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English

**Neo–Appreciation Pedagogy: The Pragmatics of Reading
Aesthetic Affect in the Undergraduate Classroom**

a thesis

by

William Kennedy Burchenal

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
the degree of

Ph.D

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Neo–Appreciation Pedagogy: The Pragmatics of Reading Aesthetic Affect in the Undergraduate Classroom

Abstract

This dissertation offers collegiate literary instructors a theoretical foundation and pedagogical method for teaching their students how to analyze aesthetic affect: a theory and practice termed here “neo–appreciation pedagogy.” While the dissertation outlines a general theory of literary reading, it only does so to provide the basis for classroom methods that directly confront archaic, text–immanent models of meaning production. While preserving much of the method and terminology of the traditional literary classroom, neo–appreciation pedagogy offers students an overt admission that literary study is at least partially a transmission of particular cultural biases; however, it also teaches them ways to critique those cultural biases, beginning with their own responses to “great” literature. In other words, neo–literary appreciation pedagogy seeks to teach students why certain cultural artifacts have been valued in the past (particularly works which they themselves typically do not value) by expanding their repertoire of reading or “lectical” strategies.

In pursuit of this goal, this dissertation outlines a taxonomy of conventional reading strategies simple enough to teach to undergraduate students. This taxonomy is articulated into a heuristic – “the lectical triangle” – used to teach students first how to analyze the lectical strategies they already use then how to deploy those and other lectical strategies (with which they may be less familiar) in increasingly sophisticated – i.e. academic – ways. Building upon post–structuralist, linguistic theory and American Pragmatism in general (along with significant elaborations upon the work of Wolfgang Iser and Wayne Booth in particular, lectical analysis helps students explore how different textual patterns can “invite” certain lectical responses and only “tolerate” or even “resist” others while never requiring any particular response. Neo–appreciation pedagogy, therefore, does not seek to reinforce conventional or canonical readings of literary works, much less reproduce any particular aesthetic affect; instead, it seeks to give students the tools to understand the lectical conventions by which such works have been valued in the past, while giving them more lectical resources for readings they might perform in the future.

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by

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2003

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Neo-Appreciation Pedagogy:
The Pragmatics of Reading Aesthetic Affect in the Undergraduate Classroom

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**Neo-Appreciation Pedagogy:
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Classroom**

by

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Dedicated to all the family, friends, and colleagues who have supported
me over the years, but particularly to
The Fabulous Gina and the three Frijoles,
because all good work is inspired by love.

By some innate power the true sublime uplifts our souls; we are filled with a proud exaltation and vaunting joy, just as though we had ourselves produced what we had heard.

Longinus, *On the Sublime*

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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**Polemical Introduction:
How I Stopped Worrying and Started Appreciating Literature Again**

This story went over my head, I guess. I don't get the whole "gender" thing. Do you mean that the story is sexist? I guess you could say it means Alice is basically owned by her husband the jerk, but I think its just a story. Also I don't get the ending. I mean it just stops - what happens? Do they argue? Do they become friends? I know I'm supposed to know but it just leaves me hanging.

This is bullshit. The Wasteland is more like a waste of time. I could write anything that came into my head too, would that make me a great poet? I don't think so. I hope this isn't going to be on the test cause I'm flunking if I have to say anything intelligent about this.

Finally something I can relate to! I was enchanted (sic) by Cather's story. Rosicky was so real, everyone has known someone like him. I felt like crying at the end, but good. I hope we read more regular stories like Cather - Yea!

In my opinion Hemingway is great. It's so realistic I forgot I was doing homework. I see what you mean about the way he narrates the story and how that effects our point of view - is this what you mean by narrative frame or is that something else. I can't tell what Ernie wants us to think about the story but it doesn't matter because the characters are so cool. Also I noticed how by going back and forth in time he slowly builds what is going on till at the end you are right there with him on the hunt. I know about the pressure to be a "real man" and it really happens when you are hunting.

Whatever this poem is supposed to be about, I don't get it. This is why I suck at English.

The above excerpts culled from the reading journals of five of my undergraduate literature students have at least one thing in common: the writers know they are supposed to create an articulate response to a literary

work but in varying degrees feel their responses are inadequate. Some (the first and the last excerpts) are written in a resigned, even despairing voice; others (“This is bullshit”) respond to the task with anger and contempt. Those entries that describe a positive reading experience do so with an admission that their encounters with literature in a classroom setting are not always so pleasant; although they sound excited about the reading assignment at hand, their tone is still tentative, the comments of an outsider. Notice even the most confident of these writers (“Hemingway is great”) is acutely aware of his status as an apprentice reader-critic and therefore writes in a voice that is overly qualified (“In my opinion”) and deferential (“is this what you mean”). So, even in their own journals, where the only requirement was to write freely and openly about a reading assignment, my students apparently felt self-conscious or, perhaps, overly conscious that their “free” writing will be read by someone else, someone who they feel is fluent in a dialect they can barely speak.

Although undergraduate students are, in fact, the novices of academic culture, Donald Bartholomae makes the trenchant assertion that their development as scholarly writers depends on their ability to adopt the authoritative voice of initiates of it (590). According to Bartholomae, the student “has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience” (590). In other words, they need not only to talk like us but also to us *as if* they are our peers. Bartholomae, therefore, would probably characterize the different voices apparent in the above excerpts as being indicative of the different stages of rhetorical development of the writers, although all of them have yet to “appropriate” a place for themselves in academic literary discourse.

It makes sense that a student’s development as a writer and a critical thinker is closely correlated to his or her willingness and ability to pretend they already have an authority they have only just begun to develop. The best

students, following this logic, are those who are most able to sustain the pretense that they are active, committed participants in an ongoing scholarly discussion of which they barely understand the most basic concepts. From my experience, if they can “act as if” they are scholars long enough, they will in fact develop scholarly skills. As I have pointed out to my students for years, however, keeping up this pretense can be very tricky. Some students erroneously believe that they will get an “A” by speaking up occasionally in class and parroting literary jargon; after all, that strategy usually works pretty well in high school. Although some days I am indeed grateful to hear *any* sound from the peanut gallery, usually in the collegiate classroom we want more than hollow participatory gestures from our students; we want them to think about the literary works they read and then express those thoughts to a community of fellow readers. We don’t, however, want them to think in any old way; we want them to think and express themselves like us, that is, like scholars.

Many students, of course, do not want to think or be like us, and some – “This is bullshit” – resent the implication that they should. From their perspective, English teachers are of that species of authority figures that are not particularly respected but must be obeyed, like nightclub bouncers or airline ticket agents. Gratefully, some students do respect our profession and seem to see us as role models; they like the way we think and would like to think that way too. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between a student's respect for our profession and his or her success in the classroom. Even if their analytical and compositional skills are substandard when they come to us, such students tend to improve those skills quite rapidly, if for no other reason than they actively seek and receive feedback about their work. Most literary instructors, in fact, have to take measures to prevent class time from devolving into an enjoyable but exclusionary seminar of three or four participants and thirty to forty spectators. This correlation between identity and performance

suggests a pedagogical goal; if being able to imagine themselves the peers of their instructors will help them be better students, maybe we should make creative self-visualization (or even self-creative visualization) a part of our curriculum so our undergrads can release their inner English teachers. In other words, if we are indeed trying to teach them to think and write like us, as it seems, it makes sense that it would further that project to teach them how to like us, or at least how to respect us and by extension our discipline.

I am only half joking here. If our undergraduate students do, in fact, have to appropriate or be appropriated by the discourse of literary studies as Bartholomae suggests, then it follows that project should include some sort of “ethical” indoctrination; that is, to be successful some of our students need to be taught how to adopt a certain type of ethos, at least in their classroom writing. Needless to say, overt indoctrination of any kind is frowned upon in scholarly culture these days, which is not to say that indoctrination does not happen. If Bartholomae is correct, undergraduate students *must* have a scholarly ethos to be successful in college - whether we try to teach one or not - which explains why so often literature classes become polarized into those who “get it” and those who don’t, those who walk into the first class with a clue and those that walk out of the final exam without one.

The classroom dynamic described above is typical in any academic discipline that includes the transmission of cultural value as part of its curriculum. In such courses some students will seem to “get it” intuitively quite simply because they have already got it; to some extent they already value the cultural artifact, whether it is a poem, a building, a piece of legislation, a symphonic movement, or a scholarly tradition. Although few undergraduate literature courses will list “understanding the importance of literary study” as a course requirement, certainly having that understanding is one of the core

pedagogical goals of the literary classroom. It is not by accident that introductory literary courses used to be called “Appreciation” courses; introductory courses were and still are designed at least in part to raise the value of great literature (as defined by the individual instructor) in the student’s estimation. One of the problems with teaching students to “appreciate” literature, of course, is that in recent years the project of teaching the cultural heritage – and therefore the prejudices – of a certain (ruling) class has come under heavy fire. The heated debate surrounding the socio-political ramifications of teaching a(ny) canon continues without any definitive or even partial consensus in sight. Given this situation, how do we justify to our students an activity about which we as a discipline express much ambivalence? This problem is compounded by the fact that the value of reading literature cannot be transmitted directly because it is based in an experience, an experience we can describe only in the abstract. We can point our students toward valuable reading experiences but we can’t make them have one. To whatever extent they do not understand the value of reading a particular work or even a whole genre of literature, our students do not know *why* literary study is worth pursuing.

Similarly, we can list out *what* we give our students (i.e. the subject matter presented in the classroom), but what they supposedly receive by completing a literature course is an abstract faculty, a set of cognitive tools forged in our classrooms but intended for a lifetime of use. For instance, we offer students information about the original historical/political/cultural milieu of literary texts, the biographies of authors, philological data, literary terminology, genre criteria, and the heritage of critical commentary surrounding a given work – all in the hopes that such information will give them a better *understanding* of the works at hand and literature in general. Simply knowing such data, of course, is not valuable in its own right (unless one plans to be a Jeopardy

contestant). Sure, they get tested on their ability to remember the definition of “allegory” or whether Naturalism has anything to do with Romanticism, but only in the hopes that knowing those “facts” will give them a richer context within which they might develop a more sophisticated, scholarly – i.e. better – understanding of literary works. In addition, we might require our students to learn various critical and rhetorical theories, interpretive heuristics, the conventions of scholarly composition, and “close” reading techniques, but we do so only in the hope they will *understand* the range of what is “logical” or “acceptable” commentary in academic discourse and therefore be able to write in that dialect upon command. Again, learning Freytag’s Pyramid or the M.L.A. guidelines for a works cited page is important only if those concepts are used skillfully within a scholarly commentary. However, both the memorization of such data and the commentary itself are only the observable symptoms of the actual pedagogical object of a literary course: the ability to understand and write about literature in an academic way. Since we are unable to transmit this ability directly, we hope our students will develop it through exposure to various artifacts of literary culture – artifacts of which we are but one type.

The fact that we teach abstract, cognitive skills is not a pedagogical problem in itself; that students learn how to write interpretive essays that are logical, unified, and stylistically appropriate is proof that these skills exist and can be developed by conventional classroom methods. The problem is that since these skills can not be articulated - we can not say exactly *what* they are - they tend to be mystified by teachers and students alike. As with other abstract, cognitive processes like “faith,” “confidence,” or “love,” this mystification tends to divide groups of people into those that have “got it” and those that do not. In the classroom, this often leads to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and confusion for the “have-nots”; they struggle to grasp concepts that seem beyond them (because they are not yet inside them), or they dismiss

the entire project and pull a “C” by memorizing those “facts” that can be articulated about literature.

I believe negotiating some sort of practical solution to such problems is a prerequisite for being an effective teacher of literature. Although there are many ways to design a syllabus, the best teaching plan, to my mind, is one that consciously aligns its *what* (material) and *how* (method) with a coherent explanation of *why* literature should be taught in the first place, that is, why students should be motivated to study it. However, the *why* of literary pedagogy can only be established according to some system of values. That is to say, before one can decide responsibly which material and method best serves students, the individual teacher needs to decide why and in what context the study of literature is valuable, why it is of use to students who all too often are convinced of its uselessness. Few literary scholars these days will openly subscribe to overtly prescriptive value systems, but fewer still will admit our discipline is utterly valueless. Clearly a transaction occurs in the classroom; a service is offered, purchased, and delivered. But what can the consumer expect to receive for their (parents’) money? How does analyzing and writing about literature improve one’s lifestyle?

As suggested above, the most common justifications given for the study of literature are: (1) literature is an important and pervasive cultural artifact that should be carefully analyzed and (2) to do so develops one’s critical skills. Both of these are variations of the more general, time-honored justification for the Liberal Arts as a whole: i.e. it is valuable to have a thorough, analytical understanding of human culture because it will make you “well-rounded,” or some such. Additionally, there is a vague sense that being “well-rounded” improves one’s chances in the job market - the number one reason young people tell themselves (or at least their elders) why they go to college. Although most

students will buy this general justification for the liberal arts, many have great difficulty seeing how studying literature in particular will give them a better understanding of human culture as they know it quite simply because much of the literature read in the college classroom is not immediately accessible to them. They fail to see the practical value of fully engaging such works, particularly because to do so often requires great effort and/or resources which they do not have. Since our students often do not experience “classroom” literature as being important or even relevant to their world, and since “critical skills” can be honed in any of the liberal arts, getting a decent grade becomes their sole motivation for completing the requirements of a literature course. Certainly getting good grades is an honorable priority for students in any course of study, but merely giving students credit toward their degrees cannot be a valid justification for *offering* a course of study. We need, therefore, to clarify and make explicit to our students the value we receive from the study of literature and how that value is translated into course materials. We already implicitly impose a system of values upon our students; I merely suggest that they will be more effective students if they accept or at least understand *why* we think literary study is of practical value in the first place.

As pointed out above, some students arrive in our classrooms motivated to embrace our subject matter because they already believe literary study is valuable, even fun. Invariably this belief comes from previous, positive experiences with the Fine Arts, in or out of the classroom. Such students are motivated to study literature for another, less officially authorized reason than the first two listed above. They want to study literature because they believe it can be pleasurable to do so. In this respect, of course, they resemble those of us who study and teach literature for a living. People join this profession at least in part because they love the experience of reading literature and their lives have been profoundly enriched by those experiences. I do not use the

word “love” lightly here. Love denotes a relationship, an ongoing, intimate engagement with the beloved. Love can be experienced as pleasure, but also often induces pain, despair, longing, and confusion. Love can not be objectively explained; it must be experienced. Love also connotes a commitment; true lovers will go to great lengths for their beloved, persevering through Herculean tasks to consummate their affection. Moreover, love, like virtue, is its own reward. Although being in love may be difficult and strenuous, the attendant experience of loving is powerful enough to sustain the lover through a lifetime of facing challenge after challenge. We love to read literature. Our best students like it a lot. Most of our students, however, can’t figure out what we see in it. Since they do not love it, they do not understand why analyzing it is worthwhile.

The above scenario suggests we have inverted the relationship between the cultural value and the emotional/affective value of literature. The official justification for our discipline is its importance as a cultural artifact, but literature is a cultural artifact worthy of serious academic study *primarily because of the affective potential of reading it*. If literature did not have a unique potential to move us, to encourage us, to make us feel the full range of human experience, it would be studied seriously only along with other elements of pop culture, like advertising jingles and comic books. However, literary scholars and totalitarian despots alike have always recognized that reading literature can change a person on deep, emotional, even spiritual, levels and therefore is a powerful and potentially revolutionary social force. Without these types of experiences with reading we wouldn’t be standing up at our podiums professing our love of literature to our students, albeit all too often indirectly. Furthermore, our students know we love literature, even if we try to keep our feelings about it tucked away, in the closet as it were. To elide the emotional power of literary reading in our undergraduate curriculum, therefore, is not only counter-productive, it is dishonest.

Whereas “being an important cultural artifact” and developing ones “critical skills” are time-honored reasons for the serious academic study of a given cultural object, merely having the potential for inducing pleasure usually is not. Perhaps this explains why literature courses most often do not officially address the affective value of literature. After all, we don’t analyze roller-coasters or ice-cream bars. We may study alcoholism as a pervasive aspect of human culture, but we don’t scrutinize the variety of ways to serve whiskey to determine which is the most pleasurable – unless we are trying to get licensed as a mixologist. Moreover, all courses of study induce pleasure to some extent or, rather, to some people. Aristotle even identifies the event of “learning” as being *inherently* pleasurable to humans: “learning things gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but also in the same way to all other men, though they share this pleasure only to a small degree” (Poetics 4:4). However, Aristotle distinguishes between the type of learning achieved through exposure to art and other types of learning. While most types of learning are exercises of reason, learning from art is an emotional exercise. Art purifies us by releasing our untidy and potentially dangerous emotions, a process that teaches us things even while it “moves” our soul toward the ideal state of pure reason (11:1). Further, Aristotle claims that the purpose of a given work of literature is to elicit “its own peculiar form of pleasure” (23:2). For Aristotle, then, the chief justification for analyzing a literary work is to determine what its “particular form of pleasure” is and how effective that work is at inducing it.

Needless to say, currently popular theories of literature and language have progressed way beyond the Aristotelian impulse to categorize the phenomena surrounding literature as if they were stable, material objects one could analyze reliably. For Aristotle and over two millennia of cultural critics, textuality itself was not a theoretical problem to be overcome but a thing that

could be objectively described, like a sub-species of parrot or a category of social justice. However, for the last two centuries all academic disciplines have had to develop a theoretical superstructure to account not only for the problem of textuality but the related problematics surrounding the (un)reliable analysis of human perception. The good news *and* the bad news about this change in academic culture is that the theoretical descriptions of our subject matter have become increasingly rigorous and complex. On the one hand, our current formulations of the cultural dynamic surrounding literature are far less naïve than were the essentialist formulations of Aristotle and his direct descendants. This, of course, is good. On the other hand, our current formulations are so elaborated and complex that it is virtually impossible to teach them to undergraduates within the bounds of a literature survey course. This is not so good, because we owe our students a clear account of the relationship between what they study in the literature classroom and our reasons why their efforts there are valuable. Within the current academic climate, however, questions of value inevitably engage questions of theory; hence, the act of choosing course material and how that material will be taught is tantamount to taking a theoretical stance. My point here is not that the literary classroom should be overtly “theoretical,” only that there is no such thing as “atheoretical” pedagogy.

It seems to me it follows we should make more explicit - both to our students and ourselves - the theoretical assumptions and value systems implied by the conventional methods typically employed in literary pedagogy. While the conventional methods we use to teach undergraduates do explicitly address the cultural importance of literature (theory/value #1) and do promote the development of critical skills in general (theory/value #2) they generally do not explicitly address or analyze the affective dimension of reading literature. This is not to say, however, that the affective dimension of literature is not very

much a part of literature courses. Assertions of the affective value of literature such as “interpretation is fun,” “poetry is beautiful” or “Moby Dick is a great novel” usually are not explicitly presented as course materials (although they could be), but certainly they are indirectly transmitted by our delivery of other, more explicit course materials. For instance, giving reading assignments to students is an effective way to teach them information about the cultural context of a given work (an explicit course material) but it also teaches them a literary canon. The texts we assign become concrete examples for our students of the types of texts *we believe* are appropriate for serious literary study, even in courses specifically designed to problematize the practice of literary canonization. Whatever texts an instructor assigns will also teach theoretical and generic biases - often ones that the instructor might not even hold.

Canonization and theoretical biases are also taught by lecturing, but through additional means than employed by reading assignments. Obviously enough, a verbally delivered text, whether it is utterly extemporaneous or read verbatim from notes, includes significantly more affective information than a written text. Body language, verbal inflection and emphasis, even the lack of emphasis teaches students what their instructors think and feel about the material at hand. Whether instructors display engagement or detachment, playfulness or seriousness, the non-verbal messages they send students during a lecture amounts to a model of what a literary scholar is like. From this projection students extrapolate not only our particular attitudes toward literature in general but a sense of what kind of behaviors might be expected of them. Furthermore, the affective clues we project during lectures teach students how we think one should feel about literature, or at least the literature in front of them. This phenomenon, of course, occurs in all disciplines; it is not unusual for a student to pick a major and subsequently a career based upon the ethos presented by a single teacher. The fact that we teach abstract, cognitive

skills in literature courses, however, makes students hypersensitive to our biases, especially those students who are having a hard time “getting it.” They are anxious to know “what the teacher wants”; unfortunately, visual and aural clues are easily misunderstood.

Another core classroom strategy is dialectical discussion. Although lectures often turn into dialectical discussions, and vice versa, there are some fundamental differences between the two methods. Whether they occur during class-time or office hours, dialectical exchanges give instructors the opportunity to observe their students’ developing understandings of the class materials. Instructors can then use this information to reiterate or rephrase the material in ways which better target the specific difficulties their students are encountering. Dialectical discussion, therefore, reinforces those pedagogical objects which can be taught effectively by reading assignments and lecturing (contextual data), but also is quite effective at narrowing and concretizing articulations about those pedagogical objects which can not be articulated clearly, only developed. In addition, by employing the method of dialectical discussion, instructors dramatize a number of general ideas and attitudes regarding literary studies, such as “responses to literature are to be discussed and shared,” and that “interpretations can vary but all must be supported to be considered ‘valid’ academically.” By responding critically to their own critical responses, we also teach them that not all interpretive statements are equally “valid” in a literature class.

This last point indicates another important function of dialectical discussion; it tends to reinforce the lines of authority within the classroom. Dialectical discussions inevitably demonstrate that the instructor has “mastered” the material at hand, if for no other reason than for the fact that the instructor is the one who determines what constitutes mastery. As in a lecture, during dialectical discussions instructors present non-verbal cues to the class which can

cement their authority through an authoritative style but with the additional affect that their statements and comments are spontaneous responses to the material at hand and, hopefully, are more skillfully delivered than the students' spontaneous responses. The authority of those students who "get it" is also reinforced; we praise their interpretive gestures and are visibly grateful for their participation in the class. Our public expressions of approval distinguish such students from the rest of the class, operating as badges of rank; in effect, we identify certain students as role models through our own affective behavior. Similarly, the feedback we give our students on their written work provides them a model for the relationship between a writer and an editor. For instance, if our comments are dismissive ("delete this redundancy") rather than explanatory ("can you condense this passage? It seems repetitive"), or pronounce judgments ("this is circular logic") rather than ask questions ("what is the difference between 'truth' and 'reality' in this paragraph?"), then we project an authoritarian editorial ethos. Since literary students are often required to perform editorial tasks, it is reasonable to assume that how we respond to their papers will affect how they respond to their own and their peers' work. All this information about how one becomes an "authority" in literary studies is, of course, instrumental to a student's development according to Bartholomae's notions about "appropriating" an authoritative, academic voice.

There is no question, then, whether or not we will to some extent teach our students how we feel about reading literature; we can not help but project our idiosyncratic responses to the literary works before the class along with the implication that some responses are more "literary" than others. Furthermore, to whatever extent we pretend we are "objective" about reading literature, we renounce one of the deepest and most obvious reasons for teaching or studying it. To do so is unethical in the sense that it is a denial of our identity as professional academics. Despite theoretical or ethical ambivalence we may have

about it, we are in the business of transmitting - and hopefully critiquing - cultural tradition. Although we do not require students to accept the aesthetic and ethical prejudices of academic, literary culture to succeed in literature courses, clearly students who identify with or “appropriate” a place for themselves within that culture have a leg up on those who do not. To make the distinction between merely teaching students about a cultural artifact rather than how to enjoy it smacks a bit of equivocation; we want them to engage intellectually *and* emotionally with the works they read because otherwise they can not understand their value, and they miss out on what literature has to offer. If the motivation and payoff for engaged reading is some sort of pleasure, it follows that part of what we are up to in the literature classroom is teaching them how to feel good about the literature *we* decide they should read.

So, we try to teach our students to like the literature that we love. It sounds so hegemonic, so Matthew Arnold when you say it out loud. It also sounds archaic, a throw-back to the Aristotelian aesthetic tradition that seeks to recognize great works of art by categorizing the attributes of sublimity; one studies literature, according to this tradition, in order to more easily access the experience of reading it. In the past, of course, the pleasure of reading literature has been institutionalized as the “appreciation” of literature. Until recently, courses in the appreciation of literature were common on college campuses; the ostensible goal of such curricula was to teach students the value of - presumably - great works of literature. Even today at the University of Texas (hardly an academic backwater) the official departmental title of the American Literature survey course is “Masterworks of American Literature,” a title which takes for granted that some literary artifacts are better, more masterful than others. Even though individual instructors are given the right to establish their own canon implied by the works they assign, the concept of canonization is assumed to be valid, in fact, a definitive element of the course’s

logic. No amount of verbal qualification can erase the implied canonization of whatever works appear on a given syllabus, any more than a jury can really ignore damning evidence just because the judge tells them to do so.

Traditionally, the translation of literary theory into classroom practice was elegantly simple and direct in literary appreciation courses, if naïve; teach students THE criteria for masterful literature by revealing them in THE Masterworks of literature so that when we send the new initiates forth into the world they will be able to recognize great art wherever they encounter it. Such pedagogical theory exploits at least two senses of the word “appreciation”; literary appreciation is both the action of recognizing value in literature (thereby raising its value) and the feeling associated with reading a masterful literary artifact, presumably something like the feeling of deep gratitude for a precious gift. Both these events are intended products of a traditional appreciation course, but the skill which students would leave the classroom with - hopefully - is the skill of recognition: not of knowing what you like already, but knowing what you should like as an educated reader.

The above discussion suggests that the conventional methods still employed in most literature courses imply theoretical assumptions which most teachers do not directly endorse. Specifically, typical literary pedagogy continues to teach ideas associated with the supposedly archaic tradition of literary appreciation; our journals indicate we have advanced beyond those notions but our syllabi imply we still believe them. Clearly, “appreciation” as described above is a discredited form of teaching literary heritage, and rightly so, in that it is blind to the tacit, culturally contingent prejudices which valorize any “Masterwork” and thereby promote hegemony. What is objectionable about such practices, presumably, is not the principle of evaluation per se (after all, condemnations of hegemonic practices are themselves evaluative and operate according to an implicit normative system) but the absolutist nature of

traditional aesthetic criteria - the Rules of Art delivered as universal imperatives. Although few scholars these days will claim there is anything universal or imperative about individual interpretations of literature, it is not therefore self-evidently true that all attempts to discuss how literature can be “appreciated” are necessarily naive, misguided, or unethical simply because previous attempts to do so were. Neither are normative nor evaluative gestures inherently hegemonic, although they are always culturally situated, always made from a particular (although likely very complex) cultural orientation. Our current classroom methods, however, teach students that some works – and readers – are better than others while as a discipline most of us give at least lip service to some form of anti-foundationalist cultural theory. No wonder our students are confused; we consistently send them double-messages.

