The Limits of the Mind: Cognition and Narrative Form in the Modernist Novel

By

James Edward Harker

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Committee in charge:

Professor David Bates, Chair
Professor Kent Puckett
Professor Ann Banfield
Professor Ramona Naddaff

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The modernist novel displays a recurrent interest in the limits of perceptual and cognitive faculties. Exploring this "cognitive thread" I reconsider terms for understanding literary modernism (difficulty, "unknowing," inwardness, stream of consciousness) as well as terms fundamental to narratology (frame, character, focalization, discourse). Chapter One addresses the difficulty of tracking the thoughts of a large number of characters. This challenge is also at work in narratology's communicative frame. Modernist narratives and the narratological frame for understanding them approach cognitive limitations in tracking multiple consciousnesses, resulting in a pragmatic "functionalizing"—a readerly practice of reducing characters and agents from sources of consciousness to discrete functions. Chapter Two addresses the functionalizing tendency of modernist experimentation in the single character. I reinterpret E.M. Forster's distinction between "flat" and "round" characters as the basis of a computationalist theory of character rather than a mimetic theory. I show how this conception of character is at work in *A Passage to India*. By foregrounding artifice rather than mimesis, Forster gives a new dimension to modernist "unknowing," the tendency for modernist narratives to dismantle the *Bildungsroman* structure of a subject coming to know itself. Chapter Three addresses the critical debate between "inwardness" and the external world in the works of Virginia Woolf. I argue that in Woolf's essays and fiction, forms of misperception are an index of her understanding of the inherent connection between the inner life and the outer world by a fallible human body. The limits of the sensory apparatuses run parallel to the limits of what can be conveyed in narrative. Perceptual limitations form the basis of Woolf's experimentation with focalization—the narratological term for the vantage from which a narrative is told. Chapter Four focuses on the minimum threshold of consciousness itself—moments of *not thinking* at all—in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes*. The novel uses familiar stylistic strategies such as free indirect discourse but not in the service of the "inner voice" or the "stream of consciousness." Instead, the novel focuses on the "core" element of consciousness—what Antonio Damasio explains as "a sense of self about one moment—now—and about one place." Despite the focus on core consciousness, *Lolly Willowes* is nonetheless a novel of self-discovery in which Laura comes to understand herself to be a witch. In Warner's version of epiphany, I show how insight comes not from a process of reasoning but from core consciousness—an emanation from the lowest limit of the mind.

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Introduction

British modernist novels created new narrative forms to depict consciousness. In this study, I seek to broaden our understandings of novelistic innovation and of literary renderings of consciousness by showing how cognitive limitations act as the fulcrum for the modernist novel. Novels at the peak of high modernism, the 1920s, exhibit a wide range of experiments in the representation and manipulation of cognitive and perceptual capacities—wider than common conceptions of modernism allow. I open by considering the ways in which modernist novels manipulate the reader's limited ability to comprehend and track the thoughts of multiple characters or "agents" such as the narrator or author. Then, in readings of E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Sylvia Townsend Warner, I associate formal properties of narrative style with specific topics and theories in the cognitive sciences that give shape to the limits of cognition. I argue for a "cognitive" thread in novelistic experimentation in the era of high modernism: perceptual and cognitive processes and their limitations serve as the inspiration for stylistic and thematic innovation.

A focus on consciousness and a desire for formal innovation are not specifically *modernist* interests. These are the constitutive features of the novel form in British literary history. Pointing out the former in his classic study *The Rise of the Novel,* Ian Watt argues that the primary characteristic of the novel is "truth to individual experience" (13). The emergence of the genre reflects a move from a "unified world picture" to "a developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places" (31). Earlier literary forms made use of character types and mythic plots, the generality of which reflected the universality of the human condition, and of moral and social conduct. British novels of the late eighteenth century, however, adopted what would later be called *literary realism,* which Watt defines as "a full and authentic report of human experience…under the obligation to satisfy its readers with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms" (32). The move from universals to particulars has its correlative in the philosophical realism of the same point in the late eighteenth century. Hugh Kenner, supporting the association, writes, "the philosophy which has stood behind all subsequent philosophies, and which makes the whole of intelligible reality depend on the mental processes of a solitary man, came into being at the same time as the curious literary form called the novel" (17). That philosophy is Cartesianism, the significant element of which is that the route to knowledge is through the individual's apprehension of the world. For Descartes, one's own experience, rather than abstract principles or tradition, forms the basis of philosophical reasoning and of the understanding of what is real.

The novel's attention to the particulars of an individual's experience developed in tandem with the genre's formal innovations. As an individual's experience, Watt observes, is always "unique and therefore new," so the novel put "unprecedented value on originality" (13). Early novels did not borrow traditional plots from mythic or scriptural courses, and characters took on specific psychological and social contours. Mikhail Bakhtin has a concurring understanding that "the novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding" (7). Paul Ricoeur, following these claims, asks, "Is not the novel an antigenre genre…?" (154) While more recent critics such as Franco Moretti have cast suspicion on the notion that the genesis of the novel is

always in innovation (Moretti observes that early novels in most parts of the world were actually imitations), he makes an "exception" for the Western European novel, and specifically the British case. ("Conjectures" 60-61)

The emphases on individual experience and innovation make the British novel the "modern" literary genre. Its most distilled form, though, is the modernist novel of the early twentieth century. Of the particularized characterization that Watt sees in the novel, "The most obvious and extreme example…is the stream of consciousness novel" (22). For Ricoeur, the history of the novel can be understood in three stages of development: "the novel of action, of character, of thought" (13). The final stage is that of the modernist novel: the ultimate account of the individual experience is in the phenomenon of thinking. The British modernist novel, in addition to being intensely psychological, is self-consciously new. "Make it new," Pound's famous dictum, applies as easily to the modernist novel as to poetry. The manifestoes of Forster, Woolf, and others routinely refer to the experimental nature of modernist fiction. The period of high modernism in the British novel is therefore a particularly apt area for the study of innovation and the representation of thinking. One of the goals of this study is to show a wider range of experiments by including the marginally "modernist" Forster, and the eccentric Warner, who is a fervent antagonist of the stream of consciousness style.

In each chapter, I make interdisciplinary connections among 1) core concepts of modernism coming from literary history and criticism, 2) a form of formal innovation as understood in the language of narratology, and 3) a specific limitation or feature of cognition understood in the terms of the cognitive sciences. The first chapter, "Framing Modernism's Difficulty," takes up the often-cited difficulty of modernist projects. Allusiveness, shifting points of view, the absence of navigable description or the inclusion of vast quantities of apparently insignificant details are all elements of modernist styles and are all hard for the reader to comprehend. Leonard Diepeeven's recent study *The Difficulties of Modernism* argues that being hard to read was a constitutive feature of modernist literary projects. I connect the stylistic interest in difficulty with the increasingly complex framework of narrative communication devised in the field of narratology. While earlier formalist schools looked to simple narratives such as folk tales, structuralist narratology of the 1970s onward often turned to modernist novels. In doing so, the communicative frame of reader, text, narrator, and author became increasingly complicated by additional agents such as focalizer, and spectator. The proliferation of agents in the communicative frame of fictional narratives runs up against the limits of comprehension. To explain this weakness, I turn to cognitive psychology's concept of "embedded intentionalities," the term for series like "he thought that she thought that he knew that she believed…" Unlike cause-effect sequences, series of embedded intentionalities quickly become incomprehensible and meaningless. The narratological frame, I argue, works like the modernist novel its attempts to coordinate an increasingly complex organization of characters. The complexity of the narrative framework approaches cognitive weakness in processing embedded intentionalities. The result is a necessary practice of simplification. Narratological agents such as the narrator or focalizer become functions rather than minds—that is the price of coherence. This reduction to function in the face of potentially overwhelming complexity has its diegetic analogy. The "difficulty" of tracking high orders of embedded intentionalities in modernist novels entails a reading practice of functionalizing characters.

The next chapter, "'Am I a machine?' E.M. Forster, Functionalism, and Character," continues the theme of the functionalizing tendency of modernist experimentation but focuses on the single character. Connecting narratological theories of character with computationalist

theories of mental functioning, I reinterpret Forster's famous distinction between "flat" and "round" characters as the basis of a computationalist theory of character rather than a humanistic one. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, long seen as a form of naïve humanism, has been resuscitated in recent studies that have called for a return to the "human" element of the novelistic character. But the distinction between Forster's kinds, flat and round, cannot be read in isolation from the rest of Forster's theory of character. The novelistic character, of whichever shape, is not human. It is *homo fictus* rather than *homo sapiens*. The *homo fictus* is a human-created entity built of parts that accomplish certain tasks. For Forster, the novelistic character's mental functioning is not mimetic—it is mechanical and purpose-driven. Forster's theory of character strongly aligns with functionalism rather than humanism. Consciousness, for Forster, is a functional kind, readily accomplished by a constructed, non-human entity. I argue that Forster's odd anti-humanism points toward what James Phelan calls the "synthetic" component of character. By foregrounding the synthetic rather than the mimetic component of character, Forster gives a new dimension to what Philip Weinstein has recently called modernist "unknowing," the tendency for modernist narratives to dismantle the *Bildungsroman* structure of a subject coming to know itself. Chapters One and Two provide a sustained argument that modernist experimentation causes or points toward cognitive mechanisms of reducing minds to functions.

Following Chapter One's focus on multiple minds and Chapter Two's focus on the perspective on the single mind *from without*, "Misperceiving Virginia Woolf," the third chapter, addresses the critical tendency to view modernism as a turn "inward" to the vagaries of consciousness, or the single mind *from within*. Virginia Woolf is often regarded as the most inward of all British writers. I argue, however, that forms of misperception are an index of Woolf's understanding of the inherent connection between the inner life and the outer world by a fallible human body. The inner life, rather than being independent, is constrained by the limitations of the body and its perceptual faculties. Woolf's tropes of misperception adhere to contemporary concepts in studies of cognition: embodied perception and change blindness. In "The Mark on the Wall," the limitations of the body, its position, and the acuity of its perceptual faculties consistently shape the "inner life." Tracing the common trope of bird misidentification in Woolf's novels, I examine instances in which characters mistakenly see what they take to be the same birds over time in *To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and Between the Acts*. These passages reflect what cognitive scientists refer to as "change blindness," the inability of our perceptual faculties to register minor and often even large differences in our visual fields. I also argue for a readerly experience of change blindness due to Woolf's unusual naming strategies in *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*. Episodes of textual and metatextual misperception, making careful use of the cognitive phenomenon of change blindness, form the foundation of Woolf's experimentation with focalization—the narratological term for the vantage from which a narrative is told. The limits of what can be conveyed in narrative run parallel to the limits of the sensory apparatuses. These thresholds show how Woolf's inwardness and outwardness are merely two vantages on the same interest in the relationship of inner life and external world.

The final chapter, "'The secret corner of her mind': Core Consciousness in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes*" presents a challenge to the pervasiveness of the "stream of consciousness" in modernist fiction. Unlike modernist novels that focus on characters' thoughts (Woolf), or sensations (Flaubert), or feelings (Lawrence), *Lolly Willowes* focuses on the minimum threshold of consciousness itself—moments of apparently *not thinking* at all—and the nearer fractions of often subverbal conscious awareness. Rather than having a steady "inner

voice" like in stream of consciousness novels, Laura Willowes often has a blank mind, minimal sensation, or only an occasional phrase or word in her head. Warner's answer to stream of consciousness techniques is a highly fractured combination of what in narratology is called free indirect discourse (FID) and narration subtly colored by Laura's thoughts. This style, I argue, aligns with an understanding of consciousness that does not privilege the verbal or any more complex form of cognition. Language, habits, memory, and reasoning occasionally come to the fore, but the true focus remains the "core" element of consciousness—what Antonio Damasio explains as "a sense of self about one moment—now—and about one place" (16). Despite the focus on core consciousness, *Lolly Willowes* is nonetheless a novel of self-discovery in which Laura comes to understand herself to be a witch. In Warner's version of epiphany, I show how insight comes not from a process of reasoning but from core consciousness—an emanation from the lowest limit of the mind.

While the four chapters of this study explain specific formal innovations in modernist novelistic prose by looking to explanations of cognitive phenemona, they also, collectively, reassess the key concepts of *modernism, innovation,* and *thinking*.

Modernism

An extraordinary amount of contemporary scholarship has considered the term *modernism* and the ground it has the potential to cover. Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz have prompted the circulation of the term "new modernist studies," to reflect the "temporal, spatial, and vertical" (Mao and Walkowitz 738) expansion of our understanding of modernism in recent studies. The three axes correspond to a widening understanding of the historical period of modernism, the interrelated geographical locations in which allied experimentation occurred, and the socio-cultural range from "high" to "low" affected by shared impulses. One of the elements of this study is a contribution to the expansion of the concept of modernism. While some portions of the this study concern canonical works of modernism, such as Woolf's oeuvre, the second and fourth chapters make a case for a set of thematic and formal continuities between the high modernists and Forster and Warner. Forster's being part of the Bloomsbury Group has often placed him closer to the heart of literary modernism than his novels would seem to merit. In this study, however, Forster's theory of character aligns precisely with the modernist approach to the problem of other minds. Warner has never fallen squarely in the "modernist" camp, for her novels hover near "middlebrow" and are distinctly opposed to the more fashionable experiments with the stream of consciousness. However, by attending to Warner's contributions, we see a broader range of literary experiments during the period often too quickly characterized by the work of a small set of canonical authors.

That broader range of experimentation is what I see as the "cognitive thread" of literary modernism. Following that thread, this study begins with the *difficulty* of modernist prose and the tendency for modernist fiction to trace a pattern of *unknowing*. These core concepts of modernism prove to be metatextual and textual variations of a common questioning of the reliability of knowledge, particular of oneself and of others. The modernist focus on *inwardness* and the *stream of consciousness* in particular would seem to cement the notion that knowledge of self and other is illusory given the fractured, constantly varying nature of the individual. What becomes evident through this study, however, is that a thread of modernism makes use of the mechanics of perception and the limitations of the cognitive faculties as the basis for a literary aesthetic and as the conduit of intellectual insight. Rather than turning to solipsism, these literary experiments focus on the difficulty of perceiving and understanding the world given the limitations of the perceptual and cognitive faculties.

Innovation

The set of literary innovations in this study challenge our understanding of some basic narratological concepts: *frame, character, focalization,* and *discourse*. In each case, these concepts prove to be conditioned by our cognitive architecture in ways that require reassessing their very constitution. Chapters one and two concern, respectively, how we interpret a collection of characters or agents and how we interpret a single character based upon a series of events. In both cases, cognitive limitations tilt our understanding toward functionalism. In Chapter One the complexity of the communicative context (the frame) of many modernist narratives precludes being able to understand each character *as* a character. Focusing on the individual character in Forster, Chapter Two finds that integrating information about a person also follows a functionalist model, meaning that a character's patterns of behaviors are understandable by virtue of a set of rules rather than by element of "humanness." In narratological terms, I argue against the dominance of the "mimetic" component of character in favor of the "synthetic."

Chapter Three looks at textual and metatextual manipulations of *focalization,* the term coming from Genette meaning "point of view" (though focalization is intended to avoid the strictly visual sense of the more idiomatic term). Woolf is widely known for experimentations in this area—"Kew Gardens" is told from the point of view of a slug, *Flush* from a dog's perspective, while her most famous works shift from perspective to perspective from page to page, and sometimes even sentence to sentence. Focalization fundamentally concerns the amount of knowledge portrayed in narrative—a narrator might have more, less, or the same knowledge as a character. However, Woolf's unusual naming practices, naming extraordinary number of characters for example, show that another "amount" of knowledge can be not just *more* than the character's but *too much*. In Genette's terms, Woolf's narratives would be "nonfocalized" or would display "zero focalization," meaning that the narration has no limitation on its ability to convey information about characters' thoughts and actions. However, a very real limitation does constrain what information is conveyed: the reader's capacity to interpret what is presented. By exceeding what can be understood and remembered, Woolf provides a strange new form of focalization, not zero focalization, but *negative focalization*—the presentation of more information than can possibly be understood.

Chapter Four looks to another cognitive limitation, potentially the "lowest" of all, in focusing the subverbal elements of consciousness presented in *Lolly Willowes*. The narratological question becomes: what are the means by which the minimal threshold of consciousness can be presented? A common viewpoint in narratology is that the non-linguistic elements of thought must be presented as narration, because they cannot be "quoted" in language. However, some observers such as Ann Banfield and Monika Fludernik have shown that "nonreflective" thought can be presented in free direct discourse, the narrative style in which speech or thought is presented with syntactic structures and lexical markers of the character but also with distinctive shifts of tense and person. *Lolly Willowes*, as an unusual and unusually exaggerated display of "not thinking," shows that even the discrete components of a nonreflective thought, the bare sense-data, can be presented in FID. Through examinations of such passages, I argue for lowering the threshold of what FID is capable of depicting—not such spontaneous perceptions, but the discrete elements that give rise to the feeling—and illusion—of spontaneous perception. This lower limit of consciousness aligns with a lower limit for one of the most challenging topics in narratology.

Thinking

The "cognitive thread" I follow through narrative fiction of the modernist period makes use of contemporary concepts: embedded intentionalities, computationalism, change blindness, core consciousness. These concepts themselves come from no one discipline among the cognitive sciences. They do, however, expand the range of resources for understanding how narrative fiction works as well as for understanding the innovations of specific writers grouped into a period with only a hazy set of intellectual and aesthetic connections. My use of cognitive concepts does not suggest a determinative theory of literature. Woolf's understanding and literary treatment of perception, for example, is not explained merely by the measurable phenomenon of "change blindness." The fundamentally interpretive work of the literary critic nonetheless can draw from the empirically-driven science that measures such a cognitive phenomenon. Change blindness is a condition that makes Woolf's experimentation possible. The alignment of cognitive processes and stylistic experiments in this study attempts to expand the range of critical vantages on literary modernism beyond the most common psychoanalytic, philosophical, or philological approaches.

The second goal of following the "cognitive thread" of modernist experimentation is to dissociate an interest in perception and cognition from solipsism or "inwardness." The four chapters of this study show how a crucial element of the cognitive thread of modernism is the overlay of textual *and* metatextual experimentation. The reader's perceptions, thoughts, and cognitive limitations are central to these challenges to literary form, often echoing the thematic treatment of misperception and consciousness. This experimentation, working on the level of pragmatics, concerns not the single mind, but the efforts and the failures of minds understanding other minds.

This study shows the range of explorations in modernist the novel to be wider than variations on the stream of consciousness, from the balancing of multiple embedded minds to the barest traces to consciousness itself. The modernist novel proves to be the testing ground for exploring the limits of the mind and the limits of narrative style.

Chapter One: Framing Modernism's Difficulty

T.S. Eliot famously wrote, "it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results" (65). This statement has long been taken as an apology for modernist difficulty. Poetry, narrative fiction, even music and visual art became more difficult to understand for the typical Anglo-American recipient of the early 20th century. Critics have long lamented the impenetrable style of the modernists, and Leonard Diepeeven has even argued that for many critics and reader, difficulty *defined* modernism. (13) That specifically modernist difficulty Diepeeven defines as:

> a barrier to what one normally expected to receive from a text such as it logical meaning, its emotional expression, or its pleasure. For modern readers, difficult was the experience of having one's desires for comprehension blocked, an experience provoked by a whole variety of works of art ("comprehension" is here broadly defined)" (x).

Variety figures as a prominent concept—as a reason for difficulty for Eliot and as the location of difficulty and as forms of reaction. A complex world requires a complex literary style in order to achieve complex readerly responses.

In this chapter and the following, I take up some of modernism's "difficult" techniques in order to show how they produce just the opposite effect from what is anticipated. Rather than being the means toward variation of responses, difficulty is a means of eliciting a readerly practice that reduces variation to the functionally similar. In this chapter, I start by looking at the way we understand the communicative framework of fictional narratives themselves and by showing how modernist fiction has led to the emergence of narratological concepts that make our understanding of narrative communication increasingly complicated. Innovations in narratology offer a metatextual echo of modernist literary innovations, particularly having to do with "Theory of Mind," the way one comes to understand the mind of another person and to predict the other's probable reactions. Theory of Mind is a longstanding topic in cognitive psychology and has recently been the subject of a surge of interest from literary critics,[1] many of whom have engaged with Lisa Zunshine's recent suggestion that a core modernist innovation is a greater compounding of Theory of Mind—that is, understanding another mind understanding another understanding another, etc.[2] If such compounding of minds (called "embedded intentionalities") is an operation of the difficult modernist novel, it is also an operation of the narratological framework for explaining that novel. Narratology operates like a difficult modernist novel in its assumption of increasing and increasingly complicated agents beyond the intuitive author, character, and reader.

In contrast, I argue that these increasing difficulties or complications common to the modernist novel and to narratology elicit a pragmatic simplification. Increasing narratological frames, like greater compounding of minds thinking about minds, reduce each frame or "mind" to a function. Difficulty, likewise, yields a readerly reaction of finding functional similarity, rather than the superficial "variety and complexity" endemic to literary modernism.

Complicating the Narratological Frame

The understanding of the communicative context for a fictional narrative has traditionally been modeled on spoken communication. The relay of information has at its core an author, a text, and a reader in parallel to a speaker, message, and listener. Wimsatt and Beardsley's 1954 essays on the "intentional fallacy" and "pathetic fallacy" epitomized a New Critical renunciation of the exploration of certain elements of the communicative context in literary studies. However,

the effect of New Critical methodologies was stronger in poetry than in narrative fiction. And, in the study of the structure of fiction, the intentional and pathetic fallacies might have actually had the opposite of their intended effect by setting the stage for an increase in the complexity of the communicative context of narrative. In the following sections, I look to some of the intermediary figures and frames added to the model of narrative communication. My goal is not a comprehensive survey of narratological theories, but a general argument for the increase in agents to the model.

The Implied Author and the Implied Reader

Wayne Booth's 1961 *The Rhetoric of Fiction* introduced some of the most frequently cited intermediary agents to the communicative model of fiction. While reviewing the evolution of the novel, Booth considers the gradual diminution in authorial commentary on the plot of the story and the approach of an almost purely "objective" narration:

> It is a curious fact that we have no terms either for this created "second self" or for our relationship with him. None of our terms for various aspects of the narrator is quite accurate. "Persona," "mask," and "narrator" are sometimes used, but they more commonly refer to the speaker in the work who is after all only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies. "Narrator" is usually taken to mean the "I" of a work, but the "I" is seldom if ever identical with the implied image of the artist. (73)

The author and the "narrator" are not the same entity. The narrator, to Booth, is the speaker of the story, the fictional "I" in a first-person narration, the teller of the story and potentially the occasional commentator in third-person accounts. Here, Booth observes that there is some possible distinction between the story as it is related and our understanding of the entity who must have created it. Booth argues that this "author" is not an actual person. Rather, we surmise a figure that Booth calls the "implied author." The relationship between the author and the implied author might be one the author engineers. "A great artist can create an implied author who is either detached or involved, depending on the needs of the work in hand" (83). That the artist can manipulate the type of implied author suggested by the text indicates that the relationship between the two is an embedding of mind or "intentionalities." When we read a work of fiction, we could understand that an author *thinks* that the implied author *thinks* that a particular character *believes* X or Y.

In a symmetrical fashion, Booth also posits an "implied reader." Booth explains: "Every stroke implying his second self will help to mold the reader into the kind of person suited to appreciate such a character and the book he is writing" (89). A book is intended for a particular kind of reader, one with the right sensibility, aesthetic, morality, education, disposition, etc. as the implied author. As Booth remarks, "The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement" (138). The distinction between any actual reader and the implied reader lends another level of complexity to the model, for from an actual reader's perspective the implied reader makes ethical and aesthetic judgments that affect the interpretation of characters and of the plot.

Since Booth's introduction of the concepts of the implied author and reader, there have been several arguments made against their utility or existence. Susan Lanser explains Booth's implied author in terms of its compromise with the dominant New Critical model of the period:

> Wayne Booth and other critics of the 1950s and 1960s like Kathleen Tillotson and Wolgang Kayser "rescued" the notion of the author and offered a compromise that suited both the formalists who wished to eradicate the authorial presence and those critics who were dissatisfied with the obliteration of authorial context. …In other words, "implied author" became a compromise; it has the illusion of seeming like a purely textual entity (though of course, even as Booth describes it, the implied author is an image created by the audience), and it could be distinguished from the real-life creator of the text. This compromise remains problematic; it not only adds another narrating subject to the heap but it fails to resolve what it sets out to bridge: the author-narrator relationship. (49-50)

For Lanser, Booth's concepts add an intermediary figure "to the heap" of the communicative model and therefore renders it more complicated and potentially confusing. The general problem of assigning distinct qualities to the "implied author" that clearly do not belong either to the actual author or to some form of narrator has proven difficult for others as well. In *Fictional Minds* Alan Palmer admits:

> I have not found it possible to maintain a coherent distinction between the agency that is responsible for selecting and organizing the events (as Prince describes the role of the implied author), and the voice that recounts them (the narrator). For example, which one decides that direct access is given to the thoughts of one character and not another? Which one decides on the length and extent of access or whether it is given in direct or free indirect thought or in thought report? Which one decides on the precise degree to which the language used in the discourse explicitly or implicitly conveys the motivation of a particular character? (17)

Palmer's confusion in the face of the implied author is not exactly a complete repudiation. Rather, it is a very careful questioning of the practicality of the concept. In doing so, Palmer also brings to the surface a phenomenon complementary to the increasing complexity of the narratological model: as the number of agents grows, their functions become more specific. The line of criticism from Lanser to Palmer is that an underlying recognizably "human" agent is hard to discern in the narratological concepts, despite the clarity of their functions. But what at first seems a weakness comes into focus as the constitutive feature of the narratological frame—functions, rather than minds, form the communicative context.

It is not a coincidence that Booth's examples in his elucidation of the implied author and implied reader rely heavily on modernist authors such as Flaubert, Woolf, Lawrence, Forster and Faulkner, and dominant among all examples, the proto-modernist Henry James. Booth's more complex rendering of the communicative context is necessary to explain the narrative experiments of these figures. After Booth, many narratological concepts also draw on modernist works.

