influence of American professionalization on the realist style, focusing on "popular naturalism," a direct, aggressive, self-consciously masculine style that defined itself against a feminine literary style (1-62).

7 The politics of the Atlantic Monthly deserves a more comprehensive telling than it has received. Mott devotes only scattered paragraphs to its liberal orientation (American Magazines: 1865-85, especially 90).

8 Fetterley, for example, dismisses Deborah as an artistic failure because her presence suggests that "women's hunger for love may be denied or fed, but whether their life turns tragic or joyous bears no relation to their class" (Provisions 312).

9 Dillon defines footings as a complex register of linguistic markers, including interrogatives, modals, and pronouns, that constitute a stance toward the reader. He describes addresses as varying degrees of "engagement" ranging from romance to combat. His scale encompasses five planes, which extend the typical stylistic descriptions beyond vague, conceptual terms like "intimate" and "authoritative." The peculiarities of each register will become more apparent throughout my reading; for now, I simply list the polarities that define the planes: impersonal vs. personal, distant vs. solidary, superior vs. equal, confrontive vs. oblique, formal vs. informal.

10 In her chapter on Uncle Tom's Cabin, Warhol defines the sermonic direct addresses as part of the engaging narrative strategy because the invocation of "you," "thou," and "ye" make a "general appeal to the reader's presumed experience of emotions, in order to render more immediately present the feelings" of the characters. What makes Stowe's novel a "cross-gendered" text are more specific addresses to readers that reveal the narrator staging the text (101-15). I have redefined Warhol's categories to better illustrate the split between gendered narrative and gendered style in "Life in the Iron Mills." Unlike Stowe, Davis does not distance her real-life audience to signal irony. I associate the jeremiad with the distancing strategy because the scripted role of the "you" encourages the audience to identify with the storyteller's "we." While distanced from the fictional reader, we are incorporated in the narrator's ideal community.

11 Davis's engaging strategy foreshadows the social feminism of orators like Frances Willard, who did not address millennial subjects but spoke on domestic, women's issues. Campbell argues that Willard, whose popularity as leader of the Woman's Christian Temperance Movement postdates "Life in the Iron Mills" by some twenty-five years, exploited the paradoxes of "feminine feminist" and "womanly rebellion" by celebrating the centrality of stereotypical feminine virtues to American culture, thus unobtrusively campaigning for suffrage and educational rights: "Seeing and hearing Willard, her audiences — male and female — must have believed they could have it all: femininity and reform, successful female leadership which affirmed true womanhood and separate spheres" (130). Davis and Willard both wrote for The Congregationalist, a conservative, anti-suffrage Boston paper, which suggests how their attempts to rewrite femininity within pre-existing cultural contexts severely limited their thinking on women's issues. They were mutual if somewhat distanced admirers. Willard
apparently found Davis's essay "In the Gray Cabins of New England" a bit too aggressive in its emphasis on social rather than spiritual salvation for the unmarried village women condemned to "drudgery." Davis was not too offended, however. She included Willard in a list of major female reformers in *Bits of Gossip*. See Harris (262, 291).


13 The gendering of local color remains controversial. Douglas argues that women regionalists retreated from the professional gains achieved by sentimental writers, helping the male academy diminish their centrality to American realism. Donovan, meanwhile, sees local colorists as establishing a new "women's literary realism" that recuperated female protagonists from the limiting plots of the sentimentalists while expanding representation of the domestic sphere to issues other than romance (1-7). Alice Hall Petrey inverts the definitional dichotomy (particular vs. universal) that separates local color from realism, arguing that regionalist social manners are symbolic of universal humanist values (111-26). Habegger excludes local color from the realist tradition because of its "deep rejection of the contemporary world" in favor of pastoral nostalgia, which precludes it from analyzing the present-tense "social world" on which Howells focused (104-105). Buell sees local color as a transition between romance and realism, noting that its "syrupiness" was exactly the quality that masculine realists dedicated themselves to eradicating from narrative style (331). Transitional definitions imply that realism evolved beyond local color when the truth is just the opposite: many contemporary writers are literary descendents of Harte, Jewett, and Cooke. What sanctions the exclusive association between local color and women writers is its detail and scope, which suggests the private rather than public sphere. Schor explores how detail traditionally has been associated with a feminine aesthetic.

14 An unexpurgated edition of Jewett's collected letters remains to be printed. The first published version, edited by Annie Fields, was heavily edited to remove references to the erotic nature of the Jewett-Fields friendship. See Donovan, "The Unpublished Love Poems" (107-17). Cary's 1967 edition is a vast improvement but excludes numerous letters not owned by Colby College.

15 Kasson's *Rudeness and Civility* emphasizes the influence of gender on etiquette more the Cmiel's *Democratic Eloquence*. For contemporary readings of gender and sociolinguistics, see Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place*; Coates's *Women and Society*; Priesler's *Linguistic Sex Roles in Conversation*; and Cameron's *Feminism and Linguistics*.

16 Representative essays include Ammons's "The Shape of Violence in Jewett's 'A White Heron'"; Griffith; Held; Brenzo; Cary, *Sarah Orne Jewett*; and Mathiessen (145-46). These are merely a sample of the many that make similar arguments.
17 Singley explores the similarities between the two poems through the paradigm of initiation rather than language (36-47).

18 Heller's argument is echoed by Atkinson (71-4).

19 I refer here to a long debate over whether women employ rhetorical hedges more frequently than men or whether this "voluble" tendency is a social stereotype. Otto Jesperson, one of the earliest historians of language use, argued that female speakers used adverbs of intensity like "so" because "women much more often than men break off without finishing their sentences, because they start talking without having thought out what they are going to say" (215). The obvious sexism of such an assertion only points out the paucity of its own logic. Yet many linguists with a specifically feminist perspective have committed similar errors of generalization. Robin Lakoff, for example, is routinely criticized for suggesting in that women indulge in "empty" adjectives because of a socialized inferiority complex. In her more recent work, she discusses the controversy. See Talking Power.

20 See Mathiessen (145-46); Schakford (363); and Habegger (104-5, 372), among many others.

21 For an overview of how diagnostic practices constrained women's social roles, see Smith-Rosenberg's "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America," in Disorderly Conduct (197-216). Shapiro offers a book-length examination of the very unobjective methods the medical establishment used to diagnose hysterics.

22 I borrow Barthes's distinction between the "readerly" and writerly texts liberally, recognizing that, for him, the latter offers interpretive freedom from an authorial consciousness, allowing the audience to enjoy the textual erotics. My own sense is that, in American more than France, audiences have been taught to read to deduce authorial intent, or at least to attach a greater amount of importance to it.

23 Grice illustrates his maxims with general statements of principle. Quantity rests on two cooperative agreements: "make your contribution as informative as is required" and "do not make your contribution more informative than is required." The second category, quality, concerns the truth value of the speech act and is based on the presumption that speakers neither say what they believe is false or assert truths for which they lack adequate evidence. Relation, the third category, operates according to a single maxim: "Be relevant." Finally, manner, the fourth and final category, concerns how the speech act is communicated and conforms to traditional rhetorical principles: avoid obscurity, ambiguity, be brief and orderly. Grice delineates four ways in which speakers may fail to fulfill a maxim: either they may unintentionally violate a conversational postulate or simply opt out, or a speech act may force a clash between two conflicting maxims. Finally, and most importantly, they may flout a maxim, by which they "blatantly" fail to fulfill the CP, though, unlike the other three ways of failing to fulfill the maxims, flouting does not jeopardize the cooperation principle. According to Pratt, even when a fictional speaker opts out, violates, or clashes maxims, we interpret the failure as the author's intentional flouting: "In order to cooperate as the literary speech situation requires, the reader confronting a violated maxim in a literary work must interpret the
violation as being in accord with the 'accepted purpose or direction of the exchange' in which he and the author are engaged. The reader must assume that regardless of what the fictional speaker is doing, the author is observing the [cooperative principle]... consequently, when a fictional failure fails to fulfill a maxim, it will usually be the case that the author is implicating things in addition to what the fictional speaker is saying or implicating" (Speech Act 198-99).

24 For background on 19th-century rhetoric in general, see Nan Johnson, especially 191ff.

25 See Kolodny, "A Map for Misreading"; Triellier; Fetterley, "Reading About Reading." More recently, these readings have been critiqued for promoting an essentialist view of gender. See Haney-Peritz; Jacobus, "An Unnecessary Maze of Sign-Reading"; Lanser, "Feminist Criticism, 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' and the Politics of Color in America"; and Dimock.

26 Diamond makes a similar point in regard to realist theater (59).
During Gertrude Stein's triumphant 1934-35 American lecture tour, a group of envious Hollywood moguls asked how she managed to generate such favorable publicity. "By appealing to a small audience," she replied (Everybody's Autobiography 284). The comment illuminates an important paradox defining narrative authority in post-realist short fiction. Stein invokes here a cardinal tenet of modernism: art is autonomous from mass culture, transcending the historical conditions of its origin through radically experimental techniques that create a self-sufficient, anti-communicative aesthetic medium. Modernists themselves, however, were adept at manipulating the burgeoning phenomenon of publicity, appropriating a range of emerging journalistic forms (the "profile," the gossip column, the interview) to popularize their agenda if not their art. ¹ Shrewdly recognizing the media's attraction to provocative personalities, Stein parlayed the persona of a "difficult" writer to wide recognition—to the point where she was better known than her work. While supporters and detractors debated her merits in the large-circulation press, those same publications consistently rejected her work, with only Vanity Fair exposing her to a wide audience. While a Saturday Evening Post subscriber would have to wait until 1938 to read a contribution from her, that same reader likely knew more than a decade earlier how Gertrude Stein was supposed to sound. By the mid-1920s, style became a synecdoche of personality so that "voice" was nearly as recognizable as physical appearance. Stein was dubbed the "Mother Goose of Montparnasse" because she practiced an instantly identifiable brand of "baby talk," and because she served as expatriate mater to all those "young men of twenty six" who flocked to Paris to write under her tutelage.
Of course, this self-conscious autonomy from America's mass readership often masked desires for the fame that publicity promised. Before the breakthrough of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Stein claimed that she was "working for what will endure, not a public"; yet, for more than a decade, she had deluged the *Atlantic Monthly* with submissions, testing the patience of editor Ellery Sedgwick, who claimed that America lacked a sympathetic "literati or illuminati or cognoscenti or illustriissimi" to understand her writing. "You could not even find a handful of careful readers who would think that it was a serious effort," he added (qtd. in Mellow 347). (A few years later, when Sedgwick agreed to excerpt Toklas in four installments, he expressed relief that "the real Miss Stein" had pierced her "smoke-screen"). Hemingway was never interested in the glory of avant-garde obscurity. He modelled his earliest work on the slick formula fiction of *The Post*. In Paris, he placed the stories collected as *In Our Time* with local literary journals like *transatlantic* and *This Quarter* only after they were rejected by commercial magazines. Between 1925 and 1930, arguably the apex of his career, he placed only one story in a prestigious mass-market periodical ("Fifty Grand," published by the *Atlantic* in July 1927); most appeared in the medium-circulation *Scribner's Magazine*, the house organ of his publisher. Only in the 1930s, long after "fame became of him" (as Archibald MacLeish wrote), would *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, and *Ken* offer the lucrative remuneration that F. Scott Fitzgerald had been earning from competitive periodicals for more than a decade.

Neither Djuna Barnes nor Richard Wright achieved the celebrity status of Stein and Hemingway, but their work was equally identified with their public personae. Barnes appears in 1920s gossip columns as a caustic, cerebral wit, far too smart and artistic to appeal to the American "booboisie." Reviews of her two original story collections, *A Book* (1923) and *A Night Among Horses* (1929) reinforce the image: they complain of stylistic excesses and undue morbidity, accusations often leveled at "bohemian" artists. Her critics failed to recognize the influence of the metropolitan New
York dailies for whom she began writing in 1913; between 1916 and 1920, when she left America for a twenty-year European exile, the *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine* alone published nearly two dozen of her short stories, giving her the largest readership she would ever achieve. As Douglas Messerli writes, the impressionism that foreshadows her masterpiece *Nightwood* (1936) was entirely compatible with the sensationalism of the dailies: "The very qualities which help to make these tales seem so eccentric—the use of flat, stereotyped characters, the narrational intrusions, and the emphasis on unresolved narrative action—may have as much to do with where or when Barnes published them as with any decision to write peculiar or obscure fictions" ("The Newspaper Tales" 16-17). Literary myth also has it that, once in Paris, Barnes made a self-conscious distinction between journalism and fiction; yet her contributions to *Vanity Fair* and *Smart Set* are no less experimental than the work published in the little magazines. Only after she abandoned journalism altogether (when she left Paris in 1932) did she lose access to a mass audience. Wright was just beginning his literary apprenticeship at this time. Long before publishing his first major story, he crafted a Marxist literary aesthetic that he called "personalism," a testimonial stance in which "personal protest" would "seek to make those who come into contact with it take sides for or against certain moral issues" (qtd. in Fabre 143). Wright's own migration from the Jim-Crow South to the urban North became the formative topic of his early work, not only his stories, but the political essays and reviews that he contributed to *New Masses, Saturday Review of Literature*, and *Harper's*, which often read like excerpts from his autobiographies. Fiercely protective of the intellectual property in his work, he redressed critics who misinterpreted his intentions, publicizing his social and artistic aims through press releases and lecture tours. Unlike Hemingway, he often rejected lucrative theater- and movie-adaption deals that failed to guarantee him artistic approval over the final product. He even parlayed the controversy surrounding his novel *Native Son* into a wider celebrity when he starred as Bigger Thomas in the 1950 film.
For at least one critic, short-story writers were particularly susceptible to the publicity phenomenon because of an unholy dependence upon the periodical industry, both commercial and avant garde, which had a financial stake in cultivating "name" authors. In *The Dance of the Machines* (1929), Edward J. O'Brien draws an extended analogy between the machine and the American short story, arguing that the industrialization of literary form places an undue emphasis on style. As editor of the *Best Short Stories* series from 1915 to his death in 1941, O'Brien was an influential historian and advocate of short fiction. In 1923 he included Hemingway's "My Old Man" in his anthology (even dedicating the volume to him) though the story was previously unpublished. By the end of the decade, however, he regarded the short story as a "mechanistic structure." "The American short story is impersonal," he writes. "Like the machine, [it] manufactures 'types,' and it is the recognition of these 'types' which appears to give pleasure to the reader." The magazine trade traps quality writers into perpetuating a product: "If the American short storywriter achieves a satisfactory mechanical product which the magazine of large circulation finds acceptable to its advertisers, he is not allowed to practise literary birth control....The most popular writers of short stories in the most popular American periodicals have a definitely recognized pattern from which they do not widely depart. It is known as their 'style.'" O'Brien adds that "many talent artists who honestly believe that they are doing their best and frequently are doing so" become trapped in this quest for a marketable style (124-25). His critique includes subtle references to Sherwood Anderson, a "promising American writer who had a passion for Turgenev...[but who] has now given up writing short stories and is a 'publicity expert'" (152-53) and Hemingway, whose "earlier sensitiveness to character has become strangely blurred...he has lost much of his economy of statement" (138).

For O'Brien, a storywriter's need to advertise his/her style is symptomatic of a cultural obsession with "veneer," the "deft, slick patter" that gives "flavor" to the product: "I have come to be suspicious on principle of storywriters who talk too much about their art.
After a few years, their stories become rather like D. A. R. culture and apples from Oregon. Apples from Oregon are huge and have a wonderful polish, but apples of humbler size and appearance have a better flavor. "The most highly flavored American short stories appear to be coal tar products" (153).

The identification between the artist and the art that O'Brien laments points to a deeper paradox of modernist styles. The signature technique by which storytellers distinguished themselves was partly founded on how they accommodated other voices in their writing: in other words, how they dealt with the issue of polyvocality. As I argued in the last chapter, the putative impartiality of realism encourages the storyteller to probe multiple perspectives from the vantage point of an observer who witnesses and reports. "The Yellow Wallpaper" foregrounds the perceptual immediacy of its protagonist, but the narrative act itself is still present, though embedded and fictionalized in the pretext of diary writing. In modernism, however, storytelling is often elided altogether. There is rarely a demonstrable sense of address; instead, narration unfolds as a panorama of perceptual impressionism. In the absence of a more overt narrative stance, an audience may fill the role of the absent storyteller with the implied author, the behind-the-scenes shape shifter who manipulates its sympathies. As Michel Foucault suggests, this "author function" operates according to a cultural desire for authority. Perception of an authorial presence allows one to delimit meaning in deference to the values embodied by that writer's public identity, thus restricting the "free circulation" of signification so that, ultimately, an author becomes "the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning." At its simplest, celebrity serves as a "principle of thrift" (274). At the same time that modernist styles de-authorize their enunciation by eliding the narrative act, they are identified, in the cultural milieu, as expressions of an singular authorial ethos.

The paradox of the author function resonates through countless modernist manifestoes. T. S. Eliot decries the influence of "newspaper critics" whose "Blue-book
knowledge" of writers' lives inflated "popular" reputations, but the founding thesis of his "impersonal" theory of art in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) nonetheless celebrates the peculiarity of the artist. Art requires "a continual extinction of personality," a "self-sacrifice" to something "which is more valuable" (i.e. the artistic medium) that makes it an "escape" from emotion. "But, of course," he adds, "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things" (5).

True art necessitates a "more perfect" mind that eschews "sincere emotion" in favor of "significant emotion." In other words, it takes a special kind of person to be impersonal. The leap from this paradox to outright praise for aesthetic individuality is a short one as the singularity of voice is canonized as an essential gauge of art: "One knew when one was reading a Joyce or Lawrence or Hemingway story because it bore on its every page the signature of a unique sensibility responding to experience in an absolutely individual way" (Aldridge "Gray Middle," 269). Uniqueness and "absolute" individuality are a far cry from the community and counsel that Benjamin (writing in 1936) argues are the pragmatic goals of storytelling.

One signal of the elision of storytelling in modernism is the prevalence of free indirect discourse, which promises access to a character's "consciousness without the apparent intrusion of a narrative voice...[it presents] the illusion of a character's acting out his [or her] mental state in an immediate relationship with the reader" (Pascal 52). Modernists did not invent free indirect discourse (hereafter called combined discourse); its popularity is credited to a variety of early realists, from Austen to Goethe to Flaubert, with James recognized as its most prominent American agent. In the realist mode, a storyteller acts as a ventriloquist, putting words into the mouths of "dummy" characters and controlling the audience's perception of other voices. Because it is grounded in the "real," the authority of the narrative style is rarely challenged. 2 In the modernist mode, however, the (hypothetical) effect of combined discourse is not unlike the telephone (in which the voice is separated from the body) or the silent movie (in which the body was
rendered mute before the soundtrack). It posits an inexorable fissure between the reception act and the origin of the utterance. A character's perception and the narrator's cognition are intertwined, diminishing the authority of the latter because his/her point of view carries no more emphasis than the figural perspectives. For Marxist critics like Adorno and Horkheimer, combined discourse creates a "negative knowledge" that precludes a complacent reader response by fragmenting and defamiliarizing reality (qtd. in West 63). Regardless of whether one agrees with the "radical" or avant-garde value of the technique, the effects that it creates transform several characteristics of storytelling addressed in previous chapters.

First, because combined discourse represents (or re-presents) a character's words or thoughts in the narrative style, it dramatizes the revision inherent in any act of retelling. Irving introduced this difference-within-repetition into his legend by attaching Knickerbocker's editorial frame to the text, which precludes attribution of the narrative voice to a single speaker. But if Irving's frame signalled the transcription of an oral narrative into a written text, combined discourse, as a "radically bivocal language [that] defies normal vocalization," more frequently evokes writing (McHale 282). Of the four modes of storytelling discussed in this study, modernism announces its writtenness most intently. As a result, focus is directed to the linguistic medium itself, not its transmission. As Karl Kroeber argues, the "teller function" of traditional narratives leads us to identify with different phenomenological perspectives; combined discourse "intensifies, complicates and subtilizes that identifying tendency. The result...is a demand for continuous complex intensity of response...[that] arises from readers' conscious engagement in a linguistic performance. One cannot respond to the basic sylleptic bind—do these words represent the character's or the narrator's perception?—without recognizing that one has encountered a verbal [meaning linguistic, not oral] dilemma" (106).

Not all modernists employ combined discourse, of course; nor are many stories composed exclusively of it. As Brian McHale has shown, it falls midway on a scale of
possibilities for reporting speech and thought. At one extreme is the "purely diegetic," indirect or reported speech, which involves "only the bare report that a speech event has occurred, without any specification of what was said or how it was said" (258). At the other extreme is the "purely mimetic," direct speech or dialogue, which encourages identification with the figural voices. The stories gathered in this chapter illustrate these possibilities. In "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," Stein subsumes the voices of her characters within her own ludic style: "she was telling about using other ways in being gay, she was telling about learning other ways in being gay." The distance that she places between the "original" utterances and her representation of them is immense. She does away with the dramatic fictional contexts from which meanings arise, subordinating semantics to the sonic texture of her style. The resulting narrative voice assumes prominence over other voices yet refrains from articulating a single, determinate meaning. Hemingway, on the other hand, avoids speech summary by staging long interchanges of direct speech that efface his narratorial agency. Conversation reveals how context shapes a meaning often at odds with the words spoken. In "Hills Like White Elephants," talk dramatizes how "the barrier to articulation is the cost of being precise in language" (Lid 402). Because these exchanges often revolve around sexual politics, their interactive pattern illustrates the gender dynamics of conversation. One particular characteristic of Hemingway's style, repetition, highlights the illusory purity of direct speech. "All dialogue is conventionalized or stylized to some degree," McHale writes. "Straightforward transcription would be intolerable...since the 'normal non-fluency' of ordinary speech has the appearance of illiteracy in print" (259). Precisely because Hemingway strives to omit all clues of a narrating consciousness, how he crafts his dialogue becomes the most obvious expression of his agency.

Stories by Barnes and Wright typically incorporate more diverse forms of speech representation, creating "double-voiced" narratives in which implicit meanings require some knowledge of the authorial ethos. "Run Girls, Run" is a texturally dense, allusive
story that juxtaposes Elizabethan and modern idioms as it revises stereotypes of femininity perpetuated by Western mythology. The parody arises from an inherent contrast between formal oral discourses drawn from Barnes's theatrical background (the soliloquy and epic formulae) and typographic devices (parentheses, orthography).

"Almos' a Man," Wright's most anthologized short story, offers a litmus test for a whole range of assumptions about the social affectivity of art and the minority writer's relationship to dominant culture. In the story, Wright juxtaposes combined discourse with a more mimetic form of perceptual representation, interior monologue, creating a pattern of perspectival shifts heightened by the movements in and out of Afro-American dialect. The pattern dramatizes the importance of individualism in Wright's work, revealing a striving for a pure, "thinkerly" style of narration that transcends a language compromised by its social usage.

**Gertrude Stein: Indirect Speech and Conversation**

"I do not like stories," Stein declares in *Geography and Plays* (132); even to read a work like "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" as short fiction requires preliminary justification. Though *Three Lives* (1909), her first published book, is a story cycle modelled on Flaubert's *Trois Contes*, little in her subsequent oeuvre complements traditional notions of storytelling. Most obviously, the bulk of her work is non-mimetic, foregrounding stylistic effects like rhythm and repetition over theme and content. A narrative for Stein does not tether its relevance to a particular time and place. Instead, structurally and rhetorically, the work incorporates and revolves around the moment of composition, its creative genesis maintained in a continuous present tense that aims to shelter it from history. Words must resist "outside" social contexts that might limit their meaning. The sentence, not the utterance or speech act, is the fundamental unit of language because it exists "contained within [itself] and anything really contained within itself has no beginning or middle or ending" (*Narration* 52). As such, Stein's writing challenges the
very idea of storytelling as communication, often to the point where concepts like plot, characterization, and point of view sound like a dead language when applied to her work. As if to heighten this threat to narrative norms, she writes within traditional genres: most famously, the "autobiography" of her companion, Alice B. Toklas. Subtitles identify other works as plays, novels, and opera librettos. *Blood on the Dining-Room Floor* (1933), which has inspired an increasing amount of commentary in recent years, simultaneously celebrates and subverts the conventions of the mass-market whodunit.  The only story that Stein does not re-write, in fact, is the short story.

Answering why is a difficult task. Though several briefer prose works appear in little magazines like *Broom*, the *Little Review*, and *The Reviewer*, she never speaks of a short form in her lectures and criticism, conflating, instead, narrative with the novel.  As a result, critics rarely read these briefer pieces in the context of the modernist short story. Carl Van Vechten describes "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" as a "sketch" (*Selected Writings* 422). Both James R. Mellow (331) and Wendy Steiner (16) compare it to the lyric portraiture gathered in *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein* (1933) and *Portraits and Prayers* (1934). In its original context in *Geography and Plays*, the piece may not seem much more of a narrative than the collages of doggerel, closet drama, and meditative prose that compose the rest of the collection.

Yet *Vanity Fair*, reprinting the story in July 1923, subtitled it "The Tale of Two Young Ladies Who Were Gay Together and How One Left the Other Behind" and added an introduction that labels it a short story. Probably written by Edmund Wilson, the magazine's managing editor, the note is important both for what it says and implies. Among the many stories that *Vanity Fair* published during Wilson's tenure (1920 to late 1923), only "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" prompted prefatory remarks; equally experimental texts by other writers are identified with a particular genre only in the table of contents. *Vanity Fair* may have been one of the few publications with an enviable circulation to offer Stein wide exposure before 1933; yet its editors were apparently
uncertain about how a mass readership might receive her writing. Nearly apologizing for her inventiveness, the introduction assures the audience that the story is comprehensible: "in one of Miss Stein's simpler manners, [it] should convince those readers who have hitherto been baffled by her later and more telegraphic style that she is really a writer of remarkable abilities." 6

Rather than "telegraphic," Stein's manner might be described as "telescopic."