If teachers and readers would stop evaluating the literary works they read then perhaps it would make sense for us to eliminate the last traces of the appreciation tradition in literary pedagogy, as some current trends in critical theory suggest is proper. However, to do so would be impossible, simply because it would run contrary to the experience of reading literature. Readers evaluate the literary works they read; this fact should be analyzed to the best of our collective ability as a ubiquitous phenomenon associated with our subject matter. Certainly literature instructors – not to mention literary critics - should do everything they can in their classes to make the hegemonic power of literature available for analysis, but doing so will not eliminate or even significantly undercut the practice of evaluating literature, nor should it. Once again, literature is an important cultural artifact precisely because we feel strongly about it; an analysis of the process by which our feelings are translated into systems of value, therefore, should be one of the central pedagogical objects of our discipline.

Unfortunately, the first step of such an analysis would be to admit that literary readings – particularly our own - are always completed at least in part according to the type of prescriptive value systems which are problematized (and often vilified) by the current theoretical wisdom of our own discipline. To do so causes a number of pedagogical problems. Just for starters, offering students a thorough explanation of cultural subjectivity is tantamount to renouncing all claims to objectivity, a rhetorical commodity that is much valued in academia at large and hence by students. It is one thing to argue for the inherent subjectivity of interpretive acts from and within the context of professional literary scholarship; to do so is not only acceptable these days, it is fashionable. It is quite another thing, however, to take direct responsibility for our biases as biases within the classroom: a venue where we are supposed to wield some authority. Students come to us for knowledge, and expect us to have some form of mastery of our subject. Most undergraduate students believe that there are, in fact, universal Laws of Art, laws they assume we will teach them in a sixteen-week survey course. We should not be surprised, then, if they feel bewilderment (“I don’t get it”) or frustration (“This is bullshit”) when we tell them that there is no such thing as mastery, only conventionalized, class-based biases - and now you must learn them. Furthermore, anti-foundationalist cultural theory undercuts the entire tradition of cultural transmission. By telling our students that there are no universal criteria for literary excellence we teach them that literary studies is not a “legitimate” academic discipline as *they* know it; unless, of course, we simultaneously offer them some other value to attach to the study of literature.

I am proposing here a reassessment of literary “appreciation” as a valid pedagogical goal; this goal can and should be pursued by methods that at least take into consideration those advances in literary theory that unofficially banished “appreciation” from the collegiate classroom in the first place.

Reinstating some sort of “appreciation” component to literary curriculum could better align our classroom methods (*how* we teach) with currently marginalized elements of (*what* we teach) and motivations for (*why* we teach) literary study. In other words, an updated form of appreciation pedagogy could clarify both the focus and the value of literary studies for our students by making more overt those currently covert class materials. This would all be easier, of course, if one could just return to some prelapsarian state of grace where students could develop a love for the beautiful simply by being exposed to beautiful things. However, since the “osmosis” theory of liberal arts has pretty much been rejected, appreciation pedagogy needs a thorough overhaul.

It should be clear by now that what I have been calling “appreciation” pedagogy bears a distinct resemblance to traditional normative aesthetics, that tradition which starts with Aristotle and stretches through Longinus, Pope, Coleridge, Arnold and Eliot towards its ostensible terminus in critics like Auerbach, Nabokov and beyond. I purposefully use the term “appreciation,” however, to focus more closely on particular issues in pedagogical methodology as opposed to the wider and significantly more abstract horizon of topics that might be engaged by the word “aesthetics.” In effect, I am subsuming “appreciation” under the rubric of aesthetics in the attempt to maintain at least a nominal distinction between larger questions of aesthetic theory and specific pedagogical practices which might be reflected by them. This is not to say that I believe that theory and practice can *really* be separated; as detailed above, this project is founded on the assumption that they are inextricably linked and that the only responsible classroom method is one which directly delivers them together, as a system. Thoroughly engaging the multifarious and ongoing debates that could be said to relate to “aesthetics,” however, is beyond the scope of this essay; i.e. a reconsideration of how one might discuss the affective

and evaluative elements of reading literature in an undergraduate literature survey course.

To begin an overhaul of appreciation pedagogy we first need to identify more specifically what the horizon of that field has been in the past so as to separate the baby from the bathwater. As outlined above, traditional aesthetic theory was reflected in appreciation pedagogy by directly linking the development of literary “feeling” to an enrichment of the student’s understanding of the elements of great literature. The basic methodology was exposure (under duress) to canonical works combined with a (simplistic) descriptive poetics: a methodology which reflects traditional notions of text immanent literary value. As antiquated as such notions may seem, clearly they haven’t disappeared altogether. Max Baym’s discussion of aesthetics, for instance, begins by fusing literature and experience into the event of literary “contemplation.” Baym - writing in 1973, one of the most recent, unrepentant old-school literary aesthetes I could find - defines the general horizon of literary aesthetics thusly: “[aesthetics] is occupied with literature as an energizing principle of contemplation whose objects are desire, love, birth, pain, wonderment, ambition, fulfillment, frustration, hope, despair, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the cosmic and tragic, the true and false--life and death” (294). Aesthetics is further articulated by Baym as the study of “the discrimination of literary excellence in terms of the power of evocation,” a discrimination which is identified primarily through the correlation of textual passages with the literary “feeling” of a reader (294). Literary “feeling” seems to be a cognitive faculty (universal? instinctual? learned?) that is either evoked or employed (depending upon how you look at it) during readings of literature. Further, reading is “ontological” for Baym in the sense that during a literary experience “subject and object are melted down in one phenomenal stream of transcendence, and the ontological gap is closed” (297). Out of this process a

new thing – a reading – is actualized, brought into being. Making some sense of this “phenomenological stream of transcendence” is the task Baym sets out for aesthetics.

As easy as it is to spot Baym’s equivocations from our current height of critical rigor, at least he does not flinch from making a direct albeit abstract statement of what he thinks is and is not within the horizon of aesthetics. According to Baym, a literary aesthete studies literary artifacts in their capacity as stimuli for the “contemplation” of human existence. Although being able to describe literary artifacts clearly is important to the practice of aesthetics, Baym delegates the study of literary artifacts as artifacts to “poetics.” The fact that aesthetics and poetics have been thoroughly conflated since the 1950’s is one of the great errors of literary scholarship in Baym’s opinion (290). Similarly Baym prisms apart aesthetics from literary “criticism” by insisting that aesthetics focuses on the “feelings” stimulated by literature rather than interpretations of any given work; hence, aesthetics is more of a “sentiology” than a semiology. Moreover, while literary “feeling” is associated with “the discrimination of literary excellence,” they are by no means the same thing. Baym seems interested in value judgments, but less for the purpose of judging literary works than because they are products of “feelings” which are themselves products of the closing of the “ontological gap” between literary artifact and human “reality,” between what we know to be real (“I am reading a book entitled Madame Bovary”) and what we feel to be real (“Poor Charles...”). As vague and equivocal as they may seem, these distinctions indicate aesthetics is concerned primarily with the cognitive and experiential phenomena attendant to literary reading, and as such have as much in common with disciplines such as philosophy and psychology as with a poetics or any description of literature as a textual or cultural artifact.

There is no doubt, however, much of Baym’s theoretical foundation must be scrapped as rigorous theory on the grounds that it is based upon evidence

beyond reliable substantiation; *argumentum ad ignorantiam* may be a time-honored ploy of political oratory, but in general it is considered a fallacy in academic debates. Since Kant, at least, claims based upon the direct (self) analysis of (our own) cognitive processes have been deeply problematized; clearly, Baym's definition of aesthetics (and his application of it elsewhere) is rife with such claims. Virtually every assertion he makes raises questions we could answer only by going "behind our thoughts": what exactly is this cognitive faculty he calls "literary feeling"? Where is it located? Next door to our "intuition" or our "imagination"? Is "contemplation" a conscious process embraced or a feeling experienced? Is "contemplation" always valuable, or only when it is of a certain type or degree? Do certain texts "energize" certain kinds or degrees of contemplation, and if so, where is that "energy" stored? As a textual latency? As a potential in the individual reader's capacity for "literary feeling"? Does everyone have the same capacity for literary feeling, or do some of us constitutionally have more feeling than most? Does a "phenomenal stream of transcendence" leave a stain, and if so can you get it out of cotton blends?

Baym doesn't answer such questions or even seem to recognize that his definition of aesthetics begs them. In short, Baym's formulations do not meet the current criteria for responsible theoretical prose.

However, if one regards Baym's comments about aesthetics in a more pedagogical context, as a general model or representation of the relationship between a literary work and its reader, one can not help noticing a number of parallels between it and the broad goals I outlined above for a revamped "appreciation" pedagogy. Although I have used Baym as an example of the traditional aesthete (a move which is perhaps unfair both to Baym and aesthetics at large), much of his description of literary reading is not only plausible, it is "factual" (if by "facts" we mean assertions that can be thoroughly substantiated by material evidence). Taking him strictly at his word, he does

not assume, as did Aristotle, Longinus, etc., that literary meaning immanates from literary texts. Note that for him aesthetics is “the *study* of the discrimination of literary excellence,” a study that does not necessarily include a set of universal norms. Neither does “the study of” discrimination necessarily pursue the ultimate goal of discriminating between “good” and “bad” literary works. Baym very well may believe in the Universal Rules of Art (it is hard to tell exactly what he means due to his habit of writing in gross abstractions), but his program does not logically depend upon that belief. Proposing to study literature in its capacity as a stimulus for “contemplation” and “discrimination” only presupposes: (1) literature is available for sensual consumption, whereby (2) people contemplate a range of human experiences and (3) “discriminate” or evaluate the literary text at hand. One could quibble about the vagueness of the word “contemplation” in this context, but if the word is revised to one that is more neutral, “cognition” or “ideation” for instance, his claim is not a claim at all but an articulation of what *must* be true. There is no doubt that literary texts are perceived or read on a regular basis. There is no doubt that such perceptions stimulate cognitive events of some sort. Although the nature of those events can not be reliably determined, that they occur is easily evidenced, at least as well as anything can be evidenced in the social sciences. Similarly, there is no doubt that readers evaluate literary works. Wayne Booth, to give one example among many, has argued in detail that the consumption of literature *requires* an evaluative response from the reader (82ff).

Baym’s definition of aesthetics, then, could be read as a basic – and provisional – phenomenological model of what always happens when people read literature; as far as it goes, it is indeed a “factual” account in this respect. But it can go no further as it is. Although many others have argued that reading literature can be a transcendental experience and/or that it is an ontological event, Baym’s musings about how “the phenomenal stream of transcendence” is

able to “close the ontological gap” read more like an encomium to literary experience than a serious theoretical gesture, though the vocabulary is drawn from the philosophical lexicon. The fact that Baym falls short here is therefore perhaps excusable, or, rather, is further evidence that his version of how the “ontological gap” is bridged is not a serious philosophical inquiry at all, but something else.¹

It should go without saying that what is at stake in Baym’s description of literary reading is very different than what Heidegger or even Stanley Fish put at stake in theirs. Unlike those scholars, Baym does not attempt, much less claim, to detail the actual phenomenal architecture of reading literature. He attempts, rather, to offer an accurate if very basic representation of the context within which literary reading takes place, but only in order to set the stage for his larger project of teaching a general heritage of aesthetics in America. In other words, his compositional motivation is pedagogical rather than theoretical. It follows that his model of reading should not be evaluated as a theory (though it may dress like one and speak with a theoretical accent) but as a teaching heuristic, a way to frame literary experience for his readers.

It should also go without saying that there is a big difference between the criteria for writing effective literary or philosophical theories and those for developing effective pedagogical strategies for undergraduate literature courses. It *should*, but I am afraid that the stringency of contemporary literary theory and criticism has made many literature teachers acutely conscious of the theoretical and ethical ramifications of their curriculum, almost to the point of paranoia. No one wants to look naïve or perpetuate false and therefore potentially harmful ideas (especially in front of undergraduate students). However, the complexity

¹ Dabney Townsend's [The Phenomenology of Literature](#) is one example of a "serious" philosophical inquiry into literary meaning production. Although Townsend's work is interesting and thorough, I class it along with other theoretical gestures that lay beyond the reach of most undergraduate students.

of contemporary literary theory simply can not be done justice in the undergraduate classroom. At one point Baym addresses the fear of appearing naïve: “Anyone who feels he must formulate a rigorous definition of beauty before he is free to respond to works of art will be in the pitiable state of the man looking on while others feast” (viii). I would offer that such a state is doubly pitiful for teachers of undergraduate courses because in that context the interpretive anorexia of one can lead to the starvation of twenty or thirty. Not that we should be unconscious much less reckless about the theoretical ramifications of what and how we teach our courses. On the contrary, I have already stressed the importance of integrating literary theory and literary pedagogy for our undergraduate students. However, since their audience and goals are different, the standard for excellence or at least competency in a classroom should be different than those for a scholarly journal.

If one allows such distinctions between theory and pedagogy, there are quite a few elements of traditional normative aesthetics which could be brought to the task of updating literary “appreciation” curricula. As in Baym’s formulation of literary aesthetics, “neo-appreciation” curriculum should include the study of conventional methods of experiencing and thereby evaluating literature. Baym, however, only marks the furthest boundaries of reading as experience; to be useful, a neo-literary appreciation curriculum would have to be more specific about how people create powerful readings out of literary textuality. Although the actual course materials and/or requirements might change very little from what is typical now, such a shift in the vocabulary would imply a very different pedagogical object than is currently the norm; simply put, this shift identifies the object of literary study as a cognitive event instigated by the words on the page. By contrast, giving students information solely about a work’s cultural context implies that meaning is “contained” in the text and can be accessed by any reader who has mastered its original social milieu. To take

one example, such teaching methods imply that one must first understand Victorian gender stereotypes to understand fully the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy or the shock value of Song of Myself. Although such an understanding very well may enrich ones understanding of Bronte or Whitman's work, there is nothing to say that two readers equally aware of nineteenth century gender politics would necessarily read or value them identically. In fact, one would be astonished if after offering such data to a class all of ones students fell into a lockstep approach to any literary text. Once again, literary works are such powerful cultural artifacts precisely because they cannot be so easily controlled, because they are so susceptible to the idiosyncratic interpretations of individual readers. Adding a neo-appreciation component to an undergraduate literature class dramatizes for students that the meaning of literature is not simply contained by the text, the cultural context, or the reader, but is a product of the interaction of those three indices.

Neo-appreciation pedagogy, therefore, should be founded on the assertion that there is a substantive difference between defining "the beautiful" or "the valuable" and identifying those texts which people consistently claim are beautiful or valuable. The former amounts to a theory of cultural value while the latter is a presentation of demonstrable fact. Since students generally believe that cultural value is fixed when they first come to us, it is our duty to teach them the fact that value is created by readers within a complex socio-political milieu along with an account of *how* it is created, particularly when they do not already have the resources to understand why many "canonical" works are worth the paper they are printed on.

This lack of distinction between "theory" and "fact" and how they relate to the (currently marginalized) teaching of literary value is evident in the debates surrounding canonization. Although students seem to accept "the canon" as the appropriate material for study in a literature class, it is rarely

invoked these days by a professional scholar without some ambivalence; even those teachers most loyal to a canon must by now have considered the possibility that a fixed cultural program might not serve all of our students all of the time. Since the debate rages on, it seems no one seriously doubts that there is in fact a list of literary works that are considered better than others. This list may be huge and always in flux, but it is not infinite, nor would it be impossible to compile it. Though one might plausibly argue for a more restricted description of it, “the canon” at its broadest could be defined, identified, and indexed as those literary works which are currently being discussed and/or taught in an academic setting. One should note, however, that one could compile this list, even post a canon *du jour* on the M.L.A. website, and yet be no closer to a definitive theoretical assertion of what we should do about it or even the more basic question of how it is developed. Certainly those questions have been addressed at length in critical journals, but without a simple method for providing demonstrative examples, the presentation of canon formation theory in the classroom is typically too abstract to be of any real use to most our students. If we really want them to understand how literary value is created and to be able to apply that understanding to any literary work, then we need to teach our students a simple analytical method for doing so.

So, neo-literary appreciation curriculum needs to maintain a balance between the theoretical assertion of cultural subjectivity and the practical analysis of literary experience - between the “openness” of textuality with the “closure” of reading - in a way that is comprehensible to the average undergraduate. This is a tall order, one that is not easily filled without mystifying either “openness” or “closure.” Baym, for example, describes “closure” as a fundamental part of reading, even its chief purpose, with his assertion that during a literary experience “subject and object are melted down in one phenomenal stream of transcendence, and the ontological gap is closed.”

Baym's phrase provides us an excellent example of one way literary experience can be mystified. By describing the act of reading with vague abstractions, the relationship between texts, readers, and the culture in which they are both imbedded is not explained so much as re-named. Reading becomes "transcendence." Such mystifications send students the message that we don't have to understand (much less explain) how texts with indeterminate meaning and value are (presto chango) transformed into readings where meaning is stabilized and value is attributed. Such events passeth all understanding; the text works in mysterious ways.

Needless to say, many analyses of textual "openness" also mystify readers even when their expressed purpose is to de-mystify traditional methods of literary interpretation and valuation. Take, for example, this short passage from Paul de Man's "The Epistemology of Metaphor":

Being and identity are the result of a resemblance which is not in things but posited by an act of the mind which, as such, can only be verbal. And since to be verbal, in this context, means to allow substitutions based on illusory resemblances (the determining illusion being that of a shared negativity), then mind, or subject, is the central metaphor, the metaphor of metaphors. The power of tropes... is here condensed in the key metaphor of the subject as mind. (45)

This passage comes at the end of a detailed deconstructive analysis of how "the metaphor of metaphors" is used by Locke and Condillac to "objectify" cognitive material; the next section of de Man's essay takes on Kant. De Man's analysis is very thorough and, to my mind, persuasive although the intricacies of his rhetoric demand a level of sophistication and perseverance that can be fatiguing. I choose the above as my example, however, because it is a relatively clear and direct statement of one of his key theoretical assertions: the

"tropological" nature of philosophy and, by extension, reality. The fact remains, however, that after taking apart the tropological mystifications of others, de Man is obliged to articulate some of his own. In short, in this passage and elsewhere he replaces the totalizing narrative of objective reference with the totalizing narrative of "tropology." This substitution is not a flaw nor is it accidental; it is a conscious dramatization of his assertion that there is no "outside" to language, that - as he says regarding Condillac - all philosophy is "the telling of a tale" (44). But precisely because it is a tale, de Man's story about language must end; scholarly convention dictates that analyses are followed by conclusions, and de Man's text is most definitely offered as the work of a scholar. He must bring his essay to a close without contradicting his main claim that language is self-referential, so - like many anti-foundationalists - he dramatizes that thesis with a grand gesture of circular reasoning. Thought is language is trope is thought. His work, therefore, is rigorously and overtly tautological but not duplicitous.

De Man's compositional double-bind is not unique to him nor is his solution to it. Deconstructive analysis and theory almost requires some sort of overt performance of linguistic play to avoid hypocrisy, although not all performative gestures are deconstructive. While a thorough metacriticism of "performative" analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I hope I will be allowed this general observation; it is often difficult to read. From graphical experimentations (the [un]bare-Abel licht Ness of ~~being~~) to polysemous coinages ("différance") to overtly self-referential gestures ("The Epistemology of Metaphor"), "performative" analyses tend to employ strategies which direct attention upon the inadequacy of traditional critical discourse. Even those who have the knowledge and training to meet such challenges often find the process confusing and grueling. Performative essays impede clear and simple determinations of meaning because they are designed to do so. Furthermore,

the sheer bulk of scholarship typically relevant to such essays requires that they employ critical shorthand in the form of specialized jargon. Terms like "aporia," "différance," and "alterity" have a particular critical history with which most literary instructors are acquainted but only some have thoroughly consumed. It is no wonder that many literary instructors opt not to put forth the effort required to read performative analyses thoroughly; confronted with such theoretical and stylistic difficulties, they choose to invest their time and energy elsewhere in the discipline. This is how I mean gestures of "openness" often "mystify" readers; regardless of authorial intentions to the contrary, the ultimate meaning of such texts often lies beyond the grasp of their readers. As such it cannot be confirmed or denied, only accepted on faith, rejected out of principle, or simply ignored.

Undergraduate students, of course, tend to see performative gestures as being the worst kind of nonsense, even in the watered down version they might receive second hand through their instructors. Not only do they not understand the language on the line level, but they are also typically resistant to even the most general assertions of linguistic indeterminacy. As noted above, students come to us for the "facts" about literature so they can master them well enough to get an "A." Although it is our job to correct such misconceptions about literary study and theory, we can not repeat the arguments of theorists like de Man in the classroom because we do not have the time, even if our students would sit still long enough to understand them.

Since gestures of closure tend to mystify textuality and gestures of openness tend to mystify students, it is no wonder our attempts to address such problematics in the classroom are sometimes tentative or covert. However, the hesitancy to articulate *something* concrete about the dynamic between received culture, readers, and texts perpetuates the cultural hegemony it presumably is meant to forestall. Furthermore, without a method for

analyzing this dynamic, after a course is over our students have no way to apply what little we are able to teach them about it in our lectures. They get class notes but no skills. Even if our attempts to describe literary reading can never be “objective” or even do more than figuratively represent how readers “close” texts, such reductive representations will at least focus direct attention on the fact that literary meaning and value is crafted, not discovered, unearthed, unlocked, or revealed. Further, if we are forced to use analogies to explain the relationship between text, culture, and reader, as de Man and many others maintain, at least we should use analogies that don’t violate those few things we actually know about that complex and dynamic relationship.

Since we are unable to examine cognitive processes directly and rigorous logical analysis is too complex (not to mention indeterminate), it indeed seems analogy is the only mode of representation appropriate for crafting the type of classroom method I propose above. Analogical reasoning, of course, has a long history in Western critical theory; the excerpt from de Man's "Epistemology of Metaphor" above is just one of many critiques of the ongoing "story" of metaphysics. As evidenced by de Man and others, current anti-foundationalist thought hinges on the assertion that reality is linguistic in nature: i.e. the world is text. Although anti-foundationalist critiques since Pyrrus have been dedicated to the demystification of this key analogy between writing and reality, they have also always been delivered within it. That there is no "outside" from which to approach the analogical relationship between language and reality is precisely the point of such critiques. As de Man says above, reality "is not in things," it must be "posited" by the mind of the individual and takes the form of narrative. Such notions are substantiated by a whole string of analogies: the phenomenal world is thought; thought is language; language is writing. Out of such analogies anti-foundationalist critiques offer analyses of how language is pervasively reified into representations of "reality."

I propose a more limited and qualified analogy: the act of reading literature is like written or spoken "readings" of literature. By radicalizing this play in the word "reading," I identify common "reading-act" strategies as they appear in the reports or "reading-texts" of other literary commentators. In other words, I analyze the value and meaning a given writer/reader attributes to a given literary text (a reading-text) as a representation of the product of his or her reading-act (what I'll call below an "aesthetic object"); subsequently, I use that analysis to speculate which reading strategies he or she applied to the text to create that product. These speculations will have to be deduced from commonly held assumptions about what reading-acts are and how they are performed. To perform these analyses, therefore, I will outline a taxonomy of common reading strategies drawn from both critical theory, literary tradition, and personal observation.

No doubt, there are significant differences between "reading-acts" and "reading-texts," but since there seems to be no other logical alternative to some such analogy, I submit it is better to try to minimize and interrogate the problems it creates than to continue to avoid questions of literary value in the classroom. I will discuss the problems with this founding analogy between reading-acts and reading-texts at greater length below; at this point I will merely note that the "real" analytical objects of this study are reading-texts - provisionally defined as written, verbal, or ideational representations of an "aesthetic object."

In subsequent chapters I will detail a classroom method founded on the above analogical formulation, one that is offered not as *the* way to approach neo-appreciation in a literature course but as a demonstration of how such pedagogical goals might be addressed more directly than they typically are. As the title of this introduction suggests, I am acutely aware that this dissertation owes much to both the neo-Aristotelian impulse of critics like Northrup Frye and

the radical subjectivism of critics like Stanley Fish, neither of whom, I'm afraid, would wholly approve of my efforts here. Frye would reject what I have been calling neo-appreciation as "yet another document in the history of taste," and Fish would likely denounce it as yet another reification of contingent cultural values or, more likely, that I am merely asserting my right to advance my interests in a particular "interpretive community": the community of literary instructors and critics. Although I hate to be at odds with my progenitors, I assume I am not the only one with this particular oedipal conflict. If we are to continue studying literature as a valid "academic" subject, we *must* do so within the bounds of some sort of analytical framework that accounts for the pervasive and ubiquitous phenomena surrounding literature. In his "Polemical Introduction" to The Anatomy of Criticism, Frye makes a similar call to arms, asserting that the "schematization" of our discipline is unavoidable if we are to advance beyond the realm of "psuedo-science" (15ff). Although Frye's Anatomy is tattooed with all kinds of cultural mediations, I believe he is correct that some kind of "schematization" is necessary for us to advance our understanding - not to mention our teaching - of literature in the academic sphere. There simply is no "outside" to analytical categorization in the academic world; it is what we do. Frye places the value of literary study, accordingly, in the advancement of our collective knowledge, an advancement which he - and I - believe should be a product of careful analysis.

Stanley Fish seems to agree that there is no escaping analytical schematization in literary studies, but approaches that conclusion from a very different set of assumptions about the value and meaning of literature. For Fish, literary study - or any academic pursuit for that matter - can not be valued except through the pre-determined cultural biases that make it possible. Without going into the details of his argument, Fish concludes that academic subjects are arch-subjects; there are no ethical imperatives which justify the

value of such activities which are not always already contingent upon the indeterminate cultural forces which frame them and thereby give them meaning. With a striking similarity to de Man's formulation above, Fish asserts that literary study is valuable because it is *a priori* valued by the culture in which it exists. A further ramification of Fish's logic is that there can be no "progression" of our collective knowledge about literature. We can shift our cultural biases around and therefore manufacture different truths than are currently valued, but there is no such thing as *the* truth to progress toward. This is why Fish "stopped worrying" about the theoretical value of reading literature, much less the validity of his own interpretive gestures, and got back to the serious work of analyzing the readings of other critics.²

If the conclusions of Fish and other anti-foundationalist theorists are correct, then there is no pre-determined value for literary study, no undiscovered truth to warrant our analytical efforts. However, it does not necessarily follow that literary study or any of the "human sciences" is valueless. On the contrary, anti-foundationalist theory insists that there is always a surplus of value and meaning created by our efforts to understand any cultural artifact, whether it is a poem, a theory, a political movement, or an entire academic tradition. It seems to me that the rigorous and ongoing critique of that surplus is or should be the principle focus of academics.