The Focalizer

Using one of the most canonical modernist novels, Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu,* Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* introduced numerous revisions and terms to narrative theory. One of the most significant innovations is his theory of focalization, a recasting of the longstanding concept of point of view and its tripartite order of omniscience. As there is no restriction of focus for a purely omniscient narrator, such a narration would have *zero focalization*. *Internal focalization* refers to situations in which we are limited to the perspective of one person. We have access to his or her thoughts, impressions, and observations, but we cannot enter the minds of others. *External focalization* occurs when we can observe actions but we have no access to any mind. Genette points to the novels of Dashiell Hammett and some

work by Hemingway as examples of this peculiar category, but he also points out that many other novels make some use of external focalization, even if only for a few pages. (190)

On its own, Genette's articulation of focalization did not introduce any new agents or frames to the communicative context of fictional narrative. However, his concepts did lead Mieke Bal to conceive of the "focalizer." She observes:

> The difference between the nonfocalized narrative and the internally focalized narrative lies in the agent "who sees": is the agent the narrator who—omniscient—sees more than the character, or (in the second type) is the agent the narrator who sees "with" the character, sees as much as he does? Between the second and the third types, the distinction is not of the same order. In the second type, the "focalized" character *sees*; in the third type, he does not see, he *is seen*. (10)

If a story follows along providing the thoughts of the main character (as in *À la recherche du temps perdu* in the first-person or *The Ambassadors* in the third-person), the narration is from the vantage point of the character. But observing a character's actions involves a completely separate vantage point. External focalization, Bal argues, involves an additional figure, one more figure than in zero focalization or internal focalization. In this context, the functions of the narrator are divided into narrator and focalizer. The narrator "puts the narrator into words," while the focalizer "selects the actions and chooses the angle from which to present them" (14). Furthermore, if there is a seer (the focalizer) in addition to a sayer (the narrator), Bal reasons, "[t]heoretically, each agent addresses a receiver located on the same plane: the actor addresses another actor, the focalizer addresses a "spectator"—the indirect object of focalizing—and the narrator addresses a hypothetical reader" (14). The last figure, the hypothetical reader, echoes Booth's implied reader. The other additional figures, the focalizer and the spectator, are Bal's contribution. She presents her rather complex model graphically:

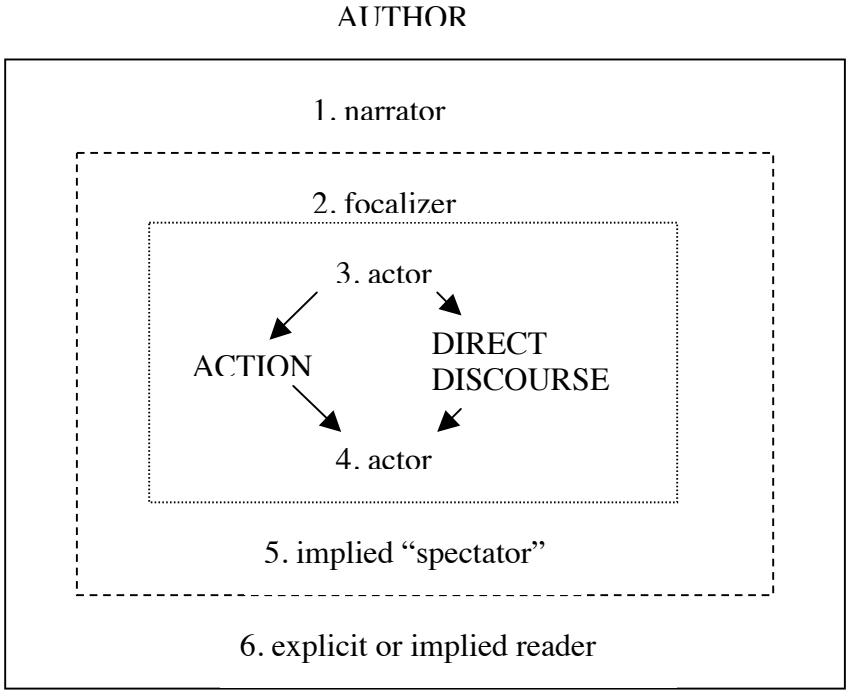


FIGURE 1.1 (14)

For Bal, the communicative frame in a fictional narrative can have six intermediary positions between the author and reader, which means that there would be seven relationships (author to narrator, narrator to focalizer, etc.).

Bal selects a modernist novel, Colette's *La Chatte,* for examples of the narratological structures she detects:

> Take the first sentence of the novel: "Towards ten o'clock, the family poker-players began to show signs of weariness" (71). The situation is presented, but by whom? The information conveyed in the sentence is fairly plentiful. The reader is given information about the time (ten o'clock), the characters present (players), the relations among them (familial), their occupation (poker), and their reaction (weariness). No sign of the narrator, no sign of the focalizer. And the word "signs"? It indicates that the behavior of the characters is such that a spectator can see and interpret it. This spectator we know is not the reader: the nature of narrative makes it impossible for the reader to perceive the content of the information directly. Nor is the spectator the narrator: the narrator is entitled to speech and not to anything else. The spectator must be the focalizer, anonymous and neutral, who sees "in place of" the reader. (20)

Bal's analysis is highly complex even for such a simple sentence by virtue of the numerous agents involved. However, those agents are severely restricted in what they actually do. The narrator can only put into language without being able to see. The focalizer sees the actions of the characters but does not report them (the narrator does that). Of course, in reading one does not "see" the action, which is why Bal inserts another figure, the spectator, between the action of the story and the reader.

The discrete functionality of each of these figures leads to a significant question: Does each of these figures constitute a separate mind? On the one hand, Bal claims that the spectator is "anonymous and neutral" and "sees 'in place of' the reader." In this regard, the spectator is rather like a machine. It could be a video camera left in the room. However, the interpretive work of determining signs and understanding their likely meaning (as in the example from *La Chatte*, judging weariness) is a very human action, something indicating the presence of a mind. The implied spectator, though, turns out to be in no way differentiated from the focalizer in any way that marks them as distinct minds; they are only distinct functionally. The focalizer, Bal explains earlier, "selects the actions and chooses the angle from which to present them," both actions that only a mind can do. But the spectator, at least in this example, views the actions from the particular chosen angle. The focalizer and the spectator could be understood to be two slightly different roles of a single mind—a mind that chooses the angle of view and then views from that angle.

Although it was Genette who introduced the concept of focalization, he expressed resistance to Bal's development of a specific entity that accomplishes the focalization—the focalizer. This was, in some sense, in spite of his own text. A later edition of *Narrative Discourse* includes a foreword by Jonathan Culler in which he accepts: "[o]ne commentator, Mieke Bal, has argued persuasively that Genette uses *focalization* to cover two cases which are so different that to treat them as variants of the same phenomenon is to weaken his important new concept" (10). This distinction (seeing a character versus seeing "with" a character) is the foundation for Bal's conception of the focalizer. But in his 1988 *Narrative Discourse Revisited,* Genette explains his sustained dissatisfaction with the notion of the focalizer. He considers the setting up an *agent* an "unreasonable desire" (72) on Bal's part. Genette explains:

> For me, there is no focalizing or focalized character: *focalized* can be applied only to the narrative itself, and if *focalizer* applied to anyone, it would only be the person who *focalizes the narrative*—that is, the narrator, or, if one wanted to go outside of the conventions of fiction, the *author himself*, who delegates (or does not delegate) to the narrator his power of focalizing or not focalizing. (73)

For Genette, focalization has to do with the perspectival limitation of a narrative. A narrative might span any knowledge or it might be limited to a character's thoughts or merely a character's actions. But for each of these categories, focalization is a quality of the narrative, rather than of a character. Bal's reworking of the term saw that in the case of external focalization, where the narrative traces the actions of a particular character, the narrative is limited to watching a particular figure's actions, the way a film follows the actions of the protagonist but (at least very often, when there are no voice-overs) does not have access to his or her thoughts. This limitation comes from a perspective other than that of the character—the perspective of the camera in the film analogy. This focalizer "chooses" the angle and "selects" what to see. But Genette counters, "the novelist is not compelled to put his camera somewhere; he has no camera" (73). While there might be a subject, a camera operator, who exercises certain discretion in the filming of the movie, whose work an editor and director rely upon for the final product, there is no such correlative subject for a novel. There is no inherent need to assume a mind in between the narrator and the characters. The "choosing" and "selecting" can easily be accomplished by the author/narrator.

Genette's problem with Bal's notion of the focalizer (and its partner, the spectator) is apparent confusion between a functional and an intentional system. On the one hand, the focalizer is conceived as "choosing" and "selecting," which by virtue of being cognitive acts means that the focalizer is indeed an intentional system, a human agent, rather than a pure mechanism. On the other hand, the focalizer is an "anonymous and neutral" agent—an uncharacterizable and therefore uncharacteristic human. Bal points to no particular examples where the focalizer has any of the rest of what we normally think of as the basic attributes of a human—the focalizer is always merely a sorting machine with an eye. Bal's narrator also has a peculiarly mechanistic bend, as "the narrator is entitled to speech and not to anything else." Once again, the agent is a strange amalgam of intentional and functional. The limitation to mere speech, furthermore, is not in place for first-person narrators, whether intra- or extra-diegetic. There is no reason that a third-person narrator could not both see and speak, just like a normal human.

Genette's adoption of focalization was expressly to separate seeing and speaking. Genette thought that considering narratives in terms of "point of view" elided certain essential distinctions, which are summarized in the questions *who sees?* and *who speaks?* However, his theory of focalization does not appear to map out distinctions between seeing and speaking; rather, as James Phelan points out, it makes distinctions "according to the criterion of *how much narrators see and know in relation to characters*" (2001: 53). Really, the theory of the focalizer is what separates seeing and speaking, as it relegates the speaking to the narrator and the seeing, more generally the perceiving, to the focalizer.

Phelan, however, argues that the distinction of perceiving and speaking "is ultimately impossible to maintain unless we reduce all narrators to reporting machines ('Hello, my name is HAL, and I will be your reporter for this narrative')" (57). Pure functionality without a human behind it conjures a science fiction nightmare for Phelan. On the contrary, the human narrator, for Phelan, "cannot report a coherent sequence of events without also revealing his or her

perception of those events" (57). This is not to say that all the perceiving that occurs in a narrative is always done by the narrator. The character might also be responsible for the focalization. Phelan proposes five permutations for the arrangement of perceiving and narrating, or in his terms focalization and voice: 1) narrator's focalization and voice, 2) character's focalization and narrator's voice, 3) character's focalization and voice, 4) blends of narrator's focalization and voice with character's focalization and voice, 5) narrator's focalization and character's voice. (59) The first category would inevitably be true of a first-person narration of one's own experiences, such as Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, or the first three sections of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. But this could also be true when a third-person narrator is clearly perceiving and interpreting, which happens in the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*. Henry James's *The Ambassadors* is often cited for its famous division of duties—the focalization (the perceiving) is done by the character Lambert Strether, with the narrating by a third-person narrator. This is an example of Phelan's second category. The third category Phelan associates with the stream of consciousness narration, while the fourth category he associates with *free indirect discourse*, a reading we will interrogate in Chapter Four. The final and most bizarre category, narrator's focalization and character's voice, Phelan associates with "when a naïve narrator unwittingly takes on the voice of another character" (59). In every instance, Phelan associates the work of perceiving (the focalizing) with either the narrator or a character. The "focalizer," then, remains a concept because it helps to distinguish between narratives (or moments within narratives) that recount the perceptions of narrators or of characters. The focalizer itself, though, is not an autonomous entity or a human mind. It is, to the extent of its usefulness, a function.

The Extrafictional Voice, the Public Narrator, and the Private Narrator

Susan Lanser, in her 1981 book *The Narrative Act,* adopts Bal's schema as a starting point. However, she sees a certain deficiency in Bal's treatment of the narrator and focalizer. Lanser explains:

> Theoretically, any persona who utters discourse on his or her own behalf may be called a "narrator," though such a stretching of a term renders it rather useless. If I may set aside these momentary "narrators" who are typical characters interacting with one another as actors rather than as storytellers, it is useful to distinguish three kinds of or levels of persona, in addition to the extrafictional voice, whose consciousness may participate in the organization of narrative: the public narrator, the private narrator, and the focalizer. (137)

Lanser's "extrafictional voice" is an "authorial presence, traditionally overlooked, that is situated *within* the text itself" (8). Later, more fully, Lanser explains, "[I]n every text,…even a fictional text, an authorial voice does communicate historical information. This authorial force is an *extrafictional* entity whose presence accounts, for example, for organizing, titling, and introducing the fictional work." (122). The "extrafictional voice" is not the same thing as Booth's implied author, which is a figure we come to understand inductively and by such characteristics as sense of morality, humor, or irony. On the contrary, the extrafictional voice, the agency that has organized the text, (not elements of the story—that is done by the host of narrators and focalizers, as we shall see), has a kind of index by virtue of the work of presenting—chapterizing, titling, and organizing. However, that organization cannot be said to be the actual historical author, but as the "most direct counterpart" (122), *within* the text, of that person. The concept provides the most clarity in the exceptional cases.

One instance where the distinction between author and extrafictional voice is helpful is Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, which was published in 1929. However, in 1945, Faulkner wrote the "Compson Appendix," which is now regularly published with the novel and read as an epilogue. There is an organizing agent to this expanded version of the novel. But is it the historical author? If so, is it Faulkner in 1929 or Faulkner in 1945? The experience of reading the novel-plus-appendix as one coherent entity, as most readers do, might be understood by Lanser as an experience organized by an extrafictional voice, who is a counterpart to the historical author, but is not quite the same as he is. (Indeed, the voice in this case is an amalgam of two Faulkners, sixteen years apart.) In this exceptional circumstance, it becomes clear why the extrafictional voice might not be identical to the historical author.

Lanser's other major contribution to the complexity of the communicative model of narrative is her distinction between the public narrator and the private narrator (her notion of the focalizer is adopted from Bal). Lanser's distinction between public and private derives from dissatisfaction with Genette's formulation of extradiegetic narration (a narrative narrated by someone who does not participate in the events) and intradiegetic narration (narrated by someone who participates in the world of the narrative). For Lanser the important distinction is that the public narrator is "an author-narrator, bringing into existence a fictional world and thus performing a public communicative act" (138).

> A private narrator, in contrast, is usually a character in the text, bound to the fictional world, and dependent upon the existence of that world for his or her authorization to speak. The private narrator is frequently delineated for us by a public narrator or by other characters. … Private narrators, moreover, are not capable of addressing personae outside the fictional context, and so their speech activity is directed to a more limited audience—a fictional character or group—rather than the textual equivalent of the reading public. (138)

Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* helps make sense of Lanser's distinction. James's story consists of a set of frames. There is a first-person narrator, unnamed, who recounts the experience of being at a country house and listening to ghost stories. Another guest reads aloud the diary of a former governess employed by his family. The guest proceeds to read aloud the story, itself a first-person account. For Genette, the "zero-degree" narrator would be the guest at the house listening to the story; the first-degree narrator would be guest reading the story aloud; while the second-degree narrator would be the governess. The zero-degree and the second-degree narrators would both be intradeigetic narrators, which means that they are involved in the events of the story. The second-degree narrator, the governess, would be an intradiegetic homodiegetic narrator because she is within the story and she is the center of that story. The zero-degree narrator, the listener, would be an intradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator, because he is part of the story but as merely an observer—the focus of the story is elsewhere. Lanser, however, finds Genette's terminology "confusing" and "counterproductive" by virtue of its off-putting complexity, a point echoed by Bal, Dorrit Cohn, and undoubtedly by this paragraph.

More significantly, Lanser adopts the public/private distinction for narration because Genette's categories do not have a way of addressing the communicative contexts that mark the listener (the zero-degree narrator) and the governess (the second-degree narrator) as distinct. The governess's story is not intended to be read by me or anyone who has ever read *The Turn of the Screw*. The intended reader of her diary is limited to the fictional world of which she is a part, and is no doubt even more limited than that—perhaps no one can be said to be the proper reader of a diary. On the contrary, even though the listener is a first-person narrator, he is also a "public

narrator" in the sense that his discourse is offered up to a general readership, and the other participant in the communicative context of which he is a part, is the implied reader. Adding her new concepts, Lanser redraws Bal's model of narrative communication:

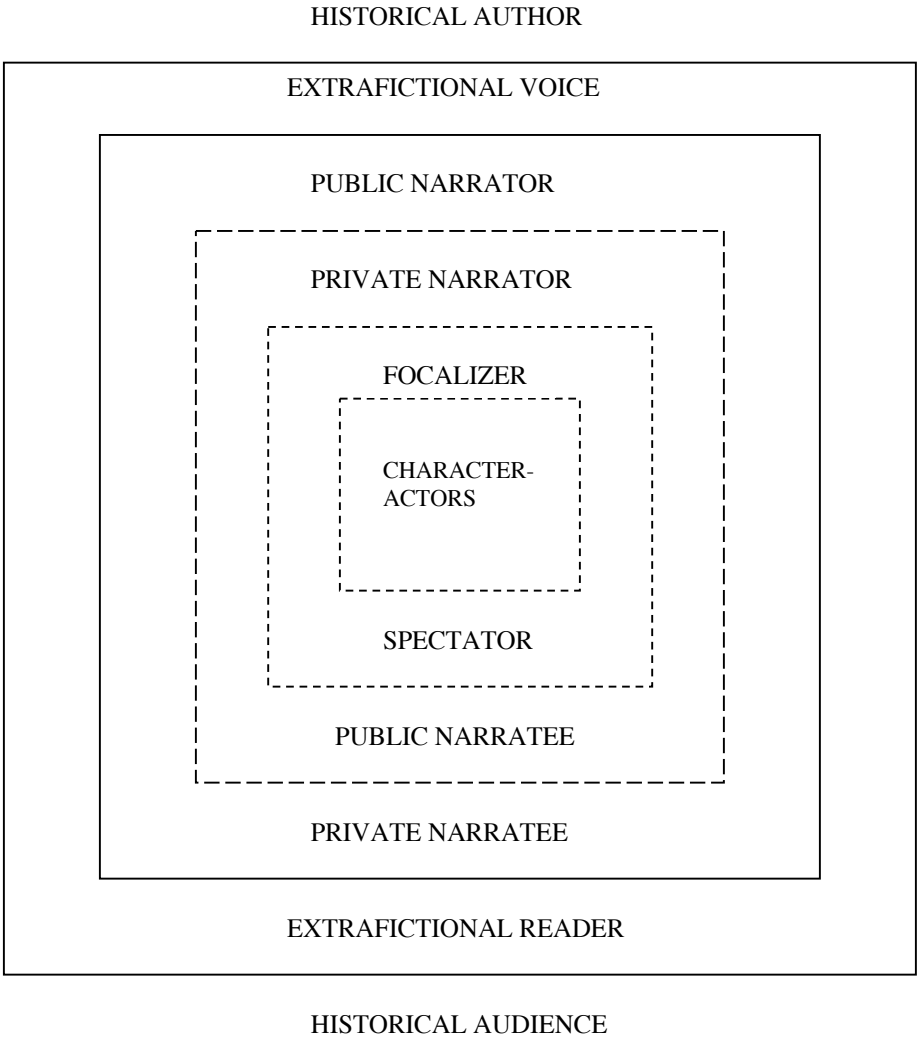


Figure 5 (144)[3]

Lanser's renovation of the communicative model of narrative totals at least twelve interactions among agents. This model attempts to *explain* narratives, and quite often the complexity is tied to features of modernist narratives specifically. At the same time, however, the narrative theory's increasing complexity mirrors the increasing difficulty of modernist narrative. Narrative models such as Bal's or Lanser's are often referred to as "structuralist" narratology. They are just as well understood by another term: they are *modernist* narrative theories. In incorporating greater and greater levels of complexity, structuralist narratology's model of narrative communication incorporates "difficulty" as a means of conveying the *variety* that motivates authorial and readerly experience. However, the overwhelming complexity of the model has the effect of reducing minds to functions. This, we will see, is a central effect of the difficulty of modernist fiction.

Modernism's Difficult Framing

The reduction of minds to functions in modernist fiction is an unexplored component of the recent turn in "cognitive approaches" to literature to mind-reading or Theory of Mind, which Lisa Zunshine defines as, "our ability to explain people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feeling, beliefs, and desires" (6). Zunshine suggests that the history of the novel can be read as a history of cognitive experiments, of new ways of challenging one's powers of mind-reading. Fiction "builds on and experiments with our other cognitive propensities" (36). And at what point do those experiments become so advanced that they are no longer easy, pleasurable, a delight in the smoothly preceding test of cognitive capacity? Zunshine answers this question by considering the limits of our mind-reading capacity. There are levels of "intentionality," or the projection of a mind. Second-order intentionality is the reading of another mind, *X thinks that Y…* Third-order adds another layer: *W believes that X thinks that Y…* Fourth-order, would be *V wonders whether W believes that X thinks that Y…* Zunshine writes:

> [Daniel] Dennett, who first discussed this recursiveness of the levels of intentionality in 1983, thought that it could be, in principle, infinite. A recent series of striking experiments reported by Dunbar and his colleagues have suggested, however, that our cognitive architecture may discourage the proliferation of cultural narratives that involve 'infinite' levels of intentionality. (28)

Curiously, Zunshine mischaracterizes Dennett's argument. Prior to Dennett, Colin Radford in a 1966 essay on "iterated knowings" made the claim that such a recursive structure could theoretically go on forever. However, even Radford comments:

> Theoretically, it would seem that the series could develop indefinitely, though death or loss of interest would stop it developing, and an understandable confusion on the part of either or both parties as to where he or the other is at may deform or blur the complex but regular structure of the later situations. (327)

James Cargile, in 1970, responds to Radford and observes that such an infinite series "would require distinctions that aren't there to be made" (154). Picking up this small cognitive puzzle in 1983, Dennett refers to the "iterated knowings" of Cargile as third-order intentionality, fourth-order, etc. He asks:

> How high can we human beings go? In principle, forever, no doubt, but in fact I suspect that you wonder whether I realize how hard it is for you to be sure that you understand whether I mean to be saying that you can recognize that I can believe you want me to explain that most of us can keep track of only about five or six orders, under the best of circumstances. (*Intentional* 243)

Zunshine, claiming that Dennett sees infinite possibility orders of intentionality, might have gotten lost in Dennett's performance. His point is more or less an adoption of Cargile's argument that while one could theoretically construct a higher-order intentional system, it would become so confusing as to become meaningless after the fifth or sixth level. Zunshine looks to far more recent research for her understanding of the limits of higher-order intentionality. Her source is a 2000 paper "On the Origin of the Human Mind," by Robin Dunbar, a cognitive psychologist, who designed an experiment to distinguish error rates in complex sequences involving cause-effect relationships and in complex sequences involving orders of intentionality. Dunbar reports, "Subjects had little problem with the factual causal reasoning story: error rates were approximately 5% across six levels of causal sequencing. Error rates on the mind-reading tasks were similar (5-10%) up to an including fourth-level intentionality, but rose dramatically to nearly 60% on fifth-order tasks" (cited in Zunshine 28). Dunbar's experiment essentially

confirms what Cargile suggested in 1966 and Dennett agreed with in 1983—that after the fourth level, intentionality becomes confusing and quickly impossible to understand.

Zunshine looks to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as an example of both a "difficult" novel and of high-level intentionality. She selects a particularly complex description of writing a letter. Woolf writes:

> And Miss Brush [Lady Bruton's secretary] went out, came back; laid papers on the table; and Hugh produced his fountain pen; his silver fountain pen, which had done twenty years' service, he said, unscrewing the cap. It was still in perfect order; he had shown it to the makers; there was no reason, they said, why it should ever wear out; which was somehow to Hugh's credit, and to the credit of the sentiments which his pen expressed (so Richard Dalloway felt) as Hugh began carefully writing capital letter with rings round them in the margin, and thus marvelously reduced Lady Bruton's tangles to sense, to grammar such as the editor of the *Times,* Lady Bruton felt, watching the marvelous transformation, must respect. (cited in Zunshine 32)

Zunshine carefully rewrites this passage in order of levels of intentionality. The passage reaches the sixth level, which Zunshine writes as the following:

> Woolf *intends us to recognize* [by inserting a parenthetical observation 'so Richard Dalloway felt'] that Richard *is aware* that Hugh *wants* Lady Bruton and Richard to *think* that because the makers of the pen *believe* that it will never wear out, the editor of the *Times* will *respect* and publish the ideas recorded by his pen…." (33)

This passage from *Mrs. Dalloway* reaches beyond the four levels of intentionality regularly comprehensible, all the way to six levels, which is more or less the limit of human comprehension according to Dennett, and the limit of meaning according to Cargile. For Zunshine, *Mrs. Dalloway* is difficult because it challenges our ability to mind-read and to put our mind-readings into a hierarchical order, potentially to the very limits of human comprehension.

Interestingly, the sixth level intentionality in Zunshine's reading is the intention we attribute to the author. This level of intentionality is different from the others because it moves from the arrangement and levels *within* the story to the communicative context in which the story occurs. This approach to intentionality is in line with Dennett's, who argues "genuine *communication*, speech acts in the strong, human sense of the word, depend on *at least* three orders of intentionality in both speaker and audience" (243). Dennett turns to the work of H. P. Grice, who formulated a communication model in terms of intentionality. Dennett summarizes Grice's model of a basic communicative act: "Utterer *intends* Audience to *recognize* that Utterer *intends* Audience to produce response *r*." (244). Importantly, Dennett uses Grice's formulation as a basis but qualifies his understanding of it with italicized *at least*, which suggests the possibility that communicative contexts might regularly require greater levels of intentionality. Zunshine's six-level reading of intentionality in *Mrs. Dalloway* devotes only one level to the communicative context ("Woolf *intends us to recognize*…that Richard *is aware*…"), in exactly the wording used by Grice and Dennett ("Utterer *intends* Audience to *recognize*…"). But following Grice's communicative model, two more levels should be added to Zunshine's schema. The result of augmenting Zunshine's formula would look like this:

> Woolf *intends* the reader *to recognize* that Woolf *intends* the reader to *understand* that Richard *is aware* that Hugh *wants* Lady Bruton and Richard to *think* that because the makers of the pen *believe* that it will never wear out, the editor of the *Times* will *respect* and publish the ideas recorded by his pen.

This is an eighth-level intentional system, one clearly beyond the cognitive capacities of mind-reading that anyone, Cargile, Dennett, Zunshine, or Dunbar, conceives as possible. Furthermore, there is still have an outstanding *at least* from Dennett, who suggests that the communicative context might still involve greater levels of intentionality than we have thus far identified.

If the entire model of narrative communication devised by structuralist narratologists were imported into the reading of the short passage from Woolf, the result would be an even more complex model, potentially affording seventeen embedded intentionalities:

1. The artist Virginia Woolf intends us to *understand*
2. in a text *conceived* and *organized* by an extrafictional voice
3. that the implied author has *created*
4. a public narrator that is *recounting*
5. what a private narrator once stated [this could be that the pen will never wear out]
6. what the focalizer *decided* to concentrate on
7. which is that Richard *is aware*
8. that Hugh *wants*
9. Lady Bruton and Richard to *think*
10. that because the makers of the pen *believe* that it will never wear out
11. the editor of the *Times* will *respect* and publish the ideas recorded by his pen,
12. all of which the focalizer *observes* (from his perspective in the dining room)
13. which a private narratee *listens to* [such as Hugh's listening to the penmaker]
14. which a public narratee *learns* from the public narration
15. which the implied *reader* understands
16. which the extrafictional reader *understands* in the context of the overall structure of the novel
17. and I, the actual reader, *understand* that I am supposed to occupy that implied readerly role.

Given the incompatibility of Booth's notions of implied author and reader and Lanser's public and private narrators and narratees, this nearly farcical model might have some redundancy. If not a full seventeen, the model might reach a fourteenth or fifteenth-level intentional system. But can incomprehensibility be measured by magnitude anyway? When Zunshine presented her case for Woolf's challenging the cognitive capacity of her readership, she might have stacked the deck to show how a particular passage reaches to the limit of human understanding in terms of higher-order intentionality by reaching to the sixth level. Here, however, we see that the communicative context of that passage as conceived in narratology involves fifteenth- or seventeenth-order intentionality, orders vastly beyond human comprehension.