Sing-song rhythms condense and distance the drama, often obscuring the fact that there is a plot. After leaving her parents' home to cultivate her voice, Helen Furr meets Georgine Skeene, with whom she becomes "regularly gay." Hints of tension develop between the women: Miss Furr does not like to travel as much as Miss Skeene, and when they visit the "quite pleasant home" that Helen has left, she refuses stay. Men also pose a vague threat: "There were men there then who were dark and heavy and they sat with them...and they went with them," though where and what happens is inconclusive. By the final paragraph, the women drift apart: "Helen Furr was living somewhere else then and telling some about being gay and she was gay then and she was living quite regularly then." Ostensibly, when Stein wrote the piece (in 1908, fourteen years before it was published), she based the characters on a lesbian couple, Ethel Mars and Maud Hunt Squire, who frequented her atelier at 27 rue de Fleurus. The story may also capture private uncertainties about romantic entanglements; still recovering from an early, unsuccessful relationship with May Bookstaver (the basis for her first novel, the posthumously published Q.E.D.), Stein had met Alice B. Toklas only a year earlier, and the women would not "marry" for two more. 7 Whatever autobiographical tones resonate here, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" is not the happy story that its style suggests. As Marjorie Perloff argues, the change that Helen Furr undergoes must be inferred through the "permutation of a highly selected group of ordinary words." This permutation creates "the skeleton narrative of any number of possible stories," from which the audience fashions an interpretation (676). 8 Nowhere is this responsibility
more obvious than in Stein's use of "gay." Contemporary audiences, accustomed to its slang association with homosexuality, may identify a sapphic subtext more quickly than a 1920s readership, for whom it primarily meant "happy" or "festive." But no internal evidence confirms or denies the couple's lesbianism. Nothing within the story limits the word "gay" to a single, substantive meaning.

An equally important word, "telling," alludes to a deeper paradox between style and content. To cultivate her voice, Helen Furr must tell others about being gay. The first major reference to speaking appears roughly halfway through the story when the women visit Mr. and Mrs. Furr, presumably Helen's parents. Miss Furr "said she would not stay, she said she did not find it gay, she said she would not stay where she did not find it gay, she said she found it gay where she did stay and she did stay there where very many were cultivating something" (19). When her companion leaves and Miss Furr realizes that "she was not at all feeling any need of having Georgine Skeene," she finds her voice suddenly superfluous: "She could use it and she did use it but then there was not any way of working at cultivating a completely pleasant voice when it has become a quite completely well enough cultivated one, and there was not much use in using it when one was not wanting it to be helping to make one a gay one. Helen Furr was not needing using her voice to be a gay one" (21). Only when she begins to learn from "very many [who were] telling about using other ways in being gay" does she begin cultivating it once more. By "telling," Miss Furr is then "teaching" others how to develop their voices, "telling about little ways one could be learning to use in being gay...telling them quite often, telling them again and again" (22). Cultivation implies artistic development; by the end of the story, Helen Furr's "telling" arguably becomes a public performance. Like numerous stories by women modernists, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" grounds the struggle for artistic self-expression in the creation of an alternative, coded language that is comprehensible only to a small audience. Without an appreciative community of "gay" listeners, there is "not much use in using" Helen Furr's voice.
The paradox is that while Miss Furr cultivates her voice, Stein never allows it to be heard; she excludes us from the ideal audience that can recognize or benefit from Helen's developing talent. Diegetic summary distances figural voices by narrating speech acts with only a vague reference to content or tone (McHale 258). When Miss Furr refuses to remain at her parents' home, for example, repetition conveys her dissatisfaction. A rhetorical effect, not what she says or how she says it, intensifies the emotion of the scene. With its subtle variations on a basic syntactic structure, the passage (quoted above) illustrates why Stein preferred the more emotive word "insistence" over "repetition": "There can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis" ("Portraits and Repetition" 167). In this case, even Helen's audience is ambiguous; it may be Georgine or her parents or both. Similarly, while Miss Furr tells others how to be gay, the storyteller offers no clue about how her new-found confidence affects her voice. While the storyline implies a change, the evidence never surfaces through the authorial style. Why does Stein refrain from slipping into the voice of her character?

The simplest explanation is that she is working in a decidedly anti-representational mode. Other modernists fragmented character through interior monologue and combined discourse. Stein foreshadows postmodernist writers like Robbe-Grillet by reducing fictional people to linguistic abstractions (Berry 96-97). The pun on "fur" and "skin" says more about the sensuality of the characters than the story admits. Diegetic summary also complements her desire to free narrative from time: eliding dramatic scenes allows her to ignore the "extraverbal" content of a speech act, those contextual conditions, whether "social, historical, meteorological, physiological" that shape the creation of meaning. Without reference to a specific historical moment, words assume an omnitemporal aura.
A less obvious justification for speech summary centers on Stein's attitude toward writing and orality and the reception activities that each inspires. Direct speech, obviously, evokes oral conversation in which participants alternately speak and listen. Stein tries to prevent this model of interaction, composed of two distinct activities, from serving as an interpretive analogy to writing and reading. Instead, her style provokes a reading response charged with composing the story's significance. And herein lies the twist in her construction of narrative authority. While eliding dramatic dialogues, she fashions a "metaphorical" conversation, not with an audience but between the audience and her words. While the narrative voice is monologic, its authority is transparent: it does not dictate a single, determinate meaning but invites a plurality of responses. As Harriet Scott Chessman remarks, "Stein suggests that the act of creating becomes an act intricately bound up with the act of receiving; the two acts, mysteriously, often appear to occur simultaneously and can no longer be easily distinguished" (148). Stein's voice, far from being self-important in its hermeticism (as her contemporaries often charged), offers a Rosetta stone for the voice of her readership. Rather than evoke, her style "evocalizes"; it orients us not to the site of emission but to the site of reception so that our reading voices (or gives rise to) an "acoustic textuality." 14

The "aurality" of Stein's style, paradoxically, is founded on a stringent distinction between speech and writing. "Of course I don't talk as I write!" she replied to a question asked by more than one suspicious reader. In an important series of lectures delivered at the University of Chicago in 1935, she explains that "you do not cannot must not shall not write as you talk" because "when you talk...what you say has no importance mostly to any audience because any audience has no feeling that they are an audience not while everybody is just talking" (Narration 54). Conversation is such an ordinary, commonplace exchange of words that we grow complacent and accept conventional meanings. The key to reception (at least in this lecture) is "recognition," on the part of writer as well as audience. To illustrate its importance, she describes how she translated the poems of a
young French poet. Translation is significant here because it is literally a re-writing in which reading and composition are incorporated into the same act. The work of this young poet, however, possessed a "certain smoothness" that alienated her from the creative process. "Hitherto I had always been writing, with a concentration of recognition of the thing that was to be existing as my writing as it was being written," she says. In these poems, recognition was completed: "there it was it was already recognition a thing I could recognize because it had been recognized before I began my writing." As a result, she could only be "carrying out" an idea that already existed: "and then suddenly I realized...that the words come out differently if there is no recognition as the words are forming because recognition had already taken place" (52). Playing the part of a reader, Stein dramatizes why writing must incorporate the process of its own becoming. Without self-reflexivity, the different roles between writer and audience solidify into insuperable identities; art, for the audience, becomes a vicarious experience. Only when we discover a writer in the process of "naming" words can recognition survive the original scene of composition and endure as a replicable experience.

According to Stein, recognition rarely takes place in oral conversation because speakers fail to exert the self-reflexivity that makes them, at the same time, listeners:

When you write this is of course recognition there is the recognition that you recognize what you write as you write, while as you talk there is of course some recognition but really is there any real recognition recognition of what you talk as you talk. I myself think not, and therefore naturally not you do not write as you talk...There really is no real reason why you should since after all you are not your audience as you talk nobody really is not really as anybody talks that is just talks. (54)

Recognition in conversation is theoretically possible, however. Listening (and, by extension, reading) becomes an act of reception because "everybody gets tired...everybody always has to be listening to something, that is the way it is always anybody has to be listening to something that is what makes life lived...you are always
listening to some one to something and you are always telling something to some one or
to any one." It takes "genius" and energy to tell and listen at the same time; much of
Narration is concerned with how various modern media (newspapers and history books
especially) bifurcate this process by making listening "too easy." In "Miss Furr and Miss
Skeene" then, Stein submerges speech events because exchanges would allow the
audience simply to eavesdrop. A dramatized pattern of "just talking" implies that meaning
can be located in the call and response of the characters, not in the audience's own
dialogue with the text.

An interesting paradox in Stein's deconstruction of writer/reader roles further
illuminates the effects of her telescoping style. Narration was first heard as an oral
performance, appearing in book form only later, a fact that she addresses in the lecture.
The oral performer is "physically] exciting": s/he possesses a presence that "destroys the
physical something that a writer is while writing" because "while he is writing that
physical something by existing does not connect him with anything but concentrates him
on recognition." In the act of writing, identity formation is a perpetual mutation of self
cast as discovery or surprise: it is self-consciousness as self-creation. But oral
performance physically ties the voice to the body, to an identity that is no longer in transit
but stabilized within a figure or form. 15 In this sense, direct speech might actually pose
a threat to the cultivation of Helen Furr's voice. Were her words offered in dialogue, the
audience might associate voice with body, activity with substance. Words might become
flesh too easily if offered in quotation; they would refer to a thing, not a process. De-
emphasizing talk through diegetic summary allows Stein to develop a voice without
reference to a "corpo-reality" that would arrest its formation.

Indirect speech enacts this simultaneous listening and speaking because, according
to V. N. Volosinov, it presupposes "an analysis simultaneous and inseparable from
transmission" (130). 16 In other words, by summarizing someone else's speech, we
transform it, and transformation implies an evaluation by which we choose to highlight
certain features. Direct quotation or citation is passive reproduction, but the analysis inherent in the indirect-speech act prompts simultaneous listening and talking, making it comparable to the process that Stein describes. Various forms of indirect speech resonate with different types of analysis. On the one hand, summary may emphasize the theme or referent of the original message. This type of analysis "receives an utterance purely on the thematic level and simply does not 'hear' or take in whatever there is in that utterance that is without thematic significance." The dichotomous type focuses upon the "texture" of the transformed speech: "it incorporates into indirect discourse words and locutions that characterize the subjective and stylistic physiognomy of the message viewed as expression" (130-31). In fictional discourse, of course, previous utterances are hypothetical. Stein does not really summarize what Helen Furr says; she merely pretends. Yet audiences tend to interpret indirect speech as if an original did exist (McHale 256). The emphasized aspect of the message (either the referent or the texture) is a clue to what the storyteller presumably feels is important about the character. In more mimetic texts, determining what type of analysis the storyteller performs necessitates only listening, for we can grow attuned to features of a character's voice even while passively participating. But a telescoped narrative, because fictional speech acts are merely described, prompts us to hear and speak at once; in attempting to recover an irrecoverable original utterance, we must write as we read. Reception and creation become interchangeable activities.

At first glance, Volosinov's analytic paradigms might seem wholly inapplicable to Stein's indirect speech. Talk is so transformed that its original content and texture are equally obscure: "Very many were telling about using other ways in being gay." What is important here, however, is how Stein literally de-personalizes speech by transforming words into textures. "Very many" refers to a constituency identified only by its large membership; like a Greek chorus, this plurality is represented as speaking with one voice in one instance. Even though the summary acknowledges various "ways" to be gay, it
does not discuss any of those differences. For Volosinov, the "maximal compactness" achieved when numerous reported utterances are "received as one whole block of social behavior" typically indicates a content analysis where "only the 'what' of speech is taken in and the 'how' is left outside reception" (119). Yet Stein substitutes her "how" for the "what" of this chorus; the rhyme ("ways"/"gay") foregrounds the sonic texture of her style rather than any feature of the figural speech. Similarly, "She told many then the way of being gay" compresses Helen's speech to the point where her original meaning and manner are irretrievable. The only referent to "gay" is the texture that it assumes in the narrative context.

Diegetic summary also distances tensions between Miss Furr and Miss Skeene:
"The voice Helen Furr was cultivating was quite a pleasant one. The voice Georgine Skeene was cultivating was, some said, a better one. The voice Helen Furr was cultivating she cultivated and it was quite completely a pleasant enough one then, a cultivated enough one then. The voice Georgine Skeene was cultivating she did not cultivate too much" (18). The passage may convey Stein's awareness that lesbian couples can replicate heterosexual sex roles: in not cultivating her voice too much, Miss Skeene plays the part of a "wife" to Miss Furr's "husband." 17 According to these roles, only one voice speaks for a couple. In this case, Miss Furr makes the decisions: "They did some travelling, not very much travelling, Georgine Skeene would have liked to do more travelling, Helen Furr did not care about travelling." As with the ambiguous "very many," the voices of the anonymous speakers who feel that Miss Skeene's voice is "a better one" are summarized within a single speech act. There is little opportunity to "hear" what their words might have been; as a result, dissenting voices cannot be identified with a particular social group. They remain disembodied, impervious to "specularity." 18 As Volosinov explains, "There is no wherewithal here for the speaker[s]' individuality to congeal into an image" (132). The repetitive structure of all four sentences ("The voice...was cultivating") suggests that the texture, too, has been transformed to conform
with the authorial style. Figural voices exist as mere traces, their message transformed to emphasize syntactical rhythm.

Elsewhere, however, one can discern a more overt interplay between a fictional utterance and its narration. When the narrator reports that Helen "said she would not stay where she did not find it gay," one assumes that the rhyme is not characteristic of her dialogue, especially since similar rhyme schemes appear in passages that have no diegetic summary. But the same cannot be said for repetition. As I suggested earlier, repetition here intensifies Helen's unwillingness to remain in a place where she cannot cultivate her voice. Texture is equally expressive of the "stylistic physiognomy" of Helen's voice as its authorial counterpart: it signifies her insistence as well as the narrator's. Similarly, "telling them quite often, telling them again and again" captures the emphatic nature of Helen's speaking: it dramatizes her need to teach others how to be gay to continue cultivating her voice. Repetition may be such an obvious trait of the authorial voice that its relevance to the character's summarized speech can be easily overlooked. The passage fuses Volosinov's analyses: because the "referent" is so ambiguous (the particular meaning of "gay"), recognition must rely on texture to communicate a meaning. The conjunction of sound and sense creates an onomatopoetic style.

Speech summary allows Stein to transform techniques of attribution into issues of reception. Words create soundscapes rather than landscapes; as a result, character develops from sonic rather than psychological patterns. Apparently, the interpretive possibilities generated by the play of rhyme and rhythm so disconcerted the modernist sensibility of *Vanity Fair*'s editors that they decided to clue their audience to "a" meaning. In its introduction, the magazine links manner to story line with a stunning *reductio ad absurdum*: "It will be seen that the style, though queer, is exactly suited to the subject" (55). Connotations of "gay" may have been equivocal in the 1920s, but "queer" was an obvious code for same-sex relations. The note makes a connection between sexual preference and narrative technique that few in the audience would miss. With a subtle
reference to Stein's lesbianism (an open secret in literary circles), *Vanity Fair* attempts to yoke voice to body.

An even more dramatic example of how the author function limits meaning is illustrated by a parody of "Miss Furrr and Miss Skeene" that *Vanity Fair* published in its October 1923 issue. Entitled "When Helen Furr Got Gay With Harold Moos: A Narrative Written in the Now Popular Manner of Gertrude Stein," the piece is credited to "K. D." (37). As the title suggests, K. D. cannot simply reproduce Stein's voice in order to pinpoint the particular object of ridicule; the parodist must introduce new characters, a new plot, new words, and new inflections that tear the fabric of imitation. After Georgine Skeene leaves, Helen Furr takes up with Harold Moos, who "was not a gay man." Despite Moos's apparent heterosexuality, Miss Furr is "more gay when Harold Moos sat regularly with her than when other dark and heavy and bald men sat with her." She takes great delight in pulling his chair out from under him and knocking his hat off his head. These are the very types of scene-specific actions that Stein avoids narrating. To emphasize the revisionary plot, K. D. must ascribe characters motives that, in the original, are ambiguous, as in the most surprising plot twist: "One day when Helen Furr was being gay and Harold Moos was feeling dark and very heavy and very bald and not at all gay they were married."

Despite the nuptials, Miss Furr resists becoming Mrs. Moos, and the parodist portrays her "gaiety" as irresponsible and frivolous. In the original, Helen wins independence, but in the parody she remains a child. K. D. implicates Stein in this behavior by referring to Helen's "baby-talk" (a common description of Stein's style) and a more direct association with homosexuality: "She would be gay in baby-talk then, and she would be gay in lisping." Harold Moss ultimately finds himself so oppressed by his wife's need to be gay that he turns violent: "I have been thinking up a way of making you less gay and of making myself more regularly gay and in a wholly new way; and, with that end in view, I hereby hit you three times regularly on the head with this walking
stick." Just as Mr. Moos attempts to cure Miss Furr of her sexuality, K. D. tries to rescue the word "gay" itself from the erotic significations that Stein invites it to assume. To make the point, K. D. must allow Harold Moos to speak. But the introduction of dialogue signals the end of parody and the assertion of a conventional moral authority. It marks the point at which K. D. stops imitating Stein in order to intimidate or threaten her. Direct speech is the explicit statement of meaning and motive that Stein's indirect speech avoids.

**Hemingway: Repetition, Stylization, and Dialogue**

In her autobiography, Stein launches a famously caustic attack on Hemingway, describing him as a better Rotarian than modernist. Her "favorite pupil" in turn declared that she was simply ungrateful for what he had taught her: "She could never write dialogue. It was terrible. She learned how to do it from my stuff...She never could forgive learning that and she was afraid people would notice it, where she'd learned it, so she had to attack me" (*Green Hills* 65). Even after admitting that his own penchant for repetition had been inspired by his Parisian mentor (but only after Stein died in 1946), he would repeatedly claim to have taught her dialogue, as if to cancel a debt that bothered only him. 19 His insecurity is unfounded. As Perloff shows, their repetition serves different ends: Stein's tends to connote, while Hemingway's denotes (698). Whether Stein learned to write dialogue from him is equally doubtful, for two the writers employ divergent forms of reported speech, creating vastly different effects. As in "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," Stein submerges speech with diegetic summary, providing only a skeletal description of fictional dialogue. When she does approach a more mimetic style of direct discourse, she omits quotation marks, accents, and other typographic cues that encourage the audience to segregate voices. 20 Hemingway, by contrast, often omits everything but dialogue. To borrow his famous image, verbal exchanges are the visible surface of the iceberg; whatever drama floats below must be inferred from the characters'
The difference in stance is easily summarized: Stein locates meaning making outside of the fictional rhetorical situation, while Hemingway firmly grounds it there.

Conversational exchanges are most prominent in the stories gathered in *Men Without Women* (1927). While *In Our Time* (1925) and *Winner Take Nothing* (1933) contain a range of reported speech and thought, Hemingway's second collection is nearly devoid of subjective narrative stances. Few speech acts are summarized, and combined discourse appears in only two stories. Narratorial reticence is so extreme that several stories, including "Hills Like White Elephants" and "The Killers," have become canonical examples of the "behaviorist" or "objective" style of storytelling in which the narrative perspective resembles a camera lens, recording without comment events that pass before its eye. From Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren through Wayne Booth and Seymour Chatman to Gerard Genette and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, the rigorous impersonality of Hemingway's stance manifests a fundamental distrust of language. As I argued in the last chapter, cultural presumptions about gendered language allow direct addresses to be stereotyped as a feminine strategy: the appeal that they voice is somehow excessively emotional and therefore unbecoming a "rational, objective" (i.e. masculine) narrator. If reticence and understatement are (presumably) uncharacteristic of feminine speech, we should not be surprised to find Hemingway's severe economy of expression described as "masculine nudity of the starkest sort" (qtd. in Stephens 62). Unmediated, direct discourse is the purest expression of a man-without-woman style.

What happens when a reader is exposed to "naked" dialogue? Virginia Woolf's review of *Men Without Women* offers some preliminary suggestions:

A writer will always be chary of dialogue because dialogue puts the most violent pressure on the reader's attention. He has to hear, to see, to supply the right tone, and to fill in the background from what the characters say without any help from the author. Therefore, when fictitious people are allowed to speak it must be because they have something so important to say that it stimulates the reader to do rather more than his share of the work of creation. But, although Mr. Hemingway keeps us under the fire of dialogue constantly, his people, half the time, are only saying what the author could say much more economically for
them. At last we are inclined to cry out with the little girl in "Hills Like White Elephants": "Would you please please please please please please please please please please please please please please please stop talking?" (qtd. in Stephens 53)

Jig actually says please seven times, not six, revealing the "violent pressure" applied to Woolf's own attention. Dialogue is an interpersonal device that invites creativity from the audience by asking it to imagine the extraverbal realities (intonation, the temporal "stops" between responses) that shape meaning. Yet the gesture can have an adverse effect: the "tendency to flood the page with unnecessary dialogue" results in a "lack of sharp, unmistakable points by which we can take hold of the story." Without some narratorial intervention, characters may talk just to hear the sound of their own voices.

Equally important, Woolf critiques the link between Hemingway's narrative reticence and his "self-consciously virile" public persona. Part of the review is a response to an advertising blurb announcing that in Men Without Women "the softening feminine influence is absent—either through training, discipline, death, or situation," a line lifted (without permission) from Hemingway's correspondence with Max Perkins, his editor at Scribner's (Selected Letters 245). "The greatest writers lay no stress upon sex one way or another," Woolf argues. Far from being a measure of heroic restraint, reliance on dialogue belies artistic cowardice. She makes her point by appropriating an analogy undoubtedly dear to Hemingway's heart: "Though Mr. Hemingway is brilliantly and enormously skillfull, he lets his dexterity, like the bullfighter's cloak, get between him and the fact." The bullfighter too preoccupied with style can "go through every sort of contortion so that the public thinks one is running every risk and displaying superb gallantry. But the true writer stands close up to the bull and lets the horns—call them life, truth, reality, whatever you like,—pass him close each time." The stories in Men Without Women are "dry and sterile" because dialogue allows the author to avoid that close pass.

Whether one agrees with Woolf's judgment, her review highlights the interpretive difficulties that a reader faces when the narratorial context is elided. The problem is
further complicated because Hemingway's characters frequently sound like their author, or, rather, what audiences expect the author to sound like. They share his preference for simple sentences, imprecise modifiers ("bright," "nice"), proper nouns, and, most important, repetition. What happens when a storyteller's stylistic devices perforate the figural speech and call attention to themselves? Bakhtin calls this phenomenon "stylization," a type of double-voiced discourse in which the audience perceives two perspectives informing the same word, competing to be recognized (Problems 189-90). Typically, Bakhtin writes, dialogue embodies the storyteller's "objectification" of a speech style associated with a certain "characterological type or profile." The audience recognizes a firm boundary between authorial and figural voices; the storyteller's "semantic authority" is never threatened because the figural voices serve an overall authorial design. This is why, according to Bakhtin, dialogue does not automatically create a double-voiced discourse. In stylization, however, the audience recognizes the authorial style within the character's voice, impinging the (relative) autonomy of that objectified type or profile. "A character always speaks in earnest," Bakhtin writes, but when the values publicly associated with Hemingway's style influence the interpretation, characters begin to speak in Ernest. When, for example, the reviewer for the Boston Evening Transcript announces that "there is nothing about his prose or his subject matter that is effeminate," one wonders if he even read "Hills Like White Elephants," one of several stories in Men Without Women that asks the audience to identify with the "softening feminine influence" supposedly eliminated by discipline and training (qtd. in Stephens 63).

Despite this reviewer's judgment, critics generally agree that Hemingway was capable of "present[ing] a woman's point of view and attribut[ing] her plight...to a combination of male self-involvement and self-aggrandizement, a combination of which the text is aware and to which it is not sympathetic" (Baym "Actually," 112). Jig is often introduced as the prime evidence; none of the ambiguity surrounding the characterization
of Margot Macomber surrounds her. Still, stylization in "Hills Like White Elephants" poses an interesting question: what happens when the audience is encouraged to identify with a "woman's point of view" expressed in a style culturally deemed as "masculine"? By way of an answer, I want to focus on Hemingway's repetitions, analyzing their function, first in the dialogue between Jig and her companion, and then in the surrounding authorial context. Stylization works at cross-purposes on these two narrative planes because it prompts two different types of reader response. In the fictional dialogue, repetition is a turn-taking gesture that symbolizes the imbalance of power in the couple's relationship. Jig cannot directly express her feelings because the companion rewrites her words. She can only mimic his language, challenging his control through parody. When mimicry fails to address the imbalance, she simply adopts his strategy, and the conversation breaks off without resolution. Repetition is thus a key device of what Madeline Kahn calls "narrative transvestism...the process by whereby a male author gains access to a culturally defined female voice and sensibility but runs no risk of being trapped in the [culturally] devalued female realm" (6). This thematic pattern develops linearly, a product of narrative sequence that, according to Herbert Zapf, makes the audience "psychically subject to the temporal process of the fiction, to the changes and the promising or disappointing turns of events." Yet repetition appears in the surrounding narratorial context as a literary device that tonally foregrounds the aridity and bleakness of the theme. The pattern here offers potential clues to the unarticulated meaning of the story, the absent "deep structure" that one must infer. According to Zapf, "what happens on the level of narrated events is no more important than what these events signify, how they are to be interpreted and related to other elements and layers of the text" (97). Rather than encourage identification, repetition at this level distances us from the characters. In other words, the narratorial context employs the same repetition strategy that, in the fictional dialogue, prevents Jig from expressing herself in her own conversational style.
Deborah Tannen illustrates how repetition functions in the ideal conversation: the audience speaks not to disagree or interrupt but to confirm its continued receptivity. "Shadowing" a speaker's language creates cohesion because recurring words bond people. Speakers also repeat their own words, either to clarify their meaning or to maintain a running summary of a complex topic. As with most conversational devices, repetition is gender-coded. Men often repeat phrases or words to contest each other's authority, while women repeat to offer support and encouragement (Talking Voices 47-53). In "Hills," however, repetition strategies dramatize each character's need to frame the conversation to a private advantage. Feeling his control over the relationship threatened by Jig's pregnancy, the American continually restates his opinion that the "operation" (the abortion) is "perfectly simple" and causes neither physical nor psychological damage. When Jig intimates that he makes this claim for selfish reasons, he must convince her otherwise and begins repeating a new phrase: "I don't want you to do it if you don't want to." In this "presentational" persuasion strategy, repetition creates a "rhetorical presence" by foregrounding an assertion and forcing the listener to respond (Johnstone 207). Jig, by contrast, imitates his words to undermine the authority that the companion presumes. For a time, she even makes him responsible for broaching intimacy, which she can then reject.