Along these lines Christopher Norris offers a third course to my poster boys for schematization and radical anti-foundationalism. In his [What's Wrong With Postmodernism?](#) Norris demonstrates how a rigorous anti-foundationalist critique - like Derrida's or de Man's - is not only beneficial to but is necessary for the "progression" of knowledge. Specifically rebutting the claims of Fish and Richard Rorty, he claims there is nothing contradictory about being committed

² The above summary of Stanley Fish's work is culled from wide reading in his corpus, but many of the ideas I attribute to him here can be found in the introduction to [Is There a Text in this Class?](#)

to both "scientific inquiry" and "epistemic relativity," and that their claims to the contrary ignore "that in fact [the two] are mutually supportive; that science requires a systematic reflection on its own socio-historical contexts of emergence; and that the failure to sustain this critical awareness is the source of various illusory or mystified knowledge-effects" (100). Norris believes scientific methodology can produce "facts," as long as one keeps in sharp focus that those "facts" are always subject to the principle of "epistemic relativity," which he (following Roy Bhaskar) defines as the awareness "that all beliefs are socially produced, so that knowledge is transient and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time" (98). He contrasts this principle to "the doctrine of judgmental relativism, which maintains that all beliefs are equally valid in the sense that there are no rational grounds for preferring one over the other" (98). Throughout his book Norris juxtaposes these two types of anti-foundationalist thought, resolutely maintaining that the "good" principle of "epistemic relativity" (associated with Habermas, Bhaskar, de Man, and Derrida) is a necessary partner with science in the progression of knowledge while the "bad" doctrine of "judgmental relativism" (identified with Fish and Rorty) is one of those "illusory or mystified knowledge-effects" which come from a lack of rigorous critical analysis. In Norris' estimation, the proponents of "judgmental relativism" suffer from "a wide-spread failure of intellectual nerve, coupled with a basic refusal to conceive of how [science, criticism, philosophy, and sociology of knowledge] might yet be related in the common effort to think their way through and beyond the limits of received consensus-belief" (101).

Although I would never accuse Stanley Fish of having a lack of nerve, I do believe Norris' synthesis of the Aristotelian and anti-foundationalist traditions situates the value of academic study correctly: i.e. in the dialectic between the pursuit of scientific "truth" and the painstaking analysis of how such "truths" are

created. Even if this dialectic never stumbles upon the final, ultimate truth about anything, the polysemous and polyvalent truths generated by this generation of readers have an undeniable cultural/political value in that they will become the foundation for the truths of the next. Hence, the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves - about our reality, history, literature, etc. - are intensely important and should be examined closely from and within a variety of perspectives, one of which, I contend, is what I've been calling neo-appreciation. This, in fact, is one of the most public and political benefits of analyzing literary reading as "truth-making." It can help us to maintain a conscious and ongoing critique of the interpretive conventions we will leave for posterity, particularly where they are already poised to be absorbed uncritically: in the classroom.

By constructing the Hegelian triumvirate of Frye (thesis), Fish (antithesis), and Norris (synthesis), I offer a rather reductive representation of how a range of critics are approaching the larger theoretical questions which are most relevant to the classroom method I will outline in subsequent chapters. As should be clear by the foregoing, however, the justification for this dissertation and the method it proposes is more ethical than theoretical. I argue for practical action according to the terms of our apparent and collective identity as literary academics. Although I find myself most sympathetic to Norris' synthesis of the Aristotelian and anti-foundationalist theoretical traditions, I do not see this dissertation as directly engaging in those debates but as a reflection of them. Rather, I offer neo-literary appreciation as a way that we can better calibrate our identities as teachers to our identities as scholars. Further, I will maintain that the type of classroom method I propose below does not require a particular theoretical orientation; my "reflections" of and upon critical theory are therefore meant to be indicative of commonly held ideas about literature, written in broad strokes.

I learned that "broad strokes" are sometimes necessary and highly productive from Erich Auerbach's Mimesis, in many ways the inspiration for this dissertation. Auerbach uses the opening line from Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" as a particularly appropriate and revealing epigraph for his book. "Had we but world enough and time," Auerbach seems to suggest, those of us who love to read, think, talk, and write about literature would indulge our passion for it languidly:

An hundred years should go to praise
Dante, and on Cervantes gaze
Two hundred to adore the Bard's full breast,
But thirty thousand to the French Realists.

However, like Marvell, Auerbach is a pragmatist; life is too short for prolonged dalliance with the object of one's affection. Auerbach adopts this rhetorical position as he embarks upon an analytical project of such broad scope that no one could hope to treat it thoroughly, much less exhaustively. Auerbach, in fact, admits in Mimesis that had he been able to pursue his topic - "the interpretation of reality through literary representation" - in a rigorous, scholarly manner he "might never have reached the point of writing" (557). Without a doubt, it is most fortunate for literary studies as a whole that he did write Mimesis; it stands among a mere handful of book-length works that can be considered "classics" of literary criticism. Painting in broad, elegant strokes, Auerbach creates a taxonomy of "literary representations of reality" which in turn provides a framework for over five hundred pages of articulate and insightful commentary ranging over twenty-five hundred years of literature. Needless to say, for Auerbach to roll all this strength and sweetness into a ball, he had to cut a few corners along the way.

Beyond its function as a tacit apologia, Auerbach's analogy between literary criticism and affairs of the heart has some interesting theoretical

implications as well. By adopting Marvell's rhetoric of consummation, Auerbach identifies Mimesis as a certain type of literary criticism, a type that has somewhat different methods and motivations than other, more rigorously "scholarly" projects. Throughout Mimesis Auerbach mentions insights about literature that can be reached only through "scientific criticism," "philology," or "in-depth linguistic analysis"; he uses these terms to describe literary criticism that tests specific hypotheses in painstaking detail, making sure every cultural, semiotic, and intertextual angle is addressed. In its Epilogue, he juxtaposes "the method of textual interpretation" employed in Mimesis to other styles of criticism that are more "theoretically" and "systematically" developed (556). Certainly Auerbach was capable of producing "theoretically" sound and "systematically" structured scholarship; other of his publications attest to the fact. In fact, Mimesis itself is full of what others have called exemplary philological close-reading. Auerbach, however, apparently felt his methodology needed to be explained and defended. Specifically, he maintained the breadth of the subject matter required him to eschew focused, scholarly "analysis" in favor of the more flexible and far-reaching critical mode he calls "textual interpretation." In brief, he chose to create a reading by a scholar rather than a scholarly reading.

Whether or not Auerbach's apologia is disingenuous--as apologia generally are--its appearance at the beginning and end of Mimesis announces that he offers the book in a different spirit than, for instance, his celebrated work on Dante. He knows he is up to something different, something outside his usual job description; most of Auerbach's written legacy is traditional, philological analysis, but Mimesis is largely a *narrative*, a story he tells us about the "representation of reality" within the arch-narrative of literary heritage. Vassilis Lambropoulos, for one, takes Auerbach to task for his storytelling:

Auerbach did not compose a History of Literature or the history of a particular idea, figure, or theme that would have been yet another all-encompassing, encyclopedic compendium; he wrote the Story of Literature – a selective philological survey which traces the origins and evolution of that chosen art, the art of the Book.
(7)

Although Lambropoulos means it as an indictment, the above is in fact a delightfully concise description of both the structure and the chief value of Mimesis. I would, however, make one key revision of Lambropoulos' assessment of Mimesis: Auerbach consciously and unabashedly wrote “his” rather than “the” Story of Literature. As stories go, Auerbach's is quite good. It has sweeping, panoramic spectacle, heroes (the Elohist, Dante, Zolá, Christ), villains (Homer and the Nazis), suspense (“how can he possibly unify Virginia Woolf and Dante Alegeri?”), and a classic denouement where all is revealed and the loose narrative strings are bound together. Certainly Auerbach believes his account of figural realism is accurate, but there is nothing in Mimesis which suggests he thought he had uttered the last word about literary realism, much less literature as a whole.

In its conclusion, Auerbach balances his discomfort with the sub-standard analytical methods and untried ideas that comprise Mimesis with his confidence that “the texts themselves” will indicate whether or not his ideas are flawed:

The method of textual interpretation gives the interpreter a certain leeway. He can choose and emphasize as he pleases. It must naturally be possible to find what he claims in the text. My interpretations are no doubt guided by a specific purpose. Yet this purpose assumed form only as I went along, playing as it were with my texts, and for long stretches of my way I have been guided only by the texts themselves.

Furthermore, the great majority of the texts were chosen at random, on the basis of accidental acquaintance and personal preference rather than in view of a definite purpose. Studies of this kind do not deal with laws but with trends and tendencies, which cross and compliment one another in the most varied ways. I was by no means interested merely in presenting what would serve my purpose in the narrowest sense; on the contrary, it was my endeavor to accommodate multiplex data and to make my formulations correspondingly elastic. (556)

My project does not ask to be excused on the basis of wartime, as Auerbach's does, but it does sympathize with the angst of necessarily treating a vast subject in a summary manner. Instead of in the texts, I rest my faith in reading; i.e. I believe that reading-acts achieve closure and that they will do so at least partially according to identifiable conventions. Like Auerbach, I am obliged to express my beliefs by telling my story of literary reading. This story is at times theoretical, at times demonstrative, thoroughly taxonomical, and not infrequently performative.

As I turn toward the proposition and subsequent application of neo-appreciation pedagogy in the following chapters, therefore, I will no doubt give short shrift to some of its theoretical implications. I do so not because I think such issues are unimportant but because the entire project is cast so deeply into the problematics of reading that a lack of focus on my pragmatic goals will likely drown the project in qualifications and self-reflexive digression. As interesting as such theoretical problems may be, I will leave them for another commentator or another day.

I have much smaller fish to fry.

Chapter One:
Neo-appreciation pedagogy and the Lectical Triangle

Language is like a windowpane. I may throw bricks at it to vent my feelings about something; I may use a chunk of it to chase away an intruder; I may use it to mirror or explore reality; and I may use a stained-glass windowpane to call attention to itself. . . . Each of these uses of language has its own processes of thought.

James Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse

This chapter develops and qualifies the analogy between reading-acts and reading-texts I proposed in the introduction as the preliminary step towards creating a practical neo-appreciation lesson plan for undergraduate literature courses. First, I will consolidate and elaborate upon those key assumptions about the "lectical" theory already implied in the introduction which bear directly upon the form of the method I will detail below. (The adjective "lectical" used throughout this essay denotes "having to do with reading as a cognitive process"). These assumptions are "theoretical" in the sense that they are the general claims of the logical system out of which I will make a variety of specific assertions. Before I go any further, then, I want to clarify and qualify how that system is warranted and employed within the bounds of this project. I will do my best to shoot for the middle ground between Emersonian exhortation and sophomoric apologetics.

Assumption #1: Literary texts do not absolutely determine their value or meaning, but they do project a "lectical" horizon that affects how they can be read by any reader.

A variety of theoretical paradigms argue the first part of this assumption: i.e. that texts - literary or otherwise - are indeterminate. Such critiques of textuality invariably posit some sort of text-based indeterminacy that thwarts direct, extra-textual reference. Reference and textual coherence, therefore, occur only as "additions" or "supplements" to the written words of a text. These indeterminacies have been given a variety of names; they are called "gaps," "lacunae," "vacancies," "ruptures," and "aporias," just to mention a few. That one can locate the textual site of such indeterminacies and thereby launch a critique of common "supplements" to them has been well documented. Paul de Man's "Epistemology of Metaphor" discussed above is one example of how clear and productive such analyses can be.

Far fewer contemporary critics, however, have made positive assertions about how or even to what extent the words of a text delimit the possible ways it can be read. It is much easier - and less risky these days - to show that a given text can not be semantically controlled than it is to offer an account of how a text might direct its own mediation. It is easier because there are established, credible methods for analyzing textual indeterminacy, and it is less risky because no "positive" assertions of meaning or value need be made which could in turn be shown to be indeterminate. Such demonstrations of the semantic instability of text, therefore, are virtually irrefutable if they are crafted with a modicum of skill and one judges them solely on their own terms. Instead of giving up the search for knowledge because it will always be authorized by an impure, culturally determined logic, I am of the opinion that we should continue to examine all the "truths" we currently value by employing a stringent dialectic between "scientific" theory and a thorough cultural critique. My re-formulation of appreciation pedagogy makes gestures from both sides of this dialectic. It offers a model (therefore an implicit "theory") of the cultural phenomenon of

literary reading and a method for subjecting that phenomenon to a general critique.

There are, of course, existing models of reading which address to what extent a textual feature determines a reader's response to it. A number of such efforts have located textual features which describe the "presence" of some sort of abstracted reader "in the text." Riffaterre's "superreader," Wolff's "intended reader," Fish's "ideal reader" (which he has subsequently repudiated for a "community of readers"), and Iser's "implied reader" are all variations on this general move. Such inquiries often produce valuable insight into how certain works "project" or even demand a certain kind of reader or reading.³ By focusing on an abstracted reader-in-the-text, however, one implies that the reader's job is to identify with the role he or she is offered by the author. Reading, therefore, becomes a form of compliance, and readings are more or less "successful" depending upon how well a reader obeys the text. Although I agree that readers often follow textual cues regarding whom they should be while reading a particular literary work, I am equally interested in analyzing how they can resist the cues they are offered. In short, I believe identification with the reader-in-the-text is just one of many strategies which should be addressed by the more general account of literary reading I propose.

Of the "reader response" critics mentioned above, only Wolfgang Iser offers a detailed description - in The Act of Reading -of how and which textual features delimit an interpretive or "lectical" horizon. For Iser, the interaction between the structural elements of a fictional text and a reader's consciousness creates an "aesthetic object" - i.e. the phenomena we call "literature" - which is

³ Waddington's analysis of the projection of "voice" in Faulkner is both trenchant and useful. His focus upon the particular lectical challenges and felicities that Faulkner's readers face is a good example of how localized and concrete "reader response" criticism can be. Poirier, on the other hand, offers a more universal model of the pragmatics of reading literature. Both works, however, at least partially assert that literary works - at least good ones - suggest how they are to be read, and by extension, what kind of readers we need to be to consume them.

a very real but necessarily ephemeral and culturally contingent entity. According to Iser, the act of reading fiction transcends the projection of a world by a text - the "fictive" world - and the prior understanding of the world by a reader - his or her "real" world - to generate new possibilities of being in a transient, but actual, third world: the "imaginary" world. Iser colonizes this unapproachable third world through his analysis of the first world of literature: textuality.

Like most contemporary philologists, Iser describes fictional textuality in terms of its fragmentation. Unlike empirical reality, which is perceived as a whole but only understood when reduced to comprehensible fragments (Iser leans on Gestalt theory here), literary texts are perceived as fragments--or "segments" in Iser's terminology-- which must be connected if a whole understanding is to be reached. Iser calls the spaces between textual segments "blanks"; readers fill in these blanks according to culturally dictated conventions of reading further mediated by their individual dispositions, thereby creating a system of connected segments which Iser calls a "referential field" (202). Although the "time-flow" of a reading is linear in the sense that readers progress through a text by encountering and subsequently filling blanks, each connection made by a reader affects not only the new addition to the referential field but the entire system of previously connected segments (203). Once readers connect a given segment to the referential field, that segment loses its status as the focus of their attention, and becomes the perspectival "standpoint" from which they will address the "blank" that marks the boundary of the next segment to be connected (203). Segments already connected and thereby assimilated into the referential field are called "vacancies" by Iser. However, since each new segment encountered can potentially and retroactively disrupt the semantic relationships which connect the various vacancies into a single referential field, all understandings-in-progress of a literary work are unstable

and uniquely temporally situated. Iser calls this retroactive affect on the "meaning" of the referential field a "reciprocal transformation" which occurs between blanks and vacancies. So each time a reader fills a blank in a text, the aesthetic object--the ultimate product of the referential field--is both constituted and re-constituted.

So far, so good. Iser's model seems to offer a topography of textual elements which instigates literary meaning production even if the actual "aesthetic object" remains beyond analysis on the other side of the subjective, although not arbitrary, mediation of the reader. However, the difficulty of actually implementing even this rather modest achievement upon a given fictional text becomes apparent when one lists the many types of blanks that can occur. Some types of blanks that Iser identifies are: 1) shifts in narrative perspective, of which he names four--narrator, character, plot, and "fictional" reader point-of-view; 2) Graphic breaks, such as chapters, serial publications, footnotes, and, presumably, the beginning and end of the work; 3) "negations" of the reader's expectations.

This last type of blank, negation, is the bugbear of the system. First of all, the destabilization of socio-cultural norms and conventions are negations--a necessary effect, according to Iser's model, of any and all (mis)representations of real conventions in a literary context. Stanley Fish's critique of Iser's equivocal definition of "convention" strikes home here ("How to..." 222); taken to the absurd, every single word represents a semantic convention that is destabilized by the fictional context. Another type of negation is the modification of a reader's comprehension of a text within the time-flow of a reading due to the "reciprocal transformation" effected between blanks and vacancies mentioned above. Yet another type of negation is the violation of the reader's expectations, intentionally manipulated through literary conventions.

Even if we are generous enough not to follow these many "blanks" to their logical conclusions, the overlapping interconnectedness of Iser's system of absences is so dense that its complexity overwhelms its descriptive utility, especially since the entire referential field is situated in time.

This is not to say that Iser's theoretical gesture is worthless; over twenty years after its publication, The Act of Reading continues to draw both extensive emulation and criticism. That his work has stimulated discussion is in itself valuable. To my project Iser offers an additional benefit: a coherent and plausible description of the basic architecture of lectical events. Iser, in effect, coins terms that describe the aporias of language from the perspective that they are, in fact, ultimately overcome by most readers. The "blanks" do get filled, and thereby aesthetic objects are brought into being. The term "reading-act" which I employ throughout this work is roughly equivalent to the process by which Iser's "aesthetic object" is created, and is meant in part as recognition of the debt I owe him here. Specifically, this dissertation shares Iser's interest in the re-construction of literary reading as well as his emphasis on developing terminology for reasoned dialogue about that process. Iser's system of blanks and vacancies is indeed so complex and overlapping that it does not bring one any closer to "fixing" textuality, but that is neither his goal nor mine. Textuality will not sit still by itself, much less if you put a reader in the room with it. As my discussion above indicates, there is no question of achieving objectivity; the best one can do - and it is no small feat - is to establish a communal subjectivity out of which critical discourse can occur. My shared goal with Iser and like-minded scholars is a desire to address this apparent interchange between literary texts and their readers in a way that enriches - and critiques - our common understandings of it and thereby enhances classroom pedagogy.

Although Iser's theory of reading does not provide an efficient compositional or analytical method with which one can interrogate reading-acts,

some recent efforts in literary ethics do. Moreover, most of the recent work in literary ethics is founded upon a radicalized analogy similar to the one I propose: i.e. the way we engage other people has some functional resemblance to the way we engage literary texts. For instance, in The Company We Keep : An Ethics of Fiction, Wayne Booth uses this analogy to describe the horizon of responses projected by a given literary text. Booth describes this horizon in anthropomorphic terms; texts either “invite,” “tolerate,” or “resist” responses to them. Booth’s justifications for his “metaphorical way of talking” about textuality are largely anecdotal and hypothetical. For instance, in one passage Booth uses a series of parodic revisions (intended as corruptions) of Yeat’s “After Long Silence” to both demonstrate how a literary work “invites” certain evaluations and why such evaluations are not necessarily illogical, unwarranted, or unreliable. Booth admits that if we ask which “After Long Silence” is better, we will immediately come up against the impossible task of establishing universal criteria for all excellent poetry, what I identified above as the central problematic of traditional aesthetics. Any such criteria would indeed be hopelessly “subjective” in that the possible criteria for “great poetry” are virtually infinite and therefore the only way to narrow the field is by adhering to the idiosyncratic, literary preferences of the individual reader or some sort of “community” of readers. To avoid this problematic, Booth suggests we should instead ask of his three versions of “After Long Silence”: “Are these lines better than those, in this poem?” (103). This shift in focus is crucial for Booth in that the evaluative project moves from judging a work according to “extrinsic” universal criteria (The Rules of Great Poetry) to judging it by “intrinsic” criteria for excellence projected by the work itself, in this case Yeats’ “After Long Silence.”

Booth is aware that some might suggest the difference between establishing the universal criteria for poetry and establishing the particular

criteria projected by “After Long Silence” is a difference of degree not of kind. In response, he appeals to the reader’s experience of the poem in comparison to his revisions:

It might be argued that if we face the pluralities of criteria, we can “prove” any poem superior to any other poem, on any arbitrarily chosen axis of value; in short, we need only become complicated subjectivists. But to say as much would be to ignore the quality of our concrete experience of diverse narrative purposes. For the purposes of a political campaign, Yeats’s poem would be inferior to “I Like Ike” or “Yawn with Ron.” For the purposes of parody, my corrupt versions of “After Long Silence” better it. For the purposes of educating first graders, almost every work I mention in this book will be found deficient. But by the criteria that “we” all find called into play when reading Yeats’s poem, his own revisions are quite clearly superior. . . . Only an artificially impoverished experience-free world could lead us to conclude that the multiplicity of criteria leaves us choosing blindly. (119)

In this short passage Booth gives us a good example of why those who reject evaluative criticism (whom Booth dubs “subjectivists”) have little difficulty refuting the claims of those who try to practice it. One has only to point out that the abstract concept “the quality of our concrete experience of diverse narrative purposes” which Booth treats as a self-evident and self-explanatory known quantity is precisely the point where his model dips naively (perhaps) into the unknowable. There is no reliable access to “our concrete experience” any more than “we” can be sure of “the criteria ‘we’ all find called into play” when reading any literary work. Such rhetorical gestures - a “subjectivist” might continue - are little but transparent attempts to gain the reader’s assent since there is no objective way to substantiate the claim that

any literary work is “better” than another except according to some culturally contingent criteria. In other words, although Booth is sufficiently aware of the theoretical problems of making claims in the first-person plural to put “we” within question marks, he asks us to overlook those problems on the authority of what he assumes is our common experience of the poem.

However, in this same passage Booth also provides a good example of what many find compelling about arguments like his which employ the rhetoric and logic of anecdotal evidence. Such arguments tend to attack radical skepticism as a whole and post-structuralist or deconstructive theory in particular by claiming that such assertions of indeterminacy do not account for the apparent determinacy of experience. In essence, Booth attempts to valorize praxis over theory by offering demonstrations of the frequent incompatibility between the logically sound abstractions of theory and “concrete experience.” Regarding his “experiment” with “After Long Silence,” for instance, Booth cajoles his readers to trust their “responses” to his examples above all else, knowing that his argument will fall flat if they don’t. Addressing those readers who do not immediately concur with his aesthetic judgment of Yeats’ poem, he writes:

If you as a reader here really disagree with the judgment, I know not what to do with you, except to plead “Read it again - and then, no matter what the result, read on.” But be sure that you in fact disagree rather than simply suppose it possible that someone might. Of course a reader totally inexperienced with English poetry might disagree, but do you? (103)

Booth’s appeal here highlights yet another common feature of “practical” criticism as it is applied in literary studies; he assumes and even insists upon a distinction between “normal” readers and professional, academic readers. In the passage above, this assumption is somewhat tacit (“Of course a reader totally

inexperienced with English poetry might disagree, but do you?”), but elsewhere he argues for the value of reading within and against a community of competent readers, a practice he calls “coduction.” Although he acknowledges the range of literary competency is very broad, Booth insists it is not infinite for any particular literary work. Again, his point is demonstrated anecdotally: “What I go to Shakespeare or Homer for, or whether I go to them at all, will vary from age to age, but no age that pays any attention to them will find them justifying a pornography of child torture, say, or a happy indifference to filial piety” (99). Such interpretations, Booth argues, are strongly “resisted” by the texts in question and would be rejected by anyone with even a nominal understanding of the culture within which they appeared and against which they should be read (99). Booth admits that he “does not know what to do” with readers who might resist his anecdotes, but for the purposes of making an effective argument he doesn’t have to. The chances that anyone outside of the literary academy would read The Company We Keep at all are very slim, and anyone who has been educated in the norms and traditions of Western literary art would have to resort to sophistry to disavow the absurdity of characterizing Shakespeare as being indifferent to filial piety, or as being a child pornographer of any kind. Since Booth characterizes contemporary skeptics as sophists whose theories only make sense in an “experience impoverished world,” readers who disagree with his judgment can be conveniently lumped with other “subjectivists” who absurdly deny the self-evidently valid experiences of the rest of “us.” However, as long as one agrees with Booth, as long as readers feel they share a common understanding of Shakespeare or any literary work, his anecdotes carry the weight of lived experience, and thereby have a personal “objectivity” that is undeniable, if logically refutable.

Booth uses similar arguments to substantiate another major feature of his extended analogy between reading fiction and meeting people: his concept of

the "implied author." Much like the abstracted implied readers of Iser et al, Booth's implied author is not the "real" author but those textual features which "imply" an authorial ethos. Although this qualification is an important defense against the "intentional fallacy," the question still arises whether or not a "real" author's intentions control how a text is received. Booth maintains this question posits a false dilemma; either authors control their texts or they do not. If they do, then it follows that there is a right or at least an "authorly" reading that can be drawn from a given text. If they do not, then there is no rational basis for using "the author" as a touchstone of meaning.

I agree with Booth that the case is not so cut and dry. Authors *do* have intentions for their texts; a botanist does not (usually) intend to be read as a poet, and a poet does not want to be read as a medical ethicist. These intentions, whatever they may be, to some extent dictate the form a text takes, who publishes it, which shelf it sits upon in the bookstore or the library, and, perhaps most importantly, in what context a reader comes into contact with it. Often books come pre-categorized for the reader by prior readers. Consider such transmissions of intention as "Turn to page 143 of your *Text* and work problems..." or "I just finished the coolest *biography* of Nixon, I think you'd like it" or "Paradise Lost is the only great *epic* poem composed in English." Texts often come with a recommendation, sometimes even a resume'. Long before I read The Old Man and the Sea, for instance, I was aware that Hemingway was a "great novelist" and by extension his novels were first rate. I had no idea what his texts were like or how they compared to novels I was familiar with, like the Hardy Boys series, but when I did pick up Hemingway's novel for the first time, I expected to read a great work of literature - an expectation which greatly affected how I consumed it. My expectation and subsequent act of reading The Old Man and the Sea as a great novel was to some extent pre-determined by Ernest Hemingway: by his delivery to a certain editor in a certain context, by the

promotion of the book as great literature by a literary master, and most importantly by its subsequent canonization (for much more complex reasons than I am willing to address at the moment).

There are, of course, many other ways authors can assert their intentions for how their texts should be read. Some works, for instance, announce their author's intended context in their titles; i.e. the book *tells* you, in its title, "I am a novel" or "I am a Human Anatomy textbook." Furthermore, the intended lectical context of a text can be projected by the "form" its author chooses to give it. For instance, confronted with a text written in short, rhythmic lines that rhyme, most readers – until they receive contradictory evidence – will decide they are reading a poem. The reader may ultimately decide they are reading a parody or a nursery rhyme or a greeting card, but those decisions will also, to some extent, be due to the reader's comparison of the form of the text to his or her repertoire of linguistic / cultural conventions. My point here and elsewhere, is not that readers are forced to reproduce the author's intentions when they read literature, but the fact that works of literature "invite" some reading strategies and "resist" others is contingent upon both how it was written - by an author, presumably on purpose - and in what cultural context it is read. Although traditional literary appreciation took intentionality for granted, my version of appreciation pedagogy treats the attribution of "intention" during a reading-act as a problematic yet common lectical strategy, not as a thing that is simply absent or present.