Although Zunshine does minimize the rhetorical or narratological dimensions of interpretation in her initial analysis, she is aware of these complicating factors. "Aren't works of fiction themselves metarepresentations with source tags pointing to their authors?…Should not we try to envision a much more intricate system of degrees of metarepresentational framing that would allow for such nuances?" (65) Zunshine concludes "a more detailed discussion deserves a separate book" (66).

The Pragmatics of Difficulty

Structuralist narratology, in explaining a difficult narrative in fine-grained subtlety, actually creates a communicative model in which communication is, cognitively speaking, impossible. David Herman, in his introduction to *Narratologies* (1999) argued that *postclassical narratology* has "displaced and transformed the assumptions, methods, and goals of structuralist

narratology" (2). This "host of new perspectives on the forms and functions of narrative itself" (2-3) has produced ever greater complications to the communicative model of narrative but also solutions to the (cognitively) impossible model of narrative communication. For example, James Phelan has recently argued for an update of Peter Rabinowitz's formulation of a narrative's reader. For Rabinowitz and Phelan, there are four distinctions, rather than the two we have seen thus far as the "implied reader" and the "actual reader." In Phelan's most recent rendering of this conception, the four categories include: "the flesh-and-blood or actual reader, the authorial audience (the author's ideal reader or what I have called the implied reader above), the narrative audience (the observer position within the narrative world that the flesh-and-blood reader assumes), and the narratee (the audience addressed by the narrator)" (*Experiencing* 4). While this understanding of the reader is more complicated than, for example, Booth's, it does not actually increase the order of intentionality. One of the ways that Rabinowitz's and Phelan's understanding of the reader/audience might be understood as "postclassical narratology" is that it does not merely pile on greater levels to the communicative context of narrative; rather, they *divide* that model into two, suggesting that in a work of fictional narrative, there are always two contexts—the author's relationship to the reader, and the narrator's relationship to the narratee. The latter has to do with the *story*, the former has to do with the *discourse*, to use classical narratological terms. The four categories for the reader/audience therefore do not really add any more levels, but they do attend to the now doubled contexts.

Four readers rather than two readers is a counterintuitive "simplification" in the orders of intentionality in the communicative model. Separating the communicative event into two, one having to do with the author/reader relationship and one having to do with the narrator/narratee relationship, means that the dozen or so orders of intentionality do not need to be stacked on top of each other in our understanding of what happens when we read fiction. Zunshine makes an observation in support of Phelan's division of communicative models:

> Constantly keeping track of the difference between the implied author and the narrator means in effect retaining a source tag behind every minute instance of narration and, moreoever, doing so *after* you have already bracketed the whole story as a metarepresentation pointing to the author. It means, for example, saying to yourself as you read *Pride and Prejudice* and come across Lydia Bennet's elopement with Wickham: "Austen claims that Lydia ran away with Wickham"—a kind of micro source-tracking that is simply to cognitively expensive and as such is not a default mode of our reading process. (80)

Zunshine's perfectly practical point is that a typical instance of reading a novel does not involve recourse to the elaborate structure that, in another sense, we *know* is in place. We do not and need not silently preface each sentence with an implied "The author writes…" or some even more complex variation on this notion.

In order to focus on the story, we forget the story-ness of it, the author, the implied reader, and any number of other agents in the story. Hamburger, considering our reaction to a description of a landscape in a novel, made what seemed like a self-evident comment: "For because we know we are reading a novel and not a travel log, we do not—and this we do unconsciously—refer the depicted landscape to the storyteller" (62). Hamburger, like Zunshine, and like any normal reader, knows that we do not think about an extraordinarily wide context when we are reading a novel. It is not that there is no author or narrator—rather those entities are reduced from full minds to mere automatic and background functions that need not even be considered consciously.

When Phelan discusses a doubled context, it is essentially recognition of the limit of our attention. We are focused on *either* the narrator/narratee model *or* the author/reader model and its attending complications. Phelan's distinction of contexts reduces to the difference between what characters do and what the author and reader do. This is the difference between story and discourse, or *fabula* and *sjuzhet*. "Postclassical narratology" of the twenty-first century, then, returns to the core distinction of Russian Formalism.

The reduction of agents to functions in the model of narrative communication is the necessary result of core cognitive limitations in the processing of embedded intentionalities. The analogy between the communicative frame of fiction and the structures of fictional stories themselves, though, offers a set of intriguing possibilities. If characters think about characters thinking about characters, in a layering of increasing difficulty and finally incomprehensibility, what are the readerly strategies of navigation? The strategy in a sentence such as Woolf's is almost certainly to reduce the extraneous minds to functions in order to follow the most important elements of the story. The variety of thoughts presented might produce a variety of interests. The cognitive limitations of any reader necessitate, though, a common reduction of some of the various minds to functions.

Chapter Two: "Am I a machine?" E.M. Forster, Functionalism and Character

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is a novel in which European and Indian characters attempt to understand each other despite their personal and cultural differences. One of the central questions of the plot is whether the European-born Cecil Fielding and the Indian Dr. Aziz can sustain a friendship. But their friendship cannot hold. Although there are misunderstandings and disappointments all along, the greatest outburst of frustration comes when Fielding cannot understand why Aziz so strongly favors his good-natured but not especially helpful friend Mrs. Moore over Adela Quested, who sacrificed her standing in order to exculpate him from the charge of attempted rape. To Fielding's disapproval of Aziz's allegiances, Aziz replies, "Is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound to be measured out? Am I a machine? I shall be told I can use up my emotions by them, next" (282-3). While *A Passage to India* would seem to pit understanding another person as a machine versus a more authentic expression of sympathy, it is my claim that the novel, rather than overturning the mechanistic theory of human subjectivity, actually supports it. Aziz is a machine—it is just that none of the other characters know how he works.

In arguing that Aziz is a machine, this chapter seeks to extend the argument from Chapter One that functionalism is at the foundation of the experience of the fictional character by synthesizing three allied strains: 1) the narratological concept of character 2) cognitive theories of intentionality and 3) the modernist interest in the inability to understand another person, in addition to one's own self. This final tenet is one of the strongest connecting threads of literary modernism. It is the basis of Phil Weinstein's recently articulated concept of "unknowing." According to Weinstein, "Modernist 'unknowing' operates, precisely, as an attack on the confidence in Western norms for securing identity and funding the career of the liberal subject" (3). Mastering the mechanics of another person's action, but not necessarily their motivations, I claim, consolidates these three approaches to understanding another person.

In *A Passage to India,* the controversy of Aziz's character, his guilt or innocence with respect to the assault on Miss Quested, is a diegetic reverberation of a more general narratological question about the way in which we interpret literary characters. The study of "character" in the novel, historically often cast in a minor role, has seen resurgent interest. Recent studies of character maintain that previous critical approaches have overemphasized the structural understanding of character while ignoring or reducing the "human" element of character—they have treated the literary character as Fielding treats Aziz. From elsewhere, there is a countervailing current—the recent wave of applications of cognitive science to the study of literature, specifically to the fictional mind, has imported universal cognitive structures and forms of computationalism to the discussion of character. This latest instantiation of the divide between humanist and structural criticism turns the novel, long considered the Cartesian literary genre, inside out—the computable mind and the ineffable character make for a machine in a ghost.

I propose to reconcile the humanist and structural approaches to the theory of character in a way that avoids the unsatisfying embedding of machine and ghost. The problem is that the structural approach to character takes a form that necessarily leaves a remainder in an antagonistic "human" supplement. The word at the foundation of structural approaches to narrative and at the heart of humanist condemnations is *function*. I develop a distinction between two senses of functionalism—the *constitutive* sense in which the relationships among

components define a complex phenomenon, and the *instrumental* sense in which components of a complex phenomenon each have a use or a purpose. Functionalist arguments in narrative theory are pervasive, but mostly they have been unable to account for the human element of character because they are instrumental and have the inherent limitations of instrumental functionalism. They register the functions of characters without being able to provide an account of how that character is a coherent, understandable being. I contend, however, that a differently conceived functionalism, one in the constitutive sense, is fully capable of a theory of character that avoids the embedding of machine and ghost by maintaining the unknown, the ineffable, as a structural component. This form of functionalism has a weak history in narrative theory, and its unlikely starting point is E.M. Forster, who is all too often taken as a naïve humanist in his theoretical writings and his fiction. In addition to proposing a constitutive-functionalist theory of character, my secondary goal, then, is to resuscitate Forster's functionalism and to expose one of his most sympathetic characters, Dr. Aziz, as a machine.

Homo fictus* and *Homo sapiens

A theory of character is not the same as a notion of what it is to be a human being. The fictional mind and the fictional character have qualities that distinguish them from real-life versions, of course. The traditional understanding of fiction as mimesis conceives of a plot as the imitation of real action, and by extension its actants, characters, are imitations of real human beings. This referential model for the fictional character has proven both compelling and unsatisfying for generations of critics. The problem is that the fictional human being is so different from the real one that it is untenable to associate all the former's idiosyncratic qualities with the transformational necessities of narrative representation. In an approach distinct from the mimetic tradition, E.M. Forster argues that the fictional human is another species. "*Homo fictus* is more elusive than his cousin" (55). The fictional character is rarely represented doing the kinds of things that occupy *homo sapiens*, from sleeping to eating. But if certain seemingly basic elements of *homo fictus* remain unaccounted for, other elements are peculiarly exposed, for the very essence of the novel is to reveal "the hidden life" (45). Indeed, theorists of the novel in generations after Forster have maintained the tenet that narrative fiction is unique among literary forms in its capacity to render the unexpressed thoughts and feelings of characters.[4] Forster's most famous observation about *homo fictus,* however, is that they come in "flat" and "round." (67) Flat characters are "easy recognized" because they are "constructed round a single idea or quality" (67). The majority of Forster's lectures, printed in *Aspects of the Novel,* concern flat characters and their strategic uses, particularly in ever more complex novels. Yet the enduring value for creative writing instructors, novelists, and critics is certainly the idea—and the goal—of the "round" character. Round characters, in contrast to their flat acquaintances, are "capable of surprising in an interesting way" (78). For that reason, "flat people are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones" (72-3).

The distinction between flat and round characters, despite the practicality of the terms, has had decades to be maligned by critics as non-existent or reductive.[5] However, some theorists have recently returned to the distinction. In *The One vs. The Many*, Alex Woloch gives his interpretation of the enduring conflict between "structural" and "humanist" approaches to narrative through reference to Forster's flat and round characters. (17) The structural vein of literary criticism attempts to develop a formal model of narrative, of which a crucial but poorly understood component is character. This approach reduces characters to functions, that is to say, to actants that accomplish certain tasks necessary to the narrative as a whole. The humanist approach maintains that characters have a "human aspect" (15) or an "implied human

personality" (13). While it might be naïve to treat characters as real people, it is equally troubling to ignore the fact that creating and enjoying literature is partly based on the ability to see characters as *referring* to human behavior.

Woloch attempts to bridge the structural and the humanist approaches with his two concepts: "the *character-space* (that particular and charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position within the narrative as a whole) and the *character-system* (the arrangement of multiple and differentiated character-spaces—differentiated configurations and manipulations of the human figure—into a unified narrative structure" (14). The concept of the character-space derives from the humanist approach, specifically the idea that any character, potentially, has a complete human personality, capable of being represented in utmost subtlety. However, there are the practical considerations that a novel can only attend to one thing at a time and is finite in length. In a literal sense, a character takes up a certain amount of space in the novel, a number of lines or pages. The distribution of space, or attention, to particular characters is the character-system. The notion of a character-system helps Woloch to resolve the seemingly contradictory achievements of the realist novel, "depth psychology and social expansiveness, depicting the interior life of a singular consciousness and casting a wide narrative gaze over a complex social universe" (19). The unequal distribution of space in the novel allows for the representation of certain characters with great depth and subtlety while others are given short shrift. This distribution, Woloch claims, mirrors the social reality out of which the realist novel emerges. The minor characters are workers in the service of the major characters. Or, in Woloch's more provocative language, "minor characters are the proletariat of the novel" (27). Woloch explains his labor theory of character in Forster's language:

> On the one hand, the asymmetric structure of realist characterization—which *rounds out* one or several characters while *flattening*, and *distorting*, a manifold assortment of characters—reflects actual structures of inequitable distribution. On the other hand, the *claims* of minor characters on the reader's attention—and the resultant tension between characters and their functions—are generated by the democratic impulse that forms a horizon of nineteenth-century politics. (31) (emphasis added)

Woloch's connection between the flat and round qualities of character and the increasingly unequal divisions of wealth and labor in the nineteenth century is compelling, even as it balances "at an imprecise juncture between form and history" (30). But the argument rests on a common reading of Forster that I will argue is misguided.

There seems to be a close connection between looking at the history of "character" and imbuing characters with history. Woloch gives a theoretical prehistory to any character: the character exists and then work is done that "rounds out" the character, or there is a process of "flattening…and distorting." Woloch's bringing together of the structural and the humanist shows that the structural approach is recessive and the humanist dominant. A position that has an allowance for the referential, a "human" part that cannot be accounted for structurally, is thereby a humanist approach. Another historian of the concept of character, Deidre Lynch, relies on the same implicit history in her attack on structuralist analyses of character. "Intent on demystifying the realist regime of writing and reading, semiotics dissolved the rounded character into their qualities (semes), in bundles of narrative functions" (15). The dissolving of a character suggests that prior to analysis, the words on a page were an index of a complete (undissolved) person. Both Lynch's and Woloch's claims rely on the notion that there exists a real human being behind the character, and that projected humanity is associated with roundness. Such studies of character

take Forster's theory of character as foundational for the "humanist" approach. What is interesting, though, is that there is nothing in Forster's conception of round and flat characters to support the connection between round characters and a real human basis.

The round character, we must remember, is not a *homo sapiens* according to Forster. It is still a *homo fictus*. The round character has no "interiority" as we generally understand the term to apply to human beings. The figure might seem real, but according to Forster a character is real "when the novelist knows everything about it" (63). The author is in complete control. "Perfect knowledge" is an illusion in real life, for Forster. "But in the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life" (63). Forster offers that the novel is a compensation for, rather than an imitation of, real life. The round character is merely the character that operates according to a logic that is not immediately apparent to the reader, even though that logic is known to the author. The difference between the flat and the round character has nothing to do with interiority or a "human" aspect—it has to do with whether the logic of the character is clear immediately or becomes clear over time.

Woloch's overarching claims about the commonality between the relationships among major characters, minor characters and interiority in the novel, and the relationships among classes in a capitalist society do not particularly suffer from my urging that we hold true to Forster's formulation and consider its implications. If not Forster, many others have observed the contrast between soulless stock characters and ones with far more developed personalities. Paying attention to Forster, though, allows us a different solution to the troubling opposition Woloch attempts to resolve with "character-space"—that opposition between characters as functions and characters as human beings. For Forster, *no* character, not even the roundest of them, is a human being. The character's constitution is entirely distinct from the human's, even if at discrete points they are similar. In the composition of a novel, Forster recognizes that flat characters can be *useful* in certain contexts because they are immediately recognizable, easily summarized, and easily remembered. Forster's dismissal of the connection between the fictional character and the human, coupled with his emphasis on the usefulness of characters makes it clear that rather than being a foundational text for the "humanist approach," Forster's theory of character is structural.

Constitutive and Instrumental Functionalism

What does it mean for a literary theory to be structural? Forster's other famous distinction in *Aspects of the Novel* helps to answer the question. Forster writes, "'The king died and then the queen died'" is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot" (93). The difference between a "story" and a "plot" is the difference between the depiction of a chronological series of events (a story) and the explanation of the logic of the relationships among events. In a manner analogous to the "story," literary theories might provide a catalogue of patterns. Or, like a "plot," a theory might explain the logic that undergirds the connections among components. Structural literary theory is akin to Forster's "plot" in that it explains *why* certain events occur in certain relations. The primary way that structural approaches to literature have operated has been to consider the *functions* discrete events or characters have. But in order to develop a rigorous understanding of *function* in literary theory, and specifically literary theories of character, we need to understand the range of use of the terms *function* and *functionalism*. In this section, I will review these terms and argue for a distinction between constitutive and instrumental senses of functionalism—a distinction that will prove crucial to the theory of the fictional character.

A *function* describes a variable relationship between two or more entities in which the characteristics of one entity depend upon the characteristics of another or of several others. Volume is a function of length, width, and height. In this sense of the word, the inputs (the length, width, and height) are *arguments*, and the output (volume) is the *value* of the function.[6] A function in this mathematical sense understands a value by virtue of its composition. A *function*, closer to everyday language, can also mean a use. We would not say that volume is a use of length, width, and height. But, we would say that a keyboard has a use, a specific function. Of course that does not mean that being able to identify what we do with the keyboard provides much insight into what a keyboard's constitutive components are. These distinct understandings of function give rise to two divergent senses of *functionalism*. The *constitutive* sense of functionalism corresponds the volume example, and I will look to philosophy of mind and sociology for models of functionalism with respect to complex phenomena that have this constitutive sense. The *instrumental* sense of functionalism corresponds to objects that we identify by their use, like the keyboard, and I turn to the applied arts for a model of this strain of functionalism.

In philosophy of mind and cognitive science, the basis of functionalism is the difference between a *functional kind* and a *physical kind*. J. Christopher Maloney explains the distinction: "Physical kinds are identified by their material composition, which in turn determines their conformity to the laws of nature. Functional kinds are not identified by their material composition but rather by their activities or tendencies" (332-333). A neuron, Maloney explains, does something specific, but by definition it has a specific physical constitution. Something that performs the functions of a neuron but is composed of other materials would not be a neuron. Therefore a neuron is a physical kind. A pendulum, on the other hand, is a functional kind because we define it by what it does, regardless of whether it is made of copper, steel, wood, or anything else. (333) The fact that a thing could be composed of many different materials is called *multiple realizability*.[7] A *functionalist* argument asserts that a particular phenomenon is a functional kind, which is to say that it can be realized in multiple ways. Although there are important subtleties to specific approaches, the common thread in functionalist arguments in philosophy of mind is the position that the mind is a functional kind. The human mind thinks, but so could something else if it had all the necessary parts performing analogous operations. Functionalism in this constitutive sense, then, defines a phenomenon by what it does rather than by what it is made of.

When we use *functionalism* in contexts that concern the organization of abstract concepts, the distinction of physical and functional kinds does not provide as much clarity. Durkheim speculated, "Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and treat them as such" (68-9). Sociologists call this a *functionalist* argument. This form of functionalism has much in common with versions that concern more tangible phenomena. Just as a pendulum is a relationship between a fixed point, a heavy object and something connecting them, so a society is a fixed relationship between certain actions--the majority must constitute socially sanctioned behaviors while a minority constitute aberrant behaviors. The pendulum and society have in common that they are realizable in multiple ways. The pendulum can be made of different materials, while society can be composed of different actions in the categories of socially sanctioned and aberrant. The difference, however, is that any actual example of a pendulum is

physical, but it is easy to see how its material constitution is not what makes it a pendulum. In the case of a complex concept like society, there is only a very indirect physical basis to the actions that constitute it. The question of whether society is a functional or physical kind becomes moot. A functional kind, therefore, is distinguished not from a physical kind but from a complex concept that does not afford multiple realizability. It is the difference, for example, between *society* and *the United States*.

The *instrumental* sense of functionalism has a different starting point. A component can have a function without, strictly speaking, being necessary to a particular functional kind. A pendulum can be made by tying a string around a stone and hanging it from a nail. The knot on the string serves a function—it holds the string around the stone. Without the knot, the string and the stone would not make a pendulum. But, a knot is not a necessary feature of a pendulum. One way of resolving this vagueness with respect to necessity is akin to what Tim Crane explains as "functional analysis" or "functional boxology." (106) To explain this principle, Crane uses the example of a mousetrap, which can be thought of as a functional kind. It does not matter what a mousetrap is made of or even how it works. Something is a mousetrap if the input is live mice and the output is dead mice. Imagining the mousetrap as a box, Crane explains: "From the point of view of the simple description of the mousetrap, it doesn't really matter what's in the MOUSETRAP 'box': what's 'in the box' is whatever is it that traps the mice. Boxes like this are known to engineers as 'black boxes': we can treat something as a black box when we are not really interested in how it works internally, but are interested only in the input-output tasks it performs" (105). In the pendulum example, from a functional perspective, we might not care about how the weight is connected to the string because no matter how the connection happens, the result is still a pendulum. However, Crane continues, "we can 'break into' the black box of our mousetrap" (105), much as we can pay attention to the more detailed mechanics of a pendulum. This process of breaking down "black boxes" into their functional components yields a more and more detailed understanding of the machine. Ultimately, all of the black boxes can be fully understood. "What is treated as one black box at one level can be broken down into other black boxes at other levels, until we come to understand the workings of the mousetrap" (106). Theoretically, we could develop a more precise definition of the pendulum that would fill in the "black boxes" (such as the points of connection) with their functional components.

Functional analysis, Crane observes, works with a different sense of "function" than we have seen thus far. "Notice, though, that the word 'function' is being used in a different sense than in our earlier discussion: here, the function of a part of a system is the causal role it plays in the system. This use of 'function' corresponds more closely to the everyday use of the term, as in 'what's the function of this bit?'" (106). Crane identifies that the means by which we refine a functionalist theory is by considering the function, meaning *use*, of each component as it serves the general mechanism. This sense of function is *instrumental*. If this methodology of breaking into black boxes, or more and more carefully defining functional components, continues until each and every function cannot be further subdivided, then the instrumental sense of function would yield a constitutive sense of function.

The functional analysis of machines shows how, starting with a basic understanding of what something does, we can refine our knowledge of it by employing an instrumental-functionalist approach. But what about objects whose basic functionality we do not entirely understand? Some of the most ordinary parts of daily life involve interacting with useful things that, when pressed, we would find hard to identify in functionalist terms. Even a house or chair, for instance, has more complexity than we might expect. *Functionalism*, as a design principle in

architecture and the applied arts, maintained that a manufactured object should have *only* the features necessary for its purpose, whether that object is a building, a piece of furniture, or a corkscrew. "Form follows function" is the oft-repeated mantra associated with the architect Louis Sullivan. This sounds like the formula for understanding, for example, a house as a functional kind, which would be to understand the house in constitutive-functionalist terms. It is easy to identify functional kinds for naturally occurring phenomena (as in Maloney's examples of neurons and planets) and even for artificial entities (we can still identify functional kinds easily for things that *do* one specific thing, such as a mousetrap), but it is hard to develop a really convincing understanding of a functional kind for a house. Houses do a lot of different things, from the intuitively functional like providing shelter and means for cooking to functions that we might not even want houses to do, like conferring a particular social status on its owners. When theory is put to practice, a Functionalist house is not the common denominator of houses. Actually, a Functionalist house is likely to strike most as extremely unusual in appearance.

Architectural functionalism is a very specific style, self-consciously austere, smooth, and lacking in traditional ornament. Such a style, though, is not the same thing as identifying the constitutive components of a functional kind. No design can be merely necessary, as David Pye observes:

> [W]henever humans design and make a useful thing they invariably expend a good deal of unnecessary and easily avoidable work on it which contributes nothing to its usefulness. Look, for instance, at the ceiling. It is flat. It would have been easier not to have made it flat. Its being flat does not make you any warmer or the room above you any quieter, no yet does it make the house any cheaper, far from it. Since there is a snobbism in these things flattening a ceiling is called workmanship, or mere craftsmanship; while painting gods on it or putting knobs of it is called art or design. But all these activities: "workmanship," "design for appearance," "decoration," "ornament," "applied art," "embellishment," or what you will, are part of the same pattern of behavior which all men at all times and placed have followed: doing useless work on useful things. (13)

Pye's point is that a simple, even austere, design is still ornamental in a certain sense of the term expanded to include "useless work." Architectural functionalism advocates a particular way of designing such that each component is understood as having a *purpose* (purpose, here, excludes the aesthetic, which is the basis of Pye's objection). This focus on each element's having a purpose is functionalism in the instrumental sense. It emphasizes the instrumentality of all of its design components while minimizing their non-functional characteristics. But as no design is without "useless work," architectural functionalism has a certain internal contradiction. A design component might be useful in some way, but it must exist in a material—and therefore non-essential—form. Another way of expressing the problem with the way that functionalism is employed in the applied arts is that it starts with too narrow of an understanding of what an object's purpose is. The ensuing dissolution into functional components does not add up again to the original object because that object was misconceived in the first place.

Instrumental functionalism inspires some dissatisfaction when it is not in the service of a constitutive functionalist account of a phenomenon. In the case of functionalism in architecture, the "usefulness" of a design feature is not a satisfactory explanation for its style. The reason for this dissatisfaction is that the interpretation of a component as having a use tends to minimize its seemingly non-useful qualities. But, when the uses do not yield a constitutive definition, it is easy to imagine that other uses or other "non-use" components might not have been explored.

Functionalism and Narrative Theory

A narrative is, of course, a far more complicated and abstract phenomenon than a pendulum or a mousetrap, which means that providing an account of what narrative *does* will be that much more difficult. In this section, I trace what kind of functionalist arguments have been made at key points in the history of narrative theory and how the form of functionalism affects our understanding of character. The critical refrain about narratology's exclusion of the "human" qualities of fictional characters is a minimizing of non-functional characteristics. I contend that the functionalism endemic to narratology is *instrumental*, despite some assertions to the contrary. For this reason, narratological accounts of character suffer the general failures of instrumental functionalism.

Russian Formalism: Vladimir Propp

In narratological accounts of character, the most significant lineage of functionalism originates in Russian Formalism, specifically Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. Propp's methodology is different from previous anthropological work on the folktale because he does not start with categories of fairy tales that are distinguished by surface features such as whether the hero is a human or an animal. Rather, Propp presents a morphology, "a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole" (19). The tale's component parts are *functions*, or "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (21). About Propp's use of the term *function,* Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan speculates, "the choice of 'function' may have been motivated by two different dictionary senses of this term. In one sense, a function is the 'activity proper to anything, mode of action by which it fulfils its purpose,' in this case its contribution to the plot. In another—logico-mathematical—sense, the term denotes a 'variable quantity in relation to others by which it may be expressed" (21). Rimmon-Kenan sees the same two senses of *function* that Crane identified in another context and that I am using to distinguish between kinds of functionalism. One of the goals here is to distinguish the two senses of *function* in Propp's work with greater clarity.