The couple's first exchange illustrates how the companion controls the conversation by redefining terms to his own advantage:

"They look like white elephants," she said.
"I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.
"No, you wouldn't have."
"I might have," the man said. "Just because I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything." (211)

Jig insults the man's imagination when he refuses her invitation to join in the conversation. He responds by challenging her assertion. Substituting "might" for
"wouldn't," he re-writes her words, expunging the pungency. Repeating the original phrase then allows him to dismiss completely the charge: she has no proof. Here the strategy works. Rather than carry on the conversation, Jig looks at the beaded curtain in the doorway of the bar. The exchange captures the asymmetry that provokes her to challenge his authority: the companion claims the right to define the terms in which they will talk.

When Jig repeats the American's words, she redefines his meaning by mimicking his authority. Assuming his voice, she can then reprimand him for his own failure in the relationship:

"It tastes like licorice," the girl said and put the glass down. "That's the way with everything." "Yes," the girl said. "Everything tastes of licorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe." "Oh, cut it out."

Jig describes the taste of the drink, which she apparently does not like, much as she describes the hills as white elephants. The simile is an invitation to talk. Yet the American interprets the comment as a complaint: the flavor is his fault. He communicates his impatience by suggesting that she compares "everything" to licorice. Jig in turn interprets this as implying that she complains too much. She repeats his words, mocking his judgment to point out where he has failed her. Apparently, the companion has been promising absinthe for some time. Regardless of the symbolic importance of licorice and absinthe, the passage exemplifies how repetition empowers Jig, if only momentarily: she can subvert his control by turning his own standards against him. Recognizing this, the American can shore up his eroding authority only by commanding her to stop the parody.

Jig does not stop talking, however. She repeats her own words, transforming them from assertions to questions: "I wanted to try this new drink: That's all we do, isn't it—look at things and try new drinks?" Quoting Robin Lakoff's work on tag
questions ("isn't it"), Pamela Smiley has suggested that Jig turns her assertions into questions because she lacks authority and self-confidence (291-92). I would suggest, rather, that the strategy authorizes Jig to define the relationship. Tag questions may signal a lack of self-assertion, but, as Lakoff has more recently argued, they also function as a more aggressive gesture: they coerce a respondent into agreement by limiting the range of reply to a yes or no (*Talking Power* 247). In this case, the companion passively concurs by echoing Jig's words. "I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?" she asks. "That was bright," he agrees, not attempting to re-frame the statement.

Jig maintains the advantage only momentarily, however. The companion engages his presentational strategy as he tries to convince Jig why the abortion is their best option: "That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy" (212). Whenever Jig voices her suspicion, he reminds her that "if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to," a line repeated five more times. Jig remains unpersuaded, however. The reason is that, as the American tries to sway her, she recognizes that his conversational style enforces her dependence upon him. As he assures her that "I know you wouldn't mind it," he implies that she should defer all decisions to him. She begins to understand that they will never be "all right and...happy" regardless of whether she consents to the abortion. To counter his argument, she asks a series of questions, attempting to re-frame the dialogue to more openly address the inequality in their relationship.

"And you really want to?" [she asked.]
"I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to."
"And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?"
"I love you now. You know I love you."
"I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?"
"I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry."
"If I do it you won't ever worry?"
"I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple."
"Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."
"What do you mean?"
"I don't care about me."
"Well, I care about you."
"Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine."
"I don't want you to do it if you feel that way." (213)

Smiley calls Jig's style in this passage a "direct attack [that] is very uncharacteristic of feminine speech" (294-95). Her questions are uncharacteristic because they do not invite what Tannen calls "rapport talk," conversation in which the discussion of similar experiences establishes the groundwork for mutual support. Instead, she invites simple yes/no responses or "report talk." Jig's use of repetition is likewise uncharacteristic. If the conversational objective of feminine speech is to establish and maintain intimacy, repetition should ratify listenership; by incorporating her companion's words into her own talk, Jig typically would encourage him to continue participating (That's Not What I Meant 62). Instead, she turns his responses into conditions, forcing him to agree or disagree. Repetition allows her to distill from his responses the source of his despair, which he finally admits: his "worry." The implication of "If I do it you won't ever worry?" is that a woman should accommodate a man's happiness, regardless of the sacrifice involved. But when Jig makes this the actual message ("I don't care about me"), challenging the American to confirm what she infers, the admission is too direct for him. He must deny the implications of Jig's statement by resorting to his presentational strategy to insist that the decision really is hers. Jig knows now what she suspected. He may indeed care about her, but his concerns define the relationship.

This passage marks the turning point in the conversation when Jig defers the caretaking to the American. Recognizing his selfishness, her lack of choice, she abandons face-to-face contact, leaving the table to walk to the other end of the station:
"Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the
field of grain and she saw the river through the trees." What the gesture means to each of
them further marks the asymmetry of the conversation. As Tannen argues, women
typically anchor their gaze on a conversant's face to show support, while men regard such
a gesture as a threat or challenge to be employed only when challenging authority (That's
Not What I Meant 83). In this case, Jig tries to focus his gaze away from her immediate
condition, her pregnancy, to make him recognize an alternative future. The landscape
represents the life that they could choose: "And we could have all this," she tells him.
"And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible." Unlike the
brown, barren hills, the fields of grain and the Ebro River promise cyclical regeneration,
an escape from the emotional waste land in which they are trapped. But for the American,
her movement poses the greatest threat yet to his control of the conversation. The
intensity of his gaze is part of his presentational strategy; it forces Jig to look away
toward the table legs or the beaded curtain. But Jig's body language now signals
disengagement to him. Repetition is no longer a means of persuasion: it must keep her
involved in the conversation. Suddenly, the companion is in the position of maintaining
the talk. Unable to understand what she means by "making it more impossible," he asks
"What did you say?" But Jig interprets the question as a sign of his indifference to her
feelings, and she abandons any elaboration:

"I said we could have everything."
"We can have everything."
"No, we can't."
"We can have the whole world."
"No, we can't. It isn't ours anymore." (213)

Jig adopts the presentational strategy, repeating words to re-frame the conversation in her
favor, making the American deal with her dissatisfaction. But the companion always
imposes his superior judgment, sending messages that reinforce her inferiority: "Come
back in the shade," he says. "You mustn't feel that way." No longer allowing him to
dominate, she challenges his authority by interrupting him, mocking his faith in his own knowledge. The aggression does not satisfy her, however. When she finally returns to the table, she recognizes that he will choose death over life. She now looks at the dry side of the valley, leaving him anchoring his gaze on her:

"Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along." [said Jig.]
"Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want any one else. And I know it's perfectly simple."
"Yes, you know it's perfectly simple."
"It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it." (214)

Frustrated by his presumptions, she mocks the affective force of his repetition strategy in order to halt the conversation completely: "Would you please please please please please please please please please stop talking?" But not even this dampens the companion's need to persuade. He insists again that he wants only what she does, and Jig makes her point even more emphatically: "I'll scream," she promises. The lengths that Jig must go to free herself from the companion's conversational frame only traps her deeper within it: threatening to scream, she becomes the woman without an argument, without language. As if recognizing this predicament, she adopts an artificial economy of emotion. Rather than reveal the mixed shade of her confusion, she speaks in primary colors. "Do you feel better?" the companion asks after carrying their bags to meet the oncoming train. "I feel fine," Jig replies. "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine."

As my reading suggests, the linear flow of the story gears our sympathy toward Jig by dramatizing her disadvantage in the asymmetry of the conversation. The companion's empty repetition impedes the give-and-take of dialogue by effecting an emotional stutter: he says again and again what he wants Jig to believe. At two curious points in the narrative, however, Hemingway employs this same presentational repetition strategy that his story attacks. Both instances center on exchanges between the couple and the Spanish woman tending bar at the train station:
"We want two Anis del Toro." [he tells the bartender]
"With water?"
"Do you want it with water?"
"I don't know," the girl said. "Is it good with water?"
"It's all right."
"You want them with water?" asked the woman.
"Yes, with water."

In the fictional world, the words "with water" are not repeated four times. The companion and the woman speak in Spanish, which Jig does not understand. The storyteller translates the passage into the narrative style. The repetition, "audible" only in the reading and not in the fictional conversation itself, cues the audience to the elemental significance of water in the "dry" valley. A similar (if less exaggerated) incident occurs toward the end of the story, after Jig promises to scream if the American does not stop talking.

The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. "The train comes in five minutes," she said.
"What did she say?" asked the girl.
"That the train is coming in five minutes."

Again, the storyteller translates the language of the figural voice into English; as a result, a pattern of repetition is created on the narrative plane that is not heard in the fictional world. What does this contribute to the story? One might suggest that it dramatizes Jig's dependence on the companion, yet we recognize that point without sharing the experience. Only if the passages were written in the "original" Spanish would the audience (at least those not fluent in the language) feel Jig's isolation. Accounting for the translation breaks the identification with Jig. It momentarily relocates us from the sensory immediacy of the fictional world to the upper atmosphere of its telling. As a device, repetition here illustrates a central theme of the story: the death of communication. Consciously or not, Hemingway "raises" his voice at these two moments to heighten recognition of the theme.
This, in fact, is the common perception of Hemingway's career: that his "presentational" strategy became increasingly prominent so that repetition and other devices degenerated into mannerisms. In these arguments, *Men Without Women* commonly marks the point where the style failed to mature. Significantly, it was during this period (the late 1920s) that the publicity press promoted the link between Hemingway's authorial ethos and his style. (The most famous example is Dorothy Parker's 1929 *New Yorker* profile, in which the code of "grace under pressure" receives its fullest and most sincere analysis). Just how loudly Hemingway's voice speaks in the reading act depends upon more than simple knowledge of his public identity, however. Frank O'Connor, for example, traces several patterns of repetition in "Hills," concluding that their pros and cons cancel out each other. On the one hand, the strategy produces a "hypnotic effect." yet (echoing Virginia Wolfe's criticism) it flattens the drama within the character's talk: "Dialogue, the autonomous element of drama, begins to blur, and the conversation becomes more like the conversation of alcoholics, drug addicts, or experts in Basic English" (161-63). O'Connor's argument contrasts sharply with Dwight Macdonald's; writing a year earlier (1962), MacDonald argues that the repetitive dialogue contributes to the overall effect: Jig's seven *pleases* inspire "a tightening of the scalp that tells one an artist has made his point" (173). His appreciation for "Hills" is all the more curious since his essay (a vituperative postmortem on Hemingway's heroic code in the wake of his 1961 suicide) is unremittingly negative. Much of the piece, in fact, parodies Hemingway's style: "It was a kind of inspired baby-talk when he was going good. When he was not going good, it was just baby talk" (167; recall that Stein's style was also dismissed as "baby talk"). Whereas O'Connor is writing specifically on the short story, Macdonald claims that the style in "Hills" is effective by comparison with *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). According to Macdonald, Hemingway was a good storywriter but not a good novelist, and therefore an incomplete artist. The two assessments illustrate the lack of an easy equation for measuring the effect of the author function. A greater
distaste for the authorial persona does not necessarily mean that the voice will "sound" louder in the reading act.

The relationship between the values associated with the authorial persona and their stylistic expression can be measured in another way. A famous pair of stories from the mid-1930s, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" depart radically from the stereotyped Hemingway style. Rather than omit, they absorb; rather than develop centripetally, they expand centrifugally. "Macomber" breaks the tradition of narratorial effacement that "Hills" embodies with shifts to the perspectives of its three major characters (not to mention a lion as it is shot to death); "Snows" contains long, interpolated passages, staged in combined discourse, in which the dying writer remembers all the stories that he failed to get onto paper. This narratorial expansiveness dilutes the intermixed patterns of repetition and dialogue typical in Men Without Women. Yet the change in style went unnoticed in the late 1930s (and remains relatively unexplored today) because the authorial ethos is so ingrained in the thematic and symbolic planes of the stories. Both "Macomber" and "Snows" manifest an obsessive concern with masculinity in the face of death, ritual violence and sport, an open hostility toward "rich bitch" wives—in short, they court an identification with Hemingway's public image that blinds many audiences to the stylistic transformations. The author himself seems to have recognized this. As he and Scribner's editor Max Perkins prepared The First Forty-nine Stories for publication in 1938, he predicted a "gang-up" by reviewers: "I don't think it is persecution mania or egotism if I say that there are a lot of critics who really seem to hate me very much and would like to put me out of business" (Selected Letters 470). The defensiveness permeates the introduction to the collection as he seems to admit that his style has dulled: "In going where you have to go, and doing what you have to do, and seeing what you have to see, you dull and blunt the instrument you write with. But I would rather have it bent and dull and know I had to put it on the grindstone again and hammer it into shape and put a whetstone to it, and know that I had something to
write about, than to have it bright and shining and nothing to say, or smooth and well-oiled in the closet, but unused" (Complete Short Stories 3-4). It is vintage Hemingway: the portrait of the artist as a craftsman. But this is a particularly modernized version of the storyteller, for, unlike Benjamin's nostalgic vision of community and counsel, the final product does not lend itself to mutual experience. What Hemingway puts to the grindstone as he sharpens his style is, quite simply, his own public image.

Djuna Barnes: Combined Discourse and Parody

The same newspaper that celebrated Men Without Women as "naked" art had, five years earlier, dismissed Djuna Barnes's A Book as decadent "cesspool literature." Another reviewer suggested that "after finishing this book, one finds it necessary to stick pins in oneself...to see if there is anything real and normal in the world" (qtd. in Messerli Bibliography, 91-92). Forty years later, still another critic complained that Spillway, a collection of radically revised stories from the 1920s, manifests "egoism and emptiness," full of moments that "reveal little in themselves, dealing as they do, with attitudinising [sic], oddly clad, unreal figures like nineteenth-century fashion plates" (qtd. in Messerli Bibliography, 118). 23 The criticism is not atypical of commentary on Barnes's stories; for many readers, past and present, there is too much "rhetoric," too many flat characters, and the plots are too bizarre to stomach. Perhaps Julian Symons, perceiving Poe's influence in the combination of macabre scenario and erudite language, puts it most kindly when he says that "nothing may be reasonable, but everything is explained" (192-93). While Hemingway's narratorial reticence complemented a "hard-boiled" public persona, Barnes's lyrical, idiomatic style suggested a haughty, aloof bohemian, far more interested in affectation than audience appeal. 24 Such charges overlook the influence of the sensational New York dailies on her writing (just as the straight-arrow Toronto Star shaped Hemingway's telegraphic prose), not to mention her freelance writing for mass-market magazines like McCall's, Harper's, Vanity Fair, and Smart Set. Still, her
"manner" inspired jokes as derisive as the "baby talk" jibe levelled at Stein. Ezra Pound, whose appreciation for Barnes's work dimmed when she declined to sleep with him (she "weren't too cuddly," he complained), wrote a scurrilous invective announcing that "her blubbery prose had no fingers or toes" (qtd. in Field Djuna, 108).

Accusations of "blubbery prose" presuppose an artificial distinction between content and expression in which words veil or obscure the clarity of meaning. Feminist critics locate a barely disguised misogyny in this interpretive stance. As Shari Benstock suggests, "The text [is] likened to a woman's body whose envelope (style or code) must be broken in order for the substance to be recovered and explained. Reading is rape, a submission of the text (woman) to patriarchal (critical) priorities" (Women 246). Barnes's stories are more vulnerable to this abuse than her longer works. The novel arises from a tradition of rhetorical luxuriance; encyclopedic forms even demand what is derogatorily called "digression." If one reads Ryder and Nightwood as anatomies (Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy was one of her favorite books, and Nightwood was originally subtitled "Anatomy of Night"), accusations of rhetorical excess are misinformed and misogynistic. The compact space of the short story, on the other hand, enhances the illusory split between style and subject. 25 This leads to oversimplified readings in which Barnes's lyricism robs characters of mimetic life: they are never more than gimmicky, "attitudinising" phrases. Her use of combined discourse should clue us to the faultiness of such judgment. The commingling of authorial and figural voices reveals that style itself is composed of the particular speech patterns that give characters their mimetic resonance.

To put it another way, Barnes's narrative voice is a mosaic of what Bakhtin calls "character zones," those "fragments of character speech... from scattered words, sayings, and verbal ties belonging to someone else's speech [to] those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipses, questions, exclamations)" (Discourse 316). Idioms are more than "verbal ties" and "expressive indicators," of course; they
resonate with ideologies that reflect their place in a culture's hierarchy of social discourse. In this sense, combined discourse challenges us to recognize the expressive independence of these voices while insisting on their social interdependence. The text must "school" its audience "to organize its semantic continuum into the appropriate voices" (McHale 273). At first glance, this interpretive task is not daunting. Because "Run Girls, Run" is set against medieval and Renaissance backdrops, archaic words and rhythmic syntax (whole paragraphs are written in unbroken iambic pentameter) should indicate immersion into the figural voices. The problem complicates, however, when one realizes that Barnes parodies these voices. Passages of Elizabethan and Jacobean vernacular ring with ironic, modern inflections. As a series of vignettes that lampoons historical stereotypes of women, the text stages a dialogue between a female perspective and patriarchal language. Combined discourse allows Barnes to replicate in the audience's reading a woman's experience within "man-made" language: we become "embroiled in the hopeless task of trying to decode or decipher a strange and incomprehensible reality...[which we experience] as an immense hieroglyph, needing to be deciphered" (Kolodny "Some Notes," 44). The paradox is that while Barnes parodies the authoritative voices that delimit womanhood, the audience must ascribe a greater amount of narrative authority to her in order to decode the text. Because the substance of a parody arises from how one voice exaggerates another, the author function by necessity plays a more overt role in the interpretive process. We cannot infer irony without ascribing an intent. In "Hills Like White Elephants," stylized repetition suggests that we may sense an author speaking louder than his characters, drowning them out. Parody in "Run Girls, Run," by contrast, implies that the author speaks under her breath.

The influence of the author function on reading is problematic here because the story is relatively obscure. Published in March 1936 in a two-issue periodical called *Caravel* (as if foreseeing the magazine's imminent demise, the editors did not bother to number its pages), "Run Girls, Run" was virtually lost before Frank Hallman reprinted it
with "Vagaries Malicieux" in 1974. (As Hank O'Neal mentions in his "informal" memoir of Barnes's later years, this edition was pirated; Barnes herself claimed that she never saw a copy of it [21].) Despite its recent availability, no biography or scholarly article has ever discussed the story. Without the typical interpretive accoutrements (critical commentary, letters, journals) that shape an audience's awareness of the storyteller's relationship to his/her text, "Run Girls, Run" is as "authorless" a text as one can find by a canonical modernist. An explanation for this obscurity may reside within the story itself. Originally a chapter of Nightwood, the story makes constant intertextual references that, without its broader context, are as elusive as they are allusive. Reading "Run Girls, Run" without some knowledge of the themes and rhetorical strategies of the novel is not unlike hearing a joke in a foreign language: one senses from the rhythm and intonation that something humorous is being said, but the punch line is funny more for the sound than the sense. Alongside the novel, however, the story becomes one of the many extended discourses on history and sexuality delivered by Matthew O'Connor, the cross-dressing gynecologist-philosopher who stands at the center of Barnes's narrative maelstrom. My approach then is to draw an extended contrast between the textual clues that signal parody within the story and the meanings that develop and accrue when a reader looks outside the text. The matrix of mythological and Renaissance allusions at the core of the story strikes me as fundamentally ambivalent when it comes to prompting an interpretive stance. On the one hand, their significance is broadly cultural, and, like many modernists, Barnes might be said to adapt them as a structure for "giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," as T. S. Eliot wrote of Ulysses. Yet the ambivalence toward history manifest in Nightwood suggests that she resists that "shape and significance." The relationship between the short story and the novel, a dialectic of internal and external meaning, is paradigmatic of the relationship between the marginal individual and history that both dramatize. Julie L. Abraham points to an important sentence in Nightwood in which
Felix Volkbein, a dispossessed Jew, feels that "the great past might mend a little if he bowed low enough, if he succumbed and gave homage" (9). The chapter title, "Bow Down" (originally the title of the novel), implies that liminal individuals must "abase" themselves, succumbing to stereotype, to be absorbed into history. According to Abraham, Barnes's narrative strategy plays off this tension between how history is told and how it really happens (258). "Tell the story of the world to the world!" demands Dr. O'Connor (161); this is precisely what the parodic voice does in "Run Girls, Run."

Within the text itself, the "double-voicing" of the narration arises from a formal clash between oral and written strands. Charles Jones has argued that the ironic effect of combined discourse arises from a juxtaposition of informal and formal styles. Because direct speech evokes oral conversation, colloquialisms typically distinguish figural voices from the narrator's "literary" voice; the sudden air of informality within formal narration creates a satiric dissonance. Hypothetically, the greater the juxtaposition, the more obvious the "register of irony" (73). By associating speech exclusively with the colloquial, Jones ignores formal oral discourses: epic poetry, opera, oratory, all dramatic genres that fascinated Barnes. Once a playwright and actress with the Provincetown Playhouse, her work draws from "ritual folk music-theatre in which characters give disconnected recitatives (sometimes in mime, sometimes playing instruments, speaking, singing)" (Field Djuna, 183). Both Ryder and Nightwood incorporate oral discourses like the lullaby, the sermon, and the riddle into their sui-generis textures (Ponsot 95). In the early 1930s, Barnes supported herself as a critic for Theatre Guild Magazine. One essay from the era, "Hamlet's Custard Pie," even calls for a return to the verbal richness of Elizabethan language. Significantly, only two fragments of direct speech appear in "Run Girls, Run," and both are soliloquies, perhaps the quintessential "disconnected recitatif." The juxtaposition that Jones posits does operate in the story, but the parody arises when typographic devices (parentheses, capitalization, and spelling) interject irony into the oracular style.
The opening lines reveal the "double-voiced" nature of the narration: "In the days when three sorts of nature but made a man; when the Marquis had no Seningalt, and the Chevalier d'Eon had yet to raise his petticoat to posterity; when...the night covered all for the gossips of dawn...we had this story—the first of its kind, though those that followed were as like as the links in the ankle chain of a convict" (31). The epic register speaks with the authority of tradition; the oral formula that defines the scope of history ("in the days...") minimalizes the "unmanliness" of the Marquis and the Chevalier by consigning them to the "night" (i.e. out of history, where they are the subject of gossip). The second voice speaks for those excluded, revealing how history perpetuates itself by repeating narratives until they become myth, lore, and other "links" that shackle identity. The first voice is masculine: tradition is defined as "the days of our fathers." The secondary voice identifies the "convicts" as those women, mothers and wives, who become the subject of (or are subjected to) history. The adulteress, the ingenue, the prostitute, the hag, the libertine, and the jealous wife all embody female desire in male narratives. One by one, the dialogue instigated by the second voice rewrites these stories.

The first scenario, the adultery narrative, introduces a pattern of recurring print inflections. The first father is identified with Christ by a capitalized "He," but any air of divinity is quickly undercut by a parenthetical insertion that links him to Othello: he has "a bit of a Moor" in him, and his nightshirt is "bespattered with the wine of thanksgiving." The equation of masculine sexuality and divine right is further undermined by the husband's name, "Don Juan B.C.," which is at once an anachronism (dating from the 17th-century, long after Christ) and an anomaly: this Don is neither dandy nor seducer but an impotent cuckold. His wife "had borne him no sons but a thundering head brace of thorns, having diddled and horned him on every one of his fleecy temples..." The subtle substitution of "thorns" for "horns" links crucifixion with adultery. With his "fleecy" temples, Don is the lamb of God, his pride martyred in the name of monogamy. An epic catalogue lists the wife's adulterous liaisons: a soldier, a senator, a huntsman, a
headsman, a carpenter, a bishop, and "the power behind the Throne," to name just a few. The severity of her "sin" is deflated both by the exaggerated length of the list (at least eleven lovers, not including an unspecified number of "stew boys") and mock-judgmental aphorisms offered in parenthetical asides: "women love the stoop in conquer," "a woman will sidle up to a climax." The first phrase echoes both Goldsmith's play and Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in which the typist "stoops to folly" with a "carbuncular" lover. In those scenarios, the women are seduced, but here the wife is the aggressor. The lover with whom she stoops is a "galley-slave without an oar," his phallic inadequacy symbolic of his social inferiority. For Don Juan, it is bad enough that his wife is unfaithful; she sleeps across the very class boundaries that define his status as a "gentleman." Adultery doubly insults his authority. The "climax" judgment alludes to the traditional duplicity ascribed to female desire, the idea that if a woman enjoys sex she must have more than pleasure in mind. Here, the wife colludes with "the power behind the Throne," the ultimate threat to Don Juan's domestic authority. But "climax" also refers to the conclusion of the catalogue itself; patterned on the rhythm of male sexuality ("tumescence and detumescence...tension and resolution...intensification [and] consummation" [Scholes 26]), the oral formula incorporates and assimilates, lists property and possession, all the while structuring its constituent parts into a hierarchy. A catalogue of adulterous conquests is inherently oxymoronic; the content mocks the heroic rhythm of the mode. The parody intensifies as Barnes places these judgments within parentheses, a marginal space symbolic of the marginality of women's culture. From this textual site, the ironic voice comments upon the action, ridiculing and revising the narration.