Although most current formulations of literary ethics trade upon the analogy between "people" and "texts," Booth's willingness to blur the lines between textuality and consciousness far exceeds the comfort level of some of his fellow literary ethicists. Like Booth, Adam Newton casts ethics as the study of how cultural entities (whether they are people or texts) must confront the alterity of other such entities, but he is unwilling to push the analogy between

"intersubjective" and interpersonal behavior as far as Booth, neither is Newton's argument as dependent upon anecdotal evidence.⁴

The chief asset *and* liability of Booth's The Company We Keep, therefore, is the wealth of information about reading he culls from an introspective analysis of how one (Booth) engages with and ultimately judges the "other" of fiction. Booth freely acknowledges the problematics of his "metaphorical way of talking" but contends -as I do - that the alternative of not talking at all about the evaluative dimension of reading literature is even more problematic, and ultimately "unethical" behavior for literary professionals. We also both identify the "illustration" of our subject matter as our principle goal (381), which underlines why his work is so helpful to my own. Booth's extended analogy between fiction and friends is very teachable; it is catchy, and undergraduate students almost immediately understand much of what he has to say about the relationship between a text and its reader. Like all strong analogies it offers us a great deal of information about an "unknown" referent - in Booth's case, reading as an ethical encounter - by claiming a resemblance between it and something that is more familiar - how we interact with other people. Unfortunately, all analogies are also inherently "false," in the sense that they go further than can be logically justified (which is not at all). Booth recognizes that much of his project is merely a shift in the arch-metaphor of literary study, but defends it as a shift that nevertheless brings different language and therefore different kinds of thinking to bear on its subject matter:

Though [my analogy] will obscure some truths that are revealed in current pursuits of 'meaning' and 'non-meaning,' we can hope that it may release a kind of critical conversation too often inhibited by

⁴ Dr. Newton's problems with Booth's formulation of literary ethics were communicated to me in various conversations we have had over the years, but a written account of the differences between his work and Booth's can be found in the introduction of Narrative Ethics, 10-11.

more mechanized pictures of texts / webs / prison houses /
mazes/ codes / rule systems / speech acts / semantic structures.
(170)

My own project shares this hope that new ways of talking will promote new ways of thinking - at least for students.

A distinction should be made here, however, between 1) the rhetorical *topos* of valorizing "praxis over theory," 2) the rhetoric and philosophy of Pragmatism, and 3) the general critical move of being "practical" regarding what one can know, say, or teach about any cultural artifact. All of these ways of talking have long histories in critical discourse, and this dissertation employs each in some way. Booth's reliance upon anecdotal evidence to persuade his audience (a reliance which I share) draws on such an ancient tradition it can not be dated; if it is not the meat and potatoes of argumentation, it is at least the knife and fork. The philosophical tradition of Pragmatism also has ancient roots; most analysts trace it back at least to sophistry, in particular Protagoras and his famous postulate "Man is the measure of all things."⁵ The fact that appeals to praxis are often used to refute (or more often dismiss out of hand) the anti-foundationalist assumptions of Pragmatism is not as paradoxical as it might seem. Booth, for example, rejects those he calls "subjectivists" by identifying them with "sophistry," as if the term is *a priori* pejorative.

This is not mere name-calling; Booth is deploying the time-honored strategy of countering skepticism with "real world" examples, a rhetorical move that dates back at least to Plato's Gorgias. In that dialogue, Socrates attempts to convert a trio of rhetoricians to the dialectical method. His first two interlocutors, Gorgias and Polus, succumb to Socrates' questions, and eventually

⁵ All of the essays included in Rhetoric, Sophistry, Pragmatism, Steven Mailloux, ed. explore links between ancient and contemporary skepticism in some way, so the collection is a pretty good introduction to the philosophical roots of pragmatism and other contemporary forms of critical discourse.

assent to his claim that the "good" is equivalent to the "true," and by extension that rhetoric is not an "art" (i.e. a science) founded on the systematization of truth (*episteme*) but a form of flattery which merely manipulates popular opinion (*doxa*). However, Socrates' third interlocutor, Callicles, will not commit to Socrates' game of responding to binary questions. Although at times Callicles replies with a simple "yes" or "no," as Socrates' repeatedly requests, often he hedges his answers ("If you say so" or "The latter follows from our previous admissions" or "The latter, Socrates, is more like the truth"), and sometimes refuses to answer at all by claiming not to understand the question. The disputants eventually become frustrated with each other's way of talking, both bewailing the other's slippery use of language. Soon after Socrates' inversion of Polus' defense of rhetoric, for instance, Callicles calls Socrates out with a short - and partially accurate - analysis of the Socratic method:

For the truth is, Socrates, that you, who pretend to be engaged in the pursuit of truth, are appealing now to the popular and vulgar notions of right, which are not natural, but only conventional. Convention and nature are generally at variance with one another: and hence, if a person is too modest to say what he thinks, he is compelled to contradict himself; and you, in your ingenuity perceiving the advantage to be thereby gained, slyly ask of him who is arguing conventionally a question which is to be determined by the rule of nature; and if he is talking of the rule of nature, you slip away to custom: as, for instance, you did in this very discussion about doing and suffering injustice."

This analysis only goads Socrates, who never answers Callicles' critique directly; without missing a beat, Socrates redoubles his "quibbling" dialectical attack on rhetoric. Callicles eventually becomes exasperated with Socrates' strategy of using analogies drawn from "real life" to define philosophical terms: "By the

Gods, you are literally always talking of cobblers and fullers and cooks and doctors, as if this had to do with our argument." In turn, Socrates becomes irritated that Callicles refuses to play along with his game of coming to "first terms": "You and I have a ridiculous way, for during the whole time that we are arguing, we are always going round and round to the same point, and constantly misunderstanding one another." Unable to agree about how to speak to one another, the dialogue breaks down; Callicles falls silent, and Socrates is forced to deliver his truth about truth in a monologue. Even before his peroration is complete, all of the guests at Gorgias' table, particularly Callicles, seem ready to move on to dessert.

No doubt, Plato offers the exchange between Socrates and Callicles as an example of a particular type of Sophistic cowardice. Another way to read Callicles' eventual withdrawal from the argument, however, is that he becomes bored with Socrates' "quibbling," his incessant use of "real life" analogies to define absolute terms. After all, this is the only dialogue that I can recall where Socrates does not actually defeat his interlocutor. Whatever motivation readers attribute to Callicles (he is, after all, a character in a fiction), this dialogue also dramatizes a perennial, rhetorical impasse between skepticism and systematization. In short, skepticism and systematization use the same method - reference to conventional understanding of the "real world" - to support apparently conflicting projects: the analysis of truth versus the discovery of truth. As any freshman composition textbook will tell you, classical argumentation requires *some* common assumptions about what is being discussed. Socrates and Callicles' dialogue fails not because they can not agree about what is real but because they can not agree upon what they are really *doing* . Socrates is interested in discovering the truth through words and Callicles is interested in exploring the words in Socrates' "truth."

These conflicting interests might be personal and pecuniary; after all, sophists and dialecticians have always and still profess competing theories in the academic marketplace. More to the point, however, is that their failure to communicate is a necessary artifact of their unwillingness to agree upon what they are talking about. By contrast, Gorgias and Polus both agree to talk to Socrates about the truth/value of rhetoric. By doing so they have already assented to the founding assumption of all traditional, systematic philosophy: that the truth can be discovered. Callicles, however, enters his dialogue with Socrates as an analyst, not as a disputant. He wants to talk about how Socrates has been talking to his compatriots. Since Socrates does not want to talk about talk and Callicles does not want to talk about truth, they have nothing to say to each other, and Socrates is forced to shut up or make a speech. Needless to say, he speechifies; the very thing he berates the sophists for doing.

In this dissertation I find myself on both sides of this perennial dispute between skepticism and schematization. Like Callicles, I am interested in analyzing conventional ways of talking about literature. To do so, however, I am forced to accept some kind of systematized account of the "truth" about reading, writing, and thinking if this essay is to: 1. Have something to analyze, and 2. Be coherent as a composition. Although the theory of reading I offer below is significantly more qualified and provisional than one Socrates could support, I would not use it if I did not think it had some truth value. Moreover, the fact that both my skeptical and schematic gestures are chiefly substantiated by appeals to *praxis* (or anecdotal evidence, which is essentially the same thing), is an artifact of my resolve to say *something* about how people understand fiction. Like Gorgias and Polus, having agreed to speak publicly about what might be true, I have already assented to the use of "real world" application as a measure of truth-value, no matter how qualified or provisional.

More recent disputes about what one should do with words often duplicate the impasse dramatized in Gorgias between Socrates and Callicles, with the significant difference that the playing field between philosophical "truth-seekers" and sophistic analysts is more level than it has been in over two millennia. Jasper Neel, for instance, believes the feud between ancient "theory-stars" (Plato and Aristotle) and teachers of rhetoric (Protagoras, Gorgias, Isocrates) is still being dramatized in many contemporary English departments (78 - 80). Certainly, almost every English department over the last thirty years or so has had to revisit this ancient debate, often resulting in very real shifts in economic and administrative power toward those that teach the practical application of rhetoric via freshman composition courses. Although perhaps Neel oversimplifies the tension between theory and practice in contemporary English departments (few professors in the position to debate policy would identify themselves as being "theory-stars," for instance), he makes the salient observation that most students do not have the requisite reading or writing skills to understand much less produce contemporary "theory" without some prior training in the basics of rhetoric (80).

Neel's account of the struggle between theory-stars and rhetoric teachers at the departmental level neatly and plausibly deploys the ancient combatants "theory" and "practice," and he is quite right that some such struggle has been taking place for some time. His argument, however, is a good example of how thoroughly convoluted terms like "theory," "rhetoric," "practice," and "Pragmatism" have become in the last few years. Neel wants to distinguish between the "disinterested intellectual inquiry" of theory-stars like Derrida, Fish, Rorty, and Hillis-Miller (writers he admits he uses not because they are unique but because they are "famous"), which yields few "practical" results, and the real work of rhetorical pedagogy, which does (79). Neel does not go so far as to claim that "theory" is useless, he merely wants to raise the currency of

being "practical" about the kinds of things - i.e. basic rhetoric and composition skills - that can and must be taught to undergraduates.

It is telling, however, that at least two of the theory-stars identified by Neel (and Booth and Norris) as being involved in impractical scholarly activities are also often associated with Pragmatism: Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish. In a recent collection of essays entitled The Revival of Pragmatism Rorty and Fish are given respectively the first and last words.

Rorty's essay in this collection attempts to recast Pragmatism as a form of "utilitarian polytheism" (21). Rorty is interested in defending the apparent tolerance of theism in American Pragmatism (specifically in James and Dewey) in contrast to other types of radical skepticism (Nietzsche is his primary example of this camp) which are not. Since Rorty is so often cast as a latter day Callicles, it is interesting that his contribution to this collection demonstrates how pragmatic skepticism is not only inherently sympathetic to democracy (a point that is virtually a tenet of pragmatism), but it can perform the same moral function as religion. In the process of making his argument, Rorty lists the key theses of his version of Pragmatism:

- 1) "Beliefs are habits of action..."; "Because the purposes served by actions may blamelessly vary, so may the habits we develop to serve those purposes."
- 2) "If there is no will to truth apart from the will to happiness, there is no way to contrast the cognitive with the noncognitive, the serious with the nonserious."
- 3) However, "pragmatism does allow us to make another distinction . . . between projects of social cooperation and projects of individual development. Intersubjective agreement is required for the former projects, but not for the latter."

4) "The only possible objection to [religious belief] can be that it intrudes an individual project into a social and cooperative project, and thereby... is a betrayal of one's responsibilities to cooperate with other human beings."

5) Therefore, "the pragmatist objection to religious fundamentalists is not that fundamentalists are *intellectually* irresponsible..., rather they are *morally* irresponsible in attempting to circumvent the process of achieving democratic consensus about how to maximize happiness" (27-28).

The traditional critique of Pragmatism, of course, is that since truth is cast as a form of belief, it provides no philosophical basis from which to condemn (currently) socially reprehensible actions like fascism, child pornography, spousal abuse, etc. Rorty tries to answer this criticism with thesis number three above: moral choices are performed in two realms, the public and the private. According to Rorty, moral choices in both of these realms are mediated purely by an individual's "will to happiness," but in the public realm an individual's happiness is achieved through cooperation and therefore must account for the beliefs of others. This postulate is a slight revision of the one Gorgias and Polus try to defend against Socrates' dialectical attack: pleasure is the ultimate good. However, while the Greek sophists use that postulate to promote the practical value of rhetoric as a means for achieving happiness (by defeating the arguments of others), Rorty uses it as the basis for why one is morally responsible to come to terms with others, at least while pursuing "projects of social cooperation." In other words, Rorty takes the Socratic position; we need to talk to each other to establish mutually acceptable "truths," to achieve a "democratic consensus" that ultimately will maximize our common "happiness." Obviously, Plato and Rorty have very different understandings about what "truth" is, but it is instructive that the chief

progenitor of essentialism and the current poster boy for pragmatic skepticism call for the same kinds of public actions.

Stanley Fish is a better candidate for the role of Callicles, and many a modern day Socrates is or should be grateful for his consistent refusal to assent to first terms. If all else fails, one can always bolster one's assertions by flailing Fish for being an unreasonably slippery sophist. Dr. Fish is almost always good for a sound byte or two in this regard. For example, in the aforementioned collection of essays on Pragmatism, Fish in his own words has been given the task of "summing up or wrapping up or mopping up" after the various other contributors. At the end of some four hundred pages of thoughtful commentary regarding the possible uses and/or value of pragmatism, Fish posits:

If pragmatism points out that its rivals cannot deliver what they promise - once and for all answers to always relevant questions - pragmatism should itself know enough not to promise anything, or even to recommend anything. If pragmatism is true it has nothing to say to us; no politics follows from it or is blocked by it; no morality attaches to it or is enjoined by it. (419)

Taken by itself, this passage is ripe to be harvested for yet another straw Fish citation. Here, as in similar assertions he has been making for the last twenty odd years, Fish is arguing against taking critical theory of any kind too seriously; philosophy, political science, linguistics, psychology, jurisprudence, and particularly literary criticism are all just discourses of particular and always changing "interpretive communities" which are self regulated by current fashions of rhetorical potency. In other words, an assertion within any of these discourses is "true" if its relevant "interpretive community" believes it is true, or at least plausible. Following this assertion, Fish "stopped worrying and started learned to love interpretation" (again?) because the absence of any extra-rhetorical truth liberates him from the anxiety of getting it wrong: as long as he

writes persuasively. No wonder he has no worries; the man can write a hell of an essay.

It is no accident, however, that Stanley Fish is placed in the "mopping up" position of a collection of essays about Pragmatism. Whether it is a "new" theory or just a re-heated way of talking, nearly all of the essays I have read which address Pragmatism do so with an eye to its potential for generating real benefits for real human beings. Our collective interest in the possibility of *any* kind of transcendental truth might be merely an artifact of communal wish fulfillment, as Fish asserts in one of his rhetorical modes. However, in another - less frequent - rhetorical mode, Fish implies that there are some strong, practical reasons to do theory. Regarding the critique of First Amendment jurisprudence, for instance, he asserts that the language used to argue such issues "is either empty and incoherent or filled with an incoherence I don't like" (421). Fish goes on to say, however, that such "empty" language should not be eradicated from jurisprudence, only that it should not be "worshiped," because:

If we worship it we shall find ourselves saddled with things we don't want; but if we avail ourselves of it - with a lightness that will be bearable in that it does not penetrate to our being - it can be put in the service of what we do want." (421)

In a much earlier essay, "Demonstration vs. Persuasion: Two Models of Critical Activity," Fish similarly shuttles between the first person singular ("I don't like") and the first person plural ("we don't want") while defending the value of doing literary criticism even though such gestures can have no pretensions to extra-rhetorical truth. In that essay, Fish argues that his notions about the rhetorical nature of "truth" make literary criticism a worthless word game only if one believes "that in order for something to be interesting, it must directly affect our everyday experience of poetry: and that assumption is in turn attached to a certain anti-theoretical bias built into the ideology of New Criticism .., and it is

that point of view that I have been challenging" ("Demonstration" 371). Both of these passages imply that what Fish is doing - i.e. metacriticism - has "real world" benefits. In the first example, deploying language with a non-reverential "lightness" can be used to get what "we" want, presumably laws that are conducive to or at least are not hostile toward certain (liberal?) applications of the First Amendment. In the second example Fish implies that metacriticism has value because it opposes certain foundationalist assumptions about the goals of critical discourse: i.e. to discover the extra-rhetorical truth about poetry. Fish does not dispute that "our everyday experience of poetry" can be affected by critical discourse, only that the criteria for value for such gestures is not the discovery of truth but whether or not or to what degree they win assent from their audience. Both of these statements assert, therefore, that some ways of talking about language, law, literature, etc. serve "our" interests more than others. In other words, he implies that "our" truth is preferable - more humane, more accurate - than "their" truth, whomever they may be.

All this is not to say that Stanley Fish is a hypocrite because he in fact believes some things are more true or at least more desirable than others; the passages above, and the many others like them in his corpus where he asserts some "truth" or another, can be understood within his contention that "truth" and rhetorically contingent beliefs are the same thing, and furthermore that there is no shame in asserting the former as long as one admits it is also the latter. From Fish's perspective we can't help having beliefs, so we should stop searching for a non-existent, absolute truth and just get to work: whether that work is doing philosophy, interpreting literature, writing history, or trying legal cases. Where he is a bit disingenuous, however, is in passages where he debunks the possibility that the process of arguing our rhetorically contingent beliefs within a given "interpretive community" might be progressive and

transformative, perhaps even a little transcendental. For instance, in the process of mopping up the question of Pragmatism, he tells us it teaches:

That we live in a rhetorical world where arguments and evidence are always available, but always changeable, and that the resources of that world are sufficient unto most days. It is neither a despairing nor an inspiring lesson, and it doesn't tell you exactly how to do anything (it delivers no method) although it does assure you that in ordinary circumstances there will usually be something to be done. (432)

Pragmatism is rhetoric is a game we play: go fish. However, in the next and final paragraph of the essay, Fish seems to proffer an "assurance" such as he credits to pragmatism, delivering to his reader a sort of backhanded peroration:

But successes do happen; obstacles are sometimes overcome; new and hitherto unthinkable links are forged. That is the world pragmatism describes and the world we inhabit independently of its description. Pragmatism is the philosophy not of grand ambitions but of little steps; and although it cannot help us to take those steps or tell us what they are, it can offer the reassurance that they are possible and more than occasionally efficacious even if we cannot justify them down to the ground. (433)

Surprise, surprise! Stanley Fish is a pragmatist! Pragmatism describes the world correctly, albeit with too much gusto. What Fish has been up to all along is not a refutation of whatever Pragmatism might mean but a particularly qualified pragmatist account of the world, one that refuses to accept the claims of like-minded theorists without processing them through his own ideas about language, meaning, and the possibility of efficacious action.

Maybe it's just me, but I can't help hearing reverberations of Emerson in this peroration. A variety of commentators (Rorty, Cavell, Poirier, to name a

few) identify Emerson as the progenitor of American Pragmatism, or (as in the case of Cavell) assert that what is now called Pragmatism exists only by virtue of its tension with Emersonian Transcendentalism. Clearly, Fish's rhetorical style is very different than Emerson's, but they seem to be covering similar ground, each offering both qualifications and assurances. One can leaf through Bartlett's quotations to find any number of Emerson's grandly ambitious exhortations, but such bumper stickers should not be understood apart from the highly qualified and patently skeptical essays within which they appear. Take, for instance, this passage from Emerson's "Circles":

But lest I should mislead any when I have my own head and obey my whims, let me remind the reader that I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle any thing as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no Past at my back. (310)

And again, from the same essay, Emerson describes the halting progress of the intellectual worker in a world hostile to "new" ideas:

Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder: the steps are actions; the new prospect is power. Every several result is threatened and judged by that which follows. Every one seems to be contradicted by the new; it is only limited by the new. The new statement is always hated by the old, and, to those dwelling in the old, comes like an abyss of skepticism. But the eye soon gets wonted to it, for the eye and it are effects of one cause; then its innocency and benefit appear. (304)

Even his most over-the-top exhortations - "If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to

him" - are almost always immediately followed by an admission that intellectual labor is struggle: "Patience - patience" ("The American Scholar"). Emerson reminds us that intellectual labor is arduous and never finished but also that occasionally, as Fish concedes, "successes do happen." Moreover, Emerson, like Fish, warns that progress is made "by little steps," but that there is "always something to be done." Carefully, patiently, one tries out one's ideas within a contingent world, albeit reassured that "the resources of that world are sufficient unto most days."

I am not merely playing a game of "spot the pragmatist," although I do see a conceptual thread linking many of the authors I have discussed so far. Fish, Emerson, Callicles, Rorty, Booth, Iser, Norris: all of these writers seem to be struggling in often very different ways with the twin impulses of doubt and belief. Specifically, all of these writers seriously doubt the adequacy of language to say anything objectively true about the world. And yet, all of them find some reason to keep expressing what they believe about life, language, and the possibility of right action in the world. Perhaps, the attempt to say something more true than the last guy or gal is nothing more than a persistent and nostalgic desire for getting it right, the urging of a vestigial organ left over from the Enlightenment. Perhaps, as Fish and Callicles are forthright enough to point out, we keep talking about the possibility of truth value because it pays to do so; the spoils of the profession go to the rhetor who carries the day, or as Fish puts it, "the prize in the competition is the (temporary) right to label your way of talking undistorting, a label you can claim only until some other way of talking, some other vocabulary elaborated with a superior force, takes it away from you" ("Pragmatism" 431).

These very real motivations notwithstanding, I think there are some other reasons why the above mentioned writers strive for a greater measure of truth value through language, specifically through the simultaneous production

and analysis of theories of meaning production. The most obvious one is that though language is inadequate to the task of describing the world, it does not necessarily follow that all linguistic descriptions of the world are equally inadequate. It is not entirely irrational, therefore, to hope that one's latest attempt to get it right might be a little less wrong than one's last attempt. Moreover - in the spirit of Booth's "coduction," Rorty's "projects of social cooperation," and even Fish's "interpretive communities" - there is the possibility that through dialogue with others, dead or alive, occasionally "new and hitherto unthinkable links are forged." Although the steps may be small and halting, there is the possibility that the process of continually confronting our intersubjectivity through careful analysis does more than just create new ways of talking. Occasionally such efforts might yield new ways of being toward each other publicly that are less hostile to our private freedoms. As mentioned above, one of my primary justifications for neo-appreciation pedagogy is that we should be very careful and conscious about our roles as cultural transmitters. The valorization of both doubt and faith that is endemic to Pragmatist thought has greatly influenced how I think about my duty as a teacher. The trick, of course, is to make sure that self-consciousness does not devolve into timidity or, worse, a disingenuous rehashing of literary "heritage."

Another theme that keeps cropping up in the writings of this gypsy caravan of Pragmatists is that the process of speculating about meaning production can be personally transformative. Whether it is primarily performatively (as in Emerson), or analytically (as in Rorty and Fish), or schematically (as in Iser and Booth), each of these writers demonstrates that the process of considering the words of others and producing some words of one's own can produce a new understanding of one's relation to the world. Quite simply, thinking and writing about meaning production tends to produce new forms of self. This is not necessarily a good or bad thing, nor is it exclusive

to Pragmatism. However, most of the writers generally associated with Pragmatism - and certainly the ones I have listed above - demonstrate a particular awareness of their enmeshment in language, and how that enmeshment both constitutes and constrains who they are at a given moment. Furthermore, they see this enmeshment not as a calamity, but as the springboard of their intellectual life. A Pragmatist doesn't bemoan subjectivity; he or she works with and within it. You'd have to ask them, of course, but from my reading it seems like they feel their conscious enmeshment in language is a good thing. It seems to bring them pleasure. Again, one of the overt pedagogical objects of neo-appreciation pedagogy is an analysis of literary and/or linguistic value. Our students often do not share or understand the pleasure that can be drawn from being immersed in language, the joy of playing with words and ideas, whether they are ours or someone else's. The Pragmatist celebration of subjectivity sets a liberating tone for students who are all too often restrained by their fear of getting it "wrong." Pragmatism teaches such students that they will always get it wrong to some extent, but in the process they might also get some things right.

Whether or not Pragmatism is a movement, a theory, or just a new name for a very old bag of tricks, this dissertation shares a general affinity with these twin impulses of doubt and belief, and I therefore employ some of the same tools to till my little plot of intellectual ground. More specifically, I believe it is worth talking about conventional strategies for reading literature because they seem to exist, even though our only access to them is through speculation, careful as it may be. I have no doubt that I will get it wrong at times, although I believe much of what I have to say about reading-acts is right. My hope is that when I get it wrong I will do so in interesting ways.

This dissertation also employs some of the theories of meaning production discussed above in some very specific ways. The assumption that

heads this section is "literary texts do not absolutely determine their value or meaning, but they do project a 'lectical' horizon that affects how they can be read by any reader." Following some of the ideas attributed above to pragmatism, I assert that meaning production during a reading-act is a deployment of self and a particular understanding of the world in response to a particular textual pattern. I believe the Pragmatist notion of communally and dialogically determined "truth" is a good model of what happens when we read. We are taught to pretend that fictions are *not* things; they are meaning-full entities which we must cooperate with - like people - in order to understand them. Although I believe there are times when readers focus upon the "thingyness" of texts, and a variety of my classroom strategies are designed to encourage students to do so, the fact remains that most of the time we read with the pretense that fictional words should be understood as a human voice, and therefore reading is approached as an intersubjective encounter. It is here that Booth's version of literary ethics has its most force and influence upon my work. The analogy between reading fictions and meeting people highlights the fact that both encounters are governed to some extent by a range of conventionally determined rules of intersubjective engagement. Although the conventions for dealing with people and dealing with fictions are very different in some ways, I maintain both can be identified, categorized, and even hierarchied according to ubiquitous practice. In the terms of this project, fictions project lectical horizons which in turn invite, tolerate, or resist certain lectical strategies. The lectical triangle detailed below is one way to organize these lectical strategies; lectical analysis as a whole sets up a protocol for undergraduate students to interrogate particular textual patterns with that taxonomy.