Propp's morphological approach to the fairy tale gives plenty of indication that his position is constitutive-functionalist:

> The functions of the actors may be singled out. Fairy tales exhibit thirty-one functions, not all of which may be found in any one fairy tale; however, the absence of certain functions does not interfere with the order of appearance of the others. Their aggregate constitutes one system, one composition. This system has proved to be extremely stable and widespread. The investigator, for example, can determine very accurately that both the ancient Egyptian fairy tale of the two brothers and the tale of the firebird, the tale of *Morozka*, the tale of the fisherman and the fish, as well as a number of myths follow the same general pattern. An analysis of the details bears this out. Thirty-one functions do not exhaust the system. Such a motif as "Baba-Jaga gives Ivan a horse" contains four elements, of which only one represents a function, while the other three are of a static nature.
>
> In all, the fairy tale knows about one hundred and fifty elements or constituents. Each of these elements can be labeled according to its bearing on the sequence of action. Thus, in the above example, Baba-Jaga is a donor, the word "gives" signals the moment of transmittal, Ivan is a recipient, and the horse is the gift. If the labels for all one hundred and fifty fairy tale elements are written down in the order dictated by the tales themselves, then, by definition, all fairy tales will fit such a table. Conversely, any tale

> which fits such a table is a fairy tale, and any tale which does not fit it belongs in another category. Every rubric is a constituent of the fairy tale, and reading the table vertically yields a series of basic forms and a series of derived forms. (1971, 95)

Propp's account of the fairy tale is constitutive-functionalist because he identifies the thirty-one necessary components and the way that they fit together (their order, that is). Without these components, something would not be a tale. Propp recognizes, however, that functions are the "fundamental" components, but they do not provide comprehensive understanding of a tale. Employing a methodology akin to what Crane calls functional analysis, Propp begins to break the "black box" of the function and, in the above passage, discovers that one particular function has distinguishable parts. The donor function, Propp observes, has four elements. Altogether, the fairy tale involves "about one hundred and fifty elements or constituents," of which only thirty-one are functions (meaning actions). The other approximately hundred-plus elements are "stable." Those elements are not expressly delineated, and even their precise number is unknown. Propp writes, significantly, "*If* the labels for all one hundred and fifty elements are written down…*then* any tale which fits such a table is a fairy tale" (emphasis added). But, nowhere in his work does Propp actually accomplish this task. These useful but not *fundamentally necessary* elements are like the knot on the string for a pendulum or the spring inside the mousetrap. Propp's non-function elements, or some of them at any rate, are *necessary* for any particular example of a fairy tale, but they are not what fundamentally constitute a tale. *If* we could identify them all, then we could have a truly comprehensive account of the fairy tale, much like the complete understanding of a mousetrap that comes from grasping all of its mechanics. A comprehensive account of the fairy tale would predict every conceivable form that a fairy tale could take, thus the pieces would be in place to reverse-engineer the limits of the fairy tale canon.

At the level of function, Propp gives a constitutive functionalist theory of the folk tale. At the level of element, Propp fails. His functional analysis identifies that there are numerous elements that have uses, and he even identifies some of these elements and their uses. But, the task is too great and too divergent from his goal, and he is unable to distinguish them all. If he had been able to, we would have, theoretically at least, a constitutive functionalist theory of the folk tale with "complete understanding" of all of its parts. That is, all of its black boxes would be understood. Functional analysis, we recall, involves instrumental functionalism, which in this case means the work of breaking the "function" boxes into distinguishable elements. In other words, Propp determines the purposes of those elements in the mechanics of the thirty-one functions fundamental to the fairy tale.

Many of those elements are characters. At the level of function, there is a "black box" called DONOR. At the level of element, that black box consists of an action (giving), a thing (the gift), and two characters (the donor and the recipient); each of these elements is *instrumental* to but not *constitutive* of the function DONOR, as it is not clear even how many elements there are or whether these particular elements are the only means of realizing the function. Propp's theory of character, therefore, is partial and instrumental, rather than constitutive. That is, he understands the significance of characters by what purpose they serve, but he does not know all the purposes that characters can possibly serve, which would be necessary for a general understanding of what characters are and what are all of the things that characters do.

Actions constitute the folktale, while characters are instrumental to it. This understanding of Propp's position is entirely orthodox, and it is exactly the position that recent theorists have criticized for its inattention to the particularities of character and its referentiality with respect to

real human behavior. But by breaking the black box of "functionalism" we can better understand the mechanisms by which such an instrumentalization of character occurs—the interplay of computation and purpose. Furthermore, by seeing how modifications to the mechanisms of functions affect our understanding of character, we can start to envision a differently conceived functionalism that does not reduce the fictional character to its service to action.

Classical Narratology

Tzvetan Todorov famously coined the term *narratology* in his 1969 *Grammaire du Décaméron*. In the standard narrative of narrative theory, the term refers to the approach to narrative theory developed in the late 1960s that borrowed from Russian Formalism and Saussurean linguistics in order to create a structuralist theory of narrative, which is to say that narrative theory became a form of functionalism with a consistent recourse to the vocabulary of linguistics. Barthes, in his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," writes, "…the most reasonable thing is to posit a homological relation between sentence and discourse insofar as it is likely that a similar formal organization orders all semiotic systems, whatever their substances and dimensions" (1977, 83). Barthes' essay takes the position that narrative analysis can operate on a number of discrete levels akin to the levels that differentiate linguistic analysis into phoneme, morpheme, word, etc. For narrative, Barthes outlines the equivalent units:

> [T]he level of "*functions*" (in the sense this word has in Propp and Bremond), the level of "*actions*" (in the sense this word has in Greimas when he talks of characters as actants) and the level of "*narration*" (which is roughly the level of "discourse" in Todorov). These three levels are bound together according to a mode of progressive integration: a function only has meaning insofar as it occupies a place in the general action of an actant, and this action in turn receives its final meaning from the fact that it is narrated, entrusted to a discourse which possesses its own code. (1977, 88)

In a certain respect, Barthes's formulation echoes the distinction that Propp devised between a function and an element. However, for Propp, significance was more or less limited to two levels—the level of function and the level of folktale. Elements were significant only insofar as they were components of functions. While he envisioned an analysis that would determine all of the elements of a function, it would really only be in the service of a greater understanding of the function. Barthes's contribution, then, is an expansion of the linguistic metaphor and recognition of more levels of potential significance than Propp conceived. Even "surface" features such as identities or qualities of particular characters are, to Barthes, laden with meaning, for "a narrative is never made up of anything other than functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies" (1977, 89).

Barthes's claim that narrative is composed only of functions alters the differentiation between superficial features and function that is so important to Propp, or, in somewhat different terms, the differentiation between surface and deep structures important to Greimas. Barthes argues fundamentally that nothing is unimportant in a narrative, even the specificity that comes with any particular character. This is essentially the structuralist insight—while it is often said that structuralist approaches employ Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, it is not often clarified what that really means for the particular application. In the simple conceptualization of surface manifestation and underlying structure, only the certain surface components that most clearly expose the underlying structure are really important, while others can be disregarded. The distinction between *langue* and *parole*, however, has no such hierarchy. Every actual instance of language use, *parole*, is fundamentally a part of the *langue*. In a similar vein, Barthes argues that if there are details in a narrative, they must fundamentally be a part of

the structure of the narrative. Barthes' maneuver would appear to support a richer understanding of character—one that finds significance in character beyond the status as actants. However, as Barthes explains in "The Reality Effect," the insignificant detail is not referential of human behavior or life in the way that the humanist approach would understand it. The trivial detail is a rhetorical gesture, an homage to the genre of history, in which Barthes claims, "the 'real' is assumed not to need any independent justification, that it is powerful enough to negate any notion of 'function,' that it can be expressed without there being any need for it to be integrated into a structure, and that the *having-been-there* of things is a sufficient reason for speaking of them" (1989, 15) That is, historical facts, are insignificant in the "strong" sense. They are what they are—they do not symbolize something, they do not mean or refer. Rather, according to Barthes, "It is the category of the 'real,' and not its various contents, which is being signified; in other words, the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent, standing alone, becomes the true signifier of realism" (1989, 16). In one essay Barthes claims that narrative is composed only of functions, and in the other Barthes claims that the "real" can negate "any notion of function." This complicated description replaces the pervasive notion that functions critical to narrative coherence are to be found by sifting through a lot of superficial details. Those details function by appearing to be useless, which is precisely the quality that reality has. Uselessness has a use—it makes a detail appear real, not by referring to something real by being its functional (or non-functional) equivalent.

From Structuralism to Poststructuralism

Barthes presents the extreme of the "structural" approach because he leaves nothing in a narrative text outside of functionality while denying the referential (or mimetic or "human") side of characterization. The implication for "character," then, is that any portion of a narrative that demarcates a character does so either in the service of the plot or, by appearing non-functional, in the service of the reality effect. Hélène Cixous, in a poststructuralist reconsideration of character, explains what is essentially the structuralist understanding of character: "By definition, a 'character,' preconceived or created by an author, is to be *figured out*, understood, read: he is presented, offered up to interpretation, with the prospect of a traditional reading that seeks its satisfaction at the level of a potential identification with such and such a 'personage'…" (385). The first part of Cixous's description echoes, skeptically, Forster's understanding that the logic of a character is known to the author and is to be figured out by the reader. The latter part of Cixous's observation, that figuring out a character involves an identification with a "personage," takes into consideration the structuralist insight that the "reality" of a character does not come from referring to a real human, but merely to reality. A "personage" is not a real human—it is merely an artificial construction adhering to a principle of coherence. Identification, then, is not with something that references a real person, but with something that references the false reality of personhood. Polemically, Cixous argues:

> So long as we do not put aside "character" and everything it implies in terms of illusion and complicity with classical reasoning and the appropriating economy that such reasoning supports, we will remain locked up in the treadmill of reproduction. We will find ourselves, automatically, in the syndrome of role-playing. So long as we take to be the representation of a true subject that which is only a mask, so long as we ignore the fact that the "subject" is an effect of the unconscious and that it never stops producing the unconscious—which is unanalyzable, uncharacterizable, we will remain prisoners of the monotonous machination that turns every "character" into a marionette. (387)

Cixous's "treadmill of reproduction" and "monotonous machination" give a much darker shade to the anti-mimetic lineage of criticism by emphasizing the directionless processing that goes into understanding a fictional character. There is only the work of analyzing but no result because the character is not referential. The "true subject," Cixous contends, is in a dialectical relationship with the unconscious, which cannot be understood by definition. Interestingly, Cixous's argument about character is taken to be symptomatic of the structural approach by Woloch, even though Cixous is clearly arguing against such a notion of character. The reason that Cixous falls on the structural side to someone like Woloch is that she maintains that this inadequate notion of character is the norm in the realist novel—only exceptional works recognize the "real subject." The humanist approach, on the other hand, finds an element of the "unanalyzable" in even the most traditional realist character.

The structural approach, whether in formalist, structuralist or poststructuralist guises, conceives of the character in instrumental-functionalist terms. While Propp and Greimas identified the uses of characters (which are to accomplish particular tasks constitutively necessary for the narrative), Barthes effectively expanded the notion of usefulness in the narrative text to include everything. Instead of a distinction between necessary and unnecessary elements, Barthes declared everything functional. However, this sense of functional is limited to the instrumental sense—even though a narrative is composed only of functions, those functions do not add up again to the constitution of a character. Cixous's dissatisfaction with the robotic functionaries called "characters" in realist novels has more recently become a dissatisfaction with the theoretical paradigm that understands characters in this exclusively purpose-oriented way. Hence the return of the ineffable human in the artificial, convention-bound domain of narrative fiction.

Consciousness and Functionalism

Although Propp concerned himself with folk tales, narratologists such as Greimas, Bal, Iser, Genette, and others focused primary on novels, that is to say, long works of narrative fiction. Their functionalist approaches seem to be in an ironic relationship to that central characteristic of the novel: its unusual capacity to portray interiority. At the beginning of *Transparent Minds,* her canonical work on the means by which novels present consciousness, Dorrit Cohn writes:

> If the real world becomes fiction only by revealing the hidden side of the human beings who inhabit it, the reverse is equally true: the most real, the "roundest" characters of fiction are those we know most intimately, precisely in ways we could never know people in real life. "I confess," writes Mann in an essay on a rival art, "that in everything regarding knowledge of men as individual beings, I regard drama as an art of the silhouette, and only narrated man as round, whole, real and fully shaped." But this means that the special lifelikeness of narrative fiction—as compared to dramatic and cinematic fictions—depends on what writers and readers know least in life: how another mind thinks, another body feels. In depicting the inner life, the novelist is truly a fabricator. Even as he draws on psychological theory and on introspection, he creates what Ortega called "imaginary psychology…the psychology of possible human minds"—a field of knowledge the Spanish critic also believed to be "the material proper to the novel." (1978, 5-6)

Thomas Mann's sense of narrative fiction's having the "roundest" characters, from his 1907 essay *Versuch über das Theater*, precedes Forster's formulation of round and flat characters by twenty years. It shows that the metaphor of roundness for characters was used before Forster, as

well as after, for a general sense of interiority.[8] But, like Forster after him, Mann recognizes that there is something fundamentally different about "narrated man." His "roundness" is actually a characteristic that no actual human could have because it depends upon the unique capacity of narrative fiction to relate the unspoken thoughts and feelings of characters. On this point, Mann, Forster, and Cohn are in alignment. Cohn, building upon Ortega y Gasset, sees the novelist as a "fabricator" of inner lives, which helps to explain why the subtitle of her work is *Narrative Modes for* Presenting *Consciousness in Fiction* (emphasis added) rather than "representing."

That fabrication of interiority, for Cohn, draws upon "psychological theory" and "introspection." The association of the novel with introspection has a long history. In his classic study *The Rise of the Novel,* Ian Watt associates the birth of the novel with Cartesianism, introspection as a source of insight being the point of connection. (13) Hugh Kenner, in concurrence, writes, "the philosophy which has stood behind all subsequent philosophies, and which makes the whole of intelligible reality depend on the mental processes of a solitary man, came into being at the same time as the curious literary form called the novel" (17). Cohn admits that her *Transparent Minds* at least in part falls in line with this tradition due to her "predilection for novels with thoughtful characters and scenes of self-communion" (v). This side of the novel, its intimacy with the mind, is what Woloch described as the "humanist" side of narrative theory.

In *Fictional Minds,* Alan Palmer, who thought Propp's starting with formulaic folk tales might have inclined narratology toward functionalism, also questions the objects of analysis for the lineage of critics who emphasize introspection as the core of the novel. Beginning with Cohn's admission of a preference for "thoughtful" characters and "self-communion," Palmer argues that the emphasis on the mechanics of solitary minds pervades narrative theory to the detriment of our understanding of the social element of mental functioning. (9-10) His project is to emphasize what he calls the "mind beyond the skin" (11), which is to say that he considers how mental functions occur in interactive and social contexts. While clearly our minds "are invisible to each other," Palmer argues, "in another sense the workings of our minds are perfectly visible to others in our actions, and the workings of fictional minds are perfectly visible to readers from characters' actions" (11). The emphasis on action returns us to the tendency of structuralist narratology to put more weight on action than on character. Narratology typically sees characters as functional units needed to accomplish particular actions. In Palmer's account, actions serve to portray minds, hence characters.

Palmer's reorientation of action and character certainly has some precedence. Henry James famously saw the relation of action and character as reciprocal in *The Art of Fiction:*

> What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. (13*)*

Even in James's highly psychological scene, the example has a social configuration, and the implicit point is that there is an immediately obvious and observable *event* in the particular look that the woman has on her face. Whether or not the narration delves into her unexpressed thoughts, the event of her look and its attendant psychological significance has occurred and is able to be registered by an observer or reader. In effect, what starts as a model of reciprocity between character and event becomes, in the end, a model in which the illustration of character is an event. Such a line of thinking resurfaces in Paul Ricoeur's attempt to reconcile the theory of mimesis with the standard history of the novel that sees the form move away from the depiction

of action toward the depiction of interiority. Ricouer theorized three stages of the novel: "the novel of action, of character, of thought" (13). But, that trajectory is not a movement from one side to its complement, action to character. "For the novel contributes to the genuine enrichment of the notion of action" (156). The turn away from action toward thought, in the trajectory that aligns James and Ricoeur, is an expansion of the domain of action, to the point that even an unexpressed thought of a character is an action.

Palmer's reversal of functionalist narratology, making actions useful in understanding a mind rather than the other way around, picks up on the strain implicit since James and ever more a burden as novels become increasingly focused on psychological processes. But one of the details that survives from James to Palmer is a slight asymmetry—while James suggests that character is the "determination" of incident, incident is the "illustration" of character. Determination suggests a discernible constititution, while illustration suggests that, to know the character in its entirety, we must look elsewhere. For Palmer, the matter is the same. Palmer's basic assumption is that narrative fiction requires projecting a complete mind—one that has something to it beyond the particular action, speech, or even thought credited to that character. About fictional minds, Palmer argues more than once "[i]t is part of the competence of the reader to ascribe consciousness to surface behavior" (122). On the one hand, Palmer defers to a basic humanist assumption that characters need to be referential in order to be understandable. In effect, they must have a spirit. But, he also makes the extraordinary claim that the mechanics of thought need not be located within the brain. The notion of a "mind beyond the skin," or the idea the thought is readily and objectively discernible in a particular social configuration or arrangement of things in the world, draws implicitly on the notion of a mind as a functional, rather than a physical, kind. The workings of thought, Palmer argues, are mechanistic, while the character remains ineffable.

Palmer's simultaneous adoption of machine and ghost is an attempt to reconcile the antinomy of structural and humanist accounts of character from a cognitivist perspective. In a later rendition of his position that reading competence requires the projecting of a complete mind, Palmer addresses the ensuing contradiction of his claims:

> Part of the competence that is required of the reader is to enter the storyworld of the narrative and thereby take part in the illusion that fictional characters are individuals with as much freedom and autonomy of movement as real people have. At the same time, readers know that the narrative is a semiotic construction and that its ending has been predetermined. So, it is possible to argue that the reader must be able to maintain simultaneously the two irreconcilable elements of freedom and teleology and that this ability is an inescapable and essential component of the ability to read novels. (156)

As with other reconciliations of the human and the structural, the human side is dominant despite the fact that Palmer vastly increases the structural side to include the processes of thought. It is not so much that the two sides are in a dynamic relationship out of which our understanding of character emerges. Rather, the understanding of the "human" element of character is the basic criteria for even being able to "enter the storyworld."

In *Living to Tell About It,* James Phelan makes a very similar argument to Palmer's about the relationship between freedom and teleology in characterization, but his approach is more explicit about why the "human" side remains dominant. Phelan takes the distinction between humanist and structural approaches to character and divides them, rather, into thirds. "Character functions" are, according to Phelan, "the ways in which characters work as representations of possible people (what I have called their mimetic function), as representative of larger groups or

ideas (their thematic functions), and as artificial constructs within the larger construct of the work (their synthetic functions)" (*Living* 12-13). In describing the effects of the character functions on readers, Phelan actually makes the distinctions between the categories the most clear:

> Responses to the mimetic component involve an audience's interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as like our own. Responses to the thematic component involve an interest in the ideational function of the characters and in the cultural, ideological, philosophical, or ethical issues being addressed by the narrative. Responses to the synthetic component involve an audience's interest in and attention to the characters and to the larger narrative as artificial constructs. The synthetic component is always present because any character is constructed and has a specific role to play within the larger construction of the narrative, but the synthetic may be more or less foregrounded. (*Living* 20)

Phelan's general orientation is rhetorical, meaning that he is interested in how these functions exist both within texts and how they produce certain audience effects. Narratives have all of these elements, but specific genres and styles tend to foreground one or another. The realist novel emphasizes the mimetic function, while metafiction emphasizes the synthetic function, for example. The mimetic function is the strongest, and Phelan observes what he calls the "impulse to preserve the mimetic" (*Living* 28). This impulse inspires a set of interpretive strategies that foreground what makes a character seem like a real person while relegating conflicting functions and information to the periphery. In order to appreciate the mimetic function of character, a reader needs to avoid thinking about the synthetic function—the artificiality of that character. Phelan is essentially breaking up what might casually be called a "suspension of disbelief" into a set of practices rather than a singular act of establishing a frame. Those practices vary from narrative to narrative, and even from moment or moment or reading to reading. Phelan writes: "…I am struck by the power of the interpretive habit to preserve the mimetic. That power is not at all surprising: the mimetic component of narrative is responsible for our emotional responses to it, and those responses are a crucial part of the distinctive quality and power of narrative" (*Living* 28). Phelan's observation is that the human side, the "mimetic" that is, is dominant because it is the side responsible for our emotional responses.

But do we really only have emotional responses to the mimetic function of character? Do we only feel when we treat a character as if it were a real and singular person? Despite the fact that Phelan's account of character interweaves the opposition of humanist and structural perspectives on rhetorical and narratological levels, it maintains a fundamentally humanist understanding of the emotional response to narrative. Palmer's cognitivist variation, also still dominated by the humanist side, shows the way toward a different understanding—the possibility that we can have an emotional response not to something ineffable and vaguely "human," but to something objective. That is to say, we can have an emotional response to a structure. What keeps this possibility submerged, though, is Palmer's reliance on an instrumental form of functionalism. Palmer's theorization of fictional minds is, he claims, "a functional approach" (90), and indeed one configured to bridge the humanist and structural approaches. Palmer explains what he means by functionalism:

> Broadly speaking, there are two uses for the term *functionalism*. Strong functionalism is the doctrine that "[f]unctional kinds are not identified by their material composition but rather by their activities or tendencies" (Maloney 1999, 333) and that minds are functional kinds. Strong functionalists conclude from this that it is possible for robots or

> computers to have minds, even though the machine supporting this mental functioning is made from a completely different substance than that of human brains. So brains can be made out of machinery….[S]trong functionalists adopt a top-down approach that is derived from the computational theory of the mind. It considers the outputs of mental functioning and studies the brain only in a very abstract manner as, in effect, the information-processing machine that produces those outputs. This is a contentious and controversial position to which there are a number of cogent objections. Searle, for example, regards strong functionalism as one of a number of approaches to the mind that deny the reality of subjective consciousness. I am not using the term *functionalism* in this very strong sense, but in a much weaker sense to mean an emphasis on the activities and tendencies of minds that asks the question What is thinking *for*? Strong functionalism is not relevant to the purpose of this book because, as fictional minds exist only in a semiotic and not in a physical sense, the question of what they are made of does not arise. Weak functionalism, however, is very relevant indeed. (88)

Palmer's "strong functionalism" is a form of what I am calling constitutive functionalism specifically having to do with the nature of minds. His "weak" functionalist approach is instrumental. The thoughts, statements, and actions of characters serve a purpose, which is "to adapt intelligently to our environment" (89). Action, in this instrumental view, is "goal-directed action" (89).

Palmer's "weak" functionalism is a compromise between the structural approach, which in this context would be strong functionalism or the position that the mind is a functional kind, and the humanist approach, which suggests that narrative understanding requires projecting the ineffable stuff of human consciousness. However, Palmer's notion of the "mind beyond the skin" is already a strong functionalist concept, for it dislocates thinking from its typical context. What keeps Palmer from maintaining a strong functionalist position all the way through his understanding of the fictional mind is a counterargument to the computational theory of mind that he adopts from Searle—that functionalism ignores consciousness. A human chess player and a robot playing chess are not two variants of the same act of cognition because the robot does not have an internal state and is therefore not conscious of the game in the way that the human is. As Palmer repeatedly states, one must ascribe consciousness to fictional characters in order to be a competent reader. One must succumb to the "illusion" of fictional consciousness. But what happens if we do not hold the illusion that a character has full human consciousness? A character, is, after all, a mere collection of words on a page—it certainly has no consciousness in the most obvious sense. To Forster, we recall, the character is not a human but a *homo fictus*. The author knows all of a character's thoughts and motivations much in the way that a designer knows, completely, his chess-playing robot.

Character and Machine

Both Palmer and Phelan maintain that the core experience of narrative fiction is the projecting of a complete human mind for a character. For Palmer, this is a matter of reading "competence" and it is what allows the disparate actions, statements, and thoughts of a character to cohere. For Phelan, seeing a character as having a human mind is the "mimetic" component—the dominant component and the one that allows for an emotional experience. But I would like to challenge each of these related positions and argue, instead, that one can understand action without recourse to a projected complete human consciousness and have an emotional response to that action.

To Palmer, some thoughts are understandable by virtue of their surface phenomena. Seeing a man rush toward a bus that is about to depart, Palmer claims, objectively indicates the man's intention (which is to catch the bus). The thought is in the action, and it does not require the projection of a complete human mind in order to be understandable nor does it require any specific guesswork as to his intentions. The fictional mind presents another analogous example. The thought, speech, or action of a character is immediately transparent in its articulation, as Palmer claims early on in *Fictional Minds*. The difference, though, between seeing a real man miss a bus and reading about a fictional character is the intuition of humanness. The man running for the bus is automatically real, but the fictional character needs some additional intellectual labor, the projecting of a mind, in order to be treated as if it were real.

But this projection of a mind, I argue, needs to be questioned, fragmented, and in certain contexts discarded. Rather than being a framework in which reading competence is achieved, the projection of a coherent fictional consciousness is erratic and often unnecessary or even unaccomplished. The fictional character is more like the man running for the bus than Palmer affords—there is no need for a projection of his interiority to understand his intention. To be sure, if we were able to read the mind of the man running for the bus or otherwise gather unobservable information, it might change certain qualities of the observing experience. This is Phelan's point in emphasizing the mimetic component of character as the fount of emotional response. When we treat someone or something as having particular thoughts, feelings, and intentions, the argument goes, we can react with a range of sympathetic emotions. Without a doubt, we could have a greater emotional reaction if we knew some unobservable information, for example, that the man was rushing to catch the last bus to take him home that night, or that he was rushing to catch that specific bus because he had left a bag of irreplaceable family photographs on it. The mimetic component of narrative fiction typically functions by manipulating what is known about intentions and thoughts of characters in order to induce a particular emotional response. While this seems undeniable, the direct and exclusive association of the mimetic component of character and emotional response is far too strong. For the man trying to catch the bus, any number of other directly observable indicators could also heighten the emotional reaction to the event—if the man were very old and struggling to rush to the bus, if the man ran from especially far away and just barely missed it, if he smiled upon reaching the door (indicating, transparently, that he thought he had succeeded) only to have it slam in his face. The point is that the emotional response of an observer is variable with the purely objective structure of an action in addition to material that is normally locked inside one's mind.

We could take the human completely out of the equation and still have an emotional response to an action. Maybe one of the most common experiences of this sort is passing by a car accident, which can be terrifying and awe-inspiring, even if there are no actual victims immediately visible. There is something a bit joyful and funny about seeing the wind pick up a plastic bag on the street and deposit it in a trashcan. Or perhaps it is a little melancholy to watch the waves slowly dissolve an abandoned sand castle. The projection of a full human consciousness does not need to function as an entry barrier to emotional experience. While all of these examples, the car accident, the plastic bag, and the sandcastle, have human consciousnesses or human behaviors associated with them in one way or another, that association is not the foundation of the emotional experience.

Maintaining the notion that we can have an emotional response to an action, a structure in which human consciousness is peripheral, allows for a general reconceptualizing of the literary character. The human side of character theory, as opposed to the structural, has typically been the

side of emotion, the human element, or the roundness of a character. But all of these qualities that we associate with the fictional character do not need to be sundered from the structure that produces them. Rather, the inexplicable in a character is how it does what it does, not necessarily the hazy interpretive framework of a coherent and sustained fictional consciousness.