Throughout the story, these parenthetical asides signal what might be called "phallic deflations." Another lover, a priest, is "nowhere to blame had his breviary been bigger." The thinness of his hymnal not only fails to prevent his seduction; it alludes to his sexual inadequacy, much as the absent oar handicapped the galley-slave. As Don sneaks upon his wife's bed chamber, he doffs his "ton of Toledo cod-work (protecting
what she had never respected)," the aside asserting and lampooning his supremacy.
Without his cod piece attached, Don's masculinity literally withers. He transforms into
Richard the Lion-hearted, "crying like a gosling," but his self-pity is self-serving: his
wife's sexuality threatens his identity, but "his man's eye," as another parenthesis
reveals, "was embroidered all over with vestal lace making his grief slightly dubious" (33).
Draped suddenly in women's clothing (the vestal lace), he is less than a cuckold:
her adultery reduces him to a state of virginity. Don knows that killing his wife with an
Othello-like smother is part of a long tradition, "a bolster from Stratford": "Jump back
into folk-lore, that old rhyme-makers may toughen their teeth on you," he cries as he
suffocates her. "The sooner I'm done with you, that sooner will you be sung of!" (33).
But even murder cannot assuage Don's lost power; he breaks down "in the classic
manner" and begins a long soliloquy meant to justify his crime as a preservation of
tradition. His speech is notable for its declamatory style: nearly every utterance ends
with an exclamation point. "Hey nonnie, I weep like a tiger in stripes for a whelp crying
'Mother!' high on a spear's end, in doing away with your habits, which were, God
knows, of the worst!...right or wrong, payment of sin always finds a head-under-pillow!
So, when I marry again at ninety, my other daughter will be a fin from another fish, blind
of an eye for the generation's sake. And will she fore-fear the blood! She will, when she
learns that you were cooled with a pillow!" (34).

Barnes parodies here the long tradition in Elizabethan theater of the *ars moriendi*,
the art of dying well, through which heroines from Ophelia and Desdemona to the titular
character of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* maintain heavenly virtue in the midst of
their violent death. This "poor slut," however, literally goes kicking and screaming, and
even after a long round of suffocation is "not dead yet by a damned sight." Only after she
strikes a series of tragic poses, her voice reduced to "Nay! Nay! Nay!" does she
succumb: "her hands went as high as her crown, and her hands went as high as her eyes,
and her hands went as high as her mouth...and with that her hands had no more ways,
and her soul roared from the portal." Exaggerating the iconography of death, the ironic voice transforms tragedy into physical comedy. If deathbed scenes in the Elizabethan theater were cathartic spectacles, Barnes turns them into sheer farce. The gestures of the dying adulteress are no more exaggerated than Don's exclamatory speech; his anxiety for his heroic status manifests hysteria. The corpse of the adulteress becomes a spectacle for public catharsis as the "many faced populace" tosses "shock-blossoms" upon her funeral procession, "never so pleasantly pleased as when pelting history new made in its own courtyard." Don accompanies the casket, still striking wounded poses so he now resembles Little Lord Fauntleroy, "shaken with a lad's grief, though of course a man among MEN" (34). Capitalization asserts and deflates titular status; Don's minions include the "Lord of the Breeches" and the "Lady of the Hose."

The description of the corpse is a bitterly ironic passage that introduces another parodic touchstone. Susan Snaider Lanser has noted the presence in Barnes's writing of a "gynocentric sexual rhetoric...[in which] terms for the female body—furrow, nook, path, keyhole, whorl, crevice, conch shell...are clearly designed to counteract emerging Freudian notions of phallic supremacy and clitoral insufficiency" ("Speaking" 162). Similar imagery pervades "Run Girls, Run," but with a less obvious "gynocentric" revision. Because the narratorial voice assumes the tenor of history, vaginal imagery, on the surface, evokes fear of the unknown: "They snatched her up and sealed her with wax (better for her had it been done in her lifetime)." The custom of sealing the corpse's orifices provides a startling metaphor for cultural strictures on female sexuality. The parenthetical utterance has two meanings: according to the primary voice, a woman's chastity must be enforced by whatever means necessary. But the ironic voice implies that unexpressed desire results in a death-in-life state. With its sexual sites waxed over and plugged, the corpse becomes a figurine, evoking the doll imagery prevalent throughout both *Nightwood* and the bulk of Barnes's short stories (Ferguson 29-30). Swathed in "trumpery satin," the dead wife is "a fright of a gaud," attractive because "a woman packs
close [draws a crowd] when she has died of suspicion." Here the ironic voice parodies the lure of a woman's tragedy. "Gaud" is a homonym for "God," again revealing the punning inversion of meaning that the ironic voice effects on the primary, oral voice.

The second vignette introduces another parodic device, the deliberative question. In "Life in the Iron Mills," interrogatives allow Davis's narrator to posit a moral standard against which the reader's sympathy for the mill workers was measured. As a tool of reproach, it fashions a superior rhetorical footing, a key component of the "distancing" strategy. Its function in "Run Girls, Run" is slightly different: as in oral literatures, the tone is deliberative, not challenging. It voices the mystery of nature, here associated with female sexuality through fertility myths. The "next [convict] in line" is Nancy, who, despite her family's best efforts, loses her virginity. She is impregnated without her knowledge. For the primary voice, the ambiguous borderline between the asexual girl and the sexual woman is a mystery of cultivation: "What had been up to her nines that controversy roved her marrow at such an early age? Was she a child, or was she not, when she first ate her porridge? Was she a woman, when a woman, she split to the harvest?...Or was it ignorance, plain and simple, that reaped her eye-sockets of trouble?" (34-35). The ironic voice subtly answers the mystery by alluding to pseudo-incest narratives, from Greek mythology (Zeus' numerous seductions) to Christian doctrine (the immaculate conception). Nancy's troubles begin when she discovers a plover's egg; the parenthetical voice underscores the persistence of the seduction narrative by admitting that "I may have the wrong egg." As the father/seducer figure goes unaccused, his identity unknown, the moral weight of the illegitimate birth falls upon the woman's shoulders. If Don Juan recovered his threatened masculinity through blustery exclamations, Nancy's soliloquy is marked by deliberative questions. Each night she asks herself: "Now how was it? And why was it? And who was it, by damn?" (35). According to the primary voice, a man regards female sexuality as a devious, subversive force; for a woman herself, however, it is not even a conscious power.
If the funeral fineries draped upon the murdered adulteress transform her into a child-like doll, Nancy's costume is meant to ensure her chastity. The mystery of the pregnancy rests on how the unknown father was able to "plough up the borders of [her] caution" while she harvests the family fields. Her clothes are meant to be a protection against such a fate, but "tucked up as neat as a hen's pinions," they are a form of imprisonment, "pinioning" her. Moral traditions established by patriarchal rule should curtail illicit passions; at Nancy's home, however, "every fire in the house," the passions of the family romance, are "kept burning and roaring away with leaves snatched from the Bible and The Book of Creation, the Zend Avista, and the Zohar." Her mother "darn[s] maxims...into hosen," weaving a moral chastity belt. Yet the very "thou-shalt-nots" sewn into the "family crotch work" provoke the threat of incest that controls women's sexuality. Nothing enforces a taboo like a broken one. The sense that female sexuality should serve only reproductive ends is both asserted and ridiculed: "Was she perhaps noosed in a caul?" The narrator alludes to the superstition that the caul, the membrane that covers the head of a fetus, is a sign of good luck. Here, however, as a "noose," the phrase is less prophetic than fateful: Nancy has no power to question it (35). Incest is a disturbing subtext throughout Barnes's writings; here she dramatizes the victim's awareness that silence turns her into the criminal: "I'll be called a witch at the weather, be tarred for a warning and feathered for fear's sake, be burned in the market, or ducked in a pond" (36).

The third tale makes the strongest connection with Nightwood by drawing an extended analogy between women's cultural marginality and the Jewish diaspora. Nell assumes the identity of a Saxon, with a "saxe-blue bonnet" and a "breastful of bosoms strapped into a keel-shaped corset from old Spitzburgen." Here orthography marks the irony: the name of the Norwegian Islands (Spitsbergen) is Germanized, alluding to the Nazi propaganda of Aryan beauty and purity circulating through post-Weimar Germany, a subtext of Nightwood as well. Despite the disguises, Nell remains "a wandering
A Jewess, ladled up handsomely from the vat of the Hebrew," with gloves of "plausible suede from Mount Sinai" and "ten good yards of Ghetto taffeta" for a dress (36). Homeless, Nell becomes a "heathen," her tragedy another spectacle, worthy of Thomas Gainsborough, the English painter: "Observe her poses. Impressive!" The ironic voice parodies fascination with the prostitute who stands with "her hand on her hip, her hip on a tilt, on her arm at the full, a reticule bulging with scraps swept from Parliament Street up Sinister Lane" (37). The bulging purse becomes the synecdoche of her social identity, dramatizing the connection between her sexuality and economic survival. Stuffed with remnants of her subsistence living, its "bulging" evokes masculine genitalia as well, so the reticule symbolizes the occupation of the vagina, the penetration that Nell must promise the "sailors closing in on her from all seas' life" if she is to stay alive. Parenthetical insertions again signal a parodic undercurrent as Nell sings "in falsetto (the voice we all come to) 'Only A Bird In A Gilded Cage' (God, what a voice!), changing from largo to largo retardo as she breaks into the strains of 'You Would Not Dare To Insult Me If My Brother Were Here.'" The pun on "come" foregrounds and exaggerates the erotic attraction of a "fallen" woman.

A deliberative question voices the voyeurism of that attraction: "So did she, holding on to the hand of her illegitimate daughter, on the instant of passing a beautiful deep-seated cistern, throw herself in by mistake?...She did and was a wet sighing seawork in less than a month." The suicide passes unnoticed; Nell's body decomposes, absorbed in vapor and sent down in rain. In the most surreal vignette, her daughter gains celebrity as "the ugliest woman in history (dating about the Voltaire period)," the parenthesis parodying the arbitrary dating of tradition. The orphan (whose name is never given) evokes an older tradition, the female grotesque, which Barnes knew from her reading of Rabelais. As a "dog-faced Girl" who grows "fat as a pudding" and takes "to loud barking [like] a beagle pointing herself by the scruff of her neck," she embodies the paradox of the grotesque body: she transgresses the idealized feminine beauty that her
mother embodied, yet that indifference is itself idealized and appropriated into a masculine
tradition of rebellion (Russo 218-19): "Men hunted her in the spring like hounds; they
plunged through the snow, sleet, rain, all for a word with her about it...in the end she
was traced back into Perugia by fools-cap and urine, all the way out of Egypt and over the
Andes into Peru" (28). In a scene that evokes the "ambivalent" imagery of "pregnant
death" from Ryder (Ponsot 108), she gives birth not to a child but to "the Bird of her
Soul, which pecking on a long seam came out at her navel, and on flat wings flew straight
into the Face of Convention." The "bird" or child astonishes "the Elders" of heaven by
rewriting mythology: she becomes "large of Leda, who [turns] out to be a boy with a
Greek face." The gender roles are reversed: the bird is a woman whose Zeus-like
sexuality astonishes the gods. Stunned to discover the shape and contours of his own
body, Leda contorts himself into a mock-erotic position, "never having heard there's
nothing much on the back" (38). By reversing roles in the rape scene, the ironic voice
transforms death into liberty. Free from the body, the androgynous soul obtains a fuller
identity.

The final vignette offers two visions of the bestial woman: Hazel the sexual
libertine and Frampucca the jealous, devious virago. We first see Hazel fainting at the
"milk-white knob" of her father's house. A parenthetical aside distinguishes her from the
other women: "no babe whimpered at the breast bone nor was there snow in the air."
Hazel has been "hot-footing it down the paternal ivy facing Main Street" with her
boyfriend. Her father accuses her of "setting her chin out from the family" and promptly
tosses her out, but not before "beard[ing] her night trick," again, an ambiguous reference
to incest. The Lord offers her to Frampucca's frazzled butcher-husband, Gonzales, as an
extramarital gift for "having taken in marriage a Christ day resenter, a terrible creature
who walked on her two feet as if they were four, whose one eye was dour for the sake of
the other" (39). To hide their liaison, Hazel dresses as a boy in galligaskins and calls
herself Gavin, but the body cannot be hidden beneath clothes: Frampucca recognizes that
she "was no more girl than the pout of her breeks [breeches] would suggest" (39). But Gonzales and Hazel are hardly discrete. They take to "sweet kissing" under a "mythically roving moon" in "gall-spotted pastures," their audacity transforming the landscape. "Could matters so stand?"

The jealous wife murders Hazel because "lore must be served; tragedy must come from all points of the compass. The Hellenic gesture, Epic injustice, were in those days, things that did not see the the brains of scholars alone; oftimes the exceeding small inch of damnation called a feminine skull could catch out scorpions, and such an inch had Frampucca" (39-40). Barnes dramatizes the murder as a parodic aggression against female sexuality. Unlike Don Juan B.C., whose revenge is spontaneous, a momentary but justifiable loss of control (a crime of passion, in other words), Frampucca concocts a grotesque, premeditated demise for her rival: Hazel is roasted alive "like a queen in her chamber" in the belly of Gonzales' best white ox.

Frampucca's bestial nature is an affront to Gonzales's masculinity. "Scattered and harried by the hell in his wife," he recalls Don Juan B.C. with his head of "fleecy thorns" (40). He hardly seems worthy of the bull, "the hero of the herd," whose fertility is figured into the arch of its horns. While the ox models "a gibbus [a rounded bulge] of plenty against the night sky," Gonzales scurries about in an apron, his tapes "stiff as the switch in the tail of an ass, what with hurrying hither and yon at her bidding." Yet Hazel's murder, far from further diminishing his phallic power, confers on Gonzales a tragic status. No longer an ass, he assumes the imagery of a soldier: "Who was it gave out that long wailing cry like a bell torn from the arms of the hour? Gonzales going head forward, headlong, at battle alone" (41). While the murder bears an obvious negative effect on the two women, it catalyzes the masculinity Gonzales has long lacked, much as the funeral possession confers on Don Juan B.C. the solemnness that he lacks in marriage. The transformation is the most egregious display of the bias of history: if the
primary voice is masculine, as the opening invocation suggests, Barnes implies that, whatever its truth, history is told to the advantage of its authors.

She caps the point by ending the story with a one-line memorial to these victims: "Farewell, Ladies, farewell! farewell!" (41). The phrase implies less concern with the tragedy of the women than their value as tragic figures. An inversion of the title, it brings the text to an ironic full circle. The title urges women to escape history, but the farewell suggests that, simply for their lives to make the official record, they must submit to the historical patterns of identity established by myth and legend. In the section of the novel from which "Run Girls, Run" was most likely excised (the "Watchman, What of the Night?" chapter), Matthew O'Connor declares that "man makes history with the one hand and 'holds it up' with the other" (90). He uses the word "man" generically here, but his long "tirade" against history clearly identifies its authors as male. They control the day and exile all others to the night, an exile specifically dramatized in the opening lines of "Run Girls, Run." In the novel, the characterization of O'Connor is a tour de force of androgynous layerings: a woman trapped in the body of a man wearing a woman's flannel nightgown and wig. Even disembodied in the short story, the acidic humor of this doubled voice burns through the body of history that it sets forth.

Richard Wright: Combined Discourse and Empathy

Barnes and Richard Wright both reviewed Stein's last work, Wars I Have Seen (1945). Barnes, who had long cultivated a personal antipathy for the matriarch of Paris exile, dismissed the book as an aesthetic exercise. Writing in Contemporary Jewish Record (the forerunner of Commentary), she found Stein's language predictably self-centered, insulated, oblivious to the moral devastation of fascism and Nazism ("Primer" 342-43). By contrast, Wright was so enthusiastic that the resulting autobiographical reminiscence, which compares Stein to his grandmother, had to be cut to fit the book-review format of P. M. Magazine. The published fragment, roughly one-third of the
original essay, describes his discovery of "Melanctha," the centerpiece of *Three Lives*, in the early 1930s: "My ears were opened for the first time to the magic of the spoken word. I began to hear the speech of my grandmother, who spoke a deep, pure Negro dialect. All of my life I had been only half hearing, but Miss Stein's struggling words made the speech of the people around me vivid. From that moment on, in my attempts at writing, I was able to tap at will the vast pool of living words that swirled around me" (247). He admits having worried about "worshipping decadence" by admiring a writer who, according to fellow left-wing critics, was "tainted with the spirit of the counter-revolution." so he concocted an "experiment" to test the accuracy of her prose: "I gathered a group of semi-literate Negro stockyard workers...into a Black Belt basement and read 'Melanctha' aloud to them....Enthralled, they slapped their thighs, howled, laughed, stomped and interrupted me constantly to comment upon the characters" (248).

Both reviews are deeply personal and political; both are surrounded by historical ironies. Not long after Barnes accused Stein of political apathy, her own work came under similar attack. Wright's affection for "Melanctha," meanwhile, is intriguing in light of his criticism of several Afro-American writers for "curtsying" to white expectations of black speech. The unpublished essay, "Memories of My Grandmother," links Stein's vernacular to rhythms in jazz and scat, bridging her modernist surrealism with Afro-American oral traditions. As Gayl Jones notes, several writers of color have found in "Melanctha" echoes of "the incremental repetition and syntactical details of blues balladry, and in the fragmentations and juxtapositions the effect of African American jazz" (75). For Wright, however, minority-culture folklore lacks the authority that he hopes to establish for his voice. While advocating an awareness of these traditions, he more typically describes his art as an appropriation of the dominant culture's literary styles: "I took these techniques [of "white writers"], these ways of seeing and feeling, and twisted them, bent them, adapted them, until they became my ways of apprehending the locked-in life of the Black Belt Areas" ("How 'Bigger' Was Born" xvi). The claim is illustrated in
another autobiographical writing where he describes spending "hours and days pounding out disconnected sentences for the sheer love of words" in homage to *Three Lives* (*American Hunger* 21-22). The results hardly evoke "Melanctha," reflecting instead Wright's burgeoning naturalism, his belief that social context determines character. According to Eugene Miller, the attraction of Stein's prose was the "emphatic exaggeration" that she invested in words (33), an effect that Wright, in the review, describes as "insistent" (perhaps recalling her own language in "Portraits and Repetition"). Exaggeration ostensibly allows him to foreground the music of language, much as Stein's style, as I argued in my reading of "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," foregrounds sonic texture over semantics. But while Stein refrains from establishing "a" meaning, Wright equates "insistence" with emphatic force. Rather than fashion an ambiguous story line, he frequently overdetermines symbols and images, forcing the audience to ground its interpretation in his "way of apprehending."

Wright's ambivalence toward dialect is illustrated by his distaste for Zora Neale Hurston, who perpetuated the "minstrel technique that makes 'white folks' laugh...[by] exploit[ing] that phase of Negro life which is 'quaint,' the phase which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the 'superior' race" ("Between Laughter" 251). In *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates analyzes the attitude toward narrative authority that distinguishes Hurston from Wright. She achieves an "authentic narrative voice that echoes and aspires to the status of the impersonality, anonymity, and authority of the black vernacular tradition, a nameless, selfless tradition, at once collective and compelling" (183). Combined discourse is a central device of this project: the narrative voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first represented in standard English, gradually absorbs Janie's idiom as it expresses her thoughts. Eventually it speaks for an entire community by mingling multiple perspectives in the figural idiom. Wright's style, by contrast, displays an inveterate individualism; he defines himself against his race, his "humanity achieved only at the expense of his fellow blacks, pitiable victims of the
pathology of slavery and racial segregation who surround and suffocate him....Wright
wills the especial self into being through the agency of contrast: the sensitive, healthy part
is foregrounded against a determined, defeated black whole" (182). If combined
discourse allows Hurston to dissolve conventional narrative authority into a "nameless,
selfless tradition," Wright refuses to relinquish "what Roland Barthes calls the
'proprietary consciousness,' the constant sign of his presence and of some larger context,
which the third-person voice inevitably entails" (184). Wright occasionally employs
combined discourse, but the figural voices are transcribed into standard English, not
Afro-American vernacular. Dialect appears only in direct speech. 32

Gates uses Native Son as his proof text, positing a triangular influence between
Hurston, Wright, and Ralph Ellison. The reading of Hurston's "speakerly text" is
intriguing, but one wishes a deeper analysis of what compelled Wright to establish a
"proprietary" voice. His early short stories reveal a long period of experimentation with
dialect and discourse. Unlike Native Son, the narrative style in "Almos' a Man" does
absorb minority idiom: "Dave struck out across the fields, looking homeward through
paling light. Whuts the usa talkin wid em niggers in the field?" (356). 33 The many
manuscript drafts located in the Bienecke Library at Yale, including an early version
rejected by Story Magazine in 1936, reveal Wright's dissatisfaction with the technique.
Originally conceived as a chapter of an unpublished novel entitled Tarbaby's Sunrise,
"Almos' a Man" was briefly considered for inclusion in Uncle Tom's Children (1939),
his first story collection. It appeared in Harper's Bazaar two months before Native Son
was published, but when editor George Davis solicited a contribution in the fall of 1939,
Wright was so busy with his novel that he asked a friend, Marie Mencken, to cull a
complete submission from the Tarbaby manuscript (Fabre Ordeal, 194). (The extent of
Mencken's editorial emendations has yet to be gauged). He subsequently revised the
story before his death in late 1960, adding a new title, "The Man Who Was Almost a
Man," for publication in Eight Men (1961). 34 If Wright thought little of the piece (it
goes unmentioned in his autobiographies), it quickly became his best-known short fiction, anthologized more than a half-dozen times throughout the 1940s alone. Currently, it remains the work most often chosen to represent his career in college readers. 35

Wright's struggle to find a voice in the late 1930s is rooted in the pragmatic aim of his fiction. Hurston and other Harlem Renaissance artists were "counter-revolutionary" because they failed to confront the racial iniquities of white America. Concentrating on life within minority communities, they perpetuated a "petty bourgeoisie" that pacified black audiences and entertained white culture by showing that "the Negro was not socially inferior...that he had a life comparable to that of other people." Wright defined his own literary project as radical, confrontational, disruptive. The existing Afro-American literary tradition, he argued, was too "humble" and "decorous," which was why he turned to "Eliot, Stein, Joyce, Proust, Hemingway, and Anderson" as his models. Their techniques promised expression of "a deep, informed, and complex consciousness" heretofore absent in black writing. Modernist devices would solve "the problem of perspective" by establishing in the audience's mind "a relationship between a Negro woman hoeing cotton in the South and the men who loll in swivel chairs in Wall Street and take the fruits of her toil" ("Blueprint" 45-46). If Barnes manipulated double-voiced discourse to create a parodic dissonance, Wright aims to engineer empathy.

The opening passage of "Almos' a Man" illustrates Wright's reaction to the "problem of perspective": "Whuts the usa talkin wid em niggers in the field? Anyhow, his mother was putting supper on the table. Them niggers can't understan nothing. One of these days he was going to get a gun and practice shooting, then they can't talk to him as though he were a little boy. He slowed, looking at the ground. Shucks, Ah ain scareda them even ef they are biggem me!" (356). Three modes of representation appear here: the narrative voice that records exterior actions and events ("he slowed"); combined discourse, in which Dave's thoughts are expressed in the narrative style ("one of these
and interior monologue, in which Dave's thoughts are expressed in his own idiom and register ("Ah ain scareda"). The juxtaposition of the last two is curious. Interior monologue is a more mimetic form of combined discourse, typically used to represent a character's unspoken thoughts. Distinguished by first-person pronouns and the present tense, it resembles direct speech "shorn of its conventional orthographic cues," namely quotation marks (McHale 259). Because it conveys less narratorial mediation, submerging us deeper in the character's consciousness, interior monologue is the device par excellence of empathy. In "Almos' a Man," however, the juxtaposed sentences of combined discourse diminish this immediacy. Side by side, the two modes create a perspectival uncertainty: the storyteller allows certain thoughts to be heard in Dave's voice but assumes responsibility for articulating others.

The juxtaposition of dialect and standard English highlights a matrix of oppositions built into the thematic layers of the story: not only black vs. white, but child vs. parent, interior vs. exterior, psychology vs. sociology, and, most important, man vs. boy, all of which illustrate how the socialization of language restricts the formation of the individual consciousness. "Boy," for example, has two obvious meanings: it marks Dave as an adolescent and a black male. When whites like Joe the store owner and Jim Hawkins, his boss, speak of Dave as "nuthin' but a boy" both meanings are inevitably invoked. Achieving manhood thus requires redefining the pejorative terms of white culture. For Gates, the opposition between the black individual and white society represents a wholesale rejection of the intermediary minority community and its traditions, which offer a less self-aggrandizing space in which a mature sense of self might be cultivated. In "Almos' a Man," however, these traditions are compromised by the absorption of white language, for racial markers distribute power within the Afro-American community. Dave thinks of the other field hands as "niggers." When he asks his mother if he can buy a gun, she says, "Nigger, is yuh gone plumb crazy?" Regardless of who speaks, language is a force of deception and manipulation. When Dave
reminds his mother that she promised him a gun, she disowns her own words: "Ah don care whut Ah promised! Yuh ain nothing but a boy yit!" 36 Dave himself resorts to lying: he tells his mother that he has been talking with other boys when he was actually borrowing Joe's catalogue. He tells his father that he threw the gun into the creek when he actually buried it beside a tree. His most egregious lie comes when he claims that Jenny, Jim Hawkins' mule, impaled itself on the plow when, in fact, Dave accidentally shot it while test firing his new gun. Knowing that the lie will fail, he realizes that the truth is too humiliating: "He could not tell Jim Hawkins he had shot his mule. But he had to tell something. Yeah, Ahl tell em Jenny started gittin wil n fell on the joint of the plow.... But that would hardly happen to a mule. He walked across the field slowly, head down" (365).