In addition, the Pragmatist notion that our intersubjective encounters with the world are to some extent self-transformative informs both the metier and the tone of how lectical analysis should be practiced in the classroom. I

describe the product of a reading-act, an aesthetic object, as a new, real artifact of a reader's encounter with a text. Reading is a process of accommodation that transforms (an author's) words into (a reader's) thoughts, and which consequently constitutes an addition to the reader's understanding of world, and by extension him or her self. In short, reading changes you, therefore you should be careful - and conscious - about it. This general belief about the affect of reading instigates a variety of procedural elements of my classroom method. Specifically, lectical analysis should be performed self-consciously, like an Emersonian essay. It should be understood as a *public* performance of self which refers to something - the past, a text, a reading-act, a thought - that cannot actually be reconstructed, only reconfigured in language to be used as fodder for new discourse and fuel for new forms of self expression. This reconfiguration can always be performed cynically, but I encourage students to analyze reading-texts with respect for the unique alterity of a fiction as they find it. Here, of course, I am echoing Emerson's famous question at the beginning of "Experience": "Where do we find ourselves?" His answer, I find, is similar to my own, and consequently one I try to persuade my students to adopt:

Onward! Onward! In liberated moments we know that a new picture of life and duty is already possible; the elements already exist in many minds around you of a doctrine of life which shall transcend any written record we have. The new statement will comprise the scepticisms as well as the faiths of society, and out of unbeliefs a creed shall be formed. For scepticisms are not gratuitous or lawless, but are limitations of the affirmative statement, and the new philosophy must take them in and make affirmations outside of them, just as much as it must include the oldest beliefs. (892)

Although I am quite certain that Emerson would have strong doubts about the liberating effect of undergraduate literary study, I try to foster such moments in the classroom by consistently asking students to perform concurrent acts of doubt and belief. Assignments are structured to thwart the dominion of their (apparent) tendency to absorb information uncritically while requiring them to act as if they accepted ideas that still seem quite foreign to them. Many, very traditional pedagogical methods can be said to do the same thing, of course, but my assignments are overtly structured to encourage an unresolved but highly productive tension between what students believe about a fiction and a careful (self-)critique of those beliefs.

Before students can do anything other than be irritated by my Emersonian cry to press "Onward," they need to be taught some sort of method for expressing their (often unconscious) beliefs about what one should do with fictions and a way to interrogate how those beliefs are deployed in the reading-acts they and others perform. This has required developing a vocabulary that is simple enough for them to remember but specific enough to have some analytical utility. In short, the method needs to be practical for undergraduate application or it will be worse than useless; it will only confirm their belief that literary study is itself useless. Here I rely upon the third of the fragments I have shored up against my reasons: the appeal to *praxis*, Pragmatism, and the necessity of being practical. "Being practical" in the classroom usually requires some sort of schematization. Students quite simply are deeply resistive, and therefore rarely understand, abstract concepts that are not organized into some sort of easily understood, differential system. Accordingly, I would assert part of the reason that the Freudian model of personality, the Marxist model of social economy, and the rhetorical triangle have had such far-reaching effects upon their respective disciplines is that the wide-ranging and abstract "truths" they express can be elaborated indefinitely (by professional academics) but also

expressed heuristically (for students). In the classroom, I offer my system of lectical analysis and the theoretical assumptions that support it as simply as I possibly can. Every semester I adjust the vocabulary and deployment of my heuristic to account for what seems to work and what doesn't. Accordingly, many of the terms I employ in the classroom are used not necessarily because I believe they are the most accurate words for the concept at hand but because through experience I have learned the best words often induce the worst kind of confusion. Since I can't always predict which words will be most easily accessible to students (they eat up the word "aporia," for instance; go figure), at times I have had to subordinate what I believe ought to be said about reading fiction to what practice has shown more likely can be understood about it in the undergraduate classroom. Following this same principle, I retool traditional literary terminology whenever possible rather than create utter neologisms. Students have already heard words like "image," "symbol," "plot," and "theme"; to perform lectical analysis they just need to learn how to deploy those words a little differently.

My duty to the audience of this dissertation, however, is significantly different to the one I discharge in the classroom. The purpose of this essay is to elaborate upon - and defend - the reasoning that supports my classroom pedagogy. I teach the way I do because it works; I am writing about the theories that surround and support the way I teach because it is interesting (in all meanings of the word) to do so. Like other systematizers I have mentioned - notably Booth and Iser - in this dissertation I attenuate my engagement with the big questions of meaning production by limiting the focus of my analysis, that is, by being practical about what can be said about meaning production in a single volume. Booth's efforts in *The Company We Keep*, for instance, are focused upon developing an "ethics of fiction." The focus of this dissertation is at the same time more general and more specific. It is more general in that I want to

offer undergraduate students a more widely applicable model of reading, one that can describe other modes of response in addition to the purely ethical.

Like Booth, however, I do not have the time or the inclination to account for *all* of the possible ways readers can evaluate fiction. Therefore, I choose to focus on one of the most common criteria of literary value, particularly among undergraduate students: the assessment that a literary work has "lectical realism." By this term I do not mean that the fiction realistically represents some thing, event, idea, or experience, i.e. that the fiction has verisimilitude, but that the reader has somehow accommodated the reading-act into his or her understanding of the "real" world. As will be detailed more fully below, "lectical realism" is a quality attributed to virtually all fictions by the process of achieving closure during a reading-act, a process which chooses what kind of pretense will be used to incorporate the words of a fiction into the reader's reality. The term "lectical realism," therefore, is an arch-assessment of fiction, the foundation upon which all other assessments - among them that a fiction is "realistic" - are built. In essence, this means the only reading-acts which do not include an assessment of "lectical realism" are those where the reader resists the "invitations" of a fiction for some reason, usually due to some conflict between the lectical horizon the reader perceives is projected by the text at hand and his or her lectical repertoire. Below I will discuss how this terminology is deployed in the practice of lectical analysis (as well as explore potential problems it elides). At this point, however, I merely want to emphasize that my focus upon lectical realism as the primary product of lectical closure is performed within - and evidenced by - the traditions of *praxis*, Pragmatism, and practicality.

Similarly, I spend more time below exploring the implications of the assumption that texts "project a lectical horizon" than arguing whether or not they actually do so. Since Booth has already expended so much energy in the defense of that assumption, I am content here to build on his labor.

The model I want to build, however, requires a few other assumptions about reading-acts. Specifically:

Assumption #2: Reading-acts are created by the "closure" of textual aporias and subsequent lectical assessments by a reader.

This assumption calls for a highly qualified definition of truth-value, one that is adequately articulated by Bhaskar's "doctrine of epistemic reality" quoted in the introduction above. As Norris suggests about this doctrine, the stories we tell ourselves about history, literature, or even ourselves often achieve the status of "truth" due to the ubiquitous practice of reading for closure. Reading, then, is in a sense not only a truth-seeking endeavor (we try to find out what is "true" about or in a given text) but potentially a strategy for truth-making. Although I address some of the practical implications of this conclusion below, for a complete discussion of the issue as a theoretical problem I direct the reader to the work of Norris, Terry Eagleton, or Paul de Man.

A few other assumptions about "closure" are necessary for my analysis of common lectical strategies, none of which can be thoroughly substantiated with "objective" evidence and therefore must be qualified. The first of these is that the aporias of a text must be "closed" somehow prior to lectical judgment or interpretation. To what extent one closes a text "subconsciously" or "consciously" is inaccessible except through introspection or second hand report, but there is general agreement that textuality is always indeterminate without substantial lectical mediation. Certainly there are pre-understandings and pre-judgments which are always brought to any reading-act and can be deployed during it (particularly in the case of a second reading), but my assumption here is that such pre-understandings - along with the words on the page - are the materials of lectical mediation, not its product. For instance, in

this project at times I will address a particularly common "product" of literary reading: the assessment that the text in hand is "realistic" (not to be confused with the "arch-assessment" of the essay, that a text has the quality of "lectical realism"). It should be clear from the start, however, that this assessment is never a necessary product of any reading of a given text. On the contrary, one can quite easily approach a text with the pre-judgment that it is or *should* be "realistic" and come away from the reading-act with the assessment that it is not. Similarly, I will show how textual features which seem to "resist" the assessment that they are "realistic" can be closed in such a way that such an assessment is not only possible, it is probable. In short, there are no such things as inherently "realistic" texts or readers.

The above distinctions describe the elements of a reading-act in the following order of occurrence: 1. The recognition of a lectical horizon, comprised of textual features or "fragments" and a reader's pre-understanding of the world; 2. The "closure" of the text, which is effected by lectical strategies for (artificially) establishing reference between textual fragments and a "world"; 3. The assessment of the text, which is a complex attribution of meaning and value by the reader. This model of reading is essentially a less detailed version of Iser's, with the additional and general presumption of the existence of lectical "assessments." While both Iser and Booth create a variety of literary assessments in the course of their arguments, I begin with the assumption that any literary work can be deemed "realistic" or "intellectually stimulating" or "entertaining" and then work backwards to show how such assessments might be made possible by employing certain strategies of closure. This model further indicates that lectical assessment is re-assessment, or rather a re-reading of the closure of a text. Although I have no rigorous way to interrogate this assertion (how long after closure does assessment take place? Seconds? Milliseconds? Days? Is it a function of will? Memory? Morality? Are assessments ever final or

are they always re-assessed?), I make the distinction between "closure" and "assessment" in order to better discuss the relationship between the process of reading and its products, both of which I identify as elements of the reading-act.

Clearly enough, reading-acts as I describe them do not occur every time someone picks up a work of fiction. I define fictional reading-acts as "complete" readings of a textual feature by an "engaged" reader. "Complete" here has two criteria: 1. All of the words of the textual feature are read; 2. All aporias *recognized by the reader* are "closed" in some way. According to these terms, the completeness of a reading is mostly a function of the individual reader's willingness and ability to address whatever challenges a text presents to him or her in the moment. This point is meant to account for the obvious differences in the lectical strategies of readers, or even the same reader on different days. To some readers, for instance, Gulliver's Travels is a fantasy narrative; for others it is a satire of eighteenth-century English politics. Although one might correctly say that the latter is a more sophisticated or informed assessment, clearly someone could read all of Gulliver's Travels and "appreciate" it without assessing the satirical interpretation it also "invites." This distinction allows one to insist that students perform "complete" reading-acts (something they can do) without insisting they perform *all* of the reading-acts overtly "invited" by the text at hand before they know how. Since I believe that literary pedagogy is inherently a form of cultural transmission, I would assert that *one* of its goals should also be to supply students with information about the culture within which a fiction was written as a step towards understanding the terms of its critical heritage: in other words, so the literary "canon" defined in part by that heritage can be critiqued.

These notions about the completeness of reading-acts concur in theory with Iser's formulation of the sequential nature of reading, that "segments" of textuality are connected by a reader in time. It follows that reading-acts are not

"complete" only when the last word of the work is read but also at any time a reader stops an engaged reading-act-in-progress. Below I will use the term "textual feature" to denote groups of words which are considered together by a reader during a reading-act. Obviously, setting the limits of a "textual feature" - i.e. deciding which words are "in" it and which words are not - has potentially important semantic ramifications. Textual features may be words, phrases, sentences, passages, paragraphs, chapters, stanzas, or entire fictions; the words of a textual feature may be syntactically contiguous or they may be separated by words that are not considered a part of it. Most importantly, how many and which words are included within a given "textual feature" is determined by a reader as opposed to the intrinsic structural elements of the text. This is not to say that texts do not have identifiable, structural units which affect how readers respond to them, only that reading-acts are not utterly dictated by those structural units. The distinction here is between units of text which can be identified according to grammatical and literary convention (The Scarlet Letter has twenty-four chapters, its first paragraph is comprised of one sentence of twenty-three words, there are over two hundred occurrences of the word "red," etc.) and the specific units of text which are used by a reader to perform a specific reading-act. One cannot predict, therefore, which units of text will be treated by a particular reader as separate textual features, but after the fact, one can use a reading-text, if one is created, to match the textual features reported by that reader to textual cues that apparently "invited" them.

According to the sequential progress of reading-acts, one can and does make a series of lectical assessments throughout the reading of a text, assessments that can change with each new textual feature encountered. A complication of this definition is that textual features stop being words as they are accumulated into an aesthetic object; in other words, a textual feature will eventually become a thought about the word or words that comprised it when it

was first encountered. Moreover, the "final" lectical assessment performed after all of the words of a fiction have been read is not different in kind from the many assessments made prior to it, although, obviously, the factors which impinge upon it multiply as a reading progresses. Although here I will not dwell on these complications of my notion of "complete reading-acts," I recognize them and will address them more thoroughly in subsequent chapters.

This definition of "complete" readings is meant to delimit what I mean by lectical "engagement" and "non-engagement" here and below. My definition of "complete" fictional reading-acts describes specific behaviors (reading all the words, closing all the aporias) which must be performed within the lectical context of "literary engagement." "Engagement" here is roughly equivalent to Austin's description of perlocutionary "uptake" in How to Do Things with Words. Austin defines "uptake" as the recognition by an audience that a certain conventionally determined speech act has been made, that is, that the audience recognizes an appropriate rhetorical context against which an utterance can be understood (117). In the case of fictional reading-acts, this suggests a reader must "engage" a fictional work *as fiction*, and consequently understand it, in part, against cultural conventions surrounding that particular type of speech act.⁶ "Uptake," however, is only the first stage of perlocutionary activity in that it provides a conventional context for other "effects" a speech act may elicit from its audience while remaining distinct from them. Austin insists that locutionary and illocutionary acts are conventional while perlocutionary acts are not (121), although "conventional acts may be made use of in order to bring off the perlocutionary act" (122). In other words, he suggests that speech acts are

⁶ Austin famously excluded fiction from his theory of speech acts, claiming that fictional speech acts are "parasitical" upon the form of "normal" speech and therefore are "in a peculiar way hollow or void" (22). Whether Austin meant that speech act theory can not be used to describe fictional speech acts or whether he merely excluded them from How to Do Things with Words is and has been up for debate. Ultimately, I agree with those, like Iser, who think speech act theory has some descriptive utility regarding literary language; for a contrary opinion, see Fish, "How to Do Things with Austin and Searle."

understood by employing linguistic and social "conventions" while at the same time recognizing that perlocutionary effects are not fully determined by the speech acts they confront. This dissertation shares Austin's interest in describing how language "invites" certain responses, but it does so with less confidence in linguistic and social conventions as knowable objects and with more confidence in our ability to describe lectical activity in conventional terms.

"Engaged" readers of fiction, then, are those readers that use their pre-understanding of fictional conventions - as a subset of their pre-understanding of a "world" - to close the aporias of a fictional work. Since "engagement" sets the context for assessment, readers who do not recognize an "invitation" to perform a *fictional* reading-act may try other, less effective, means of achieving closure and thereby develop a low assessment of the work. One can try to comprehend "The Waste Land," for instance, as a newspaper article, but the poem strongly resists the discovery of fact, the overt goal of journalistic prose. Simply put, "The Waste Land" is a lousy piece of journalism. Readers who assess low value to a fictional work because they employ ineffective strategies for achieving closure might be tempted to blame the text itself, as our students often do. However, in the case of a work like "The Waste Land" that has been variously and consistently valued as fiction by scores of readers, a lack of appreciation for it is often a function of limited lectical skills: i.e. an insufficient understanding of how one can read it. Although "The Waste Land" may be lousy journalism, it is not a lousy poem according to the current literary conventions against which it "asks" to be read. One may value it less than other fictions, one may even find the entire aesthetic of high modernism tedious, but to claim it is a bad poem is just plain wrong.

The word "wrong" above identifies the fictional reading-act at least partially as an ethical act. "Fictional engagement" as I define it implies a contract, the recognition by a reader that the text in question *should* be read as

a fiction with a particular lectical horizon. Although such assertions may smell like traditional assertions of text-immanent value, an ethical commitment to reading literature is not a commitment to a particular reading-act only a commitment to a reading-act which takes into account the unique alterity of the text under consideration. It is quite possible, therefore, to perform a reading-act that can be justified by some textual features which is "wrong" in that it does not account for the conventional context projected by the text. The assessment that "The Waste Land" is a bad poem, for instance, might be developed according to the erroneous assumption that all poems should overtly and directly tell a story; such an assumption is incorrect in that current literary convention accommodates non-narrative forms of fiction, a convention within which a reader has implicitly agreed to operate. Certainly one can find a coherent narrative in "The Waste Land," but to do so requires lectical strategies other than those needed to find one in The Iliad or even Frost's "Mending Wall."

Not having the lectical resources to recognize how a fiction asks to be engaged is only one way that readers fall short in their implied obligation to remain engaged during a reading-act. Most readers have abandoned their "ethical" duty at one time or another while attempting to respond to a perceived aporia. In some cases, one aborts a reading-act out of frustration and/or lack of interest. I have tried a couple of times to read Fielding's Tom Jones, for instance, but so far haven't made it past the eighth chapter, a situation I would like to blame on Fielding or the novel itself but can't in good conscience. Plenty of readers have found much to love and admire about the novel and the novelist; Frank Kermode, for one, insists it is one of the first "great novels," and I have no reason to doubt his assessment. Neither is my failure to read Tom Jones caused by a lack of lectical skills. I have successfully and joyfully read many fictions from the early modern period and in a comparable style (so I'm pretty sure I have the lectical resources to appreciate

it); I have also persevered through reading-acts which bored me to distraction (so I know I can fulfill my lectical obligations if I am adequately motivated). The truth of the matter is that each time I have tried to read it, I get bored and become unwilling to fulfill my obligations as a reader. My best guess is that to date my only motivations for reading the novel have been for my own edification and pleasure, and so far I haven't enjoyed reading the novel that much. Although as a point of professional pride I feel like I *should* read it (after all, it is one of the first "great novels"), apparently that motivation in itself has not been compelling enough for me to persevere through a complete reading.⁷ In other cases, I have fulfilled part of my obligation as a reader by reading all the words of a fiction, but ultimately didn't perform a complete reading-act because I gave up on some aporias. I have read all of Joyce's Ulysses, for instance, but I know for a fact that a number of times I recognized an aporia but chose not to go to the effort to close it, even though I retained a nagging feeling that I *should* be able to; instead, I just keep reading until I found a textual feature I could close without as much effort. Although most are guilty of this type of lectical laziness at one time or another, it is important to distinguish between such half measures and complete reading-acts, between being an engaged and a disengaged reader.

The foregoing suggests that one of the main objects of literary pedagogy should be to increase a student's lectical repertoire. In one sense, this is why literature instructors have always taught their students literary conventions and cultural history in order to enrich their reading experiences and improve their analytical skills: in short, we try to increase their pre-understanding of literature. The pedagogical model I propose includes such information, but also offers students explicit directions on how to deploy literary "heritage" in ways with

⁷ Since writing the above example I have, out of shame, read Tom Jones, though I can't honestly say that I feel substantially more edified.

which they are unfamiliar. By doing so, one can show students both why and how literature is and has been valued. By teaching a rhetoric of literary reading, we can overtly show our students our discipline is *not* devoted to the mere transmission of culture value - no matter how qualified - but to its critique at its source: the individual reading-act.

As much as this project is offered within a neo-ethical context, the central analogy which gives it form - reading-acts are like reading-texts - identifies it as a fundamentally rhetorical exercise. It is rhetorical in the de Manian sense that it is overtly authorized by a metaphor, not a fact, and as such can make no claims to absolute truth. It is rhetorical in a procedural sense in that it offers a way to analyze the strategic use of language; i.e. it offers a "rhetoric" of literary reading. It is rhetorical in the casual sense that it is an act of persuasive discourse, an argument warranted by a particular set of assumptions about the context, structure, and value of literary reading. Although I have a lot of rhetoric in my ethics, and visa-versa, inevitably the practice of one will to some extent cross into the realm of the other, and neither can be completely isolated from an aesthetics of some sort, particularly within the literary classroom. The likelihood that this inter-relatedness is not just apparent but constitutive leads to the third and most important assumption of this dissertation:

Assumption #3: Lectical acts bear some structural similarity to rhetorical acts in that their strategies for establishing meaning and value are always warranted by the presumption of an identifiable referent.

I have tried above to show how the ubiquitous practice of reading for closure is one of the most pervasive phenomena of language although theoretically it is never directly authorized by textuality. Even communicative

acts which posit the ultimate inadequacy of language to refer to anything but itself depend upon the practical adequacy of language to communicate that particular "truth." The truth-value of de Man's "Epistemology of Metaphor," for instance, must be established against the assumption that "language" operates the way he says it does and that his audience will be able to understand his analysis of language *despite* his overt claim that language can not be "fixed" as an object. Furthermore, the text asserts that the specific tropological analyses performed are to be understood as evidence of the general tropological nature of "language" at large. He does not suggest that language is tropological only some of the time; he offers a universal model of language. To understand and assess this claim one needs to refer to some pre-understanding of what "language" is or might be, otherwise his arguments have no substantiation, no material evidence with which to convince the reader his model is accurate. The essay, then, invites the assumption that "language" is a real thing that exists, a referent that its audience can identify during their reading.

Furthermore, de Man's text directly invites its own lectical closure with a "performative" conclusion, the circular construction "epistemology is metaphor is rhetoric is epistemology"; although circles are often used metaphorically to represent a perpetual movement with no beginning or end, they are by definition closed. He follows his analysis of an identifiable thing - "language" in the abstract - with a demonstration of how that thing works. In effect, this compositional strategy encourages readers to use their own "deconstruction" of his performance as the warrant of his claims about the indeterminacy of language. In other words, "The Epistemology of Metaphor" offers its own reading-act as a possible stable referent. Like Wayne Booth's insistence that only readers from an "impoverished experience-free world" could fail to assent to his claims, de Man's essay asks to be substantiated by an individual experience of reading. Since they are cognitive events, reading-acts are

immaterial and ephemeral, but they are also actual. Reading-acts enjoy the authority of concrete experience; they are as real to the individual who performs them as a phenomenon can be.

So: rhetorical analysis can identify textual strategies which invite readers to close the aporias of a given text in a certain way using a certain referential warrant. Sometimes these invitations are direct, as when Booth "pleads" to his readers "to read it again" if they do not agree with his analysis of Yeats. Sometimes these invitations are merely implied, as with de Man's performative conclusion. Sometimes a text both implies and actively resists a referential warrant. Such is the case with "language" as an implied warrant of de Man's essay. De Man goes to great lengths to undercut all notions of "language" as a stable, knowable "thing" which can be directly referred to even though from one perspective his argument depends upon that reference being established by the reader. A rhetorical analysis can underline to what extent "The Epistemology of Metaphor" invites and resists "language" as a referential object, but it would take a lectical analysis, as I have described it, to outline the conditions under which that reference might be established.

Simply prising apart rhetorical and lectical acts does not solve all the questions surrounding the relationship between textuality and reading, but it does focus attention on the fact that rhetorical and lectical acts must overcome two very different challenges. Rhetorical acts must contend with the inherent openness of textuality, and lectical acts must contend with the onus of closure. Clearly, the practical use of language as communication requires that both of these challenges be met somehow, so my model attempts to account for them both in a way that is accessible to students. Which came first, strategies of linguistic expression or strategies for understanding phenomena, is an important question for anthropological linguistics, but it need not be answered before we address those strategies as they exist in current cultural conventions. Whether

or not the lectical act is the chicken, the egg, or the omelet, therefore, is a problem I'll have to bracket for the time being so I can focus on how it is commonly practiced.

There is no avoiding, however, that in practice the individual lectical act is developed in response to a rhetorical act, to a text of some kind. As discussed above, the rhetorical strategies of a text delimit its own lectical horizon without determining what the actual reading-act will be. Since the rhetorical act of textuality must precede any lectical act based upon it, one might conclude that reading is fundamentally rhetorical, or at least subsumed by rhetoric as a sub-category. This conclusion implies reading is parasitical upon writing, but I think it is more productive -and probably more accurate - to think of the two as being symbiotic. Writers strategically construct texts with a concern for how they will be read. Readers perform lectical acts in response to how they were written. Although the two processes are not identical, it seems that they are responding to the same linguistic phenomenon: language does not refer to anything objectively real. I submit, however, that our desire to communicate about "reality" is strong enough that we routinely overcome the indeterminacy of language through reference to some warrant - some thing, idea, or experience - we at least provisionally *treat* as real. The fact that such beliefs are always in error on a theoretical level only emphasizes why they should be subjected to rigorous scrutiny.

Even if we bracket the problem of the exact causal relationship between rhetorical and lectical acts, a sequential model of reading, such as this one, eventually comes up against the problem of time, or, more accurately, the compositional and theoretical problems inherent to describing events which are simultaneously created by and imbedded in a reader's changing perceptions of a fiction and how those perceptions relate to the past, present, and future during

a reading-act. This problem highlights how much is elided by my analogy between reading-acts and reading-texts, and therefore merits some attention.

First, there is the problem of determining what, in fact, is being unified into an aesthetic object. Above I have used the term "textual feature" to denote words in a fiction that are understood together by a given reader as a single semantic unit. According to my use of the term, textual features can hypothetically be of any length, but there is a practical limit to how many words a person can regard at once. In the demonstrative examples above I used textual features that were relatively brief - i.e. words, phrases, or sentences - but clearly much larger groups of words are commonly understood together as semantic units. Traditional literary criticism recognizes this practice with terms like "setting," "character," "theme," "plot," "sub-plot," "exposition," "climax," "dénouement," etc. Such terms traditionally attribute a particular semantic purpose to a group of words: a group that is often too large to be understood as words. If the "setting" of a fiction, for instance, can be said to be those words which pertain to the physical surroundings of the fictional world within which narrative events take place, even a short story will have a "setting" that contains too many words to be held in a reader's mind while performing a reading-act. Even a fiction where all the constituent words of its "setting" could hypothetically be regarded at once - William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow," for instance - is not read by memorizing those words and then calling them a "setting." Neither do our minds work like computers that can, according to some organizational criteria, index the words encountered in a text into functional categories. Rather, the "setting" of a fiction is developed as a concept - an idea - that is understood as the *reference* of all the words in response to which it is created; it is not equivalent to those words. The setting of "The Red Wheelbarrow," for instance, is typically identified by students as a "farm," a "barnyard," a "red-neck's house" or some such stereotypical place

which includes but is not limited to specific images drawn from the poem: a wet, red wheelbarrow and some white chickens. The word "farm" does not appear in the poem, but for some readers that word best represents at least part of what the actual words of the poem have become for them: an idea of a setting. Whatever setting is attributed to the poem, one can assume that setting contains more than a wheelbarrow and some chickens in the vacuum of space; whether a given reader imagines a farm with a barn, shed, fences, dust, etc. in addition to a wet wheelbarrow next to some chickens is less important to my immediate purpose than to note that the setting of the poem is not restricted to its words. Rather, the reader must use his or her understanding of the words of the poem as images to develop a fictional "place" which accommodates that understanding in some way.

To complicate matters more, individual words or phrases are often concurrently employed by multiple "groups" with different semantic functions. In "The Red Wheelbarrow," for instance, any attribution of tone, style, plot, theme, character, conflict, etc. will have to be made in response to the same fourteen words which illicit an attribution of setting. This point indicates why creating a coherent understanding of the "The Red Wheelbarrow" is very challenging for many readers; the great variety of semantic functions that according to literary convention one might expect to "find" in any poem must be parceled out to the few words of that particular poem. Feeling that they do not have enough material to understand it as a coherent poem, such readers get frustrated, and often complain that "The Red Wheelbarrow" "doesn't mean anything," when in reality their complaint is that they feel compelled to make the words mean more than they know how to *as a poem*. They have no problem understanding the text as a sentence from a prose narrative, but according to the conventions for reading prose it is a non sequitor; that is, it "doesn't mean anything" without the further elaboration one can (usually)

expect from a prose narrative. In the terms of this project, their (limited) understanding of literary convention compels them to create a more elaborate aesthetic object than from their perspective the textual feature invites.