A character, I contend, is a machine that produces thoughts, speech, and action. Such a mechanistic theory of character would seem to ignore all of the lessons from the whole humanist side of literary criticism. But all of those human elements are indeed present as the mysterious inner workings of the complex character-machine. What is important about the notion of a machine here, though, is that it has two orders of functionality. The machine performs a specific task, but it has its own internal components that have specific functions in the constitution of the machine itself. Understanding what the machine does is not the same thing as understanding how the machine does it, as is evident to most people when they turn on a vacuum cleaner or drive a car. A machine might be a "black box," as Crane explained. We can identify what something is by *what* it does without really understanding *how* it does it. A character, then, is a black box—with a specific and evident purpose in the narrative, and an internal organization that remains a mystery. We see its internal components operating, and some parts even have clear enough functions, but there is necessarily some mystery to how a character manages to accomplish what it does.

Functionalism in the theories of character has tended to conflate these two levels of organization of the character-machine. Propp's analysis of the folktale identifies how characters, such as the donor, have some specific utility in the service of the plot. But, when the character is broken into it constitutive elements, those elements are also in the service of the plot. The character has no particular order of its own. Innovations in narratology radicalized the functionality of elements that comprise the character. Indeed, every detail has its function. But this instrumental functionalism does not give an account of how the character coheres into an interpretable entity other than as a bundle of semes. The problem with this bundle of semes is that it calls for a humanistic supplement in order to preserve that seemingly necessary pull of the mimetic.

The fundamental problem with theories of character that are based upon mimesis is that they overstate the need for positing a complete human consciousness where one does not belong. That is not to say that mimesis is not a part of narrative fiction or the experience of a fictional character. But, it is the recourse to human consciousness that is fragmented in the fictional character (and the means by which this is invoked, mimesis), rather than the fact of the character's artifice. What we can say about a character is that does certain things. A character accomplishes goals, makes statements, thinks thoughts and has feelings. These tasks are indeed, as critics have always maintained, the stuff out of which we constitute a plot. But, the coherence of a character, how its various speeches, thoughts, and actions work together to produce a singular entity is not entirely understandable—not because of the ineffable essence of human life, but because that is the nature of a new and complex machine. To recognize what the character does is to understand it in constitutive-functionalist terms. When we break open that black box and attempt to understand its mechanisms, we employ an instrumentalist methodology that is doomed to be unsatisfying if we fail to recognize that the components function with respect to the machine, not directly to the plot. Functional analysis finds uses for what pieces it can while ignoring or throwing its hands up at the sight of others. The result, finally, is a recourse to the ineffable, which is uncritically assumed to be the exclusive domain of the human

being. Instead, if we recognized the black box for what it is, the holder of the unknown, we could appreciate a character for what it is—a machine with unknown inner mechanics.

Dr. Aziz, Machine

It was my starting contention that in *A Passage to India*, when Aziz asks Fielding "Am I a machine?" the answer is yes from a narratological perspective. But the answer is the same from a thematic perspective. The novel makes Dr. Aziz's character a matter of speculation for nearly everyone in the novel. Frequently, the deduction of Aziz's character comes from some form of mechanistic theory, often improbably located. Early in the novel, Aziz takes off his own back collar-stud in order to give it to Cecil Fielding, the European schoolmaster, who is missing his. The scene introduces the question of their friendship, but it also sets up the City Magistrate Ronny Heaslop's explanation of the Indian in general. He explains to his mother, "Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (87). Aziz's missing back collar-stud does triple work as a symbol. While obviously it symbolizes the imperfection of the Indian to Ronny, the missing collar-stud also symbolizes the futility of making a sacrifice to one who does not recognize it as such. But most importantly, the collar-stud symbolizes Anglo-Indians' unfair generalization of native Indians. What I want to point out is simply that the metaphor is mechanistic one. The dictates of dress, from tie-pin to spats, form a kind of machine. They allow for bodily movement while certain parts move and other parts remain in place. The collar-stud does something—it keeps the collar from coming up in the back while the person moves—it is not merely decorative. Aziz's apparent error is not that his clothes have a flaw in their look; rather, they have a flaw in their functionality and operation. Ronny's error then becomes twofold (at the least), the more obvious being the fact Aziz was not missing the collar-stud because of carelessness. The other apparent error is that a human being can be understood by a correlation with such a discrete and simple system as a properly functioning suit.

The reason to highlight the mechanistic element of the collar-stud metaphor, when it has so many other valences as well, is that the novel has an obsession with mechanistic, functionalist, and pseudo-scientific theories of character ("character" in the sense of moral uprightness, but also, by extension, in the sense of a participant in the narrative). From a quite different perspective, Professor Godbole, the most significant Hindu character, answers Fielding's direction question as to whether Aziz is guilty of the attempted rape of Miss Quested in the Marabar Caves:

> "…My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz." He stopped and sucked in his thin cheeks. "It was performed by the guide." He stopped again. "It was performed by you." Now he had an air of daring and of coyness. "It was performed by me." He looked slyly down the sleeve of his own coat. "And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good occurs." (197)

Godbole's interpretation is functionalist—everyone involved is a cog in the machine. The question of Aziz's innocence or guilt is inconceivable because he is not an agent with a will of his own. His character, then, is a mere reflection of the action that occurs—it is a mere reflection of his functionality.

Godbole's functionalist interpretation contrasts with that of Mr. McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police. Mr. McByrde's theory, though, is equally totalizing and objective: "All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude

30" (184). Later, during Aziz's trial, McBryde "remarked that the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not *vice versa*—not a matter of bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a face which any scientific observer will confirm" (243). While McBryde is a vestige and caricature of a British colonialist science of race, he is also a point on the trajectory of mechanistic theories of behavior. His theory is mechanistic in the sense that it charts the flow of desire to and from discrete activated or unactivated nodes. Sexual desire is not psychological—it is purely physical and predictable.

Throughout all of these estimations of Aziz, and indeed most pointedly in his conversation with Fielding in which Aziz asks "Am I a machine?" the mounting evidence seems to suggest something terribly wrong with the reductive, functionalist, mechanistic, and pseudo-scientific rationalizations of Aziz's behavior. Standing in apparent opposition is Aziz's friend Mrs. Moore. But Mrs. Moore's estimation of Aziz, we shall see, is not adequately understood as a sympathetic antithesis to the structural interpretations around every corner in the novel. Ronny, Mrs. Moore's skeptical son, asks her about Aziz's character and why she thinks he is innocent of the charges against him:

> "One knows people's characters, as you call them," she retorted disdainfully, as if she really knew more than character but could not impart it. "I have heard both English and Indians speak well of him, and I felt it isn't something the sort of thing he would do."
>
> "Feeble, mother, feeble."
>
> "Most feeble." (228)

Mrs. Moore's form of understanding is based upon a certain amount of evidence and upon a general feeling. When we look carefully at what Mrs. Moore says, what we find is that her interpretation of Aziz is not particularly sympathetic, if that means finding one's emotions and thoughts in common with another's. Rather, Mrs. Moore treats Aziz as a machine. She understands his character only basically by others' testimonials, and her conclusions are in a straightforward alignment with what she knows of him. She does not perform the kind of functional analysis that other characters attempt—she does not divide his actions and statements into ones with distinct purposes. Rather, his overall organization remains something of a mystery—she feels she knows more "but could not impart it." Rather than having a sympathetic connection to Aziz's humanness, Mrs. Moore treats him (a person, after all, she never really cared for that much) as a simply operating machine. If there is an ethical quality that is exclusively Mrs. Moore's in the novel, it does not derive from sympathy. It comes, rather, from her reticence and her awareness that she does not know how Aziz operates and what the particular functions are of all of his behaviors. She treats him as a black box and does not try to break inside.

One of the structuring principles of *A Passage to India* is the distinction between the Occidental and the Oriental mind. Mrs. Moore, according to Aziz, operates with an Oriental mindset. When Aziz and Mrs. Moore first meet in a mosque, and after an initial unease with each other, they have a comfortable conversation of a kind Aziz has not had with a European. He erupts:

> "You understand me, you know what others feel. Oh, if others resembled you!"
>
> Rather surprised, she replied: "I don't think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them."
>
> "Then you are an Oriental." (21)

A similar conversation occurs at the end of the novel, after Mrs. Moore's death, between Aziz and her son, Ralph, visiting India for the first time. Though, this time, as Aziz has become more rigid and anti-British, the preceding conversation has been cold and restrained.

> "I must go back now, good night," said Aziz, and held out his hand, completely forgetting that they were not friends, and focusing his heart on something more distant than the caves, something beautiful. His hand was taken, and then he remembered how detestable he had been, and said gently, "Don't you think me unkind any more?"
>
> "No."
>
> "How can you tell, you strange fellow?"
>
> "Not difficult, the one thing I always know."
>
> "Can you always tell whether a stranger is your friend?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Then you are an Oriental." (349)

The "Oriental" quality that Aziz describes seems to be a sense of character rather than some form of objective, scientific or mechanistic explanation. Yet, another important feature accompanies the "Oriental" mind: not fully understanding another person. Rather than offering a few polite words of self-deprication when she claims not to "understand people very well," Mrs. Moore actually presents an ethical position, a way of being toward others. She only understands the simplest things about other people, whether they are friendly or not, and does not profess any more knowledge of their internal mechanisms. Mrs. Moore's son, many years later in his parallel conversation with Aziz, explains that whether someone is kind or not is the "*one* thing I always know" (emphasis added).

The association between the "Oriental" mind in *A Passage to India* and approaching a literary character as a machine rather than a human seems extraordinarily unlikely. For elsewhere, the "Oriental" mind seems to mean, plainly and simply, kindness and sympathy. For example, the "Oriental" mind does not quite forgive Adela Quested when she, at the very last minute, changes course and admits on the witness stand during Aziz's trial that she is not at all certain that Aziz was guilty. The act might be seen as courageous, as it is by Fielding, because of her resistance to the European faction and her inevitable loss of standing.

> But while relieving the Oriental mind, she had chilled it, with the result that he could scarcely believe she was sincere, and indeed from his standpoint she was not. For her behavior rested on cold justice and honesty; she had felt, while she recanted, no passion of love for those whom she had wronged. Truth is not truth in that exacting land unless there go with it kindness and more kindness again, unless the Word that was with God also is God. (272)

Just as Forster's critical writing about the nature of the *homo fictus* is a starting point for a turn away from conceiving of the literary character as human being and toward a machine with functional components, so is Forster's *A Passage to India* also a starting point on a trajectory in which others' minds are conceived in more and more mechanistic terms. Forster's "Oriental" mind has two competing senses—as in the last passage it conveys a sense of sympathy that accompanies "cold justice and honesty," but, as in earlier passages, it conveys a reluctance to instrumentalize, to interpret isolated actions in the name of "understanding."

Particularly in the passages having to do with Mrs. Moore and her son, Forster effectively withholds the "Oriental" mind, given that it works by not understanding and not claiming knowledge. In this sense, Forster's account of character and how we understand character has a clear resonance with the more dominant critique of knowledge acquisition. The novel is,

famously, a critique of the misguided attempt of two of its European characters, Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested, to see the "real India." The novel shows that there is no real India, but as Mrs. Moore sees upon leaving, "one hundred Indias" (233). Meanwhile, the novel is also organized around a division between European and Indian, and it opens and closes with scenes conveying the slight, as yet unrealized, possibility of friendship across the divide. These two strains of the novel—the emphasis on the failure of knowledge and the theme of national identity and its transcendence—in some accounts are enough to put *A Passage to India* in the orbit of literary modernism, despite the relative conventionality of its narrative structure. Benita Parry observes "an emergent modernism inseparable from its title" (175), which is to say that Forster self-consciously fails to deliver a "passage" to India. In more detail, Parry explains:

> …Forster's innovations were induced by an attempt to render India legible within western fictional modes. It could be extended to observe that in the process, *A Passage to India* construes the sub-continent's material world, cultural forms, and systems of thought as resistant to discursive appropriation by its conquerors: "How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile" (*Passage* 148). This meditation serves to alienate the Raj's belligerent claim to discursive power over the sub-continent, and it discloses the inevitable frustration of the novel's own narrative ambition. (175-176)

The effort to understand India becomes a realization that India cannot be understood. But the novel makes constant transferences between nation and individual, between the qualities of India and England and the qualities of Indian and English characters in the novel. That is, the novel makes heavy use of what Phelan calls the "thematic" component, the way in which characters are representative of larger phenomena. The two strains repeatedly come into contact in the effort that European characters put into understanding Aziz. Just as the novel fails to offer a passage to India, it also never allows a European character to understand Aziz. This inability to know echoes Weinstein's sense of modernist unknowing as "an attack on the confidence in Western norms for securing identity and funding the career of the liberal subject." Coming to "unknow" Aziz is what puts the novel in the vicinity of more formally innovative novelistic experiments that we call modernist.

Forster's theory of the character, made concrete in the idea of *homo fictus* and his novel *A Passage to India* come together at a point "on the imprecise juncture of form and history," in Woloch's terms. By excavating the structural side of Forster's theory of character, we can locate the beginning of a lineage that understands the character not as a human, but as a machine.

Chapter Three: Misperceiving Virginia Woolf

Frederic Jameson has argued, "[t]he most influential formal impulses of canonical modernism have been strategies of inwardness" (2). The literary impressionism of Conrad and Ford, the stream of consciousness of Richardson and Joyce, and the depiction of sensation in Flaubert and of memory in Proust are among these "strategies." But Virginia Woolf, the argument often goes, is the most inward of all. For Eric Auerbach in *Mimesis*, Woolf does not simply privilege the inner life over external reality, that external reality is arbitrary. "The stress is placed entirely on what the occasion releases, things which are not seen directly but by reflection, which are not tied to the present of the framing occurrence which releases them" (541). In Woolf's fiction, moments of looking or noticing are not important for information about the real world but for the thoughts that they inspire, the reality being a mere "framing occurrence." In *Time and Narrative,* Paul Ricoeur considered Woolf's formal innovations to be the telos of the progression of "the novel of action, of character, of thought" (13). Neatly summing up, Michael North maintains that Woolf is "usually considered the most inward of all British writers" (81).

A countervailing critical trajectory, one defending her from charges of solipsism, aestheticism, and snobbery, has been to emphasize Woolf's focus on the external world. Alex Zwerdling emphasizes "historical forces and societal institutions" (3) as crucial sources for Woolf. Zwerdling concedes the earlier portion of Woolf's career to inwardness, culminating in *The Waves,* but argues that Woolf's work in the 1930s represents a shift. (12) Recently, the date of Woolf's "outward" tack has been subject to much backward revision, however. Mark Gaipa has moved the crucial moment to the middle of Woolf's writing *To the Lighthouse* in 1927 (28), while Liesl M. Olsen observes, looking back to 1925, that "*Mrs. Dalloway,* in particular, is a novel obsessed with the ordinary as a source of knowledge about another person" (44). Ann Banfield moves the date back all the way to December 1910, the date Woolf famously refers to in "Character in Fiction" when "human character changed." For Banfield, "[t]he change was a turn to the 'external world'; it was 'changing from the general to the particular,' as Woolf says of early Bloomsbury conversation" (*Phantom* 9).[9] As further studies explore the ordinary objects of sensation, the social and political contexts of Woolf's writing, and their aesthetic and philosophical foundations, the solipsistic "inward" Woolf becomes almost the opposite—social, political, and materialist.

Both critical trajectories capture something of what is distinctive about Woolf's narrative fiction: characters are constantly observing and thinking as they navigate the world, whether that means sitting alone in a room contemplating an ordinary object, taking a walk, going to a party, or looking out the window. The inner life is rich with sensation and thought, inspired by the lowest and most common of material artifacts. The problem with critical vantages that focus too tightly on either the inner life or the "real" world is that they do not adequately account for the fact that the two are such a poor fit. One of the most curious yet pervasive features of Woolf's oeuvre is that characters are so frequently *wrong* in their perceptions. The line of argument from Auerbach, dismissing the external world as a mere frame to get at the inner life, does not explain why the frame is so ill-fitting. And for those who emphasize Woolf's commitment to everyday things, the question remains just as important. Why, in a world of everyday things, do we have so much trouble recognizing them for what they are?

Woolf's fiction and essays show a rhetorical reliance on misperception—it is a central theme of her fiction, and it is also central to her conceptions of the work of author and reader.

Woolf's characters often have poor eyesight, misidentify sounds and confuse categories. Readers, too, inevitably become lost due to some of Woolf's notoriously difficult stylistic experiments. Perspective, too, is a fount of experimentation for Woolf. "Kew Gardens" reflects the perspective of a snail, and *Flush* a dog. "Solid Objects" begins too far away to report anything in detail but then zooms in on the primary characters and actions. Both textually and metatextually, Woolf's experiments are attuned to the limitations of the sensory apparatuses. I trace the trope of misperception through the authorial, textual, and readerly components of Woolf's conception of the literary experience. Beginning with her essays on modern fiction, I show how perceptual failure is a resource for the modern author. Woolf's first published short story "The Mark on the Wall" opens my reading of the pervasive theme of misperception in Woolf's fiction. I follow the recurrent theme of misperceiving birds through Woolf's novels and demonstrate how these episodes remain tied to the mechanics of perception and related psychological functions. Turning to the readerly component, I argue that errors of identifying and naming have a metatextual reverberation—for the designs of *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves* cause similar effects for readers. These effects derive from Woolf's formal innovation in the depiction of a fictional perspective—what I call *negative focalization*. That is, the limiting point of view is neither the character's nor the ominiscient narrator's but the reader's. Woolf's formal innovations with reader and character convey that the modern literary experience derives from the nature of faculties of perception, the tenuous points of connection between the inner and the outer worlds.

"A vague general confusion": Woolf's theory of fiction

Part of the reason that the contrast between "inward" Woolf and "external" Woolf is so stark is that her own non-fictional writing seems to support either position, depending on which parts of what Jesse Matz calls Woolf's "vague theory of fiction" (176) are emphasized. In her two very famous essays, "Modern Fiction" (1925) and "Character in Fiction" (1924), Woolf outlines a vision of what modern fiction ought to do differently from what came before. The essays pit a generation of novelists including Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennett, whom she calls the Edwardians in one essay and materialists in the other, against a succeeding generation, the Georgians or the moderns, including Forster, Joyce, Eliot, and presumably, Woolf herself. In "Modern Fiction," she writes of the earlier generation, "…they write of unimportant things…they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear true and enduring" (148). In "Character in Fiction," Woolf eviscerates the opening of Arnold Bennett's novel *Hilda Lessways* by showing how it describes not Hilda but her bedroom window, her street, neighborhood, then the nearby villas, and then Hilda's house. Of all of this description, Woolf writes: "he is trying to hypnotize us into the belief that, because he has made a house, there must be a character living there" (430). The reading public is primed to understand, say, an old woman only through a certain set of predictable descriptors. "'Old women have houses. They have fathers. They have incomes. They have servants. They have hot-water bottles. That is how they are old women" (433). "Old women," Woolf archly summarizes, "of course ought to be made of freehold villas and copyhold estates, not of imagination" (433). Woolf is frustrated by the convention of representation—that a certain superfluous detail, a water bottle or the layout of a house—is supposed to conjure a particular kind of person.

The Georgians, the harbingers of modern fiction for Woolf, reject the excessive and programmatic description that has so recently been the established way to represent a realistic character. "Mrs. Brown," Woolf's iconic character, "must be rescued, expressed, and set in her high relations to the world" (433). The Georgians' attempt to save Mrs. Brown means breaking

apart the house she is trapped in, one linked no doubt to Hilda Lessways' house. "And so the smashing and the crashing began," writes Woolf, "…the sound of breaking and falling, crashing, and destruction" (433-4). Only fragments remain after a climactic destruction and renewal—at least in "Character in Fiction." In "Modern Fiction," Woolf approaches the divide of moderns and their predecessors in very different terms:

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there, so that, if a writer were a free man not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. (*CE vol 3* 149-50)

In one passage Woolf represents modern fiction as the utter destruction of what comes before. In the other, it is akin to a slightly askew button on a suit or a different "accent." Like the two versions of the modern turn in Woolf's essays, one revolutionary and one rather subtle, critics of Woolf have emphasized her revolutionary turn inward or her subtly adjusted literary realism (which implies a continued focus on the external world).

The seemingly divergent trajectories of "Character in Fiction" and "Modern Fiction" may have a common origin in earlier iterations of Woolf's conception of modern fiction. Both essays have earlier drafts. The earlier version of "Modern Fiction" was an essay, "Modern Novels," written in 1919. While portions of the earlier version remained unchanged in "Modern Fiction," the often-cited passage above was extensively revised. In the earlier version, the "mediocre" author's characters "would find themselves dressed down to the last button in the fashion of the hours" (33), setting up the errant buttoning of the moderns a few years later. About the hypothetical assumption of freedom, though, Woolf asks and answers the question in a significantly different way:

> Is it not possible that the accent falls a little differently, that the moment of importance came before or after, that, if one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability, and a vague general confusion in which the clear-cut features of the tragic, the comic, the passionate, and the lyrical were dissolved beyond the possibility of separate recognition? (33)

In the 1919 version of her argument, confusion makes twin appearances. The liberated author conveys "a vague general confusion" (which will later become the choice to subvert generic categories). The reader, correspondingly, has no possibility of "separate recognition" of features. The language of confusion and lack of recognition is eliminated in the later version, which gives more weight to the stylistic effect, but the cause is still authorial and readerly confusion.

"Character in Fiction" grew out of a 1923 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (and was even published under that title as well and is often to referred to by that title). In this version, the saving of Mrs. Brown still has its destructive side, but it begins with a lack of certainty:

> For what, after all is character—the way that Mrs. Brown, for instance, reacts to her surroundings—when we cease to believe what we are told about her, and begin to search out her real meaning for ourselves? In the first place, her solidity disappears; her features crumble; the house in which she lived so long (and a very substantial house it was) topples to the ground. She becomes a will-o'-the-wisp, a dancing light, an illumination

> gliding up the wall and out of the window, lighting now in freakish malice upon the nose of an archbishop, now in sudden splendour upon the mahogany of the wardrobe. The most solemn sights she turns to ridicule; the most ordinary she invests with beauty. She changes the shape, shifts the accent, of every scene in which she plays her part. And it is from the ruins and splinters of this tumbled mansion that the Georgian writer must somehow reconstruct a habitable dwelling-place; it is from the gleams and flashes of this flying spirit that he must allow that the lady still escapes him. (387-8)

In this earlier iteration, Mrs. Brown confounds the organs of sense perception. She is difficult to see ("her features crumble") and feel ("her solidity disappears") and hear ("shifts the accent"). She is also hard to understand—her attention to beautiful and mundane objects is unpredictable. The destruction of the house was not the work of the modern authors—it happens independently while the modern authors must use what materials are there. Using old materials in a new way, though, still does not portray Mrs. Brown. She is, finally, elusive.

The competing strains in Woolf's theories of character, one tending to emphasize a sharp turn to the inner life and one affording a continued engagement with the material world, have a common origin in tropes of confusion, misperception, and error. While critical vantages, both on Woolf and in her own writing, might focus on either the subject or the object, the connecting thread in Woolf's oeuvre is the mismatch between the two. The modern author makes use of the inability to perceive accurately, the partial information of the senses, and the errant understandings of character and motivation as materials for a kind of fiction that lays bare the imperfection of one's knowledge of the external world and of the inner life.

"The Mark On the Wall," Vagueness, and Error

Woolf's first published short story, "The Mark on the Wall" (1917), displays her interest in the limitations of the perceptual faculties and their relationship to thought, creativity, and intellectual engagement. The first-person narrator meditates on the mark she sees above the mantle. While she wonders what it is, her thoughts drift from one topic to another. Meanwhile, the narrator does not leave her chair in order to determine exactly what the mark is. At the end of the story, the narrator's meandering thinking while looking comes to an end: "Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing…There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying—'I'm going out to buy a newspaper'" (89). Here, the narrator describes the flow of her thoughts while simultaneously giving a phenomenological account of having her view of the mark blocked by someone walking in the way. Her thoughts—of a tree, a river, Whitaker's Almanack, etc.—slip out of her mind while "a vast upheaval of matter" occurs: the movement of a person into her line of view. The other figure's entrance and departure are the only large actions in a story. This other figure, presumably her husband, announces that he is going to go buy a newspaper but then, identifying the mark, exclaims, "Though it's no good buying newspapers…Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war!…All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall" (89).

Woolf's anti-heroine is the bored housewife, sedentary, purposeless, with "an ordinary mind." "The ordinary mind," Banfield observes of Woolf, "is both 'vague and wandering,'" (*Phantom* 186) to borrow some language from *Night and Day*. The "vague and wandering" mind is not without its critics—and, more recently, its defenders. In his 1936 article "Narrate or Describe?" Lukács, for example, distinguishes between two modes of novelistic writing and between two periods during which one and then the other mode is dominant. "Narration" to Lukács, is the telling of a story "from the standpoint of a participant" (111). In narration, "we experience events which are inherently significant because of the direct involvement of the

characters in the events and because of the general social significance emerging in the unfolding of the characters' lives. We are the audience to events in which the characters take active part" (116).

Narration is associated with action, participation, significance, and inevitability. These are the things truly worth capturing in literature. "The inner poetry of life," Lukács writes, "is the poetry of men in struggle, the poetry of the turbulent, active interaction of men" (126). Historically, Lukács associates narration with the earlier part of the nineteenth century, a period during which major writers, Goethe, Balzac, Stendhal, Dickens, were "actively engaged" with the development of capitalism. (119) In contrast, later nineteenth century writers such as Flaubert and Zola inherited a system already in place, and they themselves were "aloof observers." This aloof observation is characteristic of description. Lukács writes, "In Flaubert and Zola the characters are merely spectators, more or less interested in the events. As a result, the events themselves become only a tableau for the reader, or, at best, a series of tableaux. We are merely observers" (116). While narration is connected to action and inevitability, description is connected to observation and chance. For Lukács, Woolf is the wrong kind of novelist. Her narrator is a mere observer, inactive, unfocused, the furthest thing from "men in struggle." Lukács is one of a host of early critics of Woolf to condemn the inaction, apoliticism, and bourgeois self-interest of the apparent "inward" turn of a story like "The Mark on the Wall."[10]

Recent critics, taking the "external" approach, have defended Woolf's apparently "vague and wandering" mind from charges of apoliticism and mere aestheticism. In *Cosmopolitan Style,* Rebecca Walkowitz argues, "Woolf used the analytic resources of aestheticism—thinking of perception as a social process; valuing communities and experiences; cultivating a posture of distracted or limited participation—to treat politically, historically, and internationally literary values such as euphemism and argument" (82). Walkowitz shows how Woolf inverts the traditional understanding of aestheticism, the stance condemned as overly concerned with feelings and uninvolved in reality. Walkowitz's re-evaluation of the political importance of vagueness begins with an analysis of "The Mark on the Wall." "Contentiously and self-consciously," argues Walkowitz, " 'The Mark' is a story about the refusal to act without thinking" (86). The significance of the story is linked with its wartime context. Walkowitz interprets the narrator's refusal to take the steps to determine what the mark is as a kind of commentary on the need for critical thought during wartime, rather than immediate, decisive, yet unreflective action (as demonstrated by the other character). For Walkowitz, "the narrator prefers the wandering unpeacefulness of agitated thinking (the form and content of the story) to the static unpeacefulness of sheer frustration (the desire to classify the mark)" (89). By characterizing the narrator's state as the "wandering unpeacefulness of agitating thinking," Walkowitz highlights that the narrator's relationship to the mark is far from passive and complacent.[11]

Walkowitz's purpose is to show the connection between aestheticism and a politics of evasion in Woolf's work. But the reversal of the nodes of politics and aesthetics rests on an even more fundamental disruption of commonsense categories: action and inaction. If the story addresses "the refusal to act without thinking," that is not to say that the refusal involves *inaction*. The seemingly "inactive" narrator sitting in her chair is associated with agitation, a lack of peace, wandering, and continued thinking while the "active" other person who goes for the newspaper is associated with frustration, closure, a lack of depth. "The Mark on the Wall" does not merely reverse the antinomies of thought and action, it remains steadfastly focused on the

action of thought in a quite literal sense. The thoughts of the character and the apparently "inward" focus of the story are inseparable from her body and its actions.