The scene in which Dave confesses the truth of Jenny's death is the most dramatic rendering of the thematic oppositions, illustrating why he must ultimately jump a northbound train to that ambiguous "somewhere" where he can be a man. Unlike "Big Boy Leaves Home," in which the hero also escapes by train, the Afro-American community offers no support or encouragement. The crowd that gathers to gawk at the dead beast, anonymous except for Dave's parents and Jim Hawkins, is biracial. Dave, reduced to tears, "see[s] blurred white and black faces," the color line blended by his humiliation. The individual voices in the crowd are not distinguished by variations in dialect; the community acts uniformly in ridiculing Dave's attempt to lie. Indeed, it is Dave's mother who first reveals that he owns a gun. The scene, staged solely with dialogue and a minimum of narrative commentary, includes an ironic echo of the verbal games that, as Gates argues, are a central mode of interaction in Afro-American communities. Here, however, the verbal play further alienates Dave:

Somebody in the crowd laughed. Jim Hawkins walked close to Dave and looked into his face.
"Well, looks like you have bought you a mule, Dave."
"Ah swear fo Gawd, Ah didn't go t kill the mule, Mistah Hawkins!"
"But you killed her!"
All the crowd was laughing now. They stood on tiptoe and
poked heads over one another's shoulders.
"Well, boy, looks like yuh done bought a dead mule! Hahaha!"
"Ain tha ershame."
"Hohohohoho."
Dave stood, head down, twisting his feet in the dirt. (367)

In debt to "Mistah Hawkins" for two more years, Dave is reduced again to a "boy," the
"hot anger" bubbling within him the only sure sign that, to himself, he can still be a man.

As in "A White Heron," the gun is a symbol of the power to silence. In Jewett's
story, the sharp report of the hunter's weapon offers a punning clue to the narrative
strategy: the storyteller avoids "hushing" the reader with a pure reportage by calling
attention to gaps in the presentation. In "Almos' a Man," however, "hushing" other
voices is precisely what Dave hopes to achieve. The gun is a substitute for the voice that
he lacks within his community. He associates its power with manhood: "And if he were
holding his gun in his hand nobody could run over him; they would have to respect him"
(362). To gain this respect, he must master the weapon. The first time he fires it,
accidentally killing the mule, the report is deafening, knocking him to the ground. Its
force frightens him: "He stood up and stared at the gun as though it were a live thing. He
gnitted his teeth and kicked the gun. Yuh almos broke mah arm!" (364). After the crowd
humiliates him, however, the gun becomes an even more attractive object of desire. He
sneaks back to retrieve it, convinced that "ef other men kin shoota gun, by Gawd, Ah
kin!" As Dave empties the chambers, the storyteller repeats the line in standard English:
"With effort he held his eyes open; then he squeezed....Bloooom! Bloooom! Click,
click! There! It was empty. If anybody could shoot a gun, he could. He put the gun into
his hip pocket and started across the fields" (369). As with the opening passage of the
story, Wright mixes three representational modes, modulating between figural idiom and
the narrative style. The repetition of the sentence in standard English establishes Dave's
passage into manhood.
Houston A. Baker offers an evocative metaphor for understanding the relationship between the Dave's transformation and the shifts in perspective. What prompts Dave to retrieve the gun and re-fire it is an intense awareness of his place in the community: "Dam' em all! Nobody ever gave him anything. All he did was work. They treat me lika mule....N then they beat me....He gritted his teeth. N Ma had t tell on me" (368).

Baker, borrowing from Carolyn Fowler, describes such moments as the black self's sudden awareness of his/her "zero image" in the "perceptual schemes of the white, dominant culture." The realization prompts the first stage of the "rites of the black (w)hole," a ritual passage into a self-defined identity. Baker illustrates this passage with the metaphor of the black hole, the collapsed star whose intense concentration of mass reverses gravitational fields, drawing all light to its core. "Almos' a Man" is wholly compatible with this ritualistic passage since, as the title suggests, what Dave desires is an escape from the liminal status of adolescence, defined by its dependence on elders, to a self-sufficient manhood. "The trope of the black hole," writes Baker, "suggests a 'squeezing' of matter of zero sum." That is, the individual, having absorbed the "zero image" that s/he embodies in the dominant culture, appropriates and compresses it to a zero mass by the sheer force of desire. This moment of compression is symbolically illustrated as Dave squeezes the gun's trigger. Both shooting scenes mark the pulling of the trigger as the pivotal moment of transformation, the line that Dave momentarily hesitates to cross. In the first scene, when he fatally wounds Jenny, the firing knocks Dave to the ground, where he finds "himself on his knees, squeezing his fingers hard between his legs" (363). The image confirms any suspicions that the gun symbolizes the phallic power of manhood. In the second shooting scene, the squeezing marks the halfway point between "Ef other men kin shoota gun" and its transcription into standard English. In the first scene, Dave accidentally kills Jim Hawkins' mule; in the second, he intentionally kills the community's image of himself as a beast of burden: "They treat me lika mule."
By jumping the Illinois Central, Dave enters the first stage of his quest for "black (w)holeness": a self-conscious retreat from the dominant culture where "the act of withdrawal is equivalent to a conflagrational retreat in which the mass of old edicts is reduced to a light that can be dispensed (with)" (Baker 141-42). Dave's escape is not quite the "strategy of retreat" upon which Big Boy or even Bigger Thomas embark; there is no white mob pursuing him. Nor does "Almos' a Man" concern the second and third stages of the rites. There is no "period of instruction" in which he establishes contact with the "mythic images of experiences internalized by active black culture bearers" or a return to society distinguished by a "black difference" that "(w)rites a new order of discourse" by replacing traditional perceptual modes (Baker 142-43). Wright's notes on the Tarbaby's Sunrise manuscript suggest how these stages might have been dramatized had the project not been aborted: Dave escapes to Chicago where he becomes a professional boxer, his anger finding symbolic expression in the pummeling of white culture. Yet "Almos' a Man" does contain a symbolic rejection of the "light" of the dominant community. On his way to the train tracks, Dave passes Jim Hawkins's home, a "big white house," that, even in the dark night, glows: "Lawk, if Ah had jus one mo bullet Ahd taka shot at tha house. Ahd like t scare ol man Hawkins jusa little....Jussa enough t let im know Dave Saunders is a man" (369).

Delineating the discovery of potential "black (w)holeness" in the face of oppressive modes of socialization, "Almos' a Man" illuminates the spark of desire that transforms the singular consciousness. The interior struggle of this formation suggests why Wright experimented with the more experientially immediate mode of interior monologue: direct access to Dave's thought signals what Baker calls the "code of desire" whose energy traps and collapses cultural stereotypes. Yet the very dialect in which Dave's desire finds its voice is itself a social discourse subject to stereotyping, namely the minstrel-show versions of black vernacular to which Wright linked Hurston's style. As a literary convention, dialect can perpetuate the same distribution of authority to which the
Afro-American community in "Almos' a Man" has fallen prey. The shifts between interior monologue and combined discourse mark Wright's effort to capture the interior intensity of Dave's struggle for expression without allowing his own language to evoke conventionalized styles of Afro-American dialect. As Baker illustrates in his reading of *Black Boy* (1945), Wright thought of perspective as a pre-verbal realm, an intuitive mode of identification in which "words are, finally, objects annulled by a desirous consciousness in order to achieve the communality of 'point of view'" (137). Wright's description of his own youthful reading illustrates how language is merely "fuel" to feed the "black (w)hole." Rather than identify with "plots and stories," he reads for the perspective that books reveal, drawing from them what Baker calls "correlative structures" of desire whose affectivity feeds the absence of a vague "something" denied by his experience in the segregated south. As he becomes a writer, Wright identifies this desire as the moment of self-consciousness. His literary project, in turn, rests on provoking in the audience the same recognition of the absent "something" that he perceived in his reading. Baker links Wright's goal here to Barthes's vision of "zero-degree writing": by universalizing perspective as a quest for the "trace of desire," he inverts and nullifies the "fixed discursive norms" that define a particular moment in literary history. As Baker writes, "A beautifying, 'literary' language is a restrictive array of conventions preserving class division, maintaining the status quo surfaces of life, creating desire rather than elaborating its transcendence" (137-39). The shifts in representational modes mark then an implicit identification between the figural and authorial consciousness, an aligning of perspectives focused on the expression of frustrated desire that is meant, finally, to solicit an identification from the audience. The argument allows Wright's style to be recuperated from the pejorative connotations of individuality that Gates attaches to it. Hurston fashions a "speakerly" style of narration by evoking oral discourse without identifying a speaker as the origin of the utterances. Wright creates a "thinkerly" style in which the linking of perspectives, the creation of
empathy, (ostensibly) transcends its medium of expression. Again, the difference rests on the attitude toward the social function of language. Hurston explicitly describes the communal interchange dramatized through combined discourse as "words walking without masters." For Wright, however, narration must "master words" and then "make them disappear" to establish empathy (*American Hunger* 22).

The pattern of perspectival shifts illustrates how Wright attempts to re-write the "code of desire" into an anti-literary language. Combined discourse functions as a rhetorical hedge, qualifying the interior monologue to extinguish lingering stereotypes of black vernacular by transmuting Dave's desire into "structures" of vision and feeling. As is common with passages of interior monologue, Dave's directly rendered thoughts "sound" like direct speech; again, the only difference is the lack of quotation marks. The conceptual paradox of the style (it gives voice to unvoiced thoughts) enhances its suitability to the thematic and rhetorical concerns of "Almos'a Man." As a liminal mode of representation, it conveys the liminality of Dave's identity. Predominantly cast in the form of exclamatory utterances, interior monologue dramatizes the intensity of Dave's desire: "Ahma git some money from Ma n buy me a gun! Only two dollahs!" But combined discourse revises this desire, shifting the narrative perspective away from its expression to its perception. As Dave stares at Joe's catalogue, for example, the "feeling" of desire moves from the cognitive to the tactile realm: "Lawd, ef Ah only had tha pretty one! He could almost feel the slickness of the weapon with his fingers. If he had a gun like that he would polish and keep it shining so it would never rust. N Ah'd keep it loaded, by Gawd!" (360). Desire takes shape as a prayer-like invocation (many of these fragments, in fact, either begin with "Lawd," "by Gawd," or some variation of the two), which is then "answered" by the narrative voice that expresses the self-consciousness of this longing. Even when Dave shoots the mule and the interior monologue conveys his fear and shock ("Ah wuznt shootin at tha mule"), the narrative voice lends its authority to the expression of feeling: "He knew he had to stop that blood..." After Dave's
humiliation, however, the pattern of shifts reverses, moving from combined discourse to
interior monologue to express the growth in his perception: "Well, if he had to, he would
take old man Hawkins that two dollars. But that meant selling the gun. And he wanted to
keep that gun. Fifty dollahs fer a dead mule" (368). Here the direct transcription of
Dave's thought dramatizes the transformation out of the liminal realm of the "almost." It
is a moment when he recognizes that to be a man, he must separate himself from the
system of exchange that threatens to enslave him for another two years.

One of the minor revisions that Wright made shortly before his death in 1960
further illuminates the unfolding pattern of shifts. In the 1940 version, Dave awakens the
morning after he buys the gun: "In the gray light of dawn he held it loosely, feeling a
sense of power. Could killa man wide a gun like this. Kill anybody, black er white"
(362). In the Eight Men version, however, the line is cast in standard English. In the
first case, the desire to murder dramatizes the lengths Dave is willing to go to "squeeze"
the community's image of him to zero mass. In the second case, however, the "proprietary" voice endorses the impulse, ostensibly universalizing it. The revision lifts the
desire out of Dave's individual perspective to the non-linguistic realm of a "pure" or
communal feeling. The newer title likewise suggests a revisionary staging of the quest
for "black (w)holeness." "Almos' a Man" is a direct quotation of Dave's longing, but
"The Man Who Was Almost a Man" renders that desire tautological; Dave need only
realize that he is already a man to be one.

There are several explanations for why Wright stopped incorporating dialect into
the narrative voice. In "How Bigger Was Born," he describes his dissatisfaction with the
reception of Uncle Tom's Children as his own failure to render the rebellion of its
protagonists without provoking pity: "I found that I had written a book in which even
bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about. I swore to myself that
if I ever wrote another book, no one would weep over it; that it would be so hard and
deep that they would have to face it without the consolation of tears" (ii). To re-phrase
this in Baker's terms, Wright finds that his stories "create" desire rather than "elaborate [its] transcendence." The result is a cathartic sympathy, not empathy. To ensure this effect, he must resist blending other voices with his own. As he admits while describing the composition of *Native Son*, trying to "render, depict, [and] not merely tell the story" without imposing his "way of apprehending" is a difficult task: "Sometimes I'd find it necessary to use a stream of consciousness technique, then rise to an interior monologue, descend to a direct rendering of a dream state, then to a matter-of-fact depiction of what Bigger was saying, doing, and feeling. Then I'd find it impossible to say what I wanted to say without stepping in and speaking outright on my own" (xxii). As Gates argues, the absence of dialect in the combined discourse reveals that Wright exerts his authorial propriety more than he admits.

The reception history of "Almos' a Man" illustrates how authorial propriety is not always successful in delimiting the meaning of a text. The greatest concentration of critical commentary, in fact, ignores aesthetic manifestoes like "Blueprint for Negro Writing" and "How Bigger Was Born" and grounds its interpretation wholly in internal evidence. In many of the teacher's guides to the college readers that anthologize the story, Dave's quest for manhood is treated ironically. The interplay of interior monologue and combined discourse, rather than persuade us to identify with Dave, distances us from him. 37 This interpretation arises because, as McHale suggests, the absence of narrative authority inherent in combined discourse renders its reception dangerously equivocal: whether an audience perceives irony or empathy reflects its opinion of the subject rendered (275). In this case, the temptation to view Dave's desire as ironic seems to reflect a cultural discomfort with equation of manhood and violence that the story otherwise endorses. I am not suggesting that ironic interpretations are wrong; they illustrate how the author function can be ignored as well as employed.
Toward the Minimalist Short Story

Though typically regarded as a naturalist, Wright occupies a curious place in the evolution of modernist styles. With techniques learned from Stein and Hemingway, he delineates the complexity of the black consciousness that (he felt) the Afro-American literary tradition failed to convey. Yet this consciousness is always in conflict with the surrounding social environment. The function of Wright's technique is subsequently split down the middle: while he strives to transcend language by crafting a style that prompts intuitive identification, he must fall back upon realistic modes of representation to portray the social realm that stifles the development of the individual. As previously mentioned, Baker compares Wright's project to Barthes's vision of "zero-degree" language. Apropos of Gates's argument that Wright defines himself against his race, it is ironic to note that Barthes's translators describe le degré zéro as "colourless writing." For Barthes, such a style inevitably degenerates into a social discourse so that "a mode of writing appears afresh in lieu of an indefinite language" (Writing 78). Wright's career spans the same period in which the academy absorbs and institutionalizes the aesthetic values of modernism. However radical his aim, his manner embodies the predominant stylistic trend in short fiction between 1940 and 1980: rather than fragment reality, techniques like combined discourse allow a storyteller to claim a mimetic representation of a deep, complex modern consciousness.

The effect of this institutionalization on the short story can also be measured in the vast expansion of the "little-magazine" market. For modernists, small-circulation periodicals offered a relatively low-stakes arena for radical experimentation. Stein, Hemingway, and Barnes published their work in The Little Review, This Quarter, and transatlantic, to name but three, because they were personal acquaintances of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Ernest Walsh, and Ford Madox Ford, their respective editors. With the exception of The Little Review, which folded because, as Anderson wrote in her 1930 memoirs, its "mission was complete" and anything afterward would only be
repetitious, most of these publications were shoestring operations dependent on the largesse of patrons like John Quinn. They came and went without much fanfare, discovered only later by literary historians. For every Barnes or Stein that they published, there was a Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Abraham Lincoln Gillespie, and Harry Crosby, mainstays of the Paris milieu that Julian Symons describes as "fantastic freaks" and "genuine phoneys" (206), writers better known for their personal peculiarities (or their wealth) than their talent. To be sure, the absorption of the little magazines into the University has not eliminated mediocrity, but it has, according to many critics, eliminated the peculiarities.

The expansion of small-circulation quarterlies and biannuals is directly linked to the contraction of the large-circulation magazine. In his 1964 book, William Peden notes that "big slicks" like Collier's, the Saturday Evening Post, and This Week reached "a combined audience of upwards of sixty million readers," the formidable size of their audience allowing them to conduct "recruiting raids as zealously as did the talent scouts for Hollywood and bigtime football" (13-14). Within six years, however, all three of these magazines had ceased publication (though The Post would later emerge as a monthly rather than weekly). Other prestigious outlets, including The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, and Esquire, drastically reduced the number of short stories published per issue. In 1972, John W. Aldridge would complain that the institutionalization of modernism had created a "new fabricated literary mass culture" of academic writers "infected with a specious literariness through the study of writing" ("Gray Middle" 229). Twenty years later, he would claim that this fabricated culture had infected the few surviving large-circulation periodicals ("Empty Blue" 18). The culprit was a mode closely identified with The New Yorker labeled minimalism by its detractors. According to Aldridge and other critics, the minimalist style pandered to a mass audience by appropriating the language of television writing.
The next chapter begins with a survey of these complaints, then suggests how minimalism might be considered a return to storytelling. Both Raymond Carver and Bobbie Ann Mason foreground the narrative frame much like the bachelor narrators discussed in the first chapter. Their conversational styles are not a nostalgic evocation of orality, however. Minimalism bears the influence of electronic communication by projecting an isolated and intense perpetual present whose immediacy radically alters the negotiation of narrative authority. By eliding the temporal gap that traditionally separates a story from its narration, minimalists fuse the two into a single performative event.

**Notes**

1 Huyssen's *After the Great Divide* explores these contradictions, detailing how modernists defined themselves against mass culture at the same time that they appropriated its forms (see Chapter Three, especially 53-55). Literary celebrity was not invented in the 20th century, of course. Yet technology obviously amplified the reach of publicity far beyond anything previously possible. Shickel's *Intimate Strangers* offers a detailed pop-culture perspective on celebrity, including a penetrating analysis of Fitzgerald's career.

2 Bender makes intriguing analogies between the organization of the penitentiary in the 18th and 19th centuries to the narrative authority assumed by a storyteller in realism. His comments on combined discourse are especially provocative. See 242-43.

3 To understand how "anti-social" Stein's conception of the sentence is, one need only compare it to Bakhtin's argument that, as communication, words must be considered not as grammatical constructions but as utterances, their meaning shaped by "extralinguistic" or contextual influences (*Problems* 1-43). The most exhaustive account of Steinian narrative is Bush (381-408).

4 Several recent books and essays explore Stein's revision of generic traditions, especially those defining the novel. See Chessman (137-66); Ruddick; Berry; and Fifer.

5 Many of these short-prose pieces are collected in *Reflection on the Atomic Bomb*.

6 This is not Stein's first appearance in the magazine; her work had been featured semi-regularly since 1917. In fact, *Vanity Fair* published more of her material than *The Little Review* ever would.

7 For accounts of Stein's early years in Paris, see Mellow (50-78). For an account of the Stein-Toklas relationship and its influence on Stein's writing, see Benstock (143-93).

8 Elsewhere, Perloff reminds us that the "difficulty" of Stein's style varies from text to text. She identifies six general types; "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" occupies a
midpoint between the hermetic Tender Buttons and the more accessible autobiographical writings ("Six Styles").

9 It remains unclear whether Stein knew of the homosexual connotations of "gay" when she composed the piece. Perloff traces the word's etymology, showing that in the early 1900s its most subversive meaning was synonymous with "lascivious." The homosexual meaning first arose among Parisian gays in the 1920s, but did not become widely known until the late 1960s. See "Ninety Percent Rotarian," note 14 (675-76). As Vanity Fair's parody of "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" implies (discussed below), the erotic connotations of "gay" may have been more widely recognized (at least by New York magazine editors) than previously assumed.

10 Bridgman suggests that Miss Furr and Miss Skeene are singers, although nothing in the text beyond the words "cultivating voices" implies musical performance. His interpretation illustrates Perloff's argument that the story contains a number of potential narratives, though he does not concede that others might be read into the text (158).

11 In many of these stories, the artists are also exiled from a heterosexist language. See Benstock's "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism: Entering Literary History" (183-203).

12 McHale's description of the form is indebted to Page (31-38).

13 This is the definition of Bakhtin's heteroglossia that Emerson and Holquist offer in the glossary of The Dialogic Imagination (428).

14 I borrow both "evocalization" and "reading voices" from Stewart, who explores how the phonemic quality of puns, rhymes, and homophones inspires an aural style of reading in which listening is speaking. Significantly for my purposes, the site where reading gives voice to language is the receiving body, the audience, where "silent reading processes a text as the continuous inhibition of the oral" (6).

15 For an interesting study of the link between voice and body, see O'Donnell, who explores how modernists like Joyce, Malcolm Lowry, and Faulkner (among others) "face, as a narratological problem, how that which is heard but not seen (voice) will be framed, staged, and produced in narrative discourse—how it will be written down" (10). By "figuring voices," these writers inevitably disfigure the body of the character so it no longer represents a unified identity, thereby challenging claims of authorial mastery. O'Donnell's approach is predominantly psychoanalytic; as such, his book illustrates the differences between mainstream modernism and Stein, who insists on an even more exaggerated separation between voice and body that renders psychoanalytic models obsolete.

16 Bakhtin is often credited as the author of this text; I retain the original attribution.

17 If so, Stein presciently forecasts the relationship that she and Alice would maintain for some thirty-five years. For an interpretation of sex roles in the Stein-Toklas marriage, see Benstock (161-68). Stimpson offers a more benign view in "Gertrice/Altrude" (123-39).
I borrow this term from the translation of Irigaray's "Women on the Market." "Specularity" refers to the "socially valued, exchangeable body" of women as wives or daughters—the value of the feminine as a commodity, in other words. As Irigaray argues, the "specular" body is distinct from a woman's natural body: it is "a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values" that defines and delimits the social construction of femininity (180). I do not mean to suggest that Stein embarks on a specific feminist project by splitting voice from body; Stimpson links the gap between the body and consciousness manifest in Stein's work to the educational opportunities available to women at the end of the 19th century. Opportunity created a gulf between "what [women] might do with their minds and what they might do with their bodies." For Stimpson, this gap allowed Stein the freedom to craft a masculine identity and transcend the socially constructed limits of the feminine. See "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein" (490).

See, for example, his letter of 29 July 1948 to W.G. Rogers (Selected Letters 649) and A Moveable Feast (15).

The obvious exception, Three Lives, was published before Hemingway was ten years old.

The two are "The Undefeated" and "Banal Story," written respectively in late 1924 and early 1925, between the composition of "Big Two-Hearted River" and "The Battler," the last two stories completed for In Our Time. The pieces that rely predominantly on dialogue, including "The Killers," "Hills," "A Simple Enquiry" and "Ten Indians" were completed from mid-1926 to spring 1927, more than a year and a half later.

Purists will quibble with my interpretation of stylization, for Bakhtin uses the term to suggest the appropriation of "another person's referential (artistically referential) intention" (189). I am applying the concept to the reader's awareness of Hemingway's style, so what I mean is perhaps better represented by the term "self-stylization." At any rate, public recognition of a specific Hemingway style demands some biographical explanation as to why he did not revise out repetitions that somehow punctured the fictional illusion. I would suggest that the stories in Men Without Women show Hemingway struggling with the limitations of his public persona. Renza has shown how, in his first collection, In Our Time, Hemingway struggled to establish his "vocational integrity" against the stifling expectations of paternal literary influences, including Twain, Thoreau, and Sherwood Anderson ("Importance" 661-90). Having won that battle by late 1925, he now faced another formidable foe: himself.

Like Stein, Barnes is not associated primarily with the short story, though (unlike Stein) she wrote more than three dozen. Of these, only a few titles are recognizable even to those familiar with her biography. "Aller et Retour," "A Night Among Horses," and "Spillway" have generated some comment, including Ferguson's breakthrough article, the first devoted solely to the stories. The essay is still valuable for pointing to the consistency of Barnes's doll and beast imagery. The thesis, however, argues that the rhetorical "pyrotechnics" for which Barnes was criticized throughout the 1960s is less prevalent in the short stories. Unfortunately, Ferguson overlooks many stories (including "Run Girls, Run") that are as lyrically complex as the novels. Kannestine includes a chapter on the short stories, but his reading is marred by insistent aesthetic judgment. Allen analyzes a lesser-known trio of tales ("A Little Girls Tells a
Story to a Lady," "The Little Girl Continues," and "Dusie") as precursors of the lesbian erotic in *Nightwood* (*Silence and Power* 54-66). Of course, Barnes's stories were not unanimously dismissed by reviewers. Messerli's bibliography reveals a variety of praise from numerous quarters, from *The Dial* to the *Detroit Free Press Magazine*. The short-story reviews complement what Jane Marcus has written of the *Nightwood* reviews: Barnes's writing "was given the kind of press coverage which only cookbooks gets today, from serious intellectuals who took reviewing seriously and wrote elegant, if often malicious, essays for an enormous reading public" ("Mousemeat" 195).