Such readers are operating under a misconception about the distribution of labor during a reading-act. They believe that meaning is text-immanent and have been taught - in their high school literature class, if nowhere else - that poems are particularly meaning-full, so they feel imposed upon by the text, particularly if the reading-act is required as coursework. With a modicum of encouragement, however, most such readers have no difficulty elaborating a setting, tone, plot, character, theme, etc. out of the fourteen words of "The Red Wheelbarrow," but they usually do so with much less confidence than when they create similar semantic groups in response to texts that give them more words to work with. Three important points about textual features are illustrated by the above anecdote: 1. In this poem, at least, the same words can and should be treated as multiple textual features with different semantic functions if they are to be unified as a poem. 2. Because there are too few words to perpetuate the pretense of direct, text-immanent reference, the resultant aesthetic object must be constructed out of "ideas" which are conspicuously not "in the text." 3. Some readers need to be taught such lectical strategies are appropriate for reading poems before they are willing or able to employ them.

"The Red Wheelbarrow" is different from most fictions in that all of its words can feasibly be read at the same time, a condition that recommended it for a demonstration of how a single group of words can and sometimes must function as multiple textual features in order to create a unified aesthetic object. It is also different from many fictions in that its aesthetic object is considerably larger and more complex - at least when expressed as a reading-text - than in its original form. As pointed out above, one of the most common problems readers have while reading "The Red Wheelbarrow" is that their pre-

(mis)understanding of poetic convention dictates poems *should* have more meaning than some readers can immediately "find" in that particular poem. The obvious and most typical solution to this lectical problem is to extend the referential possibilities of the poem to the point where the aesthetic object represents much more than the words of the poem *denote*. For instance, one of my students wrote the following journal entry regarding Williams' poem:

The poem seems to be about despair. The wheelbarrow is a symbol for how hard the farmer has to work just to stay alive and to feed his children. What he has to do with the wheelbarrow is not really important by itself. Maybe something is in it that was ruined by the rainstorm like food for the chickens who he needs to grow fat so he can sell them to make money to keep his farm. His whole life gets melted down into this one little problem which is not really that big of a problem. All he needs to do is get a new wheelbarrow or some more food or something. Instead he just worries about the wheelbarrow instead of doing the work he needs to do to make his life better.

Its conversational style aside, this "reading-text" quite clearly indicates at least one of the strategies used by this reader to create a coherent aesthetic object. This reader treated "The Red Wheelbarrow" as a monologue by a fictional character existing in a fictional world. Since the words of the poem offer so few explicit details about what kind of fictional world might be created out of them, the reader quite simply extrapolated a world he felt was consistent with the clues the text "gave" him. The "wheelbarrow" the "rain" and the "chickens" were all given functions within the life of a fictional character, the "farmer," a life which is first surmised, then observed, and ultimately judged by the reader as a fictional life within a fictional world.

Although this reader effectively invented a fictional world that does not appear in the text, the resultant aesthetic object was not a product of free invention; it was partially determined by the words and structure chosen by Williams for the text. This is not to say that this reader was compelled to create a certain fictional world, but clearly there are elements of the poem that explicitly invite some of the lectical mediations he performed. For instance, one can trace this reader's decision to read the poem as a monologue to the words in the first line: "So much depends upon." Although this phrase is not particularly "imagistic" - i.e. none of its words overtly denote physical things to be imagined - the phrase implies a judgment about the rest of the words in the poem, words which by comparison can quite easily be read as images. The presence of this judgment implies a judge - a person from whose perspective the red wheelbarrow is much depended upon. The importance of the first line as a projection of "character" is further substantiated by the syntactical relationship it has with the rest of poem; "So much depends upon" operates grammatically as subject and verb to its direct object "a red wheelbarrow glazed with rain beside the white chickens." In the simplest, most direct, grammatical logic, an actor ("so much") performs an action in the present tense ("depends upon") in relation to a thing ("a red wheelbarrow...").

There is, of course, a conflict between the implication of judgment conventionally denoted by the verb "depends upon" and the abstract nature of its subject, "so much." Quite simply, the words "so much" are so abstract that they could mean anything, or in the terms of this project, they neither resist nor invite any particular conventional reference beyond the fact that they are being used as a singular noun - a person, place or thing - and that, according to the intensifier "so," its proportion is emphasized in comparison to some other "much." The abstract nature of the grammatically indicated "actor" of the poem, therefore, poses a lectical problem which the reader will have to resolve

somehow, presumably in relation to other words that have denotations more conventionally delimited. Of these, the verb "to depend upon" denotes an action which requires the ability to assess functional relationships between things, an ability which most often is attributed solely to humans, but at the very least requires sentience. In and of itself, then, the verb "depends upon" implies a perspective from which the subject and the direct object is regarded; that is, it indicates that the "real" actor referred to by the sentence is not the abstract subject "so much" but some person who has the ability to interpret a relationship between "so much" and "a red wheelbarrow...." The poem does not give us any information about this implied "real" actor except through the most denotative portion of the poem, the direct object "a red wheelbarrow glazed with rain beside the white chickens." However, the mundane and relatively insignificant nature of the things most often denoted by words like "wheelbarrow," "rain," and "chickens" conflicts with the implication of functional importance denoted by "depends upon"; "so much" - *whatever* those words might mean - could not exist or at least would not be itself without the existence of "a red wheelbarrow...." Therefore, the poem poses a particular lectical problem, which expressed as a question would be something like: what kind of person under what kind of conditions would think some/any thing of relative importance "depends upon a red wheelbarrow..."? This question, among others, is strongly implied by the words and structure of "The Red Wheelbarrow," and consequently the reader is invited to develop an answer to that question as a lectical problem.

Whether an actual reader recognizes this or some other invitation in the text and how he or she ultimately responds during a reading-act is another question entirely. One can speculate about apparent relationships between a reading-text and the fictional text that occasioned it, but doing so always comes up against the inadequacy of language to represent thought. One can

determine with certainty, for instance, that the first line of "The Red Wheelbarrow" invites readers to interpret the poem as a monologue and that my student used that strategy during the creation of his reading-text, but there is always the possibility that the relationship between those two texts is circumstantial rather than causal. In other words, there are other ways my student may have created his reading-text than by approaching the first line as an invitation to create a character/speaker. Although the semantic horizon of the verb "to depend upon" does specifically imply judgment and therefore a judge, all linguistic utterances imply a speaker to some extent. My student, therefore, did not have to recognize the complex grammatical relationships I outlined above to recognize the possibility that this or any fiction can be understood as a monologue spoken by a fictional person in a particular fictional world, a recognition that might have led to the reading-text that appeared in his journal. Even if one listed out all of the *apparent* ways my student's attribution of character might have been overtly invited by Williams' text, one could never be certain which of the possibilities were employed in the actual creation of the aesthetic object. This is because the aesthetic object is a cognitive event and therefore is structured differently than the reading-text that represents it and the fictional text to which it responds. We know that *some* event happens when a fiction is read (and therefore exists briefly in the mind of the reader) which subsequently can be used as the stimulus for a reading-text; we can name that complex, cognitive event an "aesthetic object," but there is no infallible method for gauging how well a particular aesthetic object is represented by a particular reading-text. This is the case not just because a reader might be mistaken or lie about an aesthetic object they have had - both of which are always possibilities - but because the process of changing thought into language replaces the unique, time-embedded contingency of an aesthetic object with conventionalized syntax. In other words, if aesthetic objects are texts, by all

evidence at our command they are organized quite differently than what I have been calling reading-texts.

My student's reading-text above, for instance, delivers a series of interpretations regarding a character he created in response to "The Red Wheelbarrow," a character he calls the "farmer." As discussed above, the text invites readers to treat it as a monologue by a character, but it doesn't articulate who that character is and why he or she thinks "a red wheelbarrow..." is so darn important. Consequently, all details about the character must be elaborated connotatively by a reader. My student, for instance, created a male character who is a "farmer"; although he specifically indicates the farmer is a poor, hardworking father who through lack of perspective has over emphasized the importance of his wheelbarrow and therefore feels "despair," it stands to reason that a whole host of other assumptions about the "life" of this character are consolidated in my student's reading-text by the single word "farmer." Whatever those other assumptions may be (grows vegetables? wears overall? has a straw hat? chews tobacco?) they are not represented in his reading-text but *must* have been a part of his aesthetic object in some way. Words do not feel despair or lose perspective; only people do. The word "farmer," therefore has to represent the idea of a person, an idea that *had* to be developed connotatively (according to my student's unique lectical horizon in the moment) out of the words "a red wheelbarrow...." Presumably, my student neglected to list out the entire contents of his lectical horizon for the word "farmer" because it was unnecessary to do so to express his perception of the aesthetic object in the form of a reading-text. By doing so he was following a principle of linguistic economy conventional to speech; in other words, he put into words only those ideas about his character that he thought were necessary to represent his aesthetic object to someone else. This does not mean, of course, that the ideas, connotations, images, stereotypes, etc. which he "left out" of his reading-

text were unnecessary for the creation or unique form of his aesthetic object. It only means he was following the conventions for expressing rather than constructing an aesthetic object.

There are many other (possible) structural differences between reading-texts and reading-acts, but this central distinction between the former being an expression and the latter being a construction of an aesthetic object is sufficient to set both the goals and the limits of lectical analysis. According to this distinction, the reading-texts which are examined by lectical analysis are the products of a double translation of which one of the necessary "texts" is missing - the aesthetic object. Quite simply, words - or textual features - must be translated into and thereby represented by a complex amalgam of ideas - the aesthetic object - that is flexible enough to entertain multiple, concurrent semantic functions and yet be perceived as single, unified phenomenon before it can in turn be represented in language as a reading-text. Neither of these "translations" - i.e. from text into thought then into text again - are available for direct analysis, so there is no way to determine what exactly is lost or added to an aesthetic object by a reading-text that attempts to reproduce it.

This failure of language to replicate phenomena has been the bugbear of all systematic attempts to describe human experience. At the same time, however, the assumption that this failure is not a *complete* failure has warranted all such attempts. The founding assumption of this dissertation, that there is some functional similarity between reading-acts and reading-texts, is shared in one form or another by most theories of reading, particularly those that owe anything to the phenomenological tradition. Although no amount of analytical rigor or schematization can make analyzing a text the same thing as analyzing a thought, reading-texts, whether our own or some other reader's, are currently the closest we can come to aesthetic objects. Hopefully, my stated allegiance to the three P's - *praxis*, Pragmatism, and practicality - explains why I think

proceeding with the best albeit flawed tools at our disposal is better than not proceeding at all. The careful analysis - and production - of reading-texts can at least determine what *seems* to be happening during a reading-act, and thereby provides us with a clearer understanding of the breadth of changes that must occur between the time a reader first begins a reading-act and the time he or she tries to represent that experience mentally, verbally, or graphically as a reading-text. In other words, if we can't be certain what a reading-act or its resultant aesthetic object *is* in the moment, at least we can try to describe what it appears to have done after the fact. The taxonomy of reading strategies detailed in the next chapter offers a vocabulary for such descriptions, and lectical analysis as a whole offers students a way to deploy them in the classroom.

Assumption number three above asserts that in the process of overcoming the same linguistic problem, rhetorical and lectical acts commit the same kind of errors, or rather, rhetorical acts project the kind of errors a lectical act must commit. Following this assumption I will categorize the referential "warrants" of lectical acts using traditional methods of categorizing rhetorical acts.

Rhetorical tradition identifies the projection of meaning and value as rhetorical "appeal." The three types of appeal, the logical, ethical, and pathetic, correspond to textual features which traditionally were understood to guide the total meaning and value of a given work: the logos, ethos and pathos of the rhetorical triangle.⁸ Although there have been various amplifications of the

⁸ James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse* is not the first or last in-depth analysis and augmentation of the rhetorical triangle, but it has been one of the most influential over the last quarter century and is the closest to my heart. Anyone interested in the history and application of the rhetorical triangle would do well to start there. In addition, the epigraph to this chapter is meant to be an homage, both to the man and his work.

rhetorical triangle over the millennia, it typically is implemented in undergraduate composition classes - and sometimes in literature surveys - as a heuristic for the overall rhetorical context within which a text can be understood. This heuristic is applied as both an analytical and compositional tool. As I have told my students for years, one of the reasons these highly abstract terms are still in use is that there are no ancient Greeks around to contradict our application of them. Of these three indices of rhetorical meaning, "logos" has the most denotations attributed to it. I stopped counting at entry one hundred and seventy five, but some of the most significant denotations include: word, oracle, tale, ground, thesis, argument, statement of theory, rule, law, narrative, fable, plot, subject-matter, speech, reason, thought, value, and idea (Perseus Project). I have roughly arranged these few of the many denotations of "logos" from the most specific to the most general. All the other denotations - with the possible exception of "value" - can be subsumed under the arch-abstraction "idea." According to this organization, an "idea" can be a cognitive event or faculty (thought, reason), a textual feature (subject-matter, thesis, argument, plot, rule, ground, word), or another name for the text as a whole (speech, fable, narrative, law, statement of theory, tale, oracle). That all of these denotations can also be equated with "value" serves to underline the traditional valorization of "idea" as the most important element of a rhetorical act.

The valorization of the logical over ethical or pathetic appeals continues in contemporary rhetorical pedagogy, especially in undergraduate composition classes. In the compositional mode, "logos" refers to the writer's main idea for a potential rhetorical text, the "thoughts" he or she has out of which a text will be written and presumably represent. Thus, the rhetorical triangle is used to develop a logical structure that can be expressed within the conventions of formal, academic prose: a structure that the writer's "thoughts" likely do not yet have. In the analytical mode, the rhetorical triangle treats logos as the

referent of the apparent logical structure of a text, the formal representation of an "idea" in a speech act. Students are encouraged to develop an understanding of the main idea of a text, understandings that are themselves rhetorical assertions and must therefore be substantiated by textual evidence. Both modes, therefore, are used to establish reference between textual features and an "idea" that might not be written but nevertheless is assumed to be "real" or at least valid.

Of the three indices of the rhetorical triangle, the modern usage of "pathos" most closely follows its original denotations in Greek, which include "that which happens," "incident," "event," "the properties of things," "experience," and "emotion." The common practice of identifying the pathos of a text as that part of it which is designed to "move" or affect the emotions of its audience builds upon these earlier denotations of the word. If one is to "move" one's readers, one must first understand the context within which the text will be read; that is, one must identify the "events," "experiences," and "things" most relevant *to the audience* about a text or topic. In effect, one must imagine the "reality" of the audience: what about my idea will attract/repel them? What beliefs do they hold which are similar/different to my own? What images or allusions will make them sympathetic to my arguments? Taken to the absurd, the pathos of a proposed text is potentially all phenomena, past, present, and future, since the text cannot absolutely control which "reality" will be referenced by a reader.

In practice, however, this absurdity never happens due to the desire for closure. Readers usually *want* to establish reference - particularly when they are required to do so before the next class meeting - and will therefore develop an experiential context out of the cues offered up by the text. Consequently, while using the rhetorical triangle in the compositional mode, we encourage our students to develop "cues" or "signals" which will have *real* meaning and force

for their readers. While the logical appeal seeks to reference an idea, a logico-linguistic abstraction, the pathetic appeal seeks reference in past experience; i.e. to become a part of the reader's real world. In the analytical mode, students are asked to identify the "real" events, experiences, and things to which a text refers; that is, the context within which they believe it *should* be understood. As with attributions of logos, students are usually required to substantiate their analyses of pathos with evidence from the text at hand.

The relationship between what the word "ethos" used to mean and how it is currently used in rhetorical pedagogy is less obvious than with the other two indices of the rhetorical triangle. The primary denotations of ethos in Greek are "custom" and "habit," but by extension it also denotes an "accustomed place" or "abode" (Perseus Project). Perhaps it is this denotation that led to the current meaning of "ethos" as that element of a text where one finds the author's "character" or even the author as a character. The implication is that the ethos is the "abode" of a text's personality, the home of its self.

In contemporary rhetorical pedagogy, this self is specifically a stylistic rather than logical or even actual self. One identifies or composes the ethos of a text not through reference to a self that simply exists but through reference to a performance of self which is itself a representation of something else. Accordingly, when we ask our students to analyze the ethos of a text we instruct them to identify not what a text says so much as how it goes about saying it. Similarly, in the compositional mode we instruct students to develop their ethos by adopting a "voice" that represents the identity they want to project in their work. The assumption that warrants all projections and analyses of ethos is that one's stylistic performance is an indicator of one's real "character" or identity; this assumption implies that one's "self" can not be separated from one's actions. This, of course, is consistent with the traditional definition of ethics as the study of moral action in the world, although traditional

ethics generally includes the additional assumption that one's actions *should* reflect a "moral" character. In both rhetorical and ethical formulations of "character," however, the focus is upon the *performance* of character, since one's "actual" character or personality is not observable except through such manifestations. In other words, if ethos is the abode of a text's "self," then it is an empty house, all style and no substance. The ethical appeal of a text, then, invites readers to use its stylistic features to complete a double reference: 1) to a "real" performance of character imbedded in conventions of "ethical" behavior 2) to a hypothetical, embodied character which is extrapolated from those conventions.

All this talk about how textual cues refer to ideas, identities, and things in the real world does not imply that the rhetorical triangle is used uncritically in the contemporary classroom, even though most notions of text-immanent meaning and value have long since been rejected on theoretical grounds. On the contrary, the rhetorical triangle is principally used to demonstrate the contingency of all attributions of meaning, whether one approaches that contingency as a writer or a reader. In the process, however, it also tacitly recognizes that reading, at least, is referential in practice - that closure happens. Certainly the rhetorical triangle is an abstract simplification of rhetorical context, but its simplicity is precisely what recommends it as a classroom heuristic for the complex theoretical heritage that substantiates it.

If assumption number three above is correct, then one should be able to develop a heuristic for lectical strategies which uses the same referential warrants as the rhetorical triangle: ideas, things, and people. However, we do not need to go to the trouble of crafting a "lectical triangle" for rhetoric and composition curriculum because in the analytical mode the rhetorical triangle adequately describes the range of lectical strategies applied to those works most often analyzed and composed in such courses: i.e. non-fictional prose. In

other words, the rhetorical triangle is already being used as a lectical triangle to teach the "appreciation" of non-fiction. This is particularly true in those classes where the instructor offers models of effective rhetorical acts which students are required to analyze. Such assignments are equivalent to what above I called "reading-texts": that is, textual accounts of what - and how - a non-fictional work can or even should be understood.

Anyone who has tried, however, knows that fictional texts do not respond to the rhetorical triangle as well as non-fictional ones, quite simply because there are significantly more lectical strategies conventionally associated with the reading of fiction. For instance, the analysis of ethos in a non-fictional work recognizes only one type of lectical strategy: using a text's stylistic performance to extrapolate the character of *the* speaker of a work. The stylistic performance of the text, therefore, is subordinated to the traditional purpose of non-fictional prose: the communication of an "idea" between one person (the author, or author-in-the-text, if you prefer) and another (the reader).

Once one decides to read a text as fiction, however, its stylistic performance can be approached in a variety of ways in addition to being indicative of the speaker's character. To begin with, determining "who is speaking" is not a difficult problem for readers to overcome while reading non-fiction while it is often the main problem in fictional works. Even those works which employ an anonymous or patently artificial speaker - Swift's "A Modest Proposal" for instance - will usually be read as performances of the author-in-the-text if they are read as non-fiction. One can employ the same lectical strategy with a work read as fiction, but there will also and always be other ways to interpret its stylistic performance. Gulliver, for instance, has been read both as Swift's "persona" and a straw man attacked by his satire of English culture. Both assessments of the Gulliver character employ the same lectical strategy; they treat the "voice" with which Gulliver narrates the story as an indicator of

Swift's "real" attitudes and beliefs. In other words, Gulliver's performance as a speaker has been used to understand something about Swift, and by extension what Swift might have been trying to communicate through his masterpiece. Certainly the Gulliver character invites this lectical strategy, but as a stylistic performance it also can be understood and "appreciated" in other ways. As pointed out above, Gulliver's Travels can also be read as a fantastic story, a witty parody of the travelogues that were popular at the time. As such, Gulliver's "voice" can be read and understood as a mimetic gesture: i.e. as the performance of *his* "character" as a fictional character. That the Gulliver character is plausible, entertaining, and accessible to a great variety of readers as a *fictional* character has been well documented, and does not depend upon reading it as an indicator of Swift's "character" or attitudes. By contrast, the unnamed speaker of "A Modest Proposal" can be recognized and valued as a finely crafted parody of 18th century social "reformists," but as long as the essay is read as non-fiction, the speaker *must* be read primarily in its capacity as an indicator of meaning. Analyzed as an ethical appeal, the skill with which the speaker is crafted is used to raise the reader's estimation of the author - Jonathan Swift - and thereby further the main "idea" of the piece: i.e. that the English are consuming Ireland. The Gulliver character, however, can be appreciated - that is experienced - solely as a stylistic performance: as long as it is read as fiction.

The foregoing asserts that the "ethos" of a non-fictional rhetorical act adequately describes the range of lectical acts one could warrant through reference to its stylistic performance. This is so because when one is reading non-fiction one reads primarily to understand its logos, hence the relative value of the ethical and pathetic elements of a non-fictional text are assessed primarily according to how well they support its logical appeal. However, the conventions of reading fiction do not necessarily valorize the attribution of logos

over other possible lectical strategies. Any reader can choose to value the "idea" of a fiction more than its stylistic performance or its phenomenal context, and certainly some fictions invite this strategy more than others, but that choice is not predetermined as it is when a text is read as non-fiction.

This observation might be taken to indicate a fundamental difference in non-fictional and fictional writing, but it is more accurate, I believe, to interpret it as a difference in how the genres are conventionally read. Although current literary convention embraces "openness" as a necessary and often positively valued element of fictional textuality, it does not follow that fictional language is somehow more open or ambiguous than other linguistic gestures. If fiction is "allowed" to be more open than software manuals, for instance, or divorce decrees, it is because the common strategies for reading fiction are more varied and elaborate. Certainly one can debate endlessly about what a legal document means, but it would be wrong (and inadmissible in court) to interpret the phrase "will provide child support" as a metaphoric reference to the payee's inner child. Legal documents resist the lectical strategy of metaphoric and/or symbolic reference as long as the reader recognizes the conventions within which they "ask" to be read. However, once one has decided to read a text as fiction (a decision which can always be made), the lectical strategies at one's immediate disposal multiply. As soon as one decides the note on the fridge is not a note at all but a poem, the way one *should* approach the text changes radically. How one might decide a text is fiction (as opposed to legislation, philosophy, biography, editorial, etc.) need not be fully determined in order to analyze clear cases where that decision has been made. A divorce decree may be read as a fiction, but we know "The Waste Land" has been. Moreover, the fact that some texts resist clear generic identification does not refute the existence of genre specific lectical conventions. Whether Julius Caesar's autobiography, for instance, is fiction, non-fiction, history, or propaganda is not as important during

its lectical analysis as how readers might try to mediate the multiple generic identities it invites. Therefore, as long as one does not insist upon categorizing texts into monolithic genres, those that fall within the gray areas of generic identity can and should be interrogated by a lectical analysis of their apparent ambiguity.

Since fictions invite more reading strategies than the rhetorical triangle offers, I have developed a heuristic - the lectical triangle - which elaborates the traditional tripartite division of rhetorical acts into a general taxonomy of common lectical strategies for fiction. Although the main categories of this taxonomy are developed according to the three traditional guarantors of rhetorical reference, the specific lectical strategies identified with each of those categories are drawn from my analysis of various reading-texts tempered by my observations over the last ten years in the classroom. The practical application of the analogy between reading-texts and reading-acts, therefore, must serve as the principle evidentiary support for this project. To some extent, of course, this analogy is necessarily false; text is not cognition, even though there may be similarities between how the two manipulate language.

The proof in this particular pudding, however, is that the method works. I have had a great deal of success over the last few years using it to teach what I called above neo-appreciation in literature courses. Although students do not all learn to love all kinds of literature, I have found that this neo-appreciation lesson plan seems to encourage a greater percentage of them to engage with a wider range of literary experience. Although there are always some students who refuse to discard their traditional notions of text-immanent meaning and value (notions which ultimately depreciate some "canonical" literary forms in their eyes), a greater number of students seem to feel empowered by the knowledge that literary value is contingent at least partially upon reading strategies which they can analyze and implement if they so choose. In other words, students

seem better equipped and more willing to understand the context within which most literary scholars value literary study.

The Lectical Triangle:

Above I indicated that the referential guarantors of the rhetorical triangle must be reformulated if they are to account for the greater range of lectical strategies available for fictional texts. The first step in that reformulation is to recognize rhetorical appeal and lectical response as being different processes which use the same three abstract categories of reference: reference to ideas, to phenomenal reality, and to stylistic performance. As abstract as they are, the words *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* will not bear the contortions to which I would have to subject them to make them work in the lectical triangle.

Moreover, since the lectical triangle represents modes of "closing" rather than "opening" texts, it seems there should be some sort of terminological distinction made between those two distinct although related processes. Although I could probably enlist some other abstract Greek words to do the job, it seems more appropriate to name the indices of the lectical triangle after three traditional modes for understanding reality: materialism, idealism, and subjectivism.

Lectical strategies, therefore, are organized into the following three categories:

1. Materialist strategies, which are warranted by material evidence of a fictional "world"
2. Idealist strategies, which are warranted by "ideas" about the world
3. Subjectivist strategies, which are warranted by a lectical performance, that is, by attending to the reading-act itself as a subjectively determined experience.

Such nomenclature is not meant to suggest that these three different types of lectical acts correspond directly to or are chiefly used to understand certain types of philosophical texts; rather, the philological connection between lectical acts and the rhetoric of philosophy is meant to indicate that this tripartite division has a long history, one to which students may already have

been exposed. Further, the fact that the roots of the three terms point toward their respective referential guarantors is mnemonically helpful for students. I retool these terms rather than create utter neologisms, therefore, in order to make it easier for students to understand and remember them. Following the same principle, I chose "Idealist" over its general synonym "Essentialist", and "Subjectivist" over other candidates such as "Indeterminist," "Skeptical," or "Anti-foundationalist."

In addition to having different referential warrants, these three lectical modes are further distinguished below according to how they accomplish five general tasks attending the assessment of "lectical realism": 1. Choosing a "target reality" 2. Choosing a "lectical focus" 3. Developing a "semantic context" 4. Achieving "lectical coherence" 5. Performing a lectical assessment. The general categorization of these strategies for establishing lectical "realism" is as follows:⁹

Materialist strategies: these strategies close textual features by constructing referential "contexts" out of linguistic representations of "things" "people" or "events." Fictional "reality," therefore, is created by emphasizing the mimetic function of fictional "images" and by subordinating other textual elements to that function. Some of these strategies are:

1. Treating a fictional "world" as the target "reality" of the text;
2. Focusing upon narrative progression or "plot" over its "diction" or "theme";
3. Extrapolating a semantic context by reading textual features as "images"; i.e. treating words as a mimetic representations of a phenomenal milieu;

⁹ See Appendix A for the version of this information that I hand out to my students.