The mechanical operations of sensations and their limitations and failures are the real actions in "The Mark on the Wall." The setting is nearly that of Descartes's *Meditations*—a single figure, thinking, alone in a room near a fireplace. But the story is not that of an inactive body and an active mind. Her perception, thoughts, and her body are integrated. She does not merely take in the mark, without full comprehension of what it is. Within the past year "I first looked up" (83) reports the narrator. The path to the mark is circular, inclusive of memory. Her current episode of looking at the mark makes her think of the first time she saw it. To remember when that was she follows a train of associations that involve taste, smell, and awareness of temperature. She remembers the fire in the fireplace, the yellow light on her book, flowers, finishing her tea, and her cigarette. "I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up," (83). The cigarette, a sensuous thing like a madeleine, makes the pieces come back together. "I looked up" she repeats for the third time, "through the smoke of my cigarette" (83). "My eye lodged for a moment on the burning coals" (83), she continues. Her encounter with the mark is a forceful one, she *looks*, her eye *lodges* rather than merely receiving. "How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object," she observes. Our thoughts "lift it a little way." Vision, for Woolf, is connected to action and to innumerable other bodily sensations.

Vision is a thing to control, rather than a phenomenon that merely happens to one. The narrator thinks, "Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants?" (84) The narrator seems to be asking why it is that we have what paltry gifts we do, and what would it be like if we did not have them. What if we had not been born into fortune? What if we had no language? What if we were blind? Except, she does not say *blind*. Being unable to "focus one's eyesight," that is, being unable to control one's vision physically, takes the place of blindness. Blindness and sight are not antinomies here, for knowledge of the world comes not merely from seeing, from passively acquiring visual data. Instead, our normal capacity, our gift, is to select, to focus, and to compile visual information.

If "seeing" means the focusing of one's eyesight, it is easier to see the narrator's refusal to stand up and identify the mark as an *action* of maintaining a certain focus. Again and again she returns to the position of her body in relation to the mark. "I might get up" (83), she thinks. Again, later, "And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain what the mark on the wall is really—what shall I say?" (87), and finally a third time, "I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is—a nail, a rose-leaf, a crack in the wood?" (88). She wonders what it would it be like "if I ran my finger down that strip of the wall" (86). Despite the temptations to move, to collect information about the mark from another perspective, to touch it, to inspect it actively, the narrator resists. "[I]f I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain" (84). Later, "what should I gain? Knowledge? Matter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as well as standing up" (87). Keeping the mark ambiguous, maintaining the right distance in order to have an aesthetic relationship to it, is a matter of situating her body—an isometric exercise of denying, acting against the tendency to solve the perceptual problem—rather than assuming a passive, default position. "The Mark on the Wall" is a story of a body actively working to control its vision and of the work of manipulating the limitations of perceptual faculties, rather than the life of the mind understood in the Cartesian sense of a semiautonomous homunculus within the body. The kind of aesthetic, intellectual, and political engagement, or the "wandering unpeacefulness of agitated thinking" in Walkowitz's

terms, derives not from the existence of a Cartesian cogito but from the mechanical imperfections of human perception.

Woolf's ordinary mind, inextricable from its moving body, is in line with the "enactive" approach in contemporary understandings of perception. "Vision," Alva Noë claims, "is a mode of exploration of the environment drawing on implicit understanding of sensorimotor regularities." Reviewing the current consensus, Noë explains, "information available to an active animal greatly outstrips information available to a static retina" (21). Normal vision feels complete, and we often think of our perceptual abilities as operating like a camera. But in fact our vision is highly irregular. We are colorblind in our peripheral vision and largely so in low light; we have only a narrow area in our field of vision in which we can focus; our eyes our constantly moving involuntarily; we have retinal blindspots. Moving around, managing the instruments of perception, what Noë calls "skillful looking" (73) is means of acquiring information about the world.

If Woolf can be said to turn "inward" to individual experience away from the objective form of realist description, that move is not a rejection of the material world—for Woolf's accounts of the mind are anti-dualist. Perceptions and sensations are inextricable from biomechanics and the physical moments that allow them to be acquired. The intellectual form of vagueness or confusion in Woolf's theory of fiction has its basis in the imperfections of the perceptual faculties and the vagueness and confusion they engender. The imperfect, sensing body engaged not in passive observation but in "skillful looking" is the locus of Woolf's experiments, which, despite being an integrated whole, is too often pushed into the service of depicting the inner or the outer world.

Woolf's Birds

While Woolf's first experimental short story concerns the difficulty of perceiving a snail, far more often Woolf's characters are puzzled by birds. Birds are among the most frequently used of Woolf's major symbols, and by tracing the frequency with which birds inspire perceptual and conceptual errors, it becomes clear how central misperception is in Woolf's fiction. There are birds or bird sounds in every novel, including over a dozen types of birds in *Mrs. Dalloway* alone, which is set entirely within a city (and whose main character is described as birdlike). Birds populate the interludes in *The Waves* and the nearly humanless "Time Passes" section of *To The Lighthouse*. One drops from the sky, frozen, when the weather changes in *Orlando*. Characters regularly mistake things for birds, one species for another, or birdsongs for other things. In *The Voyage Out,* Woolf provides a comical vantage on the ship that holds the major characters: "From a distance the *Euphrosyne* looked very small. Glasses were turned upon her from the decks of great liners…Mr. Pepper with all his learning had been mistaken for a cormorant…" (78). The birds seem to speak Greek to Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*. *The Years* opens and closes with birdsongs, heard by Eleanor, creatively but inaccurately, as "Take two coos, Taffy, take two coos" (75, also 433). Elsewhere in *The Years,* a birdsong is mistaken for that of another bird. "'Is that a nightingale?' said Mrs. Larpent, hearing a bird twitter in the bushes. Then old Chuffy—the great Dr. Andrews—standing slightly behind her with his domed head exposed to the drizzle and his hirsute, powerful but not prepossessing countenance turned upward, gave a roar of laughter. It was a thrush, he said" (56). By the next and final novel *Between the Acts,* the confusion has spread to Pointz Hall. "'A nightingale?' asked Mrs. Haines. No, nightingales don't come so far north" (3).

These last two birdsong mistakes have a particular significance given the importance of the nightingale in English literary history and of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" in particular.

Keats is one of the highest regarded of nineteenth century literary figures for Woolf. In a 1917 essay "Romance," Keats is Woolf's primary example of the Romantic writer who "is thinking more of the effect of the thing upon his mind than of the thing itself" ("Romance," 75). Her description of the Romantic writer here bears similarity to later accounts of the modernist novelist and to critical assessments of her own work. In *A Room of One's Own,* Keats is an example of the "androgynous mind" which is one that "is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties" (98). In "Ode to a Nightingale," the mortality of the lyric subject contrasts with the timelessness of the nightingale's song:

> Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird!
> No hungry generations tread thee down;
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard
> In ancient days by emperor and clown:
> Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
> Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
> She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
> The same that oft-times hath
> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. (35-6)

The nightingale of English poetry, Jeni Williams observes, is typically, "a solitary female voice singing unseen, bodiless, her rhapsodic melody swelling through the silence of spring nights, associated with beautiful, melancholy subjective verse" (10). The connection between the presumptively male lyric subject and the feminized nightingale (this, despite the fact that only the male nightingales actually sing) might be what suggests androgyny in Keats's poetry for Woolf. But androgyny is but one form of confusion. In her 1927 essay "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Woolf explains, "the emotion which Keats felt when he heard the song of the nightingale is one and entire, though it passes from joy in beauty to sorrow at the unhappiness of human fate. He makes no contrast. In his poem sorrow is the shadow which accompanies beauty" (*Granite* 16). The "sorrowful shadow" Woolf sees reflects the melancholy endemic to depictions of the nightingale. The significance of "the thing upon the mind" for the Romantic writer, despite its development over time and Keats's particular "androgyny," has a coherent focus, unlike the "vague, general confusion" of modern prose.

For Woolf, Keats's singular focus on the nightingale is foreign to the modern poet: "In the modern mind beauty is accompanied not by its shadow but by its opposite. The modern poet talks of the nightingale who sings 'jug jug to dirty ears.'…It is as if the modern mind, wishing always to verify its emotions, has lost the power of accepting anything simply for what it is" (16-17). The modern poet is Eliot, who uses English poetry's conventional onomatopoeia for the nightingale's song, "jug jug." But "The Wasteland," unlike lyric poems traditionally, juxtaposes the beautiful with the mundane and sordid. For the "modern mind," in Woolf's view, "[f]eelings which used to come single and separate do so no longer. Beauty is part ugliness; amusement part disgust; pleasure part pain" (16). Eliot's modern poetry, however, is an awkward fit for the modern mind because poetry "has always been overwhelmingly on the side of beauty" (17). The realist novel, however, also has its drawbacks in that it fails to attend to the parts of the mind that lyric poetry has always focused upon, even though it does attend to the minor details of ordinary life. In the theory of fiction Woolf presents in "The Narrow Bridge of Art," the modern novel will encompass what the realist novel did not: "our emotions toward such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death, and fate" (19).

Woolf takes up the trope of the nightingale but pushes it in a new direction. In Keats's Ode, the nightingale is both enduring and fleeting—its song is immortal but the lyric subject's experience of the single bird near him is short-lived, as the bird quickly flies away. Woolf brings out a latent potential in Keats's Ode: the nightingale's apparent immortality reflects errors in the perception of space and time. In the episodes of misidentifying birds as nightingales, Woolf points to the geographical limitations of the species. In other passages, Woolf plays with the tension between the enduring and the fleeting perceptions of birds (though not nightingales) and points to the *mistake* of hearing one song sung by an immortal bird where really there are uncountable songs sung by an uncountable number of mortal birds. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay looks out the window "at a sight which always amused her—the rooks trying to decide which tree to settle on" (80). Mrs. Ramsay tells her children Jasper and Rose stories of Joseph and Mary, the rooks that she has named. "But how did she know that those were Mary and Joseph? Did she think the same birds came to the same trees every night?" asks Jasper. (82) The implication, unmistakably, is that Mrs. Ramsay might be wrong. But Jasper's question remains unanswered because Mrs. Ramsay becomes distracted.

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf presents the same scenario, but in sharper language. The birds outside of Lucy Swithin's window wake her the morning of the annual pageant. "'How those birds sing!' said Mrs. Swithin, at a venture. The window was open now; the birds certainly were singing" (9). Mrs. Swithin, who is a Mrs. Ramsay-like character, later walks in the barn where the pageant is to be performed.

> Then old Mrs. Swithin came in. She was gazing up too, but not at the decorations. At the swallows apparently.
>
> "They come every year," she said, "the same birds." Mrs. Manresa smiled benevolently, humouring the old lady's whimsy. It was unlikely, she thought, that the birds were the same. (101-2)

These passages, from novels fourteen years apart, demonstrate a thematic continuity. The connection between Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Swithin is well-established by critics such as Elizabeth Abel, who observes that Lucy Swithin is "heir to Mrs. Ramsay's faith in human connectedness" (110). This faith in connectedness marks Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Swithin simultaneously as ordinary and in error. They perceive not discrete phenomena, specific birds for example, but continuity where really there is none.

The mistake that each character makes is an instance of "change blindness," in which, as psychologists Daniel Simons and Daniel Levin describe it, "observers are surprisingly slow and often fail to detect changes of successive views of both natural and artificial scenes" (501). Fred Dretske suggests that the phenomenon is significant because "[i]t underlies what William James (1890/1950, p. 747) was getting at when he said that only part of what we perceive comes through the senses; another part (James thought it was the larger part) comes out of our own head" (4). Dretske maintains that there are two ways of understanding the perception of difference: "as the perception of objects that differ vs. the perception of the fact that they differ" (12). Change blindness affects the latter. From one person with normal eyesight to the next, there is no difference in the perception of objects that differ—in Dretske's example, a person seeing a set of twenty-three books and then a set of twenty-four books will see just the same thing as the next person. But, the perception of the fact of the difference between the sets of objects can easily vary. The well-documented phenomenon of change blindness predicts that the twenty-three books and the twenty-four books will appear the same to the average person. A second person, warned ahead of time that one collection is smaller than the other, will be able to

perceive the difference between the objects because he or she was aware of the *fact* of the difference.

Dretske claims, "Echoing James, fact perception is that part of perception that occurs entirely 'in the head'" (13). The world, as it turns out, is not perceived by the individual in some complete and uniformly detailed way. As Noë puts it, "[t]he illusion is an illusion of consciousness" (55). When a person fails to notice the difference between sets of books, or the difference between one pair of birds outside the window and another, that "blindness" is a form of inattention. But the inattention is not to something visible. Dretske explains:

> One can't see facts and not notice them, but that isn't because facts are particularly conspicuous or salient objects, things that force their way upon our attention. It is, rather because the facts we perceive, unlike the objects and events we perceive, are the "objects" (content) of propositional attitudes, intentional states like belief, judgment, and knowledge, that are constituted by our awareness of the fact … on which the mind is directed. (12-13)

"Change blindness" could be called fact inattention. It is a fundamental element of perception and consciousness, given that our experience of the world is not, as is commonly thought, marked by continuity and regularity, but by discontinuity, irregularity, and missing data.

Change blindness suggests that our perception of continuity is often erroneous. Woolf's frequent bird passages give literary form to this fundamental limitation of perception. Banfield claims that for Woolf, "images of flight represent the mind" (185). The frequency with which birds are mistaken demonstrates how central perceptual error is to Woolf's understanding of mind. The episodes of change blindness also reflect Woolf's sense of masculine and feminine relationships to knowledge. Significantly, *women* are change blind or inattentive to fact, while men are bound to facts. Of the contrasting figures of Mrs. Swithin and her brother Bart in *Between the Acts*, "she belonged to the unifiers, he to the separatists" (118). (As her name suggests, Mrs. Manresa, who scoffs at Mrs. Swithin's change blindness, is a rather mannish character.) In the language of birds, she sees the same birds, he the individual birds. In *To the Lighthouse,* the first conflict is the adherence to or dismissal of fact. The trip to the lighthouse the following day must be cancelled because the weather will be poor. Mr. Ramsay wants his son James to accept the facts, while Mrs. Ramsay holds out that perhaps the weather will be fair, despite barometric indications to the contrary. The narration conveys Mr. Ramsay's thoughts: "[t]he extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now, she flew in the face of facts" (31). Then, the narration switches to Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts:

> To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. (32)

Mrs. Ramsay's "connectedness," her sympathy for the feelings of others, contrasts with "truth" in a way that leaves her "dazed and blinded." The invocation of blindness gives further evidence of the rhetoric of misperception in Woolf's conceptions of mind and truth.

The "vague and wandering" ordinary mind in Woolf's fiction, Banfield notes, is "paradigmatically feminine" (191). The ordinary mind is not, however, passive. "Far from being a merely passive receptacle of 'myriad impressions,' it is the female mind which lumps and leaps" (191). The lumping and leaping, significantly, are not purely mental actions—they are the part of an act of perception in which some part, in William James's words, is "in the head."

Those wandering thoughts and misperceptions are tethered to the mechanics of perception. "Change blindness" is the psychological mechanism that serves as the condition of possibility for Woolf's literary rendering of perception. Lumping and leaping takes the form of change blindness, in which the "blindness" is an assignation of sameness, a propositional attitude coming from "in the head." "Every eye," writes Woolf in *The Waves,* "brings its own contribution" (127).

Character Confusion in *Jacob's Room*

While treating the nature of perception thematically throughout her works, Woolf also tests the limits of the perceptual faculties in metatextual ways from early on her in experimental literary practices. Woolf's third novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922) is typically understood to be the first of her "modernist" novels. Unlike her two previous novels, *Jacob's Room* is largely plotless—it traces some events in Jacob's childhood, college, and early adult years without being organized by a narrative of self-discovery characteristic of a *Bildungsroman*. The narration is erratic and experimental, perhaps the most famous passage being a scene in which Jacob's conversation with college friends is conveyed by the female narrator standing outside the dormitory (unable to be admitted into the rooms of Cambridge). The character of Jacob is conveyed largely through the impressions of other characters rather than through narration of his thoughts and feelings. Without warning, the last page of the novel jumps forward in time, to after Jacob's death in the battlefields of World War I, when a few of the characters clean out his room.

Woolf's unusual portrayal of Jacob has been the focus of criticism since publication, with stress often on how Woolf moves away from realism and how she portrays not an individual, but a "type"—the upper-middle class youth coming of age.[12] Woolf's focus on Jacob is complemented by an equally unusual cast of characters. One of the strangest features of *Jacob's Room* is the number of properly named characters: 156 in a novel of 176 pages. Most of the characters in *Jacob's Room* appear so briefly that their impressions yield few enough associations to make the proper name stick. For example at a party Jacob attends, characters come in and out, occupying attention only for a brief action:

> Grey-haired Mrs. Keymer asked Dick Graves to tell her who Mangin was, and said that she had seen too much of this sort of thing in Paris (Magdalen had got upon his knees; how his pipe was in her mouth) to be shocked. "Who is that?" she said, staying her glasses when they came to Jacob, for indeed he looked quiet, not indifferent, but like some one on a beach.
>
> "Oh, my dear, let me lean on you," grasped Helen Askew, hopping on one foot, for the silver cord round her ankle had worked loose. (111)

Mrs. Keymer, Dick Graves, Mangin, Magdalen, and Helen Askew are introduced in this scene and make no further appearances in the novel. The effect of reading proper name after proper name is that some element of the experience of the novel stays entirely in the present act of reading, for it is forgotten almost immediately. No reasonable amount of re-reading alters this effect.

A.S. McDowell, who favorably reviewed *Jacob's Room* in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1922, made note of the temporal effect of the naming, claiming the novel "is not Jacob's history simply, nor anyone else's, but the queer simultaneousness of life (683). This early review also hits upon what Gillian Beer has recently claimed is Woolf's departure from realism: "the most fundamental form of connection between human beings is being alive in the same place at the same time, rather than the chosen friendships and love-affairs that fiction ordinarily privileges" (*Woolf* 76). All of the named characters in *Jacob's Room*, whose thoughts

or feelings or mere visual perspectives become the subject of a sentence or a paragraph, are not so much in contrast with Jacob (whose interior is similarly only partially explored) as they are equally plausible novelistic subjects.

The stylistic choice, nevertheless, makes for a very difficult read. Acknowledging the inevitable confusion, Edward Bishop suggests that the unusual naming in *Jacob's Room* has the effect of linking Jacob with the minor characters:

> This naming of everybody mocks the notion of naming as a way of knowing the person, stresses the notion of interpellation, of naming as a way of calling the individual into being as a subject. Here the naming is part of the ethos of the city; it is a bit frantic, the text is naming everybody in sight, all it does is confuse us. Rather than augmenting the mimetic, rather than constructing a background for the central character, this random naming has a leveling effect; we do not know who is important. (161-2)

Bishop follows the ideological implications of Woolf's naming strategy. For Bishop, the "leveling" of important and unimportant characters echoes the way that the modern, particularly urban, environment both particularizes and homogenizes. For equivocal naming establishes that Jacob, much like the mechanistic "flat character" of Forster, is "a cog in the machine" (162). Characters resemble undifferentiated objects in a cognitive process similar to change blindness. The reader does not attend to all the proper names and does notice the absence, or perhaps the recurrence, of a name after its initial invocation. This is not a matter of personal preference or poor reading practice but a constitutive cognitive process. A name becomes memorable with semantic and experiential associations. Person names are free of semantic content—they are token references that cannot be replaced with a set of properties in the way that "table" can be replaced by "raised flat surface for setting objects and sitting around." Because of their dearth of semantic content, person names are particularly difficult to remember.[13] To that end, the naming in *Jacob's Room* must be understood as a manipulation of core cognitive capacities and weaknesses. Triangulated with the critical observations of the effects of leveling so many individuals, Woolf's naming practice builds a connection between a cognitive basis and a social theory. While Beer finds a deeper connection in the randomness—the fact of being alive together—Bishop sees the darker potential of understanding others not as humans but as reduced to replaceable cogs. Of course the psychological tendency toward change blindness is not a necessary cause for treating individuals as cogs in a machine, replaceable, and uncharacterizable by virtue of our inattention. Nonetheless such patterns of perception and misperception are clearly of interest to Woolf, including what happens in the face of constantly changing impressions, whether that means birds out the window or people on the street. (Interestingly, Mrs. Ramsay's and Mrs. Swithin's bird misidentifications occur in the only two of Woolf's novels that are not set at least partly in London. All of the other novels include passages of walking about city streets and the "myriad impressions" such an experience involves.) "The ordinary mind on an ordinary day" is likely to be confused with another such mind—and Woolf's practices seem to intend such confusion to occur. Beer and Bishop's implications for this confusion provide a critical echo of the contrast between Lucy and Bart in *Between the Acts,* "she belonged to the unifiers, he to the separatists."

Banfield observes that the use of unusual naming occurs much more widely in Woolf's work:

> Woolf's novels are filled with individualizing proper names (given and surname), often denoting characters with autonomy whose brief appearances, brief flares of consciousness, suggest possibilities never actualized, like those through which the

> mysterious motor car and the skywriting airplane are presented in *Mrs. Dalloway*. (*Phantom* 326)

The motor car and airplane episodes to which Banfield refers in *Mrs. Dalloway* are two instances in which characters perceive events in different ways. It is never clear who is in the car that stalls outside of the flower shop where Mrs. Dalloway is shopping; various characters spell out the letters drawn by the airplane, but the wind makes them illegible—each character sees a different set of letters. These moments of visual misperception are diegetic instances of the kind of "possibilities never actualized" endemic to the structure of novel itself and inevitable in any reading of it. What is important, though, is that these unactualized possibilities are founded in perceptual limitations. The inability to see the sky writing clearly or to see through the darkened glass is the cause of the unactualized possibilities in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In *Jacob's Room,* it is certainly the case that Woolf presents only fleeting accounts of characters' impressions, but part of the effect of the novel comes from the fact that it exceeds the capacities of memory. The modesty of one's ability to connect meaning to proper names has a direct effect on the readerly experience. Proper names serve as fleeting objects that draw attention to the limitations of perception and memory.

Textual and Metatextual Confusion: Characters and Birds in *The Waves*

In *The Waves,* Woolf provides another variation on her approach to character and naming. The six voices of *The Waves* begin with short reports of sensations and then observations ("'I see a ring,' said Bernard…" 'I see a slab of pale yellow,' said Susan… 'I hear a sound,' said Rhoda…") (9). Gradually they become distinct, and eventually relatively thorough biographies become clear. Yet they remain far from realist characters—so much so that Woolf writes in her diary that she "meant to have none" (Vol. 4, 47). Craig Gordon describes the trajectory of *The Waves* as "a movement from brute undifferentiation to individualization to a renewed state of indifference in fusion" (28). Beer, similarly, observes that the voices "share sensory experience, though they are later sorted socially" (*Woolf* 76). For Banfield, Woolf uses "the language of sensation to construct character" (*Phantom* 311).

By starting with sensory experience, rather than biographical details, Woolf presents "characters" that are initially virtually indistinguishable. This was a general concern of hers while writing. In a letter she wrote while working on *The Waves*, Woolf muses:

> I think then that my difficulty is that I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot. Does this convey anything? And thus though the rhythmical is more natural to me than the narrative, it is completely opposed to the tradition of fiction and I am casting about all the time for some rope to throw to the reader. This is rough and ready; but not willfully inaccurate. (204, quoted in Beer *Woolf* 84*)*

The ropes that Woolf throws include the biographical details and the elements of narrative that surface over the course of *The Waves*. Susan Dick notices that references to speakers' ages and the generally chronological order serve as ropes. (67) "London," Dick argues however, "is perhaps the strongest rope Woolf throws her reader. Like the many other realistic details named, the speakers' references to the city reflect their sense of themselves as grounded in a shared, solid world" (68). The external world itself is "rope" thrown to the reader. The need for such ropes suggests that the project of *The Waves* is deliberately one of disorientation with only occasional elements for alleviation.

In a passage in *The Waves* as much about birds as it is about remembering names, Woolf synthesizes tropes of textual and metatextual misperception. In his final soliloquy Bernard muses on the familiar Woolfian convention of birds outside the window:

> One leaps out of bed, throws up the window; with what a whirr the birds rise! You know that sudden rush of wings, that exclamation, carol, and confusion; the riot and babble of voices; and all the drops are sparkling, trembling, as if the garden were a splintered mosaic, vanishing, twinkling, not yet formed into one whole; a bird sings close the window. (247)

The first look out the window in the morning is rife with sensory confusion—the birds themselves, moving suddenly, are in a state of confusion. The appearance of the garden is not yet integrated for the viewer, as if despite its being inanimate the garden has taken on the organizational confusion of the birds. The observations about the garden are encapsulated by the bird sounds and actions, giving weight to their association. Recalling the association of flight and thought so common for Woolf, the passage also reads as a description of the formation of an insight—it starts as "a splintered mosaic, vanishing, twinkling, not yet formed into one whole." As Bernard continues, the alignment of perceptions and insight continues:

> I heard those songs. I followed those phantoms. I saw Joans, Dorothys, Miriams, I forget their names, passing down avenues, stopping on the crest of bridges to look down into the river. And from among them rise one or two distinct figures, birds who sang with the rapt egotism of youth by the window; broke their snails on stones, dipped their beaks in sticky, viscous matter; hard, avid, remorseless; Jinny, Susan, Rhoda. (247)

The passage reflects a tension between the perception of particulars and the limitation of such a capacity. Bernard names the birds, but he cannot remember the names he assigned to them—a reflection of the arbitrariness and slipperiness of names. Furthermore the names are somewhere in between general and particular, not Joan, Dorothy, and Miriam but "Joans, Dorothys, Miriams." The birds are an aggregate entity until "one or two" become "distinct figures." The emergence of distinct figures is both a perceptual phenomenon and, by the analogic relationship of birds and thought, the moment of insight. The analogy is explicit—the Joans, Dorothys, and Miriams become, by the end of the passage, the three female voices of the novel, "Jinny, Susan, Rhoda." In this passage, character emerges out of sensation as an insight, an integration of confused elements—Bernard's having a spontaneous sense of Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda is a condensed version of the novel as a whole. The gradual movement from confusion to distinction reflects the readerly experience of *The Waves*, as the six voices move from indistinguishable entities to characters.