Lost-generation memoirs typically portray Barnes as pretentious and self-important. Anderson claims she was unwilling to even talk with her or Jane Heap (editors of *The Little Review*): "For us there was no way of establishing a communication with her" (181-83). McAlmon describes her as "wise-cracking...overdoing the grande dame manner [while] talking soul and ideals" (167-68). Guggenheim's "informal memoirs" are undoubtedly tinged by her own ambivalence as Barnes's patron. Flanner's portrait is the most balanced (vii-xxiv). Field's often superficial biography includes little analysis of personality. Benstock, on the other hand, places the putative haughtiness in the context of Barnes's anxiety over her social and economic inferiority (230-42). Only when her correspondence is collected and published will a balanced view emerge.

Relevant here is Frank's reading of *Nightwood*, in which he argues that style allows Barnes to disrupt the narrative sequence so the novel builds upon a spatial rather than temporal progression (2549). Frank does not take gender into consideration; his reading should be reconsidered in light of Friedman's work on narrative "spatialization," which incorporates the reader's participation in the effect of atemporal narrative (12-23).

Feminist critics have long noted Bakhtin's failure to account for gender in his theories of textual voices. Both of Dale Bauer's books, the full-length study *Feminist Dialogics* and the edited collection *Bakhtin, Feminism, and the Dialogic*, map the place of gender in heteroglossia.

Hutcheon explores this "pragmatic" limitation of parody, both from the position of the reading audience, who recognizes the "position and power" that the inferred author sways, as well as the producer of parody, who must infer an audience with sufficient cultural background to decode the allusions (84-99).

The Barnes collection housed at the University of Maryland includes a typescript of the story that clearly identifies it as a "fragment" of the novel.

See Coppélia Kahn's "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*" (33-34).

Barnes lived in Berlin in both the early 1920s and 30s. See Field *Djuna*.

She was infuriated when, in 1966, Kenneth Burke suggested that her "rhetoric of lament" was aimed at Jews. Benstock's reading of the fascist subtext of *Nightwood* is the best critical account of the controversy. See *Women* 355-63.

For background on the ambivalence of early 20th-century Afro-American writers toward dialect, see Gates's *Figures in Black*. 
Another, more famous example is the opening passages of "Big Boy Leaves Home" (1935), where Wright intersperses narrative commentary within a game of the dozens. See Uncle Tom's Children (17).

Unless otherwise noted, I quote from the 1940 version, collected in O'Brien's The Best Short Stories 1941 (356-70).

See the index to Kinnamon's bibliography (779). Oddly enough, while the story is Wright's most frequently anthologized short story, critical commentary is relatively sparse. Part of the reason, I would suggest, is that the violence in the Uncle Tom's Children stories better complements the prevailing critical attitude toward Wright, which takes Native Son as totemic of his entire corpus.

Wright added an even more acid sign of Dave's status in the community in his 1961 revision. In the original, he mother spies Joe's catalogue and says, "We kin use it around the house" (358). In the rewrite, she says "We kin use it in the outhouse" (11).

Vanessa Haley's commentary in the instructor's manual to Fictions, a popular college reader, offers a general illustration of these ironic interpretations. "So accustomed is Dave to the invisibility of his race (that is, blacks are disregarded as men, as legitimate human beings with full rights) that he inadvertently undermines his own credibility when he acts irresponsibly, hiding the gun and shooting it...From a psychological point of view, one could regard this scene [Jenny's death] as symbolic of Dave's fear of his own manhood...Dave's limited self-perception results from a combination of immaturity and the low self-esteem he struggles to rid himself of, primarily through a misconception of the power of violence" (191-92; emphasis added).
In July 1984, Harper's launched what became a decade-long assault on its closest rival in the periodical fiction market by publishing "The New Yorker Story," by Martha Bayles. A writer identified only as William, "striving for an atmosphere of depthless banality," invents a character named Betty who works at J. C. Penney, owns a Pioneer stereo system, and consumes copious quantities of Diet Coke. A tenured professor at a midwestern university, William is at home describing the brand-name obsessions and anxieties of American consumer culture; it is this "heartland without a heart to which his imagination keeps returning." His previous story, "Fred," about the owner of a 76 truck stop, proved very popular with the editors of the New Yorker. But no sooner does William begin delineating this suburban ennui than Betty takes on airs: she wears diamonds, demands fancy liqueurs, and converses like a heroine from a Fitzgerald story. Shocked, William tries to remind her just who created whom, but Betty complains of the drab existence that she has been bequeathed. "I merely describe. I don't judge," William offers as a defence. "You can appreciate that." Betty has a more complex story that she wants told: an abusive boyfriend, an indifferent local community, an escape to a new life. "Please!" shouts William. "I'm a postmodernist writer! No epiphanies, no romanticism! You have to realize, I've accepted the void!" The story ends in a stalemate, Betty pining for a fuller future, William insisting that she return to her cash register. Without recognizing the irony, he rebukes her upper-class pretensions: "Maybe someday you'll figure out that a character is more than a collection of possessions.... People are more than the sum total of their commercial surroundings" (69-71).
Though not as vituperative as "When Harold Moos Got Gay with Helen Furr," the *Vanity Fair* parody of Stein, the sketch satirizes the most identifiable traits of the minimalist style: an intense, almost suffocating immediacy fostered by the use of the present tense; clipped, brittle sentences that convey a sense of alienation; a preoccupation with surface detail, including brand names; a lack of growth or development that justifies the telling of the story. Of the many detractors of minimalism, *Harper's* pursued it with an almost Ahabic commitment. Two years after the Bayles story, it printed an essay by Madison Smartt Bell, a fiction writer himself, lamenting the "diminishing landscape of the American short story." Like Bayles, Bell criticizes Carver and Mason (among others) for creating "people...as facelessly uniform as the people on television" and proliferating a "studiedly deterministic, at times nihilistic, vision of the world." He quotes a blurb on the cover of Mason's first collection, *Shiloh & Other Stories* (1982), to illustrate minimalism's chief fault: "Like O Blood, Bobbie Ann Mason's stories can be given to almost anyone." For Bell, this is a sales pitch masquerading as *faux* populism (64-69). His essay is one of many written in the 1980s that derides minimalism as a better marketing strategy than aesthetic mode, a self-conscious effort to appeal to a mass audience distracted by oral forms of entertainment like television, radio, and the cinema. If minimalism was indeed a capitalist venture, minimalist bashing quickly became its cottage-industry counterpart, with critics as diverse as John W. Aldridge, Joseph Epstein, William Gass, and Mark Helprin contributing increasingly virulent attacks on the mode, its artists, and even the short story itself. If modernists (ostensibly) reject mass culture so that the aesthetic medium can transcend history and exist in an eternal present, minimalists seize the day by appealing to the momentary consumer consciousness. The result, according to these critics, is a time-bound style bereft of craft, depth, scope, and, worst of all, the signature of individuality that makes a text "literary."
William O'Rourke, whose "exoskeletal metaphor" was discussed in the introduction, implicitly summarizes much of the critical dissatisfaction with minimalism and the marketplace in his discussion of the "special economics of the short story form." A short story, he claims, is "capital intensive" because the time invested in its composition is greater than the time required to consume it. The novel, by contrast, is "labor intensive" because the investment ratio between production and consumption is more proportional (though hardly equal). What makes the short story fashionable in an age of instant gratification is the quicker return on the investment. He quotes from a 1985 interview with Roger Angell, Mason and Carver's editor at New Yorker, to cap his argument:

"There's a great national factory out there. If you open the windows, you can hear the sound of typewriters driven by people writing stories all over the country. It may tell something about the state of the novel that this seems to be a particularly good time for the short story." What the sound of typewriters should tell Angell is that the writing of novels in the "national factories"—serious, literary (written, rather than oral) novels, macro-form, labor-intensive, vertebrate as they are—is an unprofitable enterprise, a fact which the newest generation of writers has (unconsciously, at least) assimilated, and that is why all those typewriters are pounding out micro-form, capital-intensive, exoskeletal short stories. (205)

In a market-oriented society, the novel, as "serious" literature, is a long-term investment. The short story, by contrast, tempts with the possibility of instant gains. The lure of easy money and inflated reputation cripples the growth of the fiction economy by opening the market to get-rich-quick schemes. From this perspective, minimalism, requiring even less capital than most styles (because it is presumably easy to write), is the literary equivalent of a junk bond. But to reverse the metaphor, the collateral that finances many anti-minimalist arguments is the same portfolio of critical prejudices against which Poe defined the tale: namely, that bulk is totemic of aesthetic value. Poe reacted against a contemporary sense that American literature had to be culturally "bigger" than its British competition. Anti-minimalists, meanwhile, typically invoke the values of institutionalized modernism (depth of characterization, ambiguity of language, resistance to consumption)
to dismiss the mode on aesthetic grounds. Many lament the sudden popularity of the short story that minimalism inspired, as though its renascence threatened the very existence of the "serious, literary" novel. (To recognize how repetitive these arguments become, one need only look for some play on the minimalist credo "less is more." "Less is less," for example, is a near-obligatory jibe). By mid-decade, "minimalism" became such a pejorative term that Mason and Carver, not to mention the majority of their contemporaries, refused to be associated with it. "I don't like the term 'minimalism,'" Carver told one interviewer. "I don't like that term at all. Like a lot of other things in life, this too will pass. A few years from now all the writers being labeled 'minimalist' will be labeled something else, or not" (qtd. in Gentry and Stull 153). Mason's disdain is equally laconic: "I'm not sure what's meant by minimalism. I'm not sure if it means something that is just so spare that there is hardly anything there...or if it's just a misnomer for what happens in any good short story, which is economy" (qtd. in Lyons and Oliver 458). John Barth defended the style in The New York Times Book Review in 1986, and Frederick Barthleme volleyed back at critics with an essay glibly subtitled "Convicted Minimalist Spills Bean." Most writers associated with Carver and Mason, however, placed themselves squarely in the realist tradition, leaving academic critics to develop Mason's suggestion that minimalism is a "misnomer" for an element universal in all short stories (and all narratives): economy. 2

The prevailing strategy for resuscitating minimalist fiction after the initial flood of critical opprobrium has been to describe its affinities with the canonical postmodernism of Barth, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon. Thus Carver and Mason, like postmodernists, "are suspicious of 'depth,' seeing that the (by now) traditional models of depth are unsupportable; instead they present a play of surfaces"; they "accept the effacement of the border between 'high' culture and 'popular' or 'commercial' culture, and they use the merging of the two for establishing wider cultural possibilities" (Herzinger 76-77); their style manifests a "highly self-conscious response to the postmodern critique of
representation, one which knowingly simulates a 'return' to plain style while remaining properly ironic about the discredited representational conventions on which plain style rests"; finally, the "debate surrounding minimalist fiction has served much the same function within the writers' community" that the debate surrounding post-structuralism within "academic scholarly circles" prompted: its draws attention to the contradictions and paradoxes of all representational strategies (Simmons 51, 53). These arguments are certainly convincing, but as the last quotation implies, the aim to date has been to justify minimalist fiction as a valid area for research within the academy. They do not explain minimalism's attraction to a non-academic audience. Reading Carver and Mason alongside Benjamin's "The Storyteller," one can suggest that minimalism's radical economy represents a "return to storytelling" after the open contempt with which modernism regarded it. Carver often cites Hemingway as an influence, but the general principle of economy operating in their stories strikes me as wildly divergent. Hemingway identifies himself as a consummate modernist by minimalizing traces of his authorial agency so that his narratives are (ostensibly) self-contained. Carver and Mason, by contrast, often efface everything but the narration. The surface upon which their stories glide is often the moment of performance, which imbues the text with a confessional aura. Depth in modernist stories is similar to what Benjamin calls "information," the psychological analysis and explanation that must justify a text as newsworthy. He traces their introduction into storytelling to the novel, arguing that they block creative reception by filling the audience with information that must be digested. "It is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it," Benjamin writes (89). Minimalist narrators take this imperative to heart, and the resulting texts, far from being easy to read, require what Karl Kroeber calls "contributory feedback" through which we "create something out of the telling" (67). Despite what aesthetic critics claim, many minimalist stories are not easy to read; the "slice of life" that they offer may be
profoundly depressing or even nihilistic, but their sparsity is a reticence not unlike Jewett's silence in "A White Heron."

The emphasis given storytelling in minimalism is most visible in the narrator's temporal orientation toward his/her material. Both Bayles and Bell name the Joycean epiphany as the missing structural element in these stories. As "Araby" (the quintessential epiphany story) suggests, the most common temporal stance in written narrative is retrospective: a remembrance of things past in which a story and its telling are separated by some degree of time. The traditional past tense conveys the authority of experience, endowing discourse with the authenticity of history so the narrative voice assumes a testimonial function. Retrospection and testimony in turn influence structure. Because most Western cultures measure time linearly, the traditional narrative norm is a chronological sequence. Though the order of presentation may not replicate this chronology, time's one-way movement implies the "logic" of cause and effect. Poe's theory of the single effect, Freytag's dramatic pyramid, Bakhtin's chronotope and Barthes's "kernel action," to name just a few theories of narrative development, all model structure on the forward flow of linear time.

Yet time's influence on structure is itself subject to time and place. The rise of alternative temporal modalities promotes strategies that challenge the conception of a story line as a causal chain. Stephen Kern shows how innovations like the wireless telegraph, the telephone, and the cinema redefined perceptions of time between 1880 and 1918, raising two important issues that influenced modernist styles: whether the present was "a sequence of single local events or a simultaneity of multiple distant events, and whether [it was] an infinitesimal slice of time between the past and future or of more extended duration" (68). Amid this debate, Stein began writing in the "continuous present" (known to grammarians as the habitual or iterative present tense), which expresses repetition and cycles. Non-traditional tenses of this sort have a revolutionary effect on narrative time: a "moment" is no longer an event in a sequence but an experience in and
of itself. But if Stein and other modernists write during an age when technology thickened cultural perceptions of time, minimalists bear witness to its virtual evaporation. Fredric Jameson describes the postmodern age as "the disappearance of a sense of history...our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another sought to preserve" (125). In many minimalist stories, the aura of the perpetual present arises from the use of the punctual or instant present tense, the register of momentary experience. The opening lines of Mason's "Shiloh" convey the transitory nature of the tense: "Leroy Moffitt's wife, Norma Jean, is working on her pectorals. She lifts three-pound dumbbells to warm up, then progresses to a twenty-pound barbell" (1).

As Mason remarks in at least one interview, the static, episodic world that the present tense projects "obviously came from television" (qtd. in Lyons and Oliver 459). For many critics, television's influence is destructive because it promotes surface over substance, technique over texture, the visual over the visceral. Yet the medium illustrates two positive revisionary facets of narrative authority in minimalism, one structural and the other rhetorical. Raymond Williams has argued that broadcast media transform the "structure of feeling" that a sequence invokes. Whereas "a book or pamphlet was [once] taken and read as a specific item," broadcasting overwhelms the idiosyncrasy of the single event by assimilating it into a continuous "flow" in which one program bears no more emphasis than what follows (86-90). In present-tense narratives, the effect of this structural "flow" is unsettling. Time passes, but nothing much seems to happen. Sequences no longer progress toward a concluding point (an epiphany, for example) but "pulse" as a montage of overlapping, intermingling images and moods. Scenes come and go, but the boundaries between them are fluid and imperceptible, like the borders between TV images that are lost in the blink of an eye.
William Gass, who gives contemporary writers a "failing grade" for their use of the present tense, is thus correct to say that, like television, minimalist stories lack dimension. The absence of depth is readily observed in the repetitive sentence structures: "Kept simple, short, direct, like a punch, the sentences avoid subordination, qualification, subtlety. Subordination requires judgment, evaluation; it creates complexity, demands definition" ("Failing Grade" 35). Judgment, evaluation, and definition also require time. By closing the temporal gap that typically separates the story and its telling, the present tense negates retrospection and limits omniscience to perception, making these evaluative acts impossible. As a result, minimalist stories project a narrative vulnerability in their presentation. As Mason remarks, "If the author is writing in present tense then you get the impression he [sic] doesn't know any more than you do about what's happening" (qtd. in Lyons and Oliver 460). This "impression" is manifest in the texturing of the text, the evaluation of narrative components that linguists call "grounding" (Fleischman 170). Again, because the Western narrative norm is sequential, events that move story time forward are typically more important than the description and commentary that enhance them. In most narratives, tense variations distinguish events from commentary. In the present tense, however, the difference is often unclear. As a result, individual reading acts texture the story as the audience decides, privately, what details should bear more emphasis than others. By not creating complexity, as Gass complains, minimalistists invite it by deferring gestures like grounding to us.

Gass is also correct in noting that the minimalist style avoids subordination; as Philip E. Simmons points out, the predominant syntactical formula is parataxis, which "establishes the primacy of sequence [in the "flowing" sense] over consequence" (48). The structural organization points to the second major transformation in narrative authority, namely an oral strand that bears the imprint of electronic media. Subordination is a written style, while parataxis is a common feature of oral conversation. Similarly, while the present tense is comparatively rare in written narratives, it is the predominant
tense in oral storytelling where it serves an interpersonal function: it emphasizes the text as a performance. The present tense is a form of direct address, not one that dramatizes reader participation, as you in "Life in the Iron Mills" does, but a metalinguistic reminder of the storyteller's presence (Fleischman 264). If Irving embeds the "oral residue" of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" within multiple scribal acts, Mason and Carver go to the opposite extreme: through the present tense, they hide writing in favor of conversational spontaneity.

The oral strand in minimalism is not an evocation of the immediacy that, as I suggested in the first chapter, romanticists employed to undermine the authority of the written word. This is a particularly technologized style of address, for much as television broadcasts sound and image, minimalism appeals to the visual and aural faculties. "Television" here means "to tell a visual," for the narration unfolds simultaneously with the events that it narrates, creating an uncertain perspectival relationship between the audience and the drama. On the one hand, as Jameson suggests, the lack of "temporal continuity" in postmodern styles breaks down the connections between words; experienced in isolation, outside their sequential ordering, they become more "material" or "literal...ever more vivid in sensory ways." Because of the perpetual present, "the world comes before [us] with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious and oppressive charge of affect, glowing with hallucinatory energy... reorient[ing] the subject or speaker to a more literalizing attention toward those words" (120). Yet the metalinguistic emphasis on the storyteller's presence that the present tense creates reminds us constantly that these "images" are indeed narrated. The effect here is analogous to a cinematic "voice over" in which a visual event is simultaneously narrated, or, in the case of a first-person narrator, a "talking head" who announces his actions as s/he performs them. The resulting perspective on the drama is not unlike what Hawthorne achieves in "Wakefield," which is also narrated in the present tense. We experience the drama second-handed, always
aware that the actions that seem utterly immediate and vivid are filtering through the narrative perception.

The stories discussed in this chapter, Mason's "Shiloh" and Carver's "Where I'm Calling From," illustrate, thematically and rhetorically, the effect of the perpetual present on temporal consciousness. In "Shiloh," the drama centers on the relationship between public and private history. It explores the sense of progression lost or denied when a character feels disconnected from the realm of linear time and becomes aware, instead, of repetitive, circular experiences. In "Where I'm Calling From," storytelling is the drama: two recovering alcoholics share their stories, the act of narrating memory becoming a therapeutic form for reconciling the failures of their past with the sobering responsibilities that they must face outside the clinic. 6

Bobbie Ann Mason and the Insides of History

The structural flow and conversational spontaneity created by the present tense allow Mason to locate her story in a "narrative meantime," in which conventional temporality is no longer the ultimate authority for explaining the progression of events. The point is particularly relevant to the theme of "Shiloh." In the final scene, Leroy Moffitt recognizes that he has ignored the "insides of history," those private pulses of relevance that, in the context of linear temporality, seem insignificant and meaningless. Leroy makes this recognition only when his marriage falls apart, after he comes to fear the force of change that his wife Norma Jean represents when their history as a couple no longer matters to her. The temporal displacement that Mason's present tense effects on the reader thus has a gender-linked dramatic corollary: linear time, as numerous feminist studies argue, is governed by patriarchal values. It can exclude women from history by devaluing private temporal modalities. 7 The televisual nature of minimalism is central to conveying this theme. By assuming Leroy's perspective, Mason's storyteller holds Norma Jean in a gaze. She is the object of the narrative eye, and to make sense of her
marital dissatisfaction in the absence of more pronounced authorial clues, we must avoid relying on cause and effect sequentiality. This interpretive struggle parallels Norma Jean's: we must free ourselves from the same linear time scheme that binds her.

This tension between historical time and its "insides" in "Shiloh" is manifest in the juxtaposition between theme and style. On the one hand, Mason supplies enough clues (the characters' ages, references to Dr. Strangelove and Star Trek) so one may identify a specific historical frame for the story: roughly 1980. Yet within this frame, moments are connected by ambiguous temporal adverbs: always, sometimes, for a long time, today, in the morning, the next day, four months ago, now, for three months, years ago, all the time, for the past few years, at the moment. Obviously, just about any story will contain adverbs like these, but Mason employs them so frequently, often bunching them two and three at a time in a single sentence that they lose their specific reference, creating instead a frustrating sense of "in-betweenness" or alienation from the security of conventional time. This alienation is precisely the source of Leroy's frustration when a trucking accident suddenly makes him homebound: "He has begun to realize that in all the years he was on the road he never took time to examine anything. He was always flying past scenery."

For Leroy, time is a "departure, progression and arrival—in other words, time as history," as Julia Kristeva describes linear temporality (191). As long as highway miles provide the satisfying illusion of "flying" toward a particular destination, Leroy feels both movement and, paradoxically, stability. Progressive temporality feeds what Kristeva calls "monumental time," a register that "has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits" (191). Monumental time is infinite like space; within this realm, Leroy's flight finds its structure. The repetition of the intransitive verb to be ("Leroy is a truck driver") reveals a durative, fixed concept of identity shoring the ruin of his punctual-present reality. But with his rig now abandoned in the backyard "like a gigantic bird that has flown home to roost," monumental time becomes arrested motion, and he must find "something to kill time" to free him from this
uncomfortably static existence. He toys with various craft kits, but his master plan is to build a log cabin, "soon as I get time." With his fall from the masculine realm of linear time, Leroy's homebound life assumes feminine characteristics. As his mother-in-law says when she discovers his needlework, "That's what a woman would do...Great day in the morning!" (6).

Leroy recognizes another temporal register associated with female subjectivity. Kristeva calls it cyclical time, which measures not progression but return and repetition. On the road, Leroy often recounted his life story to hitchhikers. "He would end with a question: 'Well, what do you think?' It was just a rhetorical question. In time, he had the feeling that he'd been telling the same story over and over to the same hitchhikers" (9). At home, the disturbing sense of repetition without progress grows more persistent as Norma Jean's unhappiness becomes obvious. Again and again, she stares toward the kitchen corner while cooking, "as if she can't bear to look," and she feeds the goldfinches that repeatedly swoop past the window. For Leroy, the repetition of the birds is empty motion because they never get anywhere. In this movement, he sees an image of his own spiralling marriage: "They close their wings, then fall, then spread their wings to catch and lift themselves. [Leroy] wonders if they close their eyes when they fall. Norma Jean closes her eyes when they are in bed. She wants the lights turned out. Even then, he is sure she closes her eyes" (7).

Leroy believes that they can save the marriage if they simply "start afresh," but his memories perpetuate his immobility. In particular, he remembers the scene from Dr. Strangelove playing at the drive-in when his infant son died: "The President was talking in a folksy voice on the hot line to the Soviet premier about the bomber accidentally headed toward Russia. He was in the War Room, and the world map was lit up" (5). The peculiar shift to the preterite (the present tense typically expresses cinematic time) emphasizes the lack of motion: Leroy's memories are arrested images, frozen in time. Aware that he merely counts passing hours, waiting for some reassurance from his wife,
his alienation erupts into a distinctly masculine anxiety: "Am I still king around here?" he asks, afraid that Norma Jean is having an affair (13).

Leroy believes that history is cruise-control motion: present and past are regulated by the consistent rhythm of monumental time. He judges his wife against this linear model of progress. In his eyes, her self-improvement projects are ill planned and perfunctorily executed. She has no log cabin, no final goal, no arrival point. She graduates from body-building class and enrolls in an adult-education composition course; she toys with an organ that Leroy purchases for Christmas, then abandons it to cook ethnic dishes like Bombay chicken. But for Norma Jean, the present is an isolated spot of time, without connection to history. More than self-improvement, her spontaneity is a form of improvisation, as when she augments "Sunshine Superman" on the organ with Latin rhythms. Norma Jean (whose name is specifically linked to the tragic unhappiness of Marilyn Monroe) recognizes that the past can never be recouped into the present; a second honeymoon would only perpetuate her entrapment in cyclical time. "You and me could start all over again," Leroy says when she announces that she wants to leave him. "'Right back at the beginning.' 'We have started all over again,'" she responds. "And this is how it turned out" (15).