4. Achieving lectical coherence by developing “episodic motifs” between fictional "events" or textual features;
5. Reifying fictional characters/narrators/events/things to attribute motive and agency as the basis of an assessment of their "mimetic" value.

Idealist strategies: these strategies close textual features by identifying them with “ideas” about the "real" world. The reader thereby emphasizes what the fiction is perceived to mean. Some of these strategies are:

1. Treating fictional "meaning" as the target "reality" of the text
2. Focusing upon "theme" over the plot or diction of a text;
3. Establishing a semantic context by reading textual features as symbols; i.e. treating words as allusive references to "symbolic systems" (religious dogma, symbolic paradigms, literary traditions, mythology, cultural archetypes, etc.);
4. Achieving lectical coherence between textual features by developing analogical motifs;
5. Identifying fictional characters/narrators/events/things as "figurative" representations of the "real" world in order to assess their symbolic value.

Subjectivist strategies: These strategies close textual elements through self-referential gestures - i.e. through a focus on the performance of a reading-act. Subjectivist strategies treat the unique lectical experience of a particular reading-act as the “reality” of that reading-act. Fictional "reality" and "meaning" in the Subjectivist mode, therefore, are interrogated as artifacts of reading as opposed to artifacts of some independent “reality.” In other words, Subjectivist readings employ lectical strategies of the other two categories in

the process of constructing their own (self) referential gestures. Some of these gestures are:

1. Treating lectical experience as the target reality of the text;
2. Focusing upon a text's diction over its "theme" or "plot";
3. Suspending the attribution of semantic context to textual features by treating them as aporias; i.e. by resisting or deferring monosemic reference to a "fictional reality" or an idea about the "real" world;
4. Interrogating lectical coherence by recognizing and remembering unresolved aporetic relationships between textual features; hence, Subjectivist reading-acts are consolidated using "dialogic" motifs.
5. Assessing value to the experience of performing a reading-act as opposed to the potential mimetic or symbolic value of a fiction.

This taxonomy is structured differentially; i.e. the terms are meaningful only in contrast to each other. The words "theme," "plot," and "diction," for instance, are highly equivocal if used as denotations of distinct, objectively observable elements of fictional texts. However, in this project such terms denote identities which readers commonly attribute to textual features in a fiction, not attributes it simply has. While the pretense of text-immanent meaning is crucial to the performance of some lectical strategies, particularly in the Idealist and Materialist modes, the theory of reading offered here asserts fictional meaning is a product of lectical mediation, not textual composition. The abstract distinction between "theme" and "diction," then, is not equivocal but conventional; i.e. the slippage between such terms is moderated by the individual reader according to his or her understanding of cultural conventions.

The traditional literary vocabulary in this taxonomy, however, is often deployed in very untraditional ways, so much so that they sometimes achieve the status of coinage. These coinages, like all heuristic gestures, are a form of

shorthand used to represent complex concepts in a relatively simple way. Since the lectical triangle does not have an existing theoretical superstructure to support it, as does the rhetorical triangle, I am going to have to do some foundation work.

I will lay this foundation by addressing at length the five "tasks" performed during a reading-act, detailing how the three lectical modes address those tasks. I am aware that the strategy of listing these "tasks" sequentially implies that reading-acts are performed in a conscious, synchronic order. Most reading-acts, however, do not commence with a conscious decision to read for a particular fictional reality or lectical focus; neither does one reach the end of a fiction and consciously decide, "Gee, I've been reading for theme" or "Eureka! I've created a fictional world!" This entire project, in fact, is predicated on the assumption that lectical strategies are all too often performed unconsciously, particularly by students. Actual reading-acts, as we shall see below, are too complex and variegated to be adequately described by a single, synchronic model. Although reading-acts are without a doubt developed sequentially (i.e. in time), they occur at the speed of thought; determining the actual sequence of the cognitive events that make up a given reading-act, consequently, is currently beyond both the human and physical sciences.

However, admitting that we cannot know the physical structure of a particular reading-act does not mean we can not identify conventional, lectical strategies that must have been used at some point during it. Whether one develops a "semantic context" - a line-level lectical strategy discussed in the next chapter - before one chooses a "lectical focus" may not be accessible to such a project, but if a reader attributes a plot to a fiction, for instance, one can then speculate with some certainty about some of the specific lectical strategies he or she *must have* applied to line-level textual features to make such a determination. Conversely, if a reader reports she thinks a character "is a good

person" because of events which "happen" in a fiction (a Materialist strategy for attributing mimetic value, detailed below), one knows she has to some extent created a "fictional world" which warrants her belief. The relationship between lectical strategies which determine what a fiction "is" as a whole and those that structure how it "comes to be" out of specific textual features, therefore, should not be thought of as separate links in a causal chain. Both groups of strategies must already be in a reader's lectical repertoire as latencies, i.e. as a part of a reader's pre-understanding of the range of what a fiction can be and how one can read it.

Following these observations, when a reader chooses to respond to a textual feature with a particular lectical strategy in his or her repertoire, I contend that choice mobilizes other lectical strategies based upon similar presumptions about the nature of fiction and fictional reading. In this study I have organized lectical strategies which imply or have affinity for each other into the three modes of the lectical triangle. The relationship between different lectical strategies within a particular mode, therefore, is paradigmatic, not causal. One cannot read the plot of a fiction, for instance, without already knowing how to create discrete images out of words, but neither can one address a particular word or phrase as an element of a plot without understanding that fictions can "have" plots.

As I formulate the elements of the lectical triangle and discuss how lectical analysis as a whole can be used in the undergraduate classroom, I am often obliged for the sake of clarity and relative brevity to discuss lectical strategies - and the modes and "tasks" I have arranged them under - as if they are discreet entities or events which can be partitioned into reliable categories. The implied rigidity of my taxonomy is to some extent inherited from the tradition of analytical schematization and to some extent an artifact of my compositional strategy. Since analysis is always a form of discourse, the goal of

this project is to offer ways to talk about what we already know about reading-acts, not to express a totalizing - or even new - truth about them. My adoption of this goal is an example of me being both "practical" and "Pragmatic." As should be increasingly clear as this dissertation progresses, demonstrative examples are offered to explore how various lectical strategies respond differently - and sometimes collaboratively - to the complex problem of "closing" a fiction.

Task 1: Choosing a "target reality"

Readers accomplish this task by deciding how a fiction will be incorporated into their "reality." In all three modes the "target reality" is provisional, text-specific, and temporally situated. I agree with Iser that a reading-act produces an "aesthetic object": an ephemeral, cognitive event created by a reader's attempt to reconcile perceptions of text with his or her prior experience. As discussed above, there are three traditional referential warrants a reader can use to reconcile fiction to his or her pre-understanding of world: material evidence, ideas, and subjective experience. These correspond to three basic perspectives or assumptions about the relationship between a fiction and a reader's "real" world: that is, that portion of the reader's world - the "target reality" - against which a fiction will be understood and valued: 1. Fictions portray fictional worlds 2. Fictions communicate symbolic meaning about the "real" world 3. Fictions stimulate lectical experiences. By focusing on one of these general perspectives over the others, a reader chooses a "target reality" which will affect how a given textual feature is understood. If the reader is able to close the apparent aporias of a fiction employing one or more of these perspectives, then he or she will consequently attribute the quality of "lectical realism" to it. In other words, once a target reality has been used to close a textual feature, the reader has established how it is "real" to him or her,

whether it is as a fictional world, a meaning about "the" world, or as a reading experience "really" in progress. This process is perhaps most easily understood as the adoption of a certain role by the reader in relation to the text.

In the Materialist mode, the reader takes on the role of the observer of a fictional world, a world which is created by someone else, presumably an author. The reader's job, accordingly, is to turn textual features into perceptions of phenomena, that is, to pretend that the words one is reading represent things and events within a world one is watching. The physical properties of this fictional "world" are extrapolated from the text in conjunction with a reader's pre-understanding of a world. Since the determination of what is "real" in a fictional world is deferred to the text (or the author-in-the-text), a fictional world can have radically different physical laws than the reader's world and still be attributed the quality of "lectical realism." Once the reader adopts the pretense of being an observer of a world, thereby attributing it lectical realism, he or she is poised to make further judgments about the world being watched. One of the most common assessments of a fictional world in the Materialist mode is whether or not that world is "realistic," an assessment that also does not depend upon a reader's familiarity with the kind of world represented. This is why I do not need to serve on a pirate ship to decide whether or not Long John Silver is a "realistic" fictional character; I only have to accept that his behavior is consonant with the fictional world I extrapolate from Treasure Island as a whole in conjunction with what I already know or believe about pirates. Readers in the Materialist mode, in fact, have a great deal of tolerance for unfamiliar fictional worlds. As long as they are able to respond to the cues of the textual pattern in some way, their relative ignorance about pirates, muskets, black holes, or Hindu theology will not constitute a significant aporia.

In the Idealist mode the reader adopts the role of a translator of symbolic meaning. In this mode, the fictional world of a text is treated like a symbolic

statement about the "real" world, a statement that must be decoded somehow. Idealist strategies, therefore, must pretend the words of a fiction have a purpose beyond describing events in a fictional world; the fictional world is presumed to say something, not just be something. A textual feature is deemed to have lectical realism in the Idealist mode, therefore, to the extent that it can be incorporated into - or sometimes expand - a *reader's* understanding of his or her world. An Idealist reading of the Long John Silver character, for example, would be less interested in whether or not that character acted like a "real" pirate than assigning a "meaning" to him which could then be understood in relation to something in the reader's experience. One might decide, for instance, that Long John Silver represents a paternal figure for the protagonist Jim Hawkins, and thereby interpret the description of their relationship in Treasure Island as an elaborate representation of the small intimacies and betrayals, those daily ambiguities of blood relation, that can be found in many "real" parental relationships. Although such an interpretation must be developed in part out of a fictional "world," lectical acts that conclude the relationship between Silver and Jim has lectical realism by virtue of what it means about the "real" world belong in the Idealist rather than Materialist category.

Both the Materialist and the Idealist modes presume the reader's role is to submit more or less passively to "intentions" projected by the text. According to this presumption, the Materialist "target reality" is a fictional world one should observe and the Idealist "target reality" is a meaning one is meant to translate. While both of these fictional realities are presumed to be text-immanent, Subjectivist readings at least implicitly presume the reader shares responsibility with the text for what happens during a reading-act, and therefore such readers take on the role of a collaborator.

Theoretically speaking, Subjectivist readings are more epistemologically and ontologically accurate than those of the other two modes, at least according to prevailing theories of reading. They focus upon the reading-act - rather than the fictional text - as the warrant and guarantor of a developing aesthetic object. Subjectivist readings focus upon the immediate reality that confronts the reader: an awareness of the reading-act in progress, an awareness that is usually instigated by some sort of aporia, some issue that thwarts the seamless pretense characteristic of Materialist and Idealist readings. This is not to say that Subjectivist readings are necessarily more *consciously* theoretical, much less that they are more accurate or true, only that they implicitly recognize - or are impelled to recognize - that reading is not passive. Marked and defined by an at least partial awareness of one's current active participation while reading, Subjectivist reading-acts are open to assessments of value unavailable in the other two lectical modes. Many readers, for instance, enjoy paying attention to the process of reading a fiction. They will re-read passages not because they don't or can't understand them, but because by doing so they perpetuate the event they are experiencing. They return for nuance in the words, contemplate various possible connotations, both literal and figurative, perhaps make a referential judgment, perhaps not.

Although the above may sound like a description of "close" reading, what I have in mind here is not analytical reading, as such, but playful reading: playful in the sense of being open ended; playful in the sense of not being goal oriented; playful in the sense that the play's the thing. Playful readings in this sense are not necessarily oriented toward New Critical, deconstructive, or reader response theories; they merely recognize that the process of reading can be valuable apart from its ostensible goal: semantic closure. In many ways, then, Subjectivist readings follow the rallying cry of 19th century aestheticism: *Ars gratia ars*. Furthermore, unlike the other two modes, in the Subjectivist mode

the reader does not have to pretend that lectical experience refers to something real; it is as real as a thing can be. All this does not mean that Subjectivist readings are immune to pretense, or that only sophisticated and trained readers perform them, only that sometimes readers of all levels pay attention to what they are doing while reading words rather than what they pretend is happening and/or what those words might mean. From this perspective, the value of Treasure Island is not buried in the text like so many pieces of eight. The text is at best a map with the longitude and latitude effaced: oblique directions to a reality one is in the process of experiencing.

Task Two: Choosing a "lectical focus"

Readers accomplish this task by emphasizing one of three traditional interpretative schemas over the others: plot, theme, or diction as stylistic performance. The visual metaphor implied by the word "focus" is particularly apt here, since lectical focus, like ocular focus, is accomplished by emphasis, not by absolute exclusion. One can choose to understand a fiction primarily as a unified narrative about a series of events or characters (i.e. as a plot), but doing so requires the accommodation of textual features usually associated with theme or style. Accordingly, lectical focus is not something that a fiction "has," it is something a reader employs. The lectical focus of a given reading-act, then, is a projection by the reader of an interpretive template upon a fiction, a template which to some extent precedes the reading-act itself. If we accept that readers often valorize one of these templates over the other while reading, certain further distinctions between them can and should be made.

I employ the word "plot" to describe the lectical focus of the Materialist mode. "Plot" here is meant in its most common and abstract critical sense. In A Handbook To Literature, Holman and Harmon adequately define plot in this sense as "an intellectual formulation about the relations among incidents of a drama or

a narrative, and it is, therefore . . . an ordering control for the reader" (379). Students thoroughly understand this general concept; in fact, many of them doggedly pursue plot in fictions which have few or contradictory narrative elements. They want to know "what happens" in a fiction. Even when a textual pattern actively resists the pretense of orderly narrative progression, as long as they operate in the Materialist mode readers will virtually equate fiction and narrative, and therefore must somehow incorporate "non-narrative" elements as they develop a unified story. One can read Moby Dick, for instance, as a unified series of events told by a particular witness, but to do so requires mediating Ishmael's discourses about life, the sea, sailing, whales, women, etc. (i.e. most of the novel), perhaps as "narrative digressions" or as representations of his thoughts. Some textual patterns - the epistolary novel, for instance, or first person narration - both mirror and invite the lectical impulse to locate *all* the words of a fiction within a fictional world.

Although most of them have heard the word applied to literature before, undergraduate students are typically less conscious about how they read for "theme" as opposed to "plot." Holman and Harmon define fictional "theme" as "the abstract concept that is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image." This definition clearly presumes that "theme" is an text-immanent feature of textuality, although the "abstract concepts" which constitute a theme must often, if not always, be drawn from the reader's pre-understanding of a world, in particular, their understanding of current conventions for reading fiction. The decision to read a theme *into* a fiction is made according to the reader's repertoire of symbolic archetypes (what I will call "symbolic systems" in the next chapter) in combination with the understanding that according to current literary convention any textual feature *might* be a symbol, that fiction always has a thematic latency. It follows from this that although a fiction can invite or resist a thematic reading (or even the attribution

of a particular theme) such invitations must be actualized by a reading-act and therefore can not be absolutely dictated by the text. In Moby Dick, for instance, the speaker Ishmael both implies and denies that the pursuit of the whale should be read thematically. If, contrary to his explicit instructions, readers choose to turn Ishmael's narrative into a "hideous and intolerable allegory," the sheer volume of possible symbolic references apparent in the novel creates a lectical problem. Is Ahab's persecution of the whale a symbol for humankind's obsession with Christ, Satan, sex, the void, or one of the many other possibilities implied by Ishmael? If Ahab is meant to be everyman, then who is Ishmael? God? The writer? The reader?

Moby Dick does not solve the thematic riddles it offers readers, but those who want to find a thematic unity for the novel can do so. Ramon Saldivar, for instance, suggests that the persecution of the whale is a figure for the tropological nature of language and the monomaniacal pursuit of absolute meaning and identity where none exists. Saldivar claims "the nature of narrative as Melville came to see it [is] that its ultimate objects, in which it can most fully secure for itself the signs of the self, turn into ambiguous allegories. These allegories in turn leap out, faithlessly, to fill and deny the very void in which they are represented" (155). In other words, the "theme" which Saldivar attributes to Moby Dick is the "theme" of contemporary tropology; he claims Melville intends to represent metaphorically both the act and the consequences of representation itself. Saldivar's tropological analysis, therefore, opens up the aporia of Moby Dick's metaphoric structure while at the same time creating a unified interpretation of the novel through the "theme" of tropology: a theme which he "brings" to his reading.

Although Holman and Harmon's literary handbook adequately defines how "plot" and "theme" have traditionally been used as interpretive tools in literary studies, the lectical focus of the Subjectivist mode cannot be so easily identified

with traditional critical practice because it denotes a lectical rather than a textual "reality." Above I detailed why the conventional denotations of "ethos" were inadequate to describe the many ways the stylistic performance of a fiction can be read, most of which have something to do with how it *feels* to read. Accordingly, the Subjectivist mode focuses upon how a fiction occasions a lectical experience, and ultimately a lectical performance, rather than passively appreciate its "stylistic performance."

The fact that Subjectivist readings do not seek reference to an independent, extra-lectical "target reality," however, does not mean they are produced independently of textual features, nor that the strategy of focusing upon lectical performance does not have a cultural history like the strategies of reading for plot or theme. I contend that the practice of valorizing "style" over plot or theme, which often occurs in traditional aesthetics, tacitly asserts the affective - and thereby lectical - dimension of literary value. Holman and Harmon's definition of "style," for instance, reproduces this tacit equation of stylistic and lectical performance. Holman and Harmon do not pretend to deliver a theory of literary stylistics; as is appropriate to any general lexical effort, they offer their readers a general account of how the word "style" has most often been used in the past. Accordingly, they define style as "the arrangement of words in a manner best expressing the individuality of the author and the idea and intent in the author's mind" (487). Although this definition specifically identifies "style" as a textual feature - an "arrangement of words" - Holman and Harmon go on to admit tacitly that the style of a text is largely determined by its "connotations." Elaborating upon their definition, they assert:

It is impossible to change the diction or to alter the phrasing of a statement and thus to say exactly the same thing; for what the reader receives from a statement is not alone what is said but also certain connotations that affect the reader's consciousness. And

from this it follows that, just as no two personalities are alike, no two styles are exactly alike. (487)

In the process of repeating the traditional "ethical" analogy between personality and style, Holman and Harmon indicate that the style of a text is created not just by its unique verbal structure - by "what is said" - but by how the "connotations" of that verbal structure "affect the reader's consciousness." In other words, the style of a text is both an elaboration of and dependent upon its unique diction; if the words were different, the affect upon the reader would be different.

This definition contains two apparently contradictory assertions: 1. It recognizes that the "style" of a text is not contained by its words but must be "felt" or at least experienced by a reader, i.e. that it is at least partially subjectively determined, and 2. It distinguishes between the dependency of "style" upon the "diction" of a text and some other element of textuality which does not share that dependence. Although they do not say to what textual "style" is being compared, I offer its traditional differends, plot and theme, as being the likely suspects. The way Holman and Harmon define them, a text can indeed be paraphrased or adapted and still "have" the same plot or theme, i.e. you can change the words somewhat and still "say exactly the same thing." The recently televised version of Moby Dick, for instance, offered many of the narrative features of Melville's novel; Ishmael both narrates in voiceover and participates in a truncated version of the Pequod's ill-fated pursuit of the white whale. I have not conducted a formal survey on the matter, but I am confident that readers of the novel and viewers of the mini-series could develop very similar if not identical accounts of the plots of these two very different texts. Similarly, there is nothing about the televised version of Moby Dick that would interfere with viewers and readers developing similar thematic understandings of the two texts. This is not to say that *all* attributions of theme or plot are

equally invited by Moby Dick the novel and the teleplay based upon it. For instance, Saldivar's thematic unification of the novel would be more difficult - but not impossible - to develop out of the broadcasted adaptation of Moby Dick because many of Ishmael's "narrative digressions" were not included in the teleplay, in particular his discussion of the appalling "whiteness of the whale." Since such passages are instrumental to Saldivar's particular "reading-text," it could not be exactly duplicated from a viewing of the adaptation, although one could still project his general theme of tropology upon it. The white whale could still be understood as a metaphor for metaphor; Ahab and Ishmael could still be understood as figures for the inadequacy of (self) identification through language. This is so because the strategy of reading (or viewing) for plot and theme treat the specific verbal structure of a text as a transparent medium, the means through which one can see or understand the total fictional realities to which those strategies presume the text refers.

However, Holman and Harmon's concept of stylistic performance insists upon a direct referential relationship between the exact verbal structure of a text and its style; the words of the text cannot be transparent because in one sense they are equivalent to its style. In other words, readers know what the style of a text is only by assessing its diction *as language*, not by using it to reach some other referential object, as in the case in attributions of theme or plot. According to their definition, paraphrasing a text changes its style because style is partially constituted by the specific connotations of its diction. It follows from this that style is not equivalent with diction, it is something more, some "thing" that must be provided by some one to the words of a text. Moreover, connotative reference is not valued for its own sake but because it can "affect the reader's consciousness." Following this model, the style of a text is ultimately not a textual feature at all; it is a product of reading a specific text with a specific diction which produces a specific result: an assessment of

style. This model of style as being produced rather than merely received, of course, directly contradicts Holman and Harmon's primary definition of style as a textual feature - *unless* one uses the word "diction" to denote that part of a text's style which is written, not read. If one does so, then Holman and Harmon's definition of style is not contradictory, it merely equivocates between style as a textual feature (i.e. diction) and style as a product of lectical performance. This crucial equivocation is made evident by their use of the verb "to say"; in their formulation, one cannot "say the same thing" about a text (i.e. its complete stylistic impression) if one changes "what is said" in a text (i.e. its diction). In other words, the stylistic "saying" of a text is both written and read.

The above analysis is not meant to denounce Holman and Harmon's definition of style, but to demonstrate that traditional notions of text-immanent style both depend upon and elide a distinction between the stylistic expression of a text (i.e. its diction) and the stylistic impression it makes upon a reader (i.e. its lectical assessment), and that the unique stylistic value of a text is determined by both of these acts. Put simply, one cannot talk about the stylistic value of a text without to some extent talking about its stylistic affect, about how it feels to read it. By contrast, traditional formulations of "plot" and "theme" tend to completely elide the lectical mediations that make them possible. If a novel falls open in the forest, it most certainly has a plot and a theme, according to traditional aesthetics, but its words must be read before its unique diction can make a stylistic impression. It is in this sense that I contend the traditional valorization of literary style has always been a valorization of lectical experience, in particular over mimetic reference or symbolic meaning.

Given this understanding of style, Holman and Harmon's insistence upon the absolute interdependency of style and diction makes perfect sense while their implied equation of them does not. There is no style "in the text" except for its diction; moreover, the stylistic experience or "impression" developed

during the reading of a text must be developed in response to its diction, the unique vocabulary and syntax printed on the page. I recognize these implications of traditional literary aesthetics, therefore, by identifying "diction" as the "lectical focus" of the Subjectivist mode, a focus which is grounded in and ultimately valued by its "target reality," lectical experience. This move indicates the phrase "stylistic performance" actually denotes two performances: 1. The rhetorical performance of creating a text with a unique diction, and 2. The lectical performance of incorporating the experience of reading that unique diction into a unique reading-act. This project attempts to interrogate how these two performances accommodate and to some extent determine each other in actual reading-acts.

While the first two lectical "tasks" describe how readers pretend what in general a reading-act "is," the three listed below describe how they make it "come to be" out of specific textual features. The main difference between the two tasks discussed above and those discussed below is that almost all adult readers of fiction use all three modes of choosing a target reality and a lectical focus at times while some of the more concretely defined, "line-level" lectical strategies listed below are less universally employed. In other words, I assert that anyone able to read Moby Dick *as fiction* would be aware that, at least hypothetically, it could be understood and valued as 1. A story within a fictional world, 2. A theme with symbolic meaning, and 3. An experience one has in response to its specific diction. From my experience, even those students who have only the most basic lectical repertoire are able - through the vocabulary and practice of lectical analysis - to become more conscious of how they are *already* reading, and thereby set the stage to expand their repertoires. For instance, a reader very well may attribute a symbolic meaning to Moby Dick without consciously unifying different textual features through analogical reference, one of the "line-level" strategies I attribute to the Idealist mode.

Some students reach college without really knowing what the word "analogy" means, much less how to project one between textual features. However, the process of being forced (by a heartless instructor) to account for their symbolic gestures down to the line-level calls attention to the fact that they are *already* performing many of the same lectical strategies as the "smart" students to whom talking about literature seems to come naturally. This tends to break down the boundaries between students who "get it" and those who don't. The implication here, of course, is no matter how universal lectical strategies may be, they are learned, and therefore can be taught. As discussed above, the fact that readers have different latent lectical repertoires is both one of the principal justifications for and difficulties of teaching undergraduate literature classes.

Chapter Two: Semantic Context

The problematic closure assigns a domain, a territory, or a field to an inquiry, a research, or a knowledge.

Jacques Derrida, Aporias

The epigraph to this chapter is offered as a tacit recognition of the problems inherent to "closing" the question of lectical closure in any systematic way while at the same time asserting the necessity of doing so if *anything* is to be said about reading. "Problematic closure" is not a pejorative in Derrida's lexicon; it is merely his name for the circumscription of meaning into a coherent field of study. Since this chapter attempts a systematic description of how words are turned into thoughts, I thought I might chasten my formalism with a cold splash of skepticism before things got too hot and heavy. The field I want to enclose in this chapter is particularly swampy, so I want to define a few terms before I demonstrate how readers close the aporias of fiction at the line-level: that is, the ways they complete the lectical task of establishing a "semantic context" for textual features.

The "semantic context" of a given reading-act is a system of reference created by a reader to mediate between specific textual features and a potential "target reality" and "lectical focus." This formulation borrows heavily from Iser's description of reading as the sequential "joining" of textual segments by a reader into a "referential field" which then informs and is affected by the incorporation of subsequent segments (202). I maintain that the target realities and textual foci of the three modes of the lectical triangle imply different, basic methods for incorporating individual textual features (or segments, as Iser would say) into a developing aesthetic object by establishing a "semantic context" for each of them. I use the adjectives "mimetic," "allusive," and "elaborative" to

describe for undergraduates the three methods of establishing semantic context outlined by the lectical triangle, and the nouns "image," "symbol," and "aporia" to denote what a textual feature has become after semantic context is established via one of the lectical modes.