The characters of *The Waves* are not, however, drawn with solid outlines.
The correlation of Joans, Dorothys, and Miriams with Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda emphasizes the interchangeability and illusory particularity of names and of identity in line with the subtitle Woolf initially considered for *The Waves:* "The Life of Anybody." Names and facts are not among the impressions on the mind "engraved with the sharpness of steel." The emphasis on episodes of misperception associates moments of insight not with facts but nearly their opposite—the potentially erroneous impressions of the wandering mind.

Woolf's Negative Focalization

Woolf does not merely point to the imprecision of facts and names, and the general cognitive weakness of retaining such material. She deliberately overloads the character with sensations ("a shower of innumerable atoms") and the reader with characters. The effect is more fundamental than a mere contribution to the aesthetic of "difficulty" so characteristic of literary modernism. Rather, her experimentation points to a completely different form of focalization in the novel than has been typically understood in narratology.

The term *focalization* was introduced by Genette in *Narrative Discourse* as a revision of Todorov's threefold division of relationships between a narrator and a character in a fictional narrative. A narrator might know more than a character (narrator > character), which would be omniscient narration. A narrator might know as much as a character (narrator = character), which is how a first-person narration is likely to be structured. Or, a narrator might know less than a character (narrator < character). This occurs when the narrator does not report the actual thoughts of a character, merely the observable actions. Genette reconfigures this threefold distinction as zero focalization, internal focalization, and external focalization, with "focalization" referring to the restriction of what is represented. (*Narrative* 189 Narrative with zero focalization has no restriction on what is represented—it is akin to the more popular term *omniscient narration*. Internal focalization describes narrative limited to the thoughts of one character and information only knowable from that perspective. External focalization describes narration that remains "external" to any consciousness (such as the reportorial style of Hemingway).

Woolf's narration displays zero focalization, as it shifts from one character's thoughts to another's. But in the experimental approaches to character in *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*, there is a form of restriction on what knowledge is known—but not from a withholding narrator. Rather, the reader's cognitive capacities restrict what is known about characters. Beyond zero focalization, I call this strategy of overwhelming the reader *negative focalization* for it functions both as a restriction, or focalization, but in the opposite manner from any form of limiting information presented in narrative. The shift from understanding focalization as a purely narratorial and textual matter to one involving the mind of the reader consolidates a classical narratological concept with a pragmatic approach informed by cognitive studies. The difficulty of modernism and even its occasional unreadability, have, at least in Woolf's work, an underlying and innovative narratological structure.

The character who is inside while looking out the window at the birds and making some form of perceptual error is emblematic of the relationship between the inner life and the exterior world for Woolf. The two sides of the window are marked by a disjunction, an error of the senses. The reader's window into the consciousness of a fictional mind recreates that disjunction, one rendered especially sharply by Woolf's negative focalization. But that disjunction, caused by the mind's limitations, has its redemption—it is the foundation of Woolf's literary aesthetic.

Chapter Four: "The secret country of her mind": Discourse and Consciousness in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes*

Arguably the most canonical character in English literary modernism is now Clarissa Dalloway. Mrs. Dalloway, typical for Woolf's characters, is constantly *thinking,* much like the other famous protagonist of a stream of consciousness novel, Leopold Bloom. Studies of modernist consciousness have a tendency to associate these literary depictions with an allied but limited set of critical vantages on consciousness—Jamesian, Bergsonian, and above all else, Freudian. Meanwhile, many studies of style have addressed the discursive, semantic, and syntactic innovations of the modernist novel in terms of the representation of consciousness, in particular the use of free indirect discourse (FID). But the range of experiments in the depiction of consciousness during the period of British high modernism is much wider. In this chapter I seek to expand our understanding of such experimentation by looking to Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes* (1926). Unlike the constantly thinking Clarissa Dalloway or Leopold Bloom, Laura Willowes often has a blank mind, minimal sensation, or only an occasional word or phrase in her head. I argue that *Lolly Willowes* is a repudiation of contemporary stream of consciousness styles and a depiction of the lowest limits of consciousness, better understood not by psychoanalytic models but by what neuroscientist Antonio Damasio calls "core consciousness." Warner makes extensive use of FID in her depiction of "core consciousness," and demonstrates that FID is capable of depicting the discrete sensations that comprise knowledge of the world not even consciously known. *Lolly Willowes* represents, formally and cognitively, a new lowest threshold in the depiction of consciousness.

Sylvia Townsend Warner is one of the most curious literary figures to rise to prominence in England in the 1920s. A prolific writer, Warner wrote seven novels, hundreds of short stories, thousands of letters, and kept an extensive diary for most of her adult life. *Lolly Willowes*, her first novel, became a bestseller and the first selection of the "Book-of-the-Month" Club. She remains, nonetheless, a peripheral figure for literary studies perhaps due to her potential association with "middlebrow" literature rather than high modernism due to the "Book-of-the-Month" association (although, the selection of *Lolly Willowes* was a matter of concern, as it was deemed too literary by the board).[14] In a widely cited essay on Warner, Gillian Beer claims:

> Sylvia Townsend Warner's work abutts the Modernist: it uses surreal appositions, nonsense strides, narrative fractures and shifting scales. It is nevertheless pellucid, determined and mischievous rather than allusive and indeterminate. Its experiments are narratological rather than verbal, though the peculiar lift of her sentences produces an idiosyncratic humour. ("Warner" 77)

The most significant "surreal apposition" or "narrative fracture" of *Lolly Willowes* is that the first half reads much like a realist novel concerned with a timely social issue. Warner's context was Britain after the Great War when the decimated male population was imbalanced by so many unmarried or widowed women. *Lolly Willowes* is the story of wealthy but unmarried Laura Willowes who, upon the death of her father, is taken in by her brother and his family whom she lives with as a spinster for many years (the family calls her "Lolly"). The novel addresses an unmarried woman's feelings of uselessness and frustration at familial and societal forces that prevent her from determining the course of her life. But the latter half of *Lolly Willowes* has more in common with the "fantasy" novel that enjoyed a surge of popularity in the 1920s.[15] Decades later, during middle age, Laura decides abruptly to move to a remote village in the

country. She realizes that she is actually a witch and ultimately makes a pact with Satan, with whom she has three significant conversations.

In one sense *Lolly Willowes* seems to follow the pattern of a realist novel, rather than a modernist one, because it is a story of a woman who, through various actions, comes to understand herself and her identity. The fantastical elements are a departure from realist norms, but the pattern of a subject coming to know itself is intact. In this sense, the novel fits Beer's description of Warner's work as "pellucid" and "determined." But *Lolly Willowes* is also a highly unusual experiment in the representation of consciousness, indeed even of the varied nature of consciousness. In this respect it has a thematic commonality with the modernists. In the stream of consciousness experiments of Joyce and Woolf, consciousness is fractured, distracted, and fleetingly focused on the present time and space. Referring primarily to Kafka, Faulkner, and Proust, Philip Weinstein argues, "insistence on free-standing subjectivity is precisely what modernist fiction subverts. It does so in order to reveal the human subject as situational, space/time dependent, capable of coming to know *only* if the props that enable knowing are already in place." (2) Weinstein's account could be just as true for Warner. In *Lolly Willowes*, though, the lines of fracture are completely distinct from canonical modernist experiments.

Laura Willowes' Thoughtlessness

Despite the fact that the plot of the novel is a series of mostly mental actions, most importantly the protagonist's self-recognition, Laura Willowes is remarkably *thoughtless*—in the sense of actually not having any thoughts. Laura's consciousness is not merely fractured as in the shifting inner monologues of Leopold Bloom or Clarissa Dalloway. The first sentence of the novel conveys only actions: "When her father died, Laura Willowes went to live in London with her elder brother and his family" (5). The narration shifts to the thoughts of Caroline, her sister-in-law, which concern how Laura will adjust to London life, whether she will marry, and the dowdiness of her clothes. When the narration then turns to the protagonist's inner life, it is empty: "While these thoughts passed through Caroline's mind, Laura was not thinking at all. She had picked up a red geranium flower, and was staining her left wrist with the juice of its crushed petals" (7). From this introduction through the end of the novel, Laura is frequently and peculiarly without thought. After her move to Great Mop, "Laura sighed for happiness. She had no thoughts; her mind was swept as clean and empty as the heavens" (102). On a later walk in the forest, "Her mind was almost a blank" (152). In a conversation with Satan, he asks what she thinks of him. "'I don't know,' she said honestly. 'I don't think I do think'" (216). At another point in the conversation, "She gazed at the Maulgrave Folly with what she could feel to be a pensive expression. But her mind was a blank" (218).

Laura is not cognitively impaired and so does not belong in the category of experimental depictions of atypical consciousness such as Woolf's Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* (published the year before *Lolly)* or Benji in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (published three years afterward). Warner's "thoughtless" protagonist is a strange and stark repudiation of the relentless focus on the thinking character that aligns proto- and high modernists such as Henry James, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf despite their formal differences.[16] A simple action such as Laura's playing with a red geranium does not necessarily inspire a flood of memories (as a red carnation does in Proust's *Swann's Way*), nor, in the style of Henry James, does it hide a slowly hatching plot. The simple action bears no accompanying thought rendered in the peculiar language of third-person narration. Laura is also not an English version of Emma Bovary. *Madame Bovary* is often understood to follow Emma's sensations rather than any more complex or "reflective" thoughts.[17] *Lolly Willowes*, in contrast, covers a wider and lower

range—from Laura's recognizable and fully verbalized thoughts down to her moments not just of simple sensation, but of actually "not thinking."

What does it mean for Laura Willowes to be "not thinking" as she plays with a geranium? In one sense, Laura's state is immediately familiar and comprehensible to anyone who has ever lacked a response to the question, "What are you thinking about?" In another sense, the statement is actually impossible if Laura is awake. William James made this the foundation of his understanding of consciousness: "the first fact…is that thinking of some sort goes on" (*Principles I,* 224). Antonio Damasio offers a contemporary concurrence: "as long as the brain is awake, the machines of image making and consciousness are 'on' and we are not manipulating our mental state by doing something like meditation, it is not possible to run out of 'actual' objects or 'thought' objects" (170-171). When Laura is "not thinking," her lapse in attention is not truly an instance of not thinking in the stricter sense understood from James to Damasio. The two very possible takes on Laura's "not thinking" are a reverberation of the general question of whether thinking can occur without words. We probably understand the passage to mean that Laura had no particularly discernible words in her head or attention directed toward thoughts of the future (the topic of conversation). But, we assume she was conscious and "thinking" in the more basic sense of observing her environment and reacting to it in a purposeful way (in the form of playing with the flower). The matter of whether she was really "not thinking" has more to do with the limits of the term. Genette calls the issue of whether there is thought without language a "stale exam question" (*Revisited* 61), partially because it has been asked in various ways so often and partially because it has largely been answered in the affirmative. Merleau-Ponty might concur, without any language in her head, Laura is "not thinking."[18] But by and large, thinking about thinking from Warner's day to the present allows that some thoughts are subverbal.

The "stream of consciousness" novel, the most significant formal innovation in modernist prose, awkwardly straddles the thought/language question. Joyce, Richardson, Woolf and others attempted to represent the shifting and fractured nature of consciousness in writing that portrays, ostensibly mimetically, the shifting and fractured syntax and contents of a character's thoughts. At least some of these works seem to exhibit a perfect alignment of language and thought. Dorrit Cohn observes that these "stream of consciousness" styles are really a rendition of the "inner voice." They capture fragments of the verbal elements of consciousness, but they cannot represent the full band of consciousness mimetically. The subverbal elements of consciousness can only be portrayed by narration.

"Stream of consciousness" is a term from William James,[19] first applied to a prose style by May Sinclair in a 1918 essay on Dorothy Richardson. Yet critics have identified that the association of William James's phrase with a certain set of literary practices called "stream of consciousness" is tenuous, even inaccurate to what James really meant.[20] James's stream of consciousness is not limited to verbalizations or the "inner voice." In a later essay, James claims experience, "is made of *that*, of just what appears, of space, of intensity, of flatness, brownness, heaviness or what not" (*Essays* 27). None of these basic constituents, elements of "pure experience," are linguistic. Stream of consciousness styles, nonetheless, often present consciousness as if it were an incessant inner voice.

Warner's forsakes stream of consciousness styles by presenting a character who spends a lot of time "not thinking," which should be read with some irony, for Laura is certainly awake, sensing, and feeling. But thinking, colloquially and in the context of stream of consciousness prose, has come to mean thinking in language. That too-quick association is what Warner

attempts to divide in *Lolly Willowes*. Laura thinks, in a strict sense of the term, but not always with language.

Thinking about consciousness

Thinking, as it used ordinarily, refers to higher order reasoning—the process of deriving knowledge by making connections among various sensory or mental objects, whether this process involves language or not. *Consciousness*, though, is wider. According to Damasio, "Consciousness, as we commonly think of it, from its basic level to its most complex, is the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self" (11). Damasio's basic definition has considerable precedent. William James offers the following account:

> Consciousness connotes a kind of external relation, and does not denote a special stuff or way of being. *The peculiarity of our experiences, that they not only are, but are known, which their 'conscious' quality is invoked to explain, is better explained by their relations—these relations themselves being experiences—to one another*. (*Essays* 25)

For James, consciousness is not a state but what comes about in the relation between an experience and the awareness of that experience (which is an experience in itself). James echoes Spinoza's "idea of an idea" which is constitutive of knowledge: "For as soon as anyone knows something, by that very fact he knows that he knows, and at the same time he knows that he knows that he knows, and so on ad infinitum" (*Ethics* II.P21.Sh). Awareness of an object means both awareness of the object *and* awareness of that awareness. Such is the minimum threshold of consciousness. But, additional layers of knowing about knowing can be built upon this foundation.[21]

These layers of knowing reflect distinct forms of consciousness. Consciousness has often been divided into two kinds. One concerns what is immediate—one's surroundings, the sensations of a given moment. The other kind involves intellectual knowledge—awareness of facts, one's own intentions, and so forth. Ann Banfield brings this distinction to the discussion of the discursive means by which novelistic prose represents consciousness. Adopting the terms *non-reflective* and *reflective consciousness* from S.Y. Kuroda, Banfield turns to the unlikely confluence of Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre for clarification. For Russell, there is a distinction between "intellectual knowledge" and the fact that "there is an important sense in which you *can* know anything that is in your present sensible field" [*An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth,* 47] ("Reflective," 64). Sartre, Banfield continues, makes an equivalent distinction between the "prereflective cognito" from the "reflective cognito" [*Readings in Existential Philosophy*, 114] (Ibid, 64).

Damasio's neuroscientific approach updates the longstanding distinction of types of consciousness in philosophy and languistics. "Core consciousness," Damasio explains, "provides the organism with a sense of self about one moment—now—and about one place—here. The scope of core consciousness is the here and now" (16). The other is "extended consciousness":

> [T]he complex kind of consciousness, which I call *extended consciousness* and of which there are many levels and grades, provides the organism with an elaborate sense of self—an identity and a person, you or me, no less—and places that person at a point in individual historical time, richly aware of the lived past and of the anticipated future, and keenly cognizant of the world beside it. (16)

As in earlier conceptions, core consciousness for Damasio is a dual experience. It involves the awareness of an object and the awareness of self in relation to that object. Extended consciousness is not a singular experience but a gradient of more complex forms of understanding. The graduated degrees of extended consciousness distinguish Damasio's

understanding of consciousness from the longstanding distinction between reflective and non-reflective or thetic and non-thetic forms. The greatest distinction between core consciousness and extended consciousness is time. Damasio continues, "In extended consciousness, both the past and the anticipated future are sensed along with the here and now in a sweeping vista as far-ranging as that of an epic novel" (17). Damasio's explanation that extended consciousness functions like a novel creates a chiasmatic relationship between original and imitation. Extended consciousness is like the novel. But the novel, as widely understood by its historians and theorists, imitates consciousness. Either way, the important connection between the novel and *extended* consciousness is their similarly broad perspectives on time.

Narrative Techniques of the Core Consciousness Novel

Lolly Willowes, however, does not function like the wide-ranging novel Damasio invokes. The distinctive feature of *Lolly Willowes* is not its depiction of the far-ranging upper strata of extended consciousness but its focus on core consciousness and the nearer gradations of extended consciousness. For this endeavor, Warner idiosyncratically manipulates relatively common narratorial techniques for rendering consciousness. Numerous passages in *Lolly Willowes* are in free indirect discourse (FID), the narrative technique in which the speech or thoughts of a character are presented in third-person narration but retain the syntactic structures appropriate to the character. FID is *free* rather than subordinate to an independent clause such as "she said" or "he thought"; it is *indirect* because the wording, not directly quoted, is altered for tense and person. The paragraph before the turn to Lolly's consciousness is in the mind of Caroline: "Still, there it was, and Henry was right—Lolly ought to come to them. …Poor Lolly! Black was not becoming to her" (6). These sentences are recognizably in FID as they present Caroline's thoughts, rife with expressive elements indicating Caroline as the deictic center.

When the narration shifts to Laura's thoughts in the subsequent paragraph, she gradually moves from "not thinking" to the subject at hand:

> Laura roused herself. It was all settled, then, and she **was going to live** in London with Henry, and Caroline his wife, and Fancy and Marion his daughters. She would become an inmate of the tall house in Apsley Terrace where hitherto she had only been a country sister-in-law on a visit. She would recognize **a special something** in the physiognomy of that house-front which would enable her to stop certainly before it without glancing at the number or the door-knocker. Within it, she would know unhesitatingly which of the polished brown doors was which, and become **quite** indifferent to the position of the cistern, which had baffled her so one night when she lay awake trying to assemble the house inside the box of its outer walls. (bold indicates markers of FID, 6-7)

Even when Laura has finally started to "think," the subject is actually *not thinking*. She imagines a future in her London home in which she will not have to think about the spatial arrangement of the house or of its location in the neighborhood. That is, she will know what to do unreflectively, at a level of consciousness much closer to the core. These thoughts are presented in a style that has several features prompting an FID reading. The first sentence is a contextual marker that what follows will concern Laura's perspective. The past continuous tense, as in *she was going to live in London* indicates FID when it is not in the service of indicating simultaneity with another past action. *A special something* is an imprecise locution suggesting a figural point of view.[22] Finally, *quite* is an evaluative designation, also suggesting a figural point of view. Other elements of the passage, however, are inconsistent with FID, such as the appositions *Caroline his wife* and *Fancy and Marion his daughters*, which do not read as references that Laura would use herself in her own thoughts.

Narration as ambiguous as that which introduces the reader to Laura Willowes' consciousness does not fall squarely into a single narratorial style at the discursive level. Narratorial variation is itself a well-known phenomenon. Genette observes how common narratorial variance is, from an "almost imperceptible sliding" (*Narrative* 175) in Plato to "gradations or subtle blends" (176) in Proust. More specifically having to do with the levels of consciousness, Banfield observes, "In many narrative contexts, there is a progression from purely (objectively) narrated descriptions…to a shift to the representation of consciousness, first through non-reflective consciousness, often perceptions, and then through represented thought" ("Reflective" 74). This pattern—Flaubert is Banfield's example—intuitively moves from outside the character to sensations to what the character makes of those sensations. The above passage fits that pattern but with reversal of subject and object. The thought begins outside the house then moves to inside and then to what Laura makes of the inside (indifference). There are no shifts in discursive means of representing consciousness that fit such a clear-cut model, however.

Narratologists observe a looser association between narration and consciousness than technically consistent direct or indirect discourse. Graham Hough introduced the term "coloured narrative" for when a character's idiom influences narrated passages. (Hough 128) Banfield, also using the color metaphor, acknowledges a "tendency for narration itself to take on the color of the consciousness to which it refers" ("Reflective" 74). Cohn also observes this overlay, and labels it "stylistic contagion" (33).[23] Warner's reliance on "coloured narrative" or "stylistic contagion" is not an indication of untrustworthiness, infection, or an unsteady author's hand. It constitutes a distinct representational strategy that allows for the depictions of gradations of consciousness. The narration after Laura rouses herself moves through those gradations.

At the funeral of her father, Laura listens to the eulogy:

> "In the midst of life we are in death," said Mr. Warbury, his voice sounding rather shameless taken out of church and displayed upon the basking echoless air. "In the midst of death we are in life," Laura thought, would be a more accurate expression of the moment. Her small body encased in tremendous sunlight seemed to throb with an intense vitality, impersonally responding to heat, scent and color. With blind clear-sighted eyes she saw the coffin lowered into the grave, and the earth shoveled in on top of it. She was aware of movement around her, of a loosening texture of onlookers, of footsteps and departures. But it did not occur to her that the time was come when she too must depart. She stood and watched the sexton, who had set to work now in a more-business-like fashion. An arm was put through hers. A voice said: "Dear Laura! We must go now," and Caroline led her away. Tears ran down Caroline's face; she seemed to be weeping because it was time to go. (38-9)

This passage begins with Laura's "extended" consciousness marked very clearly, unusually clearly in the form of a direct quotation of linguistic thought—one of the only ones in the entire novel. This starkly marked reversal of the line from the burial service from the Book of Common Prayer sticks out like a flag and gives indication of Laura's own reversal of religious doctrine in being a witch and disciple of Satan. After Laura's linguistic thought, the passage reflects Laura's sensory experiences that are unsynthesized into a single nonreflective perception that "it was time to go" and the normal appropriate response for such a perception. Knowing when to leave can be recognized and acted upon, odd as it might seem, "without thinking" in sense of without thinking reflectively. Laura, however, never comes to such awareness. She remains *even lower* than, for example, Russell's example of a nonreflective conscious plan of jumping over a puddle—a coordination of multiple sensations, intentions, and actions that nonetheless is

accomplished below the threshold of language and awareness of one's own accomplishing the objective. Laura does not assemble any more than what remains closest to core consciousness—the here and now of life.

The distinct sensations experienced "near" core consciousness are presented in alternating discursive styles with extensive FID. After the direct report of her linguistic thought, the narration shifts such that Laura is the deictic center (for an omniscient narrator is not limited to reporting what "seems," so it is to Laura that "her small body…seemed to throb"). Laura has a mild out-of-body experience. That is, her body seemed small to her, while to her the sunlight seemed tremendous. Her body only "seemed" to throb with vitality, and its responses felt impersonal. The paragraph traces Laura's last thought, then a turn to focusing on her body. From here, there is a return to straight narration with an interestingly contradictory observation of Laura's "blind clear-sighted eyes" indicating her ability to see but inability to consolidate the information. FID re-emerges indicated by the anaphoric structure of her awareness of movement, loosening texture, sounds (footsteps), and departures—all disparate sensations. In another switch, not being aware of something is necessarily narrated in the following sentence. Finally there is a return to FID, first in what might be read as a moment of inappropriate distraction of noticing the "business-like" quality of the sexton. Then, the sequence "an arm," a "voice," "Caroline" traces Laura's gradual recognition of the person near her. Significantly, Laura recognizes Caroline and sees her weeping, but she does not correctly identify the relationship between the two and puts them in a serial order that produces a simple impression of a pseudo-causal order. All throughout, Laura remains close to the immediate sensations that make up core consciousness.

Laura's consciousness does not follow a model in which simple sensations engender reactions and ever more complex thoughts. There are certainly abstract evaluations, anticipations of future events, memories of past ones—all markers of "extended consciousness." But they are disorderly and interwoven with sensations and habitual, even mechanized, actions. The apparent looseness of Warner's technique—the tendency to hit upon the language of only the occasional thought and to present the stream of Laura's consciousness in narration that hardly indicates that it *is* Laura's thought—runs counter to well-known stream of consciousness styles that foreground the character's thought and reduce the amount of narration (and thereby depersonalize the narrator). Sentences inconsistently switching from FID to narration from phrase to phrase call into question whether a fully verbalized thought is present for the character.

Warner's is an eccentric solution to an awkward problem. If the stream of consciousness novel represents not the full range of consciousness but merely the verbal, or the "inner voice," as some of its critics charge, what techniques will present the lower orders of consciousness in fiction? Genette supported Cohn's observation that subverbal thought can only be represented by narration, rather than quotation.[24] FID rhetorically blurs the line between the two modes of representation—quotation and narration. FID's intermediate position between mimesis and diegesis becomes more complex when it represents thought rather than speech because the reportorial ambiguity is compounded by the ambiguity of the form of thought itself. Genette concludes that FID is essentially a "narrative of words," quotation rather than narration, and therefore does not represent subverbal thought.[25] Banfield takes the contrary position while also differentiating between levels of consciousness:

> The proper formulation requires that we characterize represented thought [Banfield's term for FID] as language representing what the character would have felt and thought reflectively, whereas non-reflective consciousness is rendered in a language which

> captures what the character perceives or knows spontaneously. In both cases, however, language must represent what is not linguistic—i.e. consciousness. (75)

What both sides of the debate have in common is that they introduce a new order of fictionality. If what is presented in FID is quotation, as Genette holds, the fictive conceit is that consciousness takes the form of inner voice. If free indirect discourse (when it concerns thought, rather than uttered statements) is, following Banfield, a record of what *would have been thought in language* if the character were to articulate it, then such sentences are doubly fictional in that they cannot even be read as true accounts within a fictional framework. This double order of fictionality in FID is a displacement of the long-standing understanding of narrative fiction as mimesis of mimesis, once more removed from real action than drama.

Warner's prose makes few insistences that a thought actually takes a certain form in language. That is, there are few "quotations" of thought, whether directly or indirectly. Narration of thought is also rarely avowed (and narration of thought is frequently actually disavowed, as in the passages in which Laura is "not thinking"); rather it is often implicit—a suggestion of a train of thought rather than a statement of one. Instances of FID often portray a mere sensation unintegrated into even a nonreflective thought, much less one that actually incorporates language. The narrative is "colored" by the occasional word or phrase that seem to be Laura's, sometimes moving into FID or even indirect or direct report. The overall quantity of directly- or indirectly-reported thoughts is low in contrast to the much more frequent ambiguous coloring. The balance suggests an idea about the proportional share that language has of consciousness. Inasmuch, Warner avoids the conceit of the "inner voice" and the conceit that quoted thought is presented in a conditional (and therefore fictive) mood. Warner largely emphasizes moments when Laura is not thinking "hard," but in these moments of reverie elements associated with the higher capacities of extended consciousness make spontaneous appearances—as a word, a phrase, a moment of a reflection about a distant memory. The focus on the here and now of Laura's awareness, overlaid with occasional memories, anticipations or more complex thoughts, matches the way that core consciousness for a cognitively normal mind is always overlaid with additional layers. The imprecision, vagueness, and variation of Warner's narrative technique—with its heavy use of FID and narration only implicitly reflecting Laura's thoughts—matches the imprecision of Laura's thinking. Consciousness, when not strongly focused, consists of sensations and awareness of the here and now, with language occasionally surfacing or experienced without clarity as to whether it is actually formed or merely retro-active.