What prompts Norma Jean's "improvised" identity is Leroy's need to idolize her as a symbol of cyclical and monumental time, thereby confining her to a fixed identity that is "small and helpless." As Kristeva argues, the "cycles, gestation, [and] eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm" that engender cyclical time can stereotype women into a single sex role: motherhood (191). Leroy still views her this way, though their child died fifteen years earlier. Her identity is as static as his memories: "She is still pretty," he decides, as if time had not touched her. She is no longer a teenager, but both her husband and her mother treat her that way: "She won't leave me alone — you won't leave me alone," Norma Jean complains. "I feel eighteen again. I can't face that all over again" (15). As this passage suggests, Leroy's attitude is only half of Norma Jean's dilemma.
Her mother, Mabel, is equally intent on restricting her to the past. Mabel wants the Moffitts to visit Shiloh because she honeymooned there years earlier, "the only real trip she ever took": "I always thought Shiloh was the prettiest place, so full of history," she says. History offers a secure retreat from the anxieties of the present by projecting the illusion that events can be explained as a progression of causes and effects. Leroy and Mabel share the same passivity. The past is their only hope for the future, and the present is simply time that they must endure. Leroy's identification with his mother-in-law further dramatizes his alienation from linear time and the masculine values associated with it: "Like Mabel, [Leroy] is just waiting for time to pass" (11).

But unlike Mabel, Leroy does finally recognize that he is a prisoner of history. When the Moffitts visit Shiloh, they discover the battlefield is not as they imagined it; there is no direct statement of its meaning, no direct path to its significance. Instead, monuments are scattered around bluffs and ravines. Norma Jean "drives aimlessly through the park," her lack of direction a vivid counterpoint to the image of Leroy flying through time in his big rig. Realizing that the battleground "looks like a subdivision site," he glimpses the hollowness of linear time:

General Grant, drunk and furious, shoved the Southerners back to Corinth, where Mabel and Jet Beasley were married years later, when Mabel was still thin and good looking. The next day, Mabel and Jet visited the battleground, and then Norma Jean was born, and then she married Leroy and they had a baby, which they lost, and now Leroy and Norma Jean are here at the same battleground. Leroy knows he is leaving out a lot. He is leaving out the insides of history. History was always just names and dates to him. It occurs to him that building a house of logs is similarly empty—too simple. And the real inner workings of a marriage, like most of history, have escaped him. (15-16)

History in Leroy's mind is a cumulative progression of events. His life, however, is complicated by moments that cannot be explained in a sequence. Ignoring the "insides of history," he overlooks the most vital part of human interaction: the experience itself. As he thinks, he watches Norma Jean walk through the cemetery on "a serpentine brick
path." She moves away, but not straight away, and the story ends with this ambiguous image, a symbol both of Leroy's newfound awareness and Norma Jean's independent self-expression. 8

The indirection of the walkway is also a fitting metaphor for the temporal development of the action. The influence of the present tense on this ambiguous movement permeates three planes of narrative time: chronology, duration, and pace. In terms of chronology, tense variations typically segment a story into scenes with specific temporal references that allow one to collate a time scheme from an non-sequential arrangement. In "Shiloh," however, tense shifts do not always establish clear boundaries between scenes. Nor do they return to the moment suspended in story time. As a result, the audience constructs the chronology by deciding where these pieces fit; we also have to decide whether they occur once or whether they are composite representations. Finally, Mason's tense play often prevents us from deciding the simple issue of who speaks.

One sign of the temporal ambiguity in the opening of the story (quoted previously) is the past perfect tense. The first scene dissolves after a few lines of dialogue between Leroy and Norma Jean into expository material, narrated in the past perfect ("Leroy has been collecting temporary disability"). Though classified as a past tense, the perfect expresses ongoing conditions and incomplete processes. Talmy Givon argues that it is not conducive to representing sequences and thus rarely appears in narrative (qtd. in Fleischman 37). When the storyteller says that "Leroy has begun to realize" his insensitivity toward time, the audience cannot fix that realization to a specific moment in the chronology. Its dramatic potential is muted because nothing in the context suggests a progression toward that recognition.

Temporal ambiguity becomes even more disconcerting when entire scenes take place in this "meantime." When the description of Leroy's accident concludes and we return to Leroy and Norma Jean, nothing in the context connects it to the opening scene.
There is no mention of weight lifting, nor does the dialogue continue where their conversation was interrupted. Instead, Norma Jean tells Leroy that his log cabin will be out of place in the subdivision, though the log cabin is first mentioned in the summary and not in the dialogue. In fact, another descriptive block cast in the perfect tense commences, again ambiguously modulating between the past, present and future: Leroy has been promising his wife "ever since they were married" that "one day" they would buy their own home instead of renting, as they have "always" done. The small section ends with one final adverb: "It does not even feel like a home, Leroy realizes now."

Again, if this exchange continues the first scene that introduced Leroy and Norma Jean, that now refers to a specific moment, and Leroy's realization becomes a narrative event with dramatic weight: it marks a sudden awareness of the distance that separates him and Norma Jean. But if the scene is a composite representation or a summary, that now refers to a broader time frame, and the drama loses its punctual force: Leroy has known for "some time" that the marriage is not healthy. The audience decides the value of now; in doing so, it determines how each sentence functions in the text. Elizabeth Deeds Ermath describes these texturing responsibilities as the "new acts of attention" that postmodern writing demands (33).

Similar ambiguities arise even between scenes linked by temporal adverbs. When Leroy meets his marijuana dealer in a parking lot, the narrator interpolates information that should fix events in historical time: Leroy is thirty-four. He and Norma Jean were married at eighteen because Norma Jean was pregnant. Leroy's dealer, Stevie Hamilton, is roughly the same age as Randy would be had he not died at four months. Yet the temporal orientation and sentence function soon turn ambiguous:

Leroy remembers handing Randy to a nurse at the emergency room, as though he were offering her a large doll as a present. A dead baby feels like a sack of flour. 'It just happens sometimes,' said the doctor, in what Leroy always recalls as a nonchalant tone. Leroy can hardly remember the child anymore, but he still sees vividly a scene from Dr. Strangelove ...Leroy remembers Norma Jean standing catatonically beside him in the hospital and himself thinking:
is this strange girl? Now scientists are saying that crib death is caused by a virus. Nobody knows anything anymore, Leroy thinks. The answers are always changing. (5)

Adverbs like always and still imply that this memory repeatedly haunts Leroy: the vision of Norma Jean in the hospital is an arrested image like the scene from Dr. Strangelove. Yet the tag in the final sentence suggests that Leroy thinks at a specific moment. Again, that act would be an action that significantly dramatizes his displacement. The clause that introduces the following scene ("when Leroy gets home from the shopping center") further implies that while the particulars of his trip home have been elided, his remembering nonetheless occurs during this interval. Once more, in the absence of a more specific temporal framework, the audience places the scene in the chronology.

The thematic tension between temporal registers enhances the interpretive dilemmas that the audience faces. After Leroy and Norma Jean stare at the goldfinches for an unspecified "long time," the storyteller introduces a scene with a hint of impending action: "Something is happening." But instead of a dramatic event, the storyteller provides more exposition: "Norma Jean is going to night school. She has graduated from her six-week body-building course and now she is taking an adult-education course in composition at Paducah Community College. She spends her evenings outlining paragraphs" (11). Nothing here ties this "now" to the previous scene; exactly how many evenings Norma Jean has spent outlining paragraphs is unclear. That information may not be vital for understanding the conflict, yet its absence points to our displacement from time. Mason herself has suggested that the present tense by necessity precludes this type of temporal hopscotch: "You can't say [a character] answers the phone today and then say it is three weeks later. How did that consciousness skip all that time? Who's doing the plotting? Who's behind the camera?" (460). Yet, as "Shiloh" demonstrates, her storyteller does skip time, moving from now to now without regard for the distance separating them. As a result, the expectation that time, by structuring cause and effect,
explains psychological motivation is disappointed. Leroy feels the loss of causation as he struggles to understand why Norma Jean changes hobbies: "What are you doing this for anyhow?" he asks. Her response is ambivalent, and the drama erodes into still more exposition: "Norma Jean used to say, 'If I lose ten minutes' sleep, I just drag all day.' Now she stays up late, writing compositions. She got a B on her first paper—a how-to theme on soup-based casseroles. Recently Norma Jean has been cooking unusual foods—tacos, lasagna, Bombay chicken. She doesn't play the organ anymore, though her second paper was called "Why Music Is Important to Me." Just how recently relates to this unspecified now is unclear, and a cause/effect relation between her composition writing and experimental cooking is impossible to determine, either for Leroy or for us. Did her cooking lead her to write on the subject of soup-based casseroles, or did the B that she received on the paper encourage her to experiment with Bombay chicken? This ambiguity further obscures anymore, which is a dependent adverb that typically references a cause/effect relationship, though it remains unclear whether the writing or the cooking or both interests have caused her to stop playing the organ. Norma Jean's motivations cannot be reconstructed in sequence; as I suggested earlier, her self-improvement is self-improvisation in which the process of experimentation is more important than its final product. The contrast between her indifference to sequence and Leroy's obsession with it is nicely highlighted: while she writes, he spends night after night constructing a model cabin out of Lincoln Logs because "the thought of getting a truckload of notched, numbered logs scares him," and he wants to be sure that he can put it together in order. The image is a metaphor for the audience's struggle to construct the text linearly. But just as Norma Jean's actions elude chronology, the significance that one seeks lies outside the concatenation of narrative events.

Mason's storyteller also renders time ambiguous by playing with frequency, the ratio between the narrating act and the events narrated. She employs what Gerard Genette calls "iterative" narrative or summary: events that occur repeatedly are narrated once
Traditionally, summary provides background. Rather than advance the plot, it enhances the consistency of the fictional world, repetition and routine fleshing out the structural skeleton of dramatic events that happen once. Summary can be distinguished by verb type (in present tense, the progressive present and the past perfect being the most common) and adverbs that signify spans of time rather than specific points (for a while, sometimes as opposed to suddenly). Again, the traditional difference in aesthetic value that distinguishes one-time events and those that occur repeatedly is founded on an assumption that actions are more important than commentary. But Mason's storyteller confounds these distinctions, exploiting frequency to dramatize the Moffitts' entrapment in cyclical time.

The image of the goldfinches, for example, first appears in a block of summary. Adverbs signify the repetition of action: "In the mornings, Norma Jean disappears... When she chops onions... She puts on her house slippers almost precisely at nine o'clock every evening." As the focus shifts from Norma Jean to Leroy, however, the adverbs disappear, and the scene shifts to that ambiguous "meantime" that might signify either punctual or cyclical temporality: "Norma Jean closes her eyes when they are in bed. She wants the lights turned out. Even then, he is sure she closes her eyes" (7). Does Leroy make this association each time he watches the birds or only once? Whether the symbol is background information or an event that signifies his growing awareness is the audience's decision. The storyteller thus de-emphasizes action in favor of description, often using summary to supply the drama that the order of events fails to produce. When Mabel first visits the couple, for example, nothing in the scene suggests conflict: she gives them a dust ruffle, rolls her eyes at Leroy's needlepoint, recommends that they go to Shiloh, and promptly disappears. Her influence on the marriage is described in an aside: "Until this year, Leroy has not realized how much time she spends with Norma Jean. When she visits, she inspects the closets and the plants... She always notices if Norma Jean's laundry is piling up" (5). When Mabel first mentions Shiloh, the storyteller stops the
Mabel is talking about Shiloh, Tennessee. For the past few years, she has been urging Leroy and Norma Jean to visit the Civil War battleground there." Summary here conveys Norma Jean's entrapment in cyclical time, the adverb (always) and tense (has been urging) marking the repetition. Her mother's routine is the conflict; to communicate its import via a dramatic confrontation between them would undermine the presentation of Norma Jean's entrapment.

The present tense clouds our perception of order and frequency so that time is an undependable interpretive frame. But tense switches have an even more basic effect: they impede our ability to distinguish shifts in what Genette calls focalization, movements in which the voice remains the same but the center of consciousness changes. During the course of the story, we face sentences that can be attributed to either the storyteller (as interpolated commentary) or to the character (as combined discourse). What we discover is a near fusion of the narrative and figural voices (specifically Leroy's) that creates the "tell-a-visual" nature of the style.

Any number of examples reveal the fusion between narrative and figural perspective. Even in blocks of summary, evaluative speech acts convey the simultaneous perception of narrator and character: "Norma Jean works at the Rexall drugstore, and she has acquired an amazing amount of information about cosmetics. When she explains the stages of complexion care, involving creams, toners, and moisturizers, he thinks happily of other petroleum products—axle grease, diesel fuel. This is a connection between him and Norma Jean" (2; emphasis added). Is this Leroy's thought or the storyteller's? The decision is ours, and, once more, any answer influences the perception of the structure. If one assumes that the storyteller comments directly to the audience, the sentence is a description that orients us to Leroy's state of mind. But if it is combined discourse, the sentence suggests that Leroy recognizes his own need to connect with his wife; such recognition implies an awareness that gives the sentence more dramatic weight. In such
examples, the present-tense closes the gap between the narrator and the characters, obliterating one device for distinguishing representation from description.

This televisual effect arises most forcefully, however, from the third temporal register, the pace of the narrating. Rhythm is the most subjective form of temporal play because its perception is a function of reading time, which will obviously vary throughout an audience. Still, as Genette argues, tempo can illuminate the relationship between the narration and the story at two levels: first, simply in terms of movement, which refers to the quantity of text that represents blocks of story time, and second, as the duration that various verb types and tense forms convey (93-94). Tempo is important in present-tense narratives because one expects that the rhythm will mimic the flow of the story. If a narrator synchronizes the two temporal planes, the story will contain no ellipses between scenes and no evaluative interpolations that would arrest forward motion. Story time will equal narration time. The *noveau roman* exploits this effect: details seem to pass indiscriminately before the narrative eye. Without a retrospective consciousness sifting and arranging materials, reading time supplies the tempo. Temporal play in "Shiloh" is less extreme but in many ways more exciting than the avant-garde novel. Rather than synchronize the two temporal planes, the narrator exploits the drag between them that signals her presence as an evaluative filter.

This drag is most detectable in descriptive passages that syncopate dramatic scenes. As Genette suggests, the tempo of a scene is modeled on exchanges of dialogue where call and response evokes the flow of oral conversation. But in "Shiloh" dialogue rarely runs uninterrupted by exposition. Conversational exchanges are themselves undramatic and tend to begin and end with indifferent abruptness. The burden of drama falls upon description, which slows the tempo of the exchanges. When Leroy meets Stevie Hamilton for a marijuana buy, for example, the scene, at first glance, seems to have minimal relevance:
"Where do you get this stuff?" asks Leroy. "From your pappy?"
"That's for me to know and you to find out," Stevie says. He is slit-eyed and skinny.
"What else you got?"
"What else you interested in?"
"Nothing special. Just wondered." (4)

Leroy recognizes in Stevie the ghost of his own son Randy, but this recognition is inferable only through the abundance of descriptive detail, which suggests that Leroy is staring studiously at the boy. The narrator notes the color of his shoes, the logo on his T-shirt, remarks on his father's occupation, and even comments on the fact that, in the local phone book, the Hamiltons have a second number listed under "Teenagers." These details may seem gratuitous for a character who says exactly three sentences and disappears. Their value, however, rests on their perception: passages of description imply the act of observation. In reporting details, the storyteller transforms narrative commentary into a story about the activity of perception. In structural terms, the relative absence of dramatic events is deceptive: the act of orienting oneself to the scene is the drama, both for the characters and the audience. Just as Leroy attempts to register what passes before him, so, too, the storyteller acts less as an organizing force than a screen whose background and foreground can be differentiated only by the audience.

The point becomes clearer when we examine the function of the scene in storytelling. In granting the illusion of unmediated access to events, the scene marks the highest degree of mimetic fidelity possible. The source of fidelity is our ability to imagine ourselves present, to be invisible amid the action. Like theater patrons, we witness a staged spectacle; but unlike a literal audience, we witness this action in our imagination. The scene thus presupposes what Alexander Gelley calls a "specular investment." It asks us to transfer language into image, to fantasize within the limitations of the frames that the description imposes. As a result, "the reader becomes an unstable subject, seeking to survey and master what is being shown, but continually thwarted by the frame or 'spectacle' that provides [the] means of access" (171). Scenes in "Shiloh" implicate us in
this act of visualization at a metarhetorical level. Rather than directly reveal herself, Mason's storyteller subtly relocates the drama outside the scenic frame into the activity of narration itself. One clue to the "spectacle" of visualization is the abundance of perceptual verbs: Leroy notices how the town has changed; Mabel notices the dirty laundry. Leroy watches the birds and looks at his rig in the backyard. He sees traces of Norma Jean's features in Mabel. Even the most dramatic scene, what seems to be the couple's breakup, is a drama of observation, not action: Norma Jean, herself looking at the Tennessee River, waves her arms at Leroy: "Is she beckoning to him? She seems to be doing an exercise for her chest muscles" (16). The modal dramatizes not only Leroy's inability to make sense of Norma Jean's actions, but the storyteller's commitment to dramatizing the subjectivity of all specular investments, including her own. The action always orients the audience back to the source of its perception.

Pace is not merely a matter of rhythm, however: a sense of movement also depends on the duration or temporal length that verbs convey. Not surprisingly, duration plays a part in the visualization of events in "Shiloh." In particular, Mason's use of the progressive present enhances our sense of an asynchrony between story and narration. The progressive typically complements ongoing processes of some length: "Rain is falling." The distinction between the progressive and punctual present is rarely maintained in storytelling, precisely because the duration that it conveys is antagonistic to the spontaneous drama that moves the story forward. As a result, events are frequently cast into the punctual present "to override the inherent duration of these situations, giving them the appearance of instantaneous achievements" (Fleischman 37). Instead of saying "Rain is falling," narrators often say "Rain falls." Tense type thus becomes another criterion by which the audience grounds information: the progressive distinguishes commentary while the punctual present conveys actions. The opening sentences of "Shiloh" illustrate this distinction: "Leroy Moffitt's wife, Norma Jean, is working on her pectorals. She lifts three-pound dumbbells to warm up, then progresses to a twenty-
pound barbell. Standing with her legs apart, she reminds Leroy of Wonder Woman."
The progressive ("is working") suggests that the workout has been going on some time
before the story begins. The action verbs (lifts, progresses, reminds), meanwhile, mark
the commencing drama.

But Mason often uses the progressive tense in sentences that one might classify as
actions: "At that moment Norma Jean is holding on to the kitchen counter, raising her
knees one at a time as she talks. She is wearing two-pound ankle weights...under her
breath, she is counting. Now she is marching through the kitchen. She is doing goose
steps" (7). Maintaining the duration of Norma Jean's activity has two effects: first, it
creates the drag of narrative rhythm. The moment that Norma Jean holds the counter has
no fixed conclusion. The audience ascribes an experiential value to the temporal adverb
(moment) according to the rhythm of its own reading time. Second, the progressive
present marks the visualization rather than dramatization of scenes. According to Suzanne
Fleischman, one of the few modes of discourse in which the progressive present is
consistently employed is the "current report," as when sportscasters "announce" a game
(31). "The runner is rounding third" describes an event occurring simultaneously with
the speaker's perception of it (38). Likewise, events in "Shiloh" do not simply happen;
they are simultaneously observed and reported. This point is important because the
progressive present is used most frequently to describe Norma Jean's actions. She is the
object of a narrative gaze. The duration conveyed by the progressive present emphasizes
Leroy's need to keep her out of linear time. But for the audience, the progressive present
slows the forward motion of the narrative sequence, re-orienting us away from the drama
of actions to the drama of visualizing them.

"Shiloh" is only one of the many stories by Mason in which tense play resists
what Kristeva calls "the inherent linearity of language" (192). It is significant that when
Mason does write in the present tense, she consistently employs a third-person
perspective. The drama of the gaze that unfolds between Leroy's need to discover a cause
of her unhappiness, one that can be explained in terms of cause and effect, and the audience's effort to interpret and account for this conflict results from the peculiar temporal drag in the representation. Again, the storyteller functions here not as an organizing presence but as a reflective surface, always amorphous but always perceptible. The translucence of such a narrative stance is particular to the undramatized narrator, however. New and different ambiguities develop when the storyteller is a character in the narrative, as is more frequently the case in Carver's stories.

**Raymond Carver: Memory and Performance**

The Carver brand of minimalism often evokes Hemingway's tough-guy reticence: "We all go into the dining room. Frank Martin cuts the cake. I sit next to J. P. J. P. eats two pieces and drinks a Coke. I eat a piece and wrap another piece in a napkin, thinking of later" (217). Emphasizing the event in lieu of the emotion, Carver shuns depth by omitting traces of a reflecting consciousness so that his stories often seem "more transcribed than told" (Stull 1). Like Hemingway, Carver learned the value of stark, staccato sentences and strategic, Steinian repetition. The two writers differ, however, in the type of utterance that they omit. As I suggested in the last chapter, Hemingway at his most economical (circa *Men Without Women*) elides all but the most embedded signals of narratorial presence, leaving only the mannerism of his style as a clue to his agency. In later stories (especially those collected in *Cathedral* [1984]), Carver's narrators openly grapple with communication; their fumbling attempts to make contact expose a humanistic counter current to the mute, existential bleakness that typically stereotypes their author. This humanism surfaces most visibly in certain linguistic gestures that Barthes, remarking on the different interpersonal orientations that the spoken and written word evoke, describes as the "scraps of language," those "appeals [and] modulations... through which a body seeks another body" (Grain 4). In "Where I'm Calling From," these scraps mark a self-consciousness about the unfolding story, a willingness to shape
and revise the narrative in process: "It's eleven o'clock in the morning—an hour and a half until lunch. Neither one of us is hungry. But just the same we look forward to going inside and sitting down at the table. What's J. P. talking about, anyway? He's saying how when he was twelve years old he fell into a well in the vicinity of the farm he grew up on" (129-30). The interrogative effects a perspectival transition from interior moods and feelings to the surrounding environment; it momentarily pinpoints the place of storytelling, not its physical location or scene, but the perceptual space from which the speaker observes and listens while he narrates. Hemingway would pencil through it without blinking. But Carver frequently employs these devices, using questions ("What's to say?" "But so what?") and emphatics ("Sure, once in a while he drank the hard stuff") and self-repairs ("I mean, his won't keep still") to register the relationship between his narrators and their stories. However "transcribed" the sparsity of the style may strike us, ample clues indicate that it is indeed "told."

This confusion between the transcribed and the told is indicative of the ambiguous televisual stance in minimalist fiction. On the one hand, the objective report of external details implies a narrator who coolly and laconically records the scene in stark black and white by filtering out all emotional coloring; the interior monologue, as Wright's use of it in "Almos' a Man" suggests, first and foremost conveys the intensity of a subjective cognitive realm where unspoken thoughts burst and explode with Technicolor exaggeration. In the first-person present tense, the perceptual borders that typically distinguish these two stances disappear. At its simplest, the style begs a question: how can one tell and take part in a story at the same instant? But a closer glance at "Where I'm Calling From" reveals a complicating problem. Events from the past are rewritten into a metaphorical present, creating the illusion of simultaneous narration and action. The boundaries between the two types of present tense are likewise ambiguous. As scenes bleed into one another and temporal grounding erodes, it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where the storyteller does call from.
The effect here, much as in "Shiloh," is a dissolving of temporal continuity as an authority, or better yet, an excuse for explaining and justifying dramatic events. Scenes in Carver's fiction are montages of experience. Whereas a modernist aesthetic would find in montage a symbolic expression of content, the fragmentation of the medium reflecting the fragmentation of the perceptual act, these scenes do not hint at meaning but leave us with what Dana Polan calls "the evacuation of sense," an emptying-out of traditional narrative motifs. In Carver's case, the obvious narrative tradition "evacuated" is the American success story. His protagonists are inarticulate and ineffectual, but unlike Hugh Wolfe in "Life in the Iron Mills," they would never fancy themselves as artists or seek in art transcendence from the social riddle. Anti-minimalists often dismiss the peculiar apathy that haunts Carver's characters as the middle-class writer's (or worse, the middle-class academic writer's) romantic view of a "noble savage" blue-collar class. What Carver elusively calls the "dis-ease" of contemporary life corresponds to what Polan describes as the recognition in mass culture of the loss of "meaningful models of behavior": narrative forms, both "high" and "popular" culture, offer "no models whatsoever, preferring instead a situation in which there are no stable values, in which there are no effective roles that one could follow through from beginning to end." The individual's "will ceases to matter...[so] one can come to luxuriate in one's own loss of will"; what would have been "a negative situation" becomes, for the audience, "a source of pleasure" (181-83). In Carver's minimalism, the source of this pleasure typically centers on what he refers to as "sentiment": "Any right-thinking reader or writer abjures sentimentality. But there's a difference between sentiment and sentimentality. I'm all for sentiment. I'm interested in the personal, intimate relationships in life" (qtd. in Gentry and Stull 180). In "Where I'm Calling From," storytelling offers a ritual, however subtle, for establishing these intimacies.

The peculiar organization of "Where I'm Calling From" results then from the relationship that the storyteller attempts to strike with audiences within the story itself and
with the narrative exchange. While Carver dramatizes storytelling as a postmodern mode of communication, he focuses on memory as the thematic fiber. The narrator meets J. P., a former chimney sweep, and listens to his confession because "it's taking me away from my own situation" (213). He does not reproduce J. P.'s story in extended quotes but re-tells it, performing it as he performs his own story. Both characters recall Leroy Moffitt in "Shiloh": they do not know how their life got off track, how the happiness of home eroded into discontent. If Leroy's anxiety drives him to a relatively pathetic form of self-delusion (planning to build a log cabin in the Kentucky suburbs) these men are far more destructive. They have become alcoholics. "Who knows why we do what we do?" the narrator asks us when J. P. admits that he had everything he could want. But unlike Leroy, whose memories are frozen in time, Carver's recovering alcoholics remember to come to terms with their loss. Toward the end of the story, while J. P.'s wife Roxy visits, the narrator sits on the clinic steps, trying not to think about how badly he wants a drink: "I'm thinking about chimney sweeps—all that stuff I heard from J. P.—when for some reason I start to think about a house my wife and I once lived in. The house didn't have a chimney, so I don't know what makes me remember it now. But I remember the house and how we'd only been in there a few weeks when I heard a noise outside one morning" (220). The memory leads to a humorous story: he discovers his landlord peeping into his bedroom window; he cannot figure out why the old man is laughing at him until he realizes that he is naked. The memory does not offer a key or answer for why things went wrong. In fact, uncertain about what even sparked it, he is content to dismiss the answer with an inconclusive "some reason." It is the plenitude of his loss that inspires him to phone his girlfriend and ex-wife.