I have found that many students have already encountered the literary term "mimetic" and therefore it is relatively simple to modify it for application in lectical analysis. If, following traditional critical usage, literary "mimesis" is the "artistic imitation of life," then mimetic semantic context is established by pretending a fiction is an imitation of a fictional world. Students quickly grasp that mimetic reference between textual features and a fictional world extrapolated from them is not one to one; an entire phenomenal milieu can be developed from just a few fictional "imitations" of phenomena, as was demonstrated above regarding Williams' "The Red Wheelbarrow." Erich Auerbach is just one of a whole tradition of readers who maintain that one of the chief functions of fiction is to provide clues - what Auerbach calls *figura* - which refer to an entire phenomenal and intrahistorical milieu, a background against which individual textual features can be understood (73-76). Lectical strategies of the Materialist mode operate according to this same referential pretense; the words on the page are treated as pieces of a world which must be reconstructed by the reader *before* any further lectical assessment can be made about the fiction at hand. In other words, in the Materialist mode the primary meaning of a fiction is its existence as a series of phenomena that can be observed as one observes quotidian reality.

This is not to say that the observation of fictional phenomena in the Materialist mode is made "real" because the observation of non-fictional, quotidian phenomena is less problematic, less fraught with referential aporias, only that the two events share similar assumptions about the referential task at

hand, or rather that Materialist lectical strategies mimic the most common referential strategy for understanding quotidian reality: recognition.

The distinction I am making here is simpler than it sounds and can be illustrated quite easily to students through demonstrative examples. For instance, if one sees a person slip upon a banana peel in the student union, before one can understand what has happened - much less what it means - one must establish a context for the phenomenon observed. One must understand that a person with certain attributes (whether male, female, fit, aged, youthful, disabled, cogent, intoxicated, conscious, laughing, crying, or injured, etc.) has slipped for some reason (whether by accident, for fun, as performance art, as political statement, or by providential design) upon a banana peel (which could be real, a prop, or something slippery that just appears to be the skin of a banana) in a specific place (on concrete, on the floor, in public, in the student union, in the U.S.A., on October 12, 2002, etc). On the most simplistic level, one decides what has happened by comparing one's current observations with one's previous experience with similar phenomena, then focusing upon and unifying the various individual phenomena (no wrinkles on the face, a blush on the cheek, nervous laughter, steady movement of the person's leg, a diamond heart-shaped earring in each lobe, etc.) into a coherent "event." This process of identifying phenomena by referencing memory is adequately described by the O. E. D.'s definition of "recognition": "The action or fact of perceiving that some thing, person, etc., is the same as one previously known; the mental process of identifying what has been known before." If I understand the "event" as "an able-bodied, young woman who is blushing, laughing with embarrassment, and apparently unhurt has slipped by accident upon a banana peel," it is because there are some elements of the "event" which I recognize as things I have "known" or seen before. Students immediately grasp that coming to such an understanding is contingent upon my unique perspective (someone from across

the room might not see or hear the laughter), focus (I might not pay attention to the disheveled man in black hurrying out the door with a purse under his arm), and pre-understanding of a world (the chiropractor standing next to me knows even minor accidents can be crippling). In other words, students quickly or already understand that what a quotidian event "means" - at least at first - is what an individual observer recognizes it *as*.

Although such exercises are rather simplistic, students need some version of "Relativism 101" before they can perform lectical analysis. In my experience, they seem to learn how to identify Materialist semantic context more quickly through analogies to how they attribute meaning in their "everyday" lives than they do through an overtly theoretical discussion of lectical strategies. The key distinction they must understand between Materialist and Idealist semantic context is that a Materialist "meaning" of a fiction is first and foremost a "being," an event that is recognized within a fictional milieu. In short, Materialist strategies presume a fiction means what it "is" (or what it has come to be) while Idealist strategies presume a fiction is what it means.

Of course, once a fictional - or quotidian - phenomenon has been recognized as "being" a part of a coherent thing or event, additional assessments or understandings of it will be made according to what it is has been recognized *as*. This point explains how a Materialist mediation of a fictional world, its "primary" meaning, can lead to additional responses, interpretations, and experiences; i.e. subsequent lectical assessments of meaning which may or may not be Materialist. Returning to the analogy between fictional and quotidian worlds, whether one screams, laughs, applauds, calls 911, or just keeps walking *after* observing someone slip on a banana peel is contingent to some extent upon what one has recognized it *as*, but one is also free to respond to or bring other observations or interpretive strategies to bear on the event. For instance, upon reflection one might attribute a more universal meaning to the event, such

as "students are too stressed out to watch where they are going" or even interpret it as a symbol for the hazards of navigating one's personal scholastic journey within a sprawling bureaucracy. Moreover, once one comes to an understanding of a phenomenal event one may have any number of affective responses to it. One could be simultaneously amused, amazed (after all, what are the chances of seeing a slapstick cliché in the flesh?), and yet somewhat unnerved after witnessing such an event. How one ultimately feels about or interprets an event, however, takes the form of a second-order response - a response to one's response, so to speak.

Readers of this dissertation will recognize the importance of - and problems with - this distinction between "primary" and "secondary" responses to phenomena, particularly the phenomena of a fiction. By identifying sequential levels of semantic reference one can at least partially account for the complexity of an actual reading act. Although it is feasible that a reader might decide the ultimate meaning of a fiction is its "being" (i.e. as a specific fictional event or thing against the background of a specific fictional world), it is more likely that Materialist "being" will be used by the reader to develop another or a series of semantic attributions, value judgments, and/or lectical experiences. As Iser asserts with his model of the reading-act, semantic closure is always provisional, not just during the reading of a fiction, but days or even years after a reader has decided "what it means." In other words, any lectical assessment can lead to a subsequent reassessment by the reader, but that reassessment will be determined to some extent by what the fiction was first understood as. During a lectical analysis of a reading-act, therefore, one tries to examine how a reader's final (or at least most recent) assessment of a fiction depends upon earlier assessments, and - through the concept of "semantic context" - eventually trace all of those assessments to particular textual features.

As mentioned above, semantic context is developed in the Materialist mode by approaching textual features as "images." I use this term because it is already in common parlance and therefore students usually do not have to learn the word itself, only how its usage is qualified and focused during lectical analysis. For example, the traditional literary denotation of the word "image," according to Holman and Harmon, is "a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses" (248). Although "image" denotes a type of textuality in traditional critical usage, in lectical analysis reading a word or series of words as an image is a type of meaning production, a strategy that can be applied to most fictional textual features. In other words, in lectical analysis textual features are not "images" until one reads them as such, but once they have been read as images their semantic function is - at least at first - devoted to the development of a phenomenal milieu within a fictional world. The shift in focus from textual to lectical analysis, therefore, is a shift from describing a being to describing an action; in the Materialist mode this is a shift from identifying "images" which simply exist in a text to examining how textual features can be "imagined."

Following tradition, Holman and Harmon point out that images can be literal or "figurative" because if an "image" is a type of textuality, as opposed to a lectical assessment, then one must account for the fact that an apparently imagistic phrase - such as "a wild rose-bush" - could be read as a symbolic reference to some other meaning beyond its function as a representation of "a sensory experience." By contrast, I maintain that the same words can be understood both literally and figuratively because readers can employ different types of lectical strategies while reading and re-reading them. For the purpose of distinguishing between the three modes of the lectical triangle, then, textual "images" do not produce "figurative" reading-acts; reading a textual feature as an "image" is the strategy used when a reader pretends a textual feature is a

"being" - not a meaning - in a fictional world. Furthermore, traditionally recognized textual patterns other than "images" can be read as images. The terms "dialogue," "narrative exposition," "setting," "character," "mood," and "historical allusion," among others, all denote qualities that traditionally have been attributed to textuality which are ostensibly imagistic. These and a number of other terms are useful as descriptors of different textual patterns, but in this project I choose the word "image" to denote what *any* textual feature can be read *as* during a Materialist reading-act. Below I will demonstrate how such terms can be exploited while performing lectical analysis in the classroom, but even then I treat traditional notions such as "setting" and "character" as being types of lectically determined images. "Figurative" meaning production is the hallmark of the Idealist mode, as we shall see below. To promote clarity I will use other terminology to denote what textual features are read *as* during Idealist reading-acts.

Perhaps a short demonstrative example is in order. The first chapter of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter includes the following language:

On one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him. (36)

According to Holman and Harmon's definition of "image" as a textual type, this sentence is imagistic from start to finish; through a series of linguistic "images" it offers a representation of a "sensory experience or object," in this case a rose-bush by the door of a prison in Colonial America. As a way of making informal distinctions between textual patterns ("this is an image; that is dialogue") such nomenclature has some practical use. However, as soon as one

tries to determine how the sentence is to be understood - i.e. to what extent individual images "have" inherent literal or figurative meaning - significant difficulties emerge. The phrase "a wild rose-bush" certainly sounds like a literal representation of a thing, but what about its "delicate gems" that "might be imagined" to offer solace from "the deep heart of Nature" to (hypothetical? real?) prisoners that pass by? The "wild rose-bush" is the subject of the sentence, but is it the semantic focus, that is, the thing which all the other words describe? Or, as is quite plausible, does the "wild rose-bush" symbolize the "deep heart of Nature"? Is this sentence to be read as a single "image" or is it comprised of several "images"? The sentence appears in a chapter entitled "The Prison Door," the very door at whose threshold the "rose-bush" is rooted; does this mean that the image(s) of this sentence are to be subordinated to the chapter's "dominate" image, the door, or perhaps the "dominate" image of the novel, the scarlet emblem Hester wears on her breast? Of the twenty phrases in the sentence, only one is not an overt representation of a sensory experience or object: the phrase "which might be imagined." But that phrase very well might be read as the semantic fulcrum of the sentence, the phrase which articulates the semantic choices the sentence offers the reader; in a fiction, at least, a wild rose-bush *might* be a symbol for Nature, or it might just be a rose-bush, or it might be both.

In short, there is no way to decide whether or not the phrase "a wild rose-bush" is a literal image, using Holman and Harmon's denotation of the word, unless we know whether or not the reader understands the rest of the sentence figuratively: i.e. as meaning something about the relationship between "Nature" and human suffering, or some such. Using the terms of this project, whether the phrase "a wild rose-bush" is literal or figurative is determined by the semantic context within which it *has already been* understood, that is either as an image or a symbol.

This ambivalence between the literal and figurative in Hawthorne's sentence is not unique, although it is explicitly highlighted by the qualified and passive construction of the phrase "which might be imagined." As pointed out above, even textual features that do not overtly invite a figurative interpretation can be understood figuratively once a reader has decided to read them as fiction. Of course, this assertion is valid only if one accepts that there are in fact certain minimum standards for reading a text as fiction. Specifically, this project presumes that anyone who could meet the admissions criteria for a college-level literature course would understand that fictions can represent both "things" and "ideas," that they can tell stories about and offer interpretations of a world, and that they can be comprised of "images" and "symbols." I maintain that one can safely presume collegiate readers have a much more elaborate understanding of how fiction can be read, but here I offer these minimum standards for the purpose of building a pedagogical method for that population. One does not have to accept that these minimum criteria for college-level, fictional reading are inherent to fictional texts to recognize that they are mandated by lectical conventions. Concerning lectical analysis, then, students are taught that by recognizing a specific textual feature in a fiction as an "image" - a literal representation of a sensory experience or object - a reader has already chosen to make a fictional world out of the words on the page, a choice which he or she must already know is always available while reading fiction.

As in the other lectical modes, this Materialist method for establishing semantic context determines *how* a given textual feature will be understood and indicates its general lectical horizon without dictating a specific or absolute semantic identity. This marks one of the limits of lectical analysis. The only way to access the unique, reader-specific semantic identity of a textual feature is through the reader's retrospective account of the reading-act he or she has

produced. Such accounts will include referential choices made according to both conventional and idiosyncratic pre-understandings of world. Although retrospective self-analysis is a notoriously suspect source of information, I maintain it is relatively easy to distinguish between lectical mediations based upon general conventions and those that respond to a reader's idiosyncratic understanding of "reality." For example, once a reader reports she has read the phrase "a wild rose-bush" as an image, we know the reader's fictional world includes a plant sprouting roses next to a dreary prison door, but we do not know what variety of the rose family she "recognizes" in that world. "Wild roses" look differently than "American Beauty" roses, for instance, which have grown wild. Moreover, the phrase does not indicate what color the roses are, although almost all readers will attribute some sense of color to it during the process of reading it as an image. Although individual words have conventionalized qualities associated with them when they are "imagined" (roses have color, hair has length, lawns are mowed or overgrown, people have age, etc.), even if a reader reports the phrase "a wild rose-bush" represents "a lush bush of red American Beauty roses in full bloom which has not been tended" there are idiosyncratic connotations beyond and behind that semantic choice which are unique to the reader's life experience and therefore can not be approached through convention. Perhaps her long deceased grandmother's house is ringed in overgrown rose bushes which have been ignored by the current tenants. Perhaps she received a batch of American Beauties as a gift when her daughter was born. Perhaps there was a picture of a big, red rose on the package of spaghetti she boiled for dinner last night. If, as is entirely possible, the phrase is subsequently re-read as a "symbol," each of the decisions made during its original, imagistic reading can radically effect what the phrase can mean figuratively, that is, when it is understood according to Idealist lectical strategies. Imagining the prison door roses to be red rather than white or yellow

does not prescriptively designate a subsequent symbolic meaning, but it does access different symbolic conventions. Hawthorne, for instance, exploits the many symbolic conventions surrounding "redness" in The Scarlet Letter, repeatedly underlining the many and often conflicting semantic possibilities those conventions might offer a reader.

This last point underlines another important element of any reading-act: i.e. establishing the limits of the "textual feature" under consideration. For instance, the phrase "a wild rose-bush" can be read as a textual feature by itself or as a part of a larger textual feature comprised of the entire sentence. Alternatively, a reader might identify a textual feature that included words that immediately precede our quote (for instance, "in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society") and/or words that follow it (such as "it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison door"). Moreover, there is nothing that stops a reader from identifying yet another textual feature that includes both the sentence quoted above and the following words from Chapter VIII:

The child finally announced that she had not been made at all, but had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses, that grew by the prison-door.

This fantasy was probably suggested by the near proximity of the Governor's red roses..., together with her recollection of the prison rose-bush, which she had passed in coming hither. (77)

The decision to read these separate representations of the prison rose bush together as a single textual feature, of course, changes the semantic horizon of them both. If, for instance, a reader understands the words "a wild rose-bush" in Chapter I as an image, and further as referring to a growth of white, wild roses, then the passage from Chapter VIII offers two important bits of information about the fictional world he or she has created: 1. The prison-door

roses are likely red, since they are "suggested by the proximity of the Governor's red roses," and 2. Pearl both notices and verbally, at least, identifies herself with the rose-bush. Further, the fact that in both passages the narrator overtly suggests the rose bush could be read as a symbol might provoke the reader to revise her strategy of reading it as an image. The important, if obvious, point here is that the meaning of a textual feature is determined not only by how a reader chooses to understand it (i.e. which lectical mode is employed) but also by the words a reader chooses to include in it. A further crucial point is that both of these determining factors are subject to cultural conventions which are learned, and therefore can be taught.

These distinctions between idiosyncratic and conventional lectical responses are meant to refine and qualify my earlier assertions about how texts "invite" but do not determine reading-acts. Following Booth (and Iser, Austin, Newton, etc.), I maintained above that a given text can "invite" certain conventionalized lectical strategies and "tolerate" or even "resist" others. Some of these conventions structure the lectical response (i.e. determine *how* as opposed to *what* a textual feature might mean), and a reader must have some awareness of them to understand a text as fiction; some of the most elementary of these are the "minimum standards" listed above, although there are others. The lectical triangle is meant as a taxonomy of these "structural" conventions of lectical response. In the immediately preceding passages, however, I have begun to demonstrate how "structural" conventions can affect or be affected by the semantic conventions of individual words. In short, certain words or combinations of words will "invite" certain types of responses and resist others. For instance, the phrase "a wild rose-bush" invites an imagined attribution of color (even for a blind reader), "tolerates" an imagined attribution of thorn size, and almost certainly "resists" an imagined attribution of political affiliation - unless the text offers the reader additional information. As we will

see below, if the phrase is eventually or concurrently read as a symbol, its semantic horizon is significantly broadened. A "symbolized" - as opposed to imagined - "wild rose-bush" might very well invite an attribution of political affiliation, particularly if the fictional setting is 15th century England. That the semantic horizon of a given word or phrase is to some extent conventional is clear; although distinguishing between conventional and idiosyncratic lectical responses at the word/phrase level will always involve speculation, I maintain that careful analysis of the interaction between the "structural" and "semantic" conventions of lectical response can create informed speculation, provisional determinations of the range of responses a given textual feature invites.

I have discussed the mitigating factors that impinge upon reading any textual feature as an image in such great detail because these same factors affect all word/phrase level attributions of meaning. Consistently recognizing these contingencies keeps one - and one's students - sensitive to the problematics which attend any analysis of what a fiction might mean. By categorizing the most common "structural" lectical strategies employed by readers, however, one can at least begin to talk about how readers negotiate the many semantic possibilities that confront them when they open a book. Yes, readers must decide which words constitute a textual feature, and textual features can change from moment to moment during a reading-act; yes, readers must negotiate between literal and figurative references for every textual feature; yes, both these decisions will be affected by the unique semantic horizon of the individual word(s) under consideration. But all of these choices are pre-mediated to some extent by conventions established by lectical traditions, in this study the tradition surrounding the assessment of lectical realism in fiction.

Keeping these qualifications in mind, I turn now to how semantic context is established in the Idealist mode: i.e. by reading a textual feature as a

"symbol." In lectical analysis, virtually any textual feature can be read as a symbol, just as it can always be read as an image, because during such exercises the focus is upon lectical mediation rather than textual classification. The most abstract and traditional sense of the word "symbol" is thereby retained albeit from a different perspective; when a textual feature is read as a symbol it is read as a figurative representation of some thing or idea beyond whatever literal/imagistic meaning can be attributed to it. When delivering this concept to undergraduate students I tell them Idealist semantic context is "allusive" in that it alludes to some kind of symbolic system that readers can use to interpret a textual feature.

My use here of the phrase "symbolic system" is purposefully broad to the point of abstraction. As with all the abstractions employed in this project, the denotation of this phrase is delimited largely through internal differentiation, that is, in comparison to other terms also defined within the project. At the most general and simplistic level, therefore, a "symbolic system" is any cultural artifact in a reader's pre-understanding that he or she uses to interpret a fictional, textual feature figuratively. Such artifacts can be legends, myths, or other fictions; they can be religious, political, historical, literary, or folk traditions; as indicated above, they can also be the "semantic conventions" surrounding a textual feature. Symbolic systems can even be "coined" by readers out of connotations they associate with a given textual feature. (I will discuss this type of symbolic system in some depth below when I consider "lectical coherence"). During actual Idealist reading-acts, all of these types of symbolic systems will be comprised of both conventional and idiosyncratic features; the focus of lectical analysis, of course, would be to determine to what extent a given textual feature invites reference to conventionalized elements of an identified symbolic system. What a symbolic system *cannot* be - again,

purely for the purpose of differentiating terms - are cultural artifacts used to read a textual feature as an image, i.e. as a part of a fictional world.

In classroom application this formulation is not as complex or vague as it may seem. Returning to the passage from Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter for a demonstrative example, the phrase "a wild rose-bush" invites reference to a variety of symbolic systems. The most obvious invitation is the narrator's suggestion that the rose-bush "might be imagined" to represent the compassion of "the deep heart of Nature." This textual feature invites reference to several different symbolic systems. First, one should recognize that the phrase "which might be imagined" operates as an overt invitation to employ one of the most basic lectical strategies: reading a word as a symbol, in this case the word "rose-bush" as a symbol for the "deep heart of Nature." Above I identified pre-understanding of this strategy as a "minimum standard" for college-level readers and further as a lectical convention which structures response, that is which tells a reader *how* rather than *what* a textual feature might mean. Lectical tradition mandates that when narrators overtly delineate a symbolic reference, as in The Scarlet Letter, readers can choose to employ the offered reference during their reading-act. In this respect, by my own definition lectical tradition is itself a "symbolic system."

In this project, however, I distinguish between lectical conventions which structure response and literary traditions which offer a particular semantic horizon and therefore can be referenced as symbolic systems. Accordingly, the phrase "which might be imagined" invokes a general lectical tradition but the words "a wild rose-bush" and "the deep heart of Nature" invoke specific semantic traditions in literature. The literary personification of "Nature" has a long history, one that intersects with philosophical, religious, political, and even legal traditions. The symbolic use of the word "rose" also has an ancient and very broad literary history. Readers who employ the lectical strategy of reading

Hawthorne's sentence as a symbol can and even *should* develop a meaning for it through reference to those two traditions in some way. The fact that the literary traditions surrounding the words "rose" and "nature" are so broad and ambiguous, of course, constitutes a potential lectical problem, an aporia which must be overcome somehow. Needless to say, this passage is one of many in Hawthorne's corpus which have been read as explicit references to the problem of understanding symbols, particularly literary symbols. Although the passage most certainly and explicitly invites such a response to the voluminous symbolic systems offered by "rose-bush" and "Nature," in the Idealist mode the reader by definition has already decided to perform a symbolic reading-act, regardless of the ambiguities he or she might have to overcome in the process. As we shall see below, reading-acts that focus on the problem of establishing reference for a particular textual feature are categorized under the Subjectivist mode.

Although I listed a variety of symbolic systems above, there are no real or objective criteria to distinguish between literary, folk, or religious traditions, for instance, because such categories are so thoroughly interrelated. Hawthorne's "rose-bush," for example, might very easily be symbolized by a reader to refer to the "Rose of Sharon" mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Whether the symbolic system thereby accessed should be called a literary, religious, mythological or folk tradition, or a political ideology is not important to this preliminary outline of lectical analysis, although lectical analysis is offered as another way to interrogate how those different cultural perspectives interrelate. It can be objectively determined, however, that the word "rose" has a long and complex history in Christian culture, *whether a given reader is aware of that history or not*, and therefore reference to that history is to some extent invited by the text. This is not to say that Hawthorne intended his rose-bush to be read as a Christian symbol, much less as a symbol for the Rose of Sharon in particular, only that the word "rose" includes within its semantic tradition certain

Christian references which *can* be used to understand it symbolically. Neither does this mean that reading-acts which ignore the potential symbolic relationship between the rose-bush and Christian tradition are necessarily inferior to those that do. The goal of lectical analysis is to examine how and under which conditions particular reading-acts have been made, not to determine which reading-acts *should* be made regarding a given fiction.

This goal notwithstanding, lectical analysis also offers student readers a method for understanding the cultural biases that have enforced canonical readings of fictions like The Scarlet Letter in the past. Furthermore, it offers them an account of what counts as "plausible" reading-acts within the scholarly tradition. Since students are almost always expected to perform plausible or persuasive interpretations of fiction during a literature course, it seems only fair to teach them general criteria for distinguishing between those interpretations that are well within the range of "plausible" scholarly commentary and those that are not. In Booth's terminology, this means students need to learn how to determine when a reading-act is invited, tolerated, or resisted by a fiction in a manner that both recognizes and interrogates the interpretive heritage of scholarly culture.

Perhaps an example of how these concepts are translated into classroom practice is in order. During a class discussion a few semesters ago, one of my students (who had been taught the rudiments of lectical analysis) suggested that Hawthorne's rose-bush can be understood symbolically through reference to the Rose of Sharon. She offered the class a short description of the interpretive tradition surrounding the phrase "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley" (The Song of Solomon 2:1), including the ancient typological interpretation of the rose as a symbol for Jesus of Nazareth. She claimed on the basis of that symbolic system that the rose-bush passage invites readers to interpret it as a symbol of redemption for sinful behavior, specifically that

Nature offers pity and kindness to Hester even as her neighbors prepare to humiliate her. After helping her explore some of the ramifications of her analysis (Is Hester thereby identified as a martyr? A saint? Is nature pitted against the Puritan status quo by such a reading act?), I gently challenged her analysis by pointing out that the "Song of Solomon" can be read literally as a passionate love poem as well as an allegory for the spiritual marriage between Jesus Christ and the Christian church. After giving her that information, I asked her how her claim that the rose-bush is a redemptive symbol was complicated by the apparent romantic and sexual content of the "Song of Solomon." In the class discussion that ensued, this particular student and some of her classmates came to the conclusion that the novel as a whole does in fact invite readers to relate sensuality with spiritual redemption and sexual repression with spiritual stagnation. Although not all of the students present agreed with this analysis, all of those who participated in the discussion recognized that the analysis was "plausible" since it was directly linked to textual features which "invite" it. In other words, they saw why the original claim proposed would make an acceptable thesis for an essay about The Scarlet Letter within the interpretive community of collegiate academics.

Clearly, such classroom dialectics will not add much to Hawthorne criticism, but they do tend to teach students how to take more responsibility for their analyses of textual features. Moreover, by insisting that they practice lectical analysis upon assigned readings, classroom discussions can develop out of understandings students *already have* about the fiction at hand, understandings which they have already examined (hopefully) using a common method and terminology. Since most fictions tend to invite a limited number of themes, quite often lectical analyses offered during class discussions are subtle variations of the critical tradition of the text under discussion (provided there is one). In effect, the critical heritage of a novel is recreated by the class through

a guided dialectical analysis, not just delivered through a lecture. Neo-appreciation methodology of this sort, therefore, often arrives at the same conclusions as more traditional "survey" courses but via a different path. I found that students who come to a traditional understanding of a fiction through their own analytical conclusions learn more about the dynamic between text, culture, and reader than do students who are offered pre-fabricated readings, no matter how open or qualified. Moreover, the skills learned by applying lectical analysis upon one text are transferable to any other, whereas merely lecturing that The Scarlet Letter thematically associates sensuality and redemption is text-specific information that can be repeated on a mid-term but teaches students very little about fiction at large.

As the case history above suggests, classroom discussions based upon lectical analysis usually do not produce monolithic readings. Most often one student's analysis is either problematized by or must co-exist with a variety of other analyses that are equally plausible. I have found, therefore, that almost every Materialist or Idealist lectical analysis proposed during class time eventually leads to the question of to what extent the fiction at hand invites Subjectivist reading-acts. Above I mentioned that semantic context in the Subjectivist mode is characterized by a resistance to or at least a deferral of referential closure. Subjectivist semantic context is developed, therefore, by elaboration; the reader in this mode entertains multiple referential possibilities for a given textual feature without assessing ultimate "meaning" to any of them. Or, rather, the ultimate meaning of a textual feature in the Subjectivist mode is the *experience* of playing with its referential possibilities. Whereas a reader may very well attempt a Materialist reading of a textual feature before choosing an Idealist strategy to establish closure (and visa versa), a Subjectivist reading achieves closure by deciding no single referential object can be given semantic priority over other apparent options.

Earlier in this dissertation I outlined the three stages of a reading-act: the recognition, closure, and assessment stages. This general model must be refined somewhat to adequately distinguish between the three lectical modes. During the recognition stage a reader develops a lectical horizon in response to a perceived semantic aporia; this lectical horizon is an inventory of all possible "meanings" a textual feature might suggest to a reader at the time given her unique pre-understanding of world. During the closure stage the reader chooses a lectical strategy he or she believes best