Variations on Insight

Lolly Willowes, while attending to the lower strata of consciousness, is also a novel of self-realization. This is paradoxical considering Damasio's claim that the sense of "autobiographical self" is the constitutive feature of extended consciousness. Laura does think and even comes to life-changing realizations, but these passages exhibit a characteristic strangeness—thinking is circumvented, separated into pieces, or displaced in time. The most profound and narratively significant realizations come not from the furthest reaches of extended consciousness but from much nearer the core.

Laura makes several significant decisions and has important realizations over the course of the narrative. She decides to move to Great Mop; she realizes that she does not want her family (specifically her nephew Titus) following her there, and finally she realizes that she is a witch. At several points, where all the signs suggest that we will get some insight into Laura's thoughts, there is little or none. After moving from London to Great Mop, she is at first

disoriented. She takes long walks to get to know the area, despite not quite enjoying them. On one such walk, with dusk approaching, "She was tired, she was miles from Great Mop, and she had made a fool of herself" (103). Here, the narration characteristically blurs the line between straight narration and FID, as she might have been reflecting on her own foolishness, as the anaphoric structure of the sentences suggests but does not necessitate a figural point of view. From there, "She sat down in the extremely comfortable ditch to think" (103). All indications would suggest that the next sentence would be some form of report about what it was that she was thinking about. Instead, the narration then turns outward: "The shades that had dogged her steps up the hill closed in upon her as she sat in the ditch, but then she took out her map there was enough light to enable her to see where the nearest inn lay" (104). The movement of the shadows conveys that Laura sat in the ditch thinking for a while, but her thoughts remain unexpressed in normal omniscient narration. The concluding thought, that it is time to find a place to go, is wholly implicit and comprehensible in her actions, in line with Palmer's notion of a "mind beyond the skin."

Later in her ambling around Great Mop, Laura's thoughts swarm when the sound of a nearby train reminds her of life in London:

> Suddenly she remembered the goods yard at Paddington, and all her thoughts slid together again like a pack of hounds that have picked up the scent. They streamed faster and faster; she clenched her hands and prayed as when a child she had prayed in the hunting-field.
>
> In the goods yard at Paddington she had almost pounced on the clue, the clue to the secret country of her mind. The country was desolate and half-lit, and she walked there alone, mistress of it, and mistress, too, of the terror that roamed over the blank fields and haunted round her. (123)

Warner's account of Laura's thinking adheres with remarkable fidelity to Damasio's assessment that "the imaged, nonverbal narrative of core consciousness is swift, that its unexamined details have eluded us for a long time, that the narrative is barely explicit, so half hinted that its expression is almost like the emanation of a belief" (187). Laura's thoughts stream "faster and faster" like the "swift" narrative of Damasio's core consciousness, while the "half-lit" and "secret country of her mind" remain just out of Laura's capacity to understand, like the "half hinted" narrative of core consciousness.[26] Laura's thoughts, coming and going too quickly to be accounted for or presented in language, give only the impression of desolation and blankness, rather than insight. The "clue" is Laura's own identity, that she is a witch. It is the fact that makes all the other parts of her life make sense. But, in this passage, she cannot reach this realization through a whirlwind of present thoughts. The "clue" nonetheless has its corollary in Damasio's account of core consciousness, as "some aspects of the narrative filter into our minds to create the beginning of the knowing mind and the beginnings of the self" (187). The origin of the understanding of an autobiographical self comes, not fully understood, from lower threshold of core consciousness.

The Emotion of Self-Realization

As a matter of readerly competence, of course we assume that Laura has a fully-developed "extended" consciousness. She has what Damasio calls "an autobiographical self" (198), meaning that at any moment she has immediate awareness or access to awareness of herself in time, from past through present into the future, in addition to awareness of a vast range of consistent identifying characteristics that consolidate her sense of self. Beyond the development of extended consciousness in early life, explains Damasio, "In a neurologically

normal state, we are never completely deprived of extended consciousness" (202). While *Lolly Willowes* often focuses on the moments at which the full resources of the conscious mind seem to idling, they are still available.

Extended consciousness's most significant product, the sense of autobiographical self, is constantly undergoing alteration and renewal. Laura's great self-realization that constitutes the core of the plot is not the development of an extended consciousness (which is something that occurs in the first years of life) but a significant alteration in the sense of autobiographical self. Changes in the sense of autobiographical self would, naturally, be a result of processes associated with extended consciousness. In the moment of Laura's most profound realization and revision of her autobiographical self, however, the upper reaches of extended consciousness are markedly unavailable. The realization occurs while Laura sits alone at home petting her kitten, but the "moment" of understanding never occurs—it is only already over:

> Not for a moment did she doubt. But so deadly, so complete was the certainty that it seemed to paralyze her powers of understanding, like a snake-bite in the brain. She continued to stare at the kitten, scarcely knowing what it was that she knew. (155)

Laura's hardly knowing what she knew indicates a stratification of levels of knowledge—some function and others do not. In this rendition of a moment of self-realization, higher order reasoning is explicitly cordoned off as inaccessible as if by paralyzed by "snake-bite." Time, meanwhile, reflects both the "here and now" of core consciousness and the scope of more extended reaches. The passage conveys an insight in a discrete here-and-now before the kitten, but it also spreads that insight over time, for "[n]ot for a moment did she doubt" fractures the realization into distinct and past moments in which doubt could have occurred. The realization emerges from core consciousness and reaches some higher orders that sustain a wider sense of time.

As Laura becomes more comfortable with her realization, it becomes clearer that the moment of insight is *emotional* rather than rational:

> Nursing the kitten in her lap Laura sat thinking. Her thoughts were of a different color now. … She had never wavered for an instant from her conviction that she had made a compact with the Devil; now she was growing accustomed to the thought. She perceived that throughout the greater part of her life she had been growing accustomed to it; but insensibly, as people throughout the greater part of their lives grow accustomed to the thought of their death. When it comes, it is a surprise to them. But the surprise does not last long, perhaps but for a minute or two. Her surprise also was wearing off. (158-9)

Laura's knowledge of her identity is likened to the knowledge one has of one's own death. An "ongoing fear of death" is one of Martha Nussbaum's primary examples of a "background emotion." (*Upheavals* 70) Background emotions, Nussbaum claims, "persist in the fabric of one's life, and are crucial to the explanation of one's actions, though it might take a specific circumstance to call them into awareness" (71). Nussbaum's observations about background emotions align with Laura's partially submerged sense of her self. Damasio also makes use of the term and conceives of background emotions as "closer to the inner core of life" (52). Laura's acclimatization occurred "insensibly," much in line with Nussbaum's equivocal claim that background emotions "need not be nonconscious…but frequently they will be, since they are persisting conditions that are often unnoticed partly on account of their pervasiveness" (71). The "pervasiveness" of background emotions has a reflection in Laura's unwavering "conviction" of her identity.

Laura's "conviction," perhaps counterintuitively, is not a result of abstract reasoning; it is an emotion. For Nussbaum, emotions are "appraisals or value judgments, which ascribe to things and persons outside the person's own control great importance for that person's own flourishing" (4). Nussbaum assumes a Stoic definition of judgment as "an assent to an appearance" (37). This is a process involving two steps: "First, it occurs to me that such and such is the case," and then "I can accept or embrace the way things look…I can repudiate the appearance…Or I can let the appearance hang there" (37). As judgments, emotions make both of these moves, potentially non-consciously or potentially in a manner different from a higher-order process of reasoning. As such, they can be understood as "convictions" as well as the kinds of judgments that derive from reason.

Laura's realization that she is a witch (and always has been) holds as closely as possible, in Damasio's terms, "to the inner core of life." The realization does not derive from the outer reaches of extended consciousness that weigh evidence or house processes of abstract reasoning. The realization does not even come in a flash of emotion, like a Joycean epiphany or Woolfian "moment of being." The realization takes the form of a background emotion coming to conscious awareness, and a change in the "color" of her consciousness. The only primary emotion involved is the fleeting surprise that comes after the fact. Laura's own awareness of her being a witch, experienced as a background emotion, occurs simultaneously with other higher orders of consciousness. "She perceived…that she had been growing accustomed to it" bears the two-fold mark of consciousness—awareness of self in relation to an object. But that this realization simultaneously occurred "insensibly" requires some bifurcation of consciousness. The bifurcation of conscious and insensible components of her awareness reflects gradations of consciousness, one more "extended" than the other. The fact was not known verbally or with all of its implications for the autobiographical self, that is, for the understanding of consistent patterns of the self's past and future behaviors, but it was *felt*. The great realization of *Lolly Willowes*, Laura's coming to know herself as a witch, is matter of the extended range of consciousness turning to the emotion at the core.

From Core Consciousness to Automation

The gradations of Laura's consciousness are on display in the novel in contexts other than her own self-realizations. The most explicit separation of levels of consciousness in the novel comes when Laura watches Titus, her nephew who has come to live in Great Mop much to her resentment, as he is attacked by a swarm of bees:

> As the untroubled air had received Titus's roarings and damnings (for it was obvious that he had both roared and damned) without concerning itself to transmit them to her hearing, so her vision had absorbed his violent pantomime without concerning itself to alarm her brain. She could not reason about what she had seen; she could scarcely stir herself to feel any curiosity, and still less any sympathy. Like a masque of bears and fantastic shapes, it had seemed framed only to surprise and delight. (197)

Laura is too far away to hear Titus, but she can surmise what sounds he would be making. That separation analogously explains the separation between what she sees and what she thinks. While she does not "reason" about Titus's condition, she nonetheless has experiences of a lower order of consciousness. She sees, and she even has emotional reactions of surprise and delight. Laura's experience of Titus's suffering does not reflect a new moral code or other product of extended consciousness that derives from her newfound understanding of her autobiographical self. Being a witch, it turns out, does not involve referencing an abstract set of patterns. Rather, her experience of watching Titus hovers close to elements of core consciousness—simple sensation

and its attending emotional responses. If this new response is reflective of Laura's awareness of her identity, then being a witch seems to mean attending to one's own core consciousness and immediate sensations and reactions.

Other more complex patterns of behavior do come into play and override Laura's initial and simple reaction. "It behoved her to be serious and attend, instead of accepting it all in this spirit of blank entertainment" (198). Laura waits a while before going to see whether Titus is all right, but she does eventually head in the direction of town to pay him a visit:

> Now that she was walking to his assistance she felt quite sorry for him. My nephew who is plagued by the Devil was as much an object of affectionate aunt-like interest as my nephew who has an attack of the measles. She did not take the present affliction more seriously than she had taken those of the past. (198)

The style strangely meanders from third person to first person and shifts tenses, but the pattern is not FID. "My nephew who is plagued by the Devil" is a phrase in the unusual style of free direct discourse (exactly quoted, but unmarked as a quotation), as is the phrase "my nephew who has an attack of the measles." These ideas in Laura's thoughts surface, even in their precise wording, but the passage is nonetheless narrated. The melding of free direct discourse and narration here conveys a mind in which ideas pop up, appositionally, but without syntax.

Laura's initial and simple awareness of Titus's plight changes into something more socially appropriate and complex as she goes to attend to and care for the nephew whose presence she resents. But that reaction, "affectionate aunt-like interest," is very clearly marked as routine, automatic, the same for measles or Satan's torture. The degree to which Laura moves beyond the immediate experience, what is known at the level of core consciousness, is slight. Her experience of the event gains another layer, but only such that she moves from "blank entertainment" to habitual actions requiring automated behaviors. "Reason" is hardly part of the equation of her action.

The Politics of Core Consciousness

While *Lolly Willowes* is invested in the representation of consciousness, and specifically a representation of the more basic "core" components, it is also a political novel. *Lolly Willowes* is engaged with a set of social and political questions about women—the degree to which they are kept from forging self-directed lives, the place of unmarried women in society and in family, the influences of religion and the laws of inheritance. When Laura moves to Great Mop and becomes settled, she reflects on the injustices that have lead her to spend twenty years as a domestic servant, an unsatisfying life. She sees her family members as tyrants, but she also recognizes that they are themselves not the real problem:

> There was no question of forgiving them. She had not, in any case, a forgiving nature; and the injury they had done her was not done by them. If she were to start forgiving she must needs forgive Society, the Law, the Church, the History of Europe, the Old Testament, great-great-aunt Salome and her prayer-book, the Bank of England, Prostitution, the Architect of Apsley Terrace, and half a dozen other useful props of civilization. All she could do was to go on forgetting them. (136)

There is no way for Laura to "forgive" her family for the constraints that they placed on her because they were not at fault to begin with. Trying to track down fault leads in every direction, to all the major institutions of civilization, to minor ones, to the slightest irritating relative. What is wrong with the world is simply too overwhelming. Laura must *not think*, she must forget in order to put the past behind her and to avoid being crushed by a society that does not afford her a satisfying life. To function within that role, she does not find a rational or moral basis for her

actions—she performs automated behaviors, like caring for Titus, which she can do "without thinking."

Laura only thinks and speaks articulately and intelligibly, with emphasis on her more complex thoughts and statements, in the "fantastic" part of the novel: the conversations with Satan. These elements have typically been seen as Warner's idiosyncratic juxtaposition of literary realism and "fantasy." The realism of the novel and the conversations with the Devil form a "surreal apposition" in Beer's terms. But the fantastic element of *Lolly Willowes* is overstated—even in the latter half of the novel, nothing particularly fantastic actually ever happens. The greatest show of Laura's powers is apparently her calling on the Devil to plague Titus with bees—something that is just as easily explained by coincidence.

The first of three conversations with "Satan" occurs when Laura is brought to a festival by her landlady, Mrs. Leak:

> "Where are you taking me?" she said. Mrs. Leak made no answer, but in the darkness she took hold of Laura's hand. There was no need for further explanation. They were going to the Witches' Sabbath. Mrs. Leak was a witch, too; a matronly witch like Agnes Sampson, she would be Laura's chaperone. (170)

Characteristically, the passage shifts between narration and a barely-marked FID. The tense of *they were going* suggests FID over narration. As an indirect report of Laura's thought, the passage shows that the event, understood as a Witches' Sabbath, is Laura's interpretation, as is Mrs. Leak's being a witch and her connection to Agnes Sampson (a real historical figure executed for being a witch in 1591).

At the "Sabbath," Laura eventually encounters the figure she takes to be Satan. Once again, the fact of his being Satan is Laura's interpretation:

> Now the newcomer must be making a speech, for they all became silent; a successful speech, for the silence was broken by acclamations, and bursts of laughter.
>
> "Of course!" said Laura. "It must be Satan!" (180)

In Laura's succeeding conversation with Satan, he never actually says or does anything Satanic, or even fantastical, although he does lick her cheek and refer to the event as a Sabbath. (182) Insulted, Laura leaves the event but settles in the countryside, unable to find her way home until dawn. At dawn, a man approaches her who calls her "Miss Willowes." They have a short, pleasant conversation in which the man encourages Laura to stay in Great Mop and offers his help if she ever needs it. "But where shall I find you?" asks Laura. "You can always find me in the wood," the man responds. (186) After some reflection, Laura comes to a realization: "This was the real Satan" (1880). The earlier one, who referred to the event as a Sabbath, was a fraud. As in the first iteration of Satan, there is nothing that marks the man as supernatural—there is only the matter of Laura's imaginative interpretation.

The final conversation with Satan occurs after Laura accompanies Titus to a nearby town so that he can take a train back to London. Laura wanders off to the countryside. "She felt a thrill of anger as she saw a gardener come out of the enclosure…She looked more closely, and recognized Satan" (206). In this final conversation, Laura's interlocutor actually says fantastical things that sound like he is Satan. He explains, for example, the first fraudulent Satan. "'He's one of those brilliant young authors,' replied the Devil. 'I believe Titus knows him. He sold me his soul on the condition that once a week he should be without doubt the most important person at a party'" (217-8). This is seemingly the conclusive marker of the turn from realist novel to fantasy.

Lolly Willowes, however, has little in common with "fantasy" short stories and novels roughly of the period, such as Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (published in 1915 but not translated

into English as *The Metamorphosis* until the 1930s) or David Garnett's *Lady into Fox*, a bestselling short novel published a year before *Lolly Willowes* (and a novel Warner certainly knew for she was a close friend of Garnett). The fantastical elements of *Lolly Willowes*, unlike the transformations in *The Metamorphosis* and *Lady into Fox*, are explicable in other ways.

The centerpiece of the final conversation with Satan is Laura's very long answer to his question, "Tell me…what *you* think" (211). Laura, the largely non-thinking character, begins a long, thoughtful monologue:

> It is we witches who count. We have more need of you. Women have such vivid imaginations, and lead such dull lives. Their pleasure in life is so soon over; they are so dependent upon others, and their dependence so soon becomes a nuisance. …It's like this. When I think of witches, I seem to see all over England, all over Europe, women living and growing old, as common as blackberries, and as unregarded…. (211-2)

A woman in Laura's position would have a "vivid imagination" with no avenue for expression. This observation, combined with the slightness of "Satan's" fantastical appearances and rather uninspired demonic powers (the apex being Titus's encounter with bees) suggests that the novel does not actually transition from a realist genre to a fantastic one. The unusual apposition of *Lolly Willowes* is the transition from Laura's core consciousness to her flights of imagination.

Laura's encounters with Satan are moments of fantasy, but in the cognitive sense rather than in the sense that defines a novelistic genre. The conversations occur, of necessity, only when she is alone and has time to "think." They mark the point at which the novel moves from its focus on core consciousness to the further reaches of Laura's extended consciousness. These conversations help to understand a looming question: Why represent core consciousness? Why focus on the "half-hinted" source of autobiographical self and abstract reasoning rather than its fully developed, extended form? Women, "as common as blackberries" have no real place to exercise their cognitive capacities. They are so often shunted into servile or idle positions that involve only routine tasks and minimal thought. Their higher cognitive capacities, instead suggests Laura, are channeled into imagination. When Laura sees witches "all over England," she sees women whose intellectual lives diverge from social institutions.

Warner, in a reversal of stylistic expectations, only barely gestures to Laura's thoughts about her family, her interactions with social institutions and the "real" world with a highly ambiguous combination of FID, "coloured narrative," and outright circumvention and denial that Laura is thinking at all. Stylistically, the encounters with Satan are the opposite: they are the longest stretches of directly quoted dialogue presented in the novel and the only points at which Laura presents cogent and well-formed ideas. Following my reading that these conversations are flights of fancy, Laura's "vivid imagination" is ironically the most precise elaboration of the higher reaches of extended consciousness.

Warner's unusual *Lolly Willowes*, a repudiation of stream of consciousness and "inner rumpuses," helps to see core narratological and modernist concepts in new ways. Free indirect discourse presents a deictic center and markers of subjectivity—whether those markers are utterances or smaller expressive, anaphoric or deictic elements that merely suggest a particular subject. *Lolly Willowes* shows just how granular FID can be in the presentation of the elements of subjectivity. While narrative theory accounts suggest that FID portrays non-reflectivity, passages in *Lolly Willowes* suggest that FID indicates the very "core" of consciousness itself. That suggestion of subjectivity in FID is what Monika Fludernik calls a "linguistic hallucination" (453). That hallucination of subjectivity is echoed in fantastical attribution of subjectivity to "Satan."

The modernist tendencies toward "inwardness" and the stream of consciousness are the subject of bizarre repudiation and parody in a novel that turns the thinking, introspective character on its head. Laura Willowes' "not thinking," an exploration of the lowest threshold of consciousness, alters what it means for the novel to turn "inward." Warner both prefigures a modern understanding of the layers of consciousness and demonstrates, contrary to a significant strain of literary criticism, that the turn toward the depiction of the inner experience can still remain political and defiant.

[1]In addition to Zunshine (2006) discussed in this chapter, see for example: Meir Sternberg's 2003 "Narrative Universals and Their Cognitivist Fortunes (II)," Jonathan Kramnick's 2007 "Empiricism, Cognitive Science, and the Novel," and Brian Boyd's response to Zunshine in his 2006 review essay "Fiction and Theory of Mind."

[2] See Joseph Carroll's 2008 "An Evolutionary Paradigm for Literary Study."

[3]Based upon the argument she presents, it appears that "public narratee" and "private narratee" were inadvertently reversed in this figure.

[4] Käte Hamburger reformulated Forster's point in *The Logic of Literature* (1973) in somewhat more limited terms. "Epic fiction is the sole epistemological instance where the I-originarity (or subjectivity) of a third-person *qua* third-person can be portrayed" (83). In *Transparent Minds* (1978) Dorrit Cohn maintains this position but puts it into simpler language: "narrative fiction is the only literary genre, as well as the only kind of narrative, in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed" (7). In *The Distinction of Fiction* (1999), Cohn maintains that this feature is one of the ways of distinguishing fiction from, for example, biography. (26)

[5] See, for example, Richard Walsh's *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (159).

[6] See Tim Crane's *The Mechanical Mind* for a very clear review of this basic terminology. (86).

[7] The term was introduced by Hilary Putnam. See *Representation and Reality*.

[8] Woloch observes that Henry James uses the metaphor of roundness in the preface to *Wings of the Dove,* also well before Forster's use of round and flat characters. Woloch cites the following passage:

> sufficiently solid *blocks* of wrought material, squared to the sharp edge, as to have weight and mass and carrying power; to make for construction that is, to conduce to effect and to provide for beauty. Such a block, obviously, is the whole preliminary presentation of Kate Croy, which, from the first, I recall, absolutely declined to enact itself save in terms of amplitude. Terms of amplitude, terms of atmosphere, those terms, and those terms only, in which images assert their fullness and roundness, their power to revolve, so that they have sides and backs, parts in the shade as well as parts in the sun—these were plainly to be my conditions, right and left. (quoted in Woloch, 22).

[9] Banfield augments the common understanding that Woolf's December date must have been referring to Roger Fry's 1910 First Post-Impressionism Exhibition. Banfield suggests that in 1910, the Bloomsbury philosophers' interest in logic and philosophical universals (the general) became melded with what Roger Fry brought to the group, an interest in the aesthetic (the particular).

[10] In *Cosmopolitan Style,* Walkowitz recounts Woolf's early negative reviews by M.C. Bradbook, R.D. Charques, and Q.D. Leavis. (81-84)

[11] Recently, Megan M. Quigley has bolstered Walkowitz's reconsideration of evasion by focusing on "vagueness" in the modern novel. "[M]odernist fiction," Quigley claims, "probes vagueness as the best way to examine psychological depth, to depict sexual indeterminacy, or to register disenchantment with the capitalist, bourgeois, and symbolic status quo while still existing within those systems" (105). The political and ethical implications of modernist strategies derive from an epistemological stance distinct from what supports the realist conventions of the nineteenth-century novel. Quigley claims, "[i]n Woolf's view, the world itself

and our position within it are necessarily vague, shifting, and blurred" (112). Furthermore, "[Woolf] insists that modern literature must represent "Life" the way it really is—blurred and distorted…" (113).

[12] In a review of *Jacob's Room* in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1922, Arthur Sydney McDowell writes: [w]e do not know Jacob as an individual, though we promptly seize his type" (683). This line of argument continues through to Edward Bishop's article, "The Subject in *Jacob's Room*," (1992) in which he argues, using James Phelan's terms, that Woolf emphasizes the "thematic" element of character rather than the "mimetic" element in her portrayal of Jacob.

[13] See Mottron, Belleville and Stip, "Proper Name Hypermnesia in an Autistic Subject," (327).

[14] In *The Making of Middlebrow Culture,* Joan Shelley Rubin reviews the selection process in the early days of the Book-of-the-Month Club: "Thus, although the board gambled for its first selection on what Canby called 'the very literary and specialized *Lolly Willowes,* by Sylvia Townsend Warner, it was in general careful to avoid anything too esoteric or academic." (145)

[15] See Claire Harman. *Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Biography*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1989. 65.

[16] A few years after the publication of *Lolly Willowes,* Warner made an entry in her diary in which she expressed a set of "prejudices" for poetry:

> I am prejudiced:
> against poems that are
> in *vers libre*
>
> express soul-states and interior
> rumpuses
>
> talk much about love, unless
> sub-acidly
> go on for a long time
>
> are verbally rich
>
> sonnets if petrarchan
>
> end on a soul-stirring note
> ask questions and exclaim
> describe
> in favour of poems that are
> formally tight in thought and
> construction
> evoke frames of mind,
> mention
> death,
> contain conceits, and
> intellectual
> stresses
> look neat
> use few images, especially
> visual
> contain references to
> Christian
> faith and mythology
> end cynically
> appear very self-controlled
> state (Harman, *Biography* 79)

While the specific subject was poetry, Warner's lists offer insight into a general literary aesthetic—one that is readily observable in her novels. The "soul-states and interior rumpuses" of the stream of consciousness style in prose clearly align with what she disfavors.

[17] See Banfield ("Reflective" 75), who also cites Leo Bersani's observation that Emma Bovary, for the most part, "is nothing more than bodily surfaces and intense sensations."

[18] In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Thought is no 'internal' thing, and does not exist independently of the world and of words. What misleads us in this connection, and causes us to believe in a thought which

exists for itself prior to expression, is thought already constituted and expressed, which we can silently recall to ourselves, and through which we acquire the illusion of an inner life. But in reality this supposed silence is alive with words, this inner life is an inner language. "Pure" thought reduces itself to a certain void of consciousness, to a momentary desire. (213)

Speech, voiced or not, is the form of thought. Merleau-Ponty leaves room for a nonlinguistic moment, but that moment is a "void of consciousness," much like Laura's moment of handling the carnation.

[19] William James writes:

> Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as "chain" or "train" do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*. (*Principles I,* 239)

[20] For example, see: Erwin R. Steinberg. "The Stream-of-Consciousness Novelist: An Inquiry into the Relation of Consciousness and Language." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. Vol. XVII, No. 4. December 1960. 439. Also, see *Transparent Minds* p. 78-80.

[21] Spinoza's infinite regress is a forerunner of the "iterative knowings" or embedded layers of intentionality discussed in Chapter One. As such, this apparently infinite pattern would quickly run up against the limits of our cognitive architecture. The increasing levels of knowing about knowing would become blurred and then indistinguishable.

[22] See Monika Fludernik's *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction*. 144.

[23] In *Transparent Minds,* Cohn writes: "the phrase 'stylistic contagion' can serve to designate places where psycho-narration verges on the narrated monologue, marking a kind of midpoint between the two techniques where a reporting syntax is maintained, but where the idiom is strongly affected (or infected) with the mental idiom of the mind it renders" (33).

[24] In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette concurs, in his own terminology with Cohn: "narrative recognizes only events or speeches (which are a particular type of event, the only type that may be directly *quoted* in a verbal narrative). In verbal narrative, "consciousness" can only be one or the other" (61-2).

[25] See *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. 60-61.

[26] The intermediary figure is between Warner's "half-lit" mind and Damasio's "half hinted" narrative of core consciousness is T.S. Eliot. Damasio opens his book with a passage from Eliot's "Dry Salvages" in *Four Quartets:*

> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it was not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
>
> (quoted in Damasio vii)

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