Oddly enough, the non-chronological retrospection that these characters perform may be more "realistic" than the typical retrospective stance, in which memory is a simple transcription of events. As Gayle Greene writes, memory "revises, reorders, refigeses, resignifies...far from being a trustworthy transcriber of 'reality,' it is a shaper and shape
shifter that takes liberties with the past...memory is a creative writer, Mother of the Muses (Mnemosyne in Greek mythology), maker of stories—the stories by which we construct meaning through temporality and assure ourselves that time past is not time lost." These "ennabling fictions" are distinct from nostalgia, a longing that more properly describes Leroy's need to think of Norma Jean as a "still pretty" teenager. Nostalgia is the desire to "return to home...to return to the state of things in which woman keeps the home and in which she awaits, like Penelope, the return of her wandering Odysseus" (294). Vivian Gornick has accused Carver of being nostalgic in this manner; in stories like "Are These Actual Miles?" or the notorious "Tell the Women We're Going," the locus of male anxiety is a woman's freedom to philander or assume an autonomous sexual identity once the sole privilege of men (1). The accusation does not apply to "Where I'm Calling From," or, for that matter, stories like "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" in which conversational storytelling is also the central drama. Roxy is not trapped in the past. When she visits her husband on New Year's Day, the narrator admits that J. P. told him the story of how they fell in love:

'I've heard about you,' I say. 'J.P. told me how you got acquainted. Something about a chimney, J.P. said.'

'Yes, a chimney,' she says. 'There's probably a lot else he didn't tell you,' she says. 'I bet he didn't tell you everything,' she says, and laughs. (219)

Her memories tell another story; however intensely the narrator has listened to J. P., he has not heard "everything." But J. P. does not try to contain his wife in the past as Leroy does. He seems to understand that after the arguments and infidelities, the broken noses and dislocated shoulders that he and Roxy have inflicted upon each other, the two people who first met by trading innocuous kisses no longer exist, not even in memory. To even complete his story is to come to terms with this loss: "Now J. P. gets real quiet again. I say, 'I want to hear the rest of this, J. P. You better keep talking.' 'I just don't know,' he says. He shrugs" (213). The narrator's attitude toward memory is more complex.
When Roxy visits, he asks her for a kiss, just as J. P. asked for a kiss years earlier. "I'm not a sweep anymore," Roxy tells him. "Not for years...But sure, I'll kiss you, sure" (219). When her kiss fails to have that same effect that it had on J. P., he silently understands the loss, and leaves the couple alone. Sitting by himself, he expresses no intention of obliging either his wife or his girlfriend to take him back: "I won't say anything about New Year's resolutions," he decides when he thinks of calling them (221). All he wants is to reach them on the phone, to hear a voice respond, even if he does not know what to say.

As a contrast, Carver describes two other characters who believe that the past does exist independent of perspective. One is Frank Martin himself, owner of the clinic, who points out Jack London's estate across the Sonoma valley and says, "Alcohol killed him. Let that be a lesson to you. He was a better man than any of us. But he couldn't handle the stuff, either" (215). For him, Jack London's life is a parable; the writer is a public figure with a purely didactic value. He tells his patients to read *The Call of the Wild* to understand the high stakes of survival, then announces "End of sermon." In his brief appearance in the story, Frank Martin hardly seems like a comforting counselor. The narrator describes him as a "prizefighter, like somebody who knows the score." J. P. is even more direct: "I feel like a bug when he's around," he confesses (215).

Another alcoholic in the clinic refuses to remember at all, taking pride in his blackouts: "He doesn't have any idea why he's here at Frank Martin's. But he doesn't remember getting here. He laughs about it, about his not remembering" (217). Here the blackout is a form of denial. Unable to accept the loss of the past, the alcoholic refuses to acknowledge it at all. Though he claims that his drinking is not a problem, he still has a story to tell, and the other clinic patients respect it: "He's not a drunk—he tells us this and we listen." They listen because they remember a time in their life when they told the same story.
Significantly, in our final glimpse of him, the narrator does think of Jack London, but not *The Call of the Wild*. Instead, he remembers a story called "To Build a Fire," which he read in high school: "This guy in the Yukon is freezing. Imagine it—he's actually going to freeze to death if he can't get a fire going. With a fire, he can dry his socks and things and warm himself." As he recalls it, the man does start his fire, but a branchful of tumbling snow extinguishes it. The story ends without resolution: "Meanwhile, it's getting colder. Night is coming on" (221). Like Leroy, who sees an image of his stagnating marriage in the repetition of the flying birds, the narrator seems to recognize something of himself in this story. But here the analogy is left unexpressed; its resonance is silent. Unlike Frank Martin or his fellow alcoholic, the narrator implies that the content of memories and the experience of relating them are inseparable. Much like Tiny, the alcoholic who entertains the patients with elaborate stories of his binges, the narrator offers the memory and waits "for a sign of recognition" (209).

As in "Shiloh," temporal interruptions obscure the chronology of "Where I'm Calling From." But whereas Mason uses the present tense to convey a sense of sequential "flow," Carver structures his text around three interlocking temporal spheres, each contained within the other like concentric circles. The first might be called "honest present," the New Year's Day when the narrator re-tells his and J. P.'s stories. Carver's "scraps," the interrogatives, self-repairs, and other interpersonal markers, help track this scene even during segments cast in the fictional present: "She tried to explain to her son that she was going to be gone for a while and he'd have to get his own food...He screamed, 'The hell with you! hope you never come back. I hope you kill yourselves!' *Imagine this kid!*" (216; emphasis added). This sphere includes the long, concluding scene in which Roxy visits J. P., when the narrator thinks of the Jack London story and decides to call his wife and girlfriend.

The second sphere is the "just present," which includes scenes from New Year's Eve. The most important takes place on the clinic's front porch where J. P. tells his
story. The narrator signals the realm in different ways: either with unexpected tense shifts that evoke the first sphere ("But he told me that being at the bottom of that well had made a lasting impression"); "I was interested. But I would have listened if he'd been going on about how one day he decided to start pitching horseshoes") or with specific time references ("A day and a half later J. P. and I meet up on the front porch...That's when J. P. gets going with his story"). The final circle includes scenes from the distant past that reveal how the men came to the clinic. Though these flashbacks begin in the preterite ("When he was eighteen or nineteen years old..."), the tense often shifts in and out of the metaphorical present: "Then the doorbell rings...This young woman chimney sweep is there with her cleaning things...She was all-right-looking, too, J. P. said " (131; emphasis added). Here the switches ostensibly guide the audience from circle to circle: the metaphoric present conveys the mini-story as if it were ongoing. J. P.'s comment about Roxy's looks, meanwhile, evokes the scene in which he narrates it.

But the subsequent paragraph introduces a more arbitrary, beguiling type of switch: "When she'd finished her work, she rolled her things up in the blanket. From J. P.'s friend, she took a check that had been made out to her by his parents. And then she asks the friend if he wants to kiss her. 'It's supposed to bring good luck,' she says. That does it for J. P. The friend rolls his eyes. He clowns some more. Then, probably blushing, he kisses her on the cheek. At this minute, J. P. made his mind up about something" (131; emphasis added). Clearly, in this case, tense changes do not divide episodes but fragment them into even smaller units. Accounting for their function is difficult, however, for the arbitrary pattern seems almost calculated. In print, these switches are visually striking precisely because the conceptual subordination by which written narratives are organized necessitates a "logic" of tense usage, which is typically grounded in the authority of linear temporality. In oral storytelling, however, tense may have nothing to do with marking time. Instead, the switches serve as an internal
evaluative device, a type of aural italics that "comments" metarhetorically upon the action, cueing the audience to the importance of the forthcoming events.

It is a sign of Carver's ear for oral conversation that he uses tense shifts rather than written conventions like italics. Their effect, I would suggest, is particular to the "tell-a-visual" nature of minimalist storytelling in which the action is always the subject of an implicit running commentary by the performance. Rick Altman has described the aural appeal of television as a "sound hermeneutic" that draws a non-attentive viewer to the screen: "the sound asks the question 'Where?' to which the image, upon identifying the source, eventually responds 'Here!'" Similarly, these tense shifts may "initiate [our] involvement" by sparking curiosity and challenging us to account for their purpose. They are key to inspiring the "specular investment" that Alexander Gelley argues is necessary for the reader's construction of a fictional scene. The story itself includes a subdued example of the "sound hermeneutic" as the narrator remembers how his girlfriend dropped him off at the clinic:

'Goodbye,' she said, and she lurched into the doorjamb and then onto the porch. It's late afternoon. It's raining. I go from the door to the window. I move the curtain and watch her drive away. She's in my car. She's drunk. But I'm drunk, too, and there's nothing I can do. I make it to a big chair that's close to the radiator, and I sit down. Some guys look up from their TV. Then they shift back to what they were watching. I just sit there. Now and again I look up at something that's happening on the screen. (214)

Whatever the "happening" that draws his attention to the screen, the narrator attempts to assimilate himself into the scene twice: first as an uneasy participant experiencing it and then as a storyteller who later recalls the moment. The switch to the present tense implicitly cues us to the importance of the moment, yet what exactly its import might be is unclear. The dramatized experience is whittled down to a sense of "sentiment," in this case a particularly awkward, alienated feeling enhanced by the other men's absorption with the television. The narrator's spectatorship is not a precise metaphor for our reading
of the story; presumably, Carver assumes that we participate less ambivalently than the
storyteller watches television. Yet the act of trying to assimilate within the scene is
similar.

Frequently, tense shifts dissolve the temporal authority with which we reconstruct
a story line, substituting instead the peculiar postmodern space of performance. The
narrator's distant past, for example, should be easier to fix in time because in the New
Year's Eve scenes (the middle temporal sphere) he ostensibly functions as J. P.'s
audience: "I say, 'I want to hear the rest of this, J.P. You better keep talking!'" (213).
Yet the interrogatives, self-repairs, and other interpersonal "scraps" often mark a
perceptual ambiguity: "J. P. quits talking. He just clams up. What's going on? I'm
listening." (134). The question can have two temporal anchors: it can refer to his thought
at the moment that J. P. clammed up or it can refer to the moment the narrator evaluates
the situation as he remembers it. This temporal ambiguity encompasses both single
sentences and whole episodes. "My wife brought me up here the first time," he says and
begins a long, past-tense flashback narrated directly to us. He describes how, before his
return to the clinic, he started drinking with his girlfriend on Christmas morning and did
not stop until he decided to make the trip back to the clinic. When the memory concludes,
he thinks: "I guess she got home okay. I think I would have heard something if she
didn't. But she hasn't called me, and I haven't called her" (215). This appears to be
simultaneous narration, yet no sooner does the confession conclude than the speaker
evokes the second temporal sphere: "They clang an old farm bell here to call you for
mealtime. J. P. and I get out of our chairs and we go inside...We can see our breath
drifting out from us as we talk" (216-17). The unexpected return to the porch suggests
that the narrator has been telling this memory to J.P. In the absence of the typical
attributive tags (I say, I tell him) that would mark that moment as a concrete scene, the
audience must determine the boundaries of the event.
Another sign of the evaluative function of tense switches is their presence within sequences of actions. In many cases, they cluster around temporal conjunctions and adverbs that create a sense of progression: "They played some records. *Then* the doorbell rings" (210); "[J. P.’s friend] kisses her on the cheek. *At this minute,* J. P. made his mind up about something (211). Here the ambiguous space of the performance overwhelms the temporality of the event. Rather than emphasize the sequence of actions, the switches vary the reader's sense of proximity to the action like a zoom lense on a camera. "Zooming" is apparent as well in Carver's manipulation of pace. Shifts here center around coordinate conjunctions, creating unexpected boundaries within sequences of actions:

From J.P.'s friend, she took a check that had been made out to her by his parents. And then she asks the friend if he wants to kiss her...

When J.P. asks for a kiss, a shift to the preterite follows the conjunction:

"Sure," Roxy says. "Why not? I've got some extra kisses." And she kissed him a good one right on the lips and then turned to go. (211)

Mason's storyteller impedes the linear movement of the text by casting events in the progressive present, where the rhythm of the reading act gives them a temporal value. What impedes the forward flow in "Where I'm Calling From" is a contrast between the completion implied by the past tense and the on-goingness conveyed by the present. Roxy's actions in the first sentence are accomplished before the sentence concludes. But the act of asking is accomplished only as the sentence concludes. In the second example, the sentence conveys an immediacy that suggests the speech act occurs as it is read; the temporal value is congruent to the length of the sentence. In the second sentence, however, the action culminates before the sentence concludes, and just how long that kiss takes will depend on the individual reading act. By switching tenses around coordinating
conjunctions, Carver alters the rhythm of the experiences dramatized even though the syntax is relatively similar. Splitting sequences into ambiguous fragments, he toys with our sense of what a narrative event is: chains of actions are represented as separate and unconnected, the intensity that they convey creating a "pulse."

The ambiguous space of postmodern performance in the first temporal sphere recalls Austin's distinction between the performative and constative speech act, which helped clarify authority issues in "Bartleby." As Austin argues, the difference between the two utterances is a "distinction between doing and saying" (47). In the performative utterance, words do something; their issuing is an act. In this sense, they evoke interior monologue: in a sentence like "I'm thinking about chimney sweeps," the articulation of the thought is itself the action. The constative, which describes an act in progress, is similar to the objective report style. "I sit down on the front steps" is a description of an event. This distinction offers a clue to help ground different sentences by implying different structural functions. The objective report conveys dramatic events. The interior monologue, by concentrating on subjective assessments, marks the narrative commentary. The performative thus indexes moods and feelings, while the constative foregrounds actions.

At first glance the differences help us gauge the narrator's perceptual distance from the story. In a sentence like "I remember the house and how we'd only been in there a few weeks when I heard a noise outside one morning," the act of remembering is performed as it is articulated. It places the audience in his head. Because the gesture is not an action, the reader interprets the sentence as commentary: it leads us into the evocative present in which the narrator discovers his landlord spying on him and his wife in bed. At other points, however, access to this interior terrain is shut off: the narrating self of the interior monologue disappears, replaced by the experiencing self, which dramatizes itself as just one more object in the narrative perspective: "I sit down on the front steps and light a cigarette. I watch what my hand does, then I blow out the match"
Much of the story's final episode, the longest block of simultaneous narration, is composed of constative utterances. Not only are the actions of the experiencing self rendered from this exterior vantage point, but this section includes more direct dialogue than any other in the text.

Yet a number of sentences in the first-person present tense can be interpreted either as performative or constative utterances: "I see this woman stop the car and set the brake," "I don't see any wedding ring. That's in pieces somewhere, I guess," "I try to put my mind on something else." As Austin argues, such sentences must be considered both performative and constative utterances: "there seem to be clear cases where the very same formula seems to be an explicit performative and sometimes to be a descriptive, and may even trade on this ambivalence" (78). In fact, the more Austin attempts to move away from the "explicit performative" (distinguished by the grammatical criteria of the first person, present tense, active voice, indicative mood) and account for ways in which language acts, the more categories of "primary" or pseudo-performatives he must develop. "I guess" would be an "expositive," which "has generally or often the straight forward form of a 'statement,' but there is an explicit performative verb...which shows how the 'statement' is to be fitted into the context of the conversation" (85). "I try" would be a "behabitive...concerned roughly with reactions to behaviour and with behaviour towards others and designed to exhibit attitudes and feelings" (83).

Austin resolves the ambiguity by suggesting that saying is merely one form of doing; that is, rather than being a special case of language use, the explicit performative is an extreme articulation of what all language does, namely, create a certain effect. The function of the constative utterance, stating or describing, is not a category of the speech act, but a component of every enunciation. Austin calls this the "locutionary act...which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which is again roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense" (109). The performative function, on the other hand, enacts an "illocutionary force," which is its
effect: a statement may assure or convince us of something, inform us, or warn us.

Significantly, Austin warns against thinking of the illocutionary force as "a consequence of the locutionary act." Instead, it "is a reference...to the conventions of illocutionary force as bearing on the special circumstances of the occasion of the issuing of the utterance" (114-15). In other words, utterances possess an internal self-reflexiveness that refers us to social conventions of interpretation that shape meaning. As I suggested in my reading of "Bartleby," an excessive focus on the meaning of an utterance (the locutionary act) diverts attention from the social conventions that shape its interpretation. In effect, we concentrate on the meaning at the expense of the effect. The first-person present tense precludes an exclusive focus on the constative. The emphasis that Carver places on performance dramatizes the peculiar hollowness of the locutionary act. Minimalism deflects our attention from content to how its creation influences our reading. The emptiness that we feel in a Carver story, that strange sense that, though characters talk and talk, they fail to state anything meaningful, compels us to look toward the effects of talking. In "Where I'm Calling From," those effects are simple, seemingly obvious, but somehow powerful and profound: they dramatize the hope that in using language, we will establish a private intimacy.

Beyond Minimalism

The present tense is only one device of economy in minimalism. By dissolving the temporal gap that typically separates story from narration, Mason and Carver heighten the experiential at the expense of the sequential, subordinating content to contact. In doing so, they expose the high stakes of confessional intimacy by dramatizing the verbal stutters and stammers that mark language as a production and meaning as improvisation. Of course, not all minimalist texts are narrated in the present tense. Mason regularly used the form in her first collection of stories, but in Love Life (1989), she experiments with the traditional retrospective stance, claiming that she wrote in the present tense "because it
seemed right at the time...But I got bored with it. I started seeing it everywhere and it just made me feel like doing something different" (qtd. in Lyons and Oliver 459). In Carver's collected stories, the present tense is an exception rather than a habit. Yet even when employing the standard past tense, these storytellers avoid capitulating to the illusion that time explains all secrets. Causality is its own breed of fiction. The emphasis on mood and feeling in minimalism, sometimes understated, sometimes disarmingly blunt, conveys the spectrum of emotions that occur when linear time's limitations are too obvious to trust or ignore. Freedom from history may be terrifying and exhilarating, but storytelling allows us to return again and again to pivotal moments and re-create their significance as an art of performance.

Unlike modernism, minimalism was never a movement in the sense that its artists shared a general aesthetic agenda. Defined more by its detractors than its practitioners, its presence was bound to fade once new techniques, or new combinations of old techniques, were identified as the succeeding literary fashion. Many critics pinpoint August 2, 1988, the day that Raymond Carver died of cancer, as the official end of minimalism. In many ways, Carver's final short stories, collected in the last third of Where I'm Calling From (1988), show him moving away from the postmodern sensibility that underlines his work in the early 1980s. His last published fiction, "Errand," about the death of Chekov, is, in Carver's own words, "fuller, more generous" than anything he had previously written (qtd. in Gentry and Stull 199). Yet while texturally rich, the stories concern a basic theme that runs throughout Carver's work, one which is endemic of much minimalist fiction: the failure of the spoken word. "It's hard for people to talk and say what they really mean," Carver told one interviewer. "But there are other ways of communicating. Things do happen, things do get done and said in the stories, even though sometimes people may be talking at cross-purposes at times, or seemingly to no good purpose" (qtd. in Gentry and Stull 200). As we gain distance from minimalism, this preoccupation with communication, not the nihilism or stark simplicity,
will offer a way to understand what writers like Carver and Mason strive for in their style. Like the oral storyteller for whom the text is both the story and its telling, their narrators rely on the ambiguous "other ways of communicating" that give the work a performative richness only implied on the printed page.

Notes

1 In 1990, the magazine was sued by Gordon Lish, Carver's one-time editor at Alfred A. Knopf and a New Yorker figurehead, for publishing without permission notes from his famously exclusive creative-writing seminar.

2 In Halpert's When We Talk About Raymond Carver, writers like Tobias Wolff, Richard Ford, and Jay McInerney reject the term "minimalism" in words that recall Carver's own dismissal.

3 Given the contempt with which institutional modernism regards mass culture, it should not be surprising to find television's influence derailed in anti-minimalist tracts. Gass, for example, complains that minimalists play "a very temporal tune" (34). (He also takes a gratuitous swat at Mason when he laments the abundance of "authors each named Ann [or Anne]"). His comments here should be compared to his essay on Stein, "Gertrude Stein and the Geography of the Sentence": "Books contained tenses like closets full of clothes, but the present was the only place we were alive, and the present was like a painting, "without before or after, spread to be sure, but not in time; and although, as William James had proved, the present was not absolutely flat, it was nevertheless not much thicker than pigment...Without a past, in the prolonged narrowness of any 'now,' wasn't everything in a constant condition of commencement?" (69).

4 See also Ermath, who explores how traditional narrators draw their authority from historical time: they "literally constitute" historical time by threading together into one system and one act of attention a whole series of moments and perspectives. Thus the continuums of time and of consciousness literally appear inseparable, functioning together as the medium of events even though this particular mutuality is rarely mentioned because to do so would be to compromise the whole effect and to locate a vulnerability in the presentation of objectivity...[the omniscient narrator] maintains the communication between past, present, and future, and thus the possibility of causal sequences from one to another. Any realistic, that is, representational and historical narrative, has as its primary cultural effect the inscription of a single, homogeneous time stretching to infinity (27-28). As she shows, postmodern writers exploit the separability of time and consciousness by flaunting the very vulnerability in presentation that typical narrators try to obscure. Tense is a major device of their technique.

5 I use "events" and "commentary" as synonyms for William Labov's structural narrative terminology, the "complicating action" and "orientation" and "evaluation" respectively. As Pratt argues, complicating actions are "the core of the narrative." Orientation generally provides information on a character or setting, while evaluation reveals why the story deserves telling. See Speech Act Theory (44-50).
6 For an interesting read of Carver's anti-polyphonic impulse, see Clark's "Raymond Carver's Monologic Imagination." She argues that Carver "suppresses the folk energies" of heteroglossia because "the polyphonic never seems far from the entropic; and in his pluralistic culture, the heteroglossia which is essential to individual identity is also profoundly threatening to it" (246).

7 See Kristeva's "Women's Time." For a book-length examination of the topic, see Forman and Sowton's Taking Our Time (20-36).

8 Many readers argue that our last glimpse of Norma Jean on a cliff above the Tennessee River is an image of suicide. My own reading has been influenced by Mason's explicit denial: "You can imagine my surprise when I hear that some students think Norma Jean is going to jump because she's standing on the edge of a cliff at the end of the story. That's so weird. Maybe Leroy would jump but not Norma Jean. She's a survivor" (qtd. Lyons and Oliver 56).

9 Barbara Henning makes a similar point about this image (692).

10 Stull's essay was one of the first to reverse the (then) dominant view of Carver as an chronicler of existential despair. His work has precipitated a critical revaluation; many in the academy have begun to address what Arthur A. Brown calls Carver's "postmodern humanism." See Brown, Nesset, and especially Chénétier, whose brilliant, complex "Living On/Off the 'Reserve'" remains the best analysis of the performative element of Carver's storytelling.

11 Nesset notes in an aside that Carver began to abandon the stark style as early as the late 1970s, when he was preparing What We Talk About When We Talk About Love for publication. According to his widow, Tess Gallagher, Carver's editor, Gordon Lish, made serious cuts in the original manuscript to maintain the ambiance of "dis-ease." See "This Word Love": Sexual Politics and Silence in the Early Works of Raymond Carver," 310, n. 28.
CONCLUSION

Charles Baxter introduces a 1990 anthology of "sudden fiction" or short short stories with the metaphor of "reduced geographies." Unlike the novel, which is an "estate," the short story "is like an efficiency on the twenty-third floor. As it happens, more people these days live in efficiencies than on estates. The result may be that we will start to see a shift in the imperial self of the traditional novel to the we and the they of communal stories" (21). I have my doubts as to whether sudden fiction will succeed minimalism as a formidable mode of narrative; in the five years since Raymond Carver's death, the short story has begun to suffer anew its historical identity crisis. On the one hand, it remains as popular as ever in the small-press market, and occasionally a commercial publisher stumbles upon a collection that dents the best-seller lists, prompting rumors of yet another short-story renascence. But brevity itself seems to have fallen out of our cultural favor. Precisely because more people must live in efficiencies, estates have become popular objects of fantasy, even if they are not affordable. The age in which we live, in which even the optimists speak of "diminished expectations," inspires a desire for "epic" experiences. While publishers claim that reading audiences abhor length, any given Sunday edition of The New York Times Book Review reveals that the average best-seller runs more than four hundred pages. The popularity of long-form experience illustrates the metaphor with which I began this study, Barth's feeding duck, which I said dramatizes the intertwining of brevity and desire. It seems an appropriate time to admit that the image itself is quoted out of context: it appears in an essay on the "maxinovels" of Proust and Musil, not on the short story. This study has attempted to grant the short story conceptual autonomy from the novel by defining brevity as an experience rather than an arbitrary size. Because the metaphor of exchange adds an interpersonal element to prevailing definitions of economy, the short story becomes an intriguing space for exploring the social function of storytelling in different historical periods. My hope is that

240
the increasing interest in the short story will inspire a deeper appreciation for the implicit contract between a storyteller and his/her audience, whether in a formal, "literary" context or in a slice of everyday conversation.
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April 12, 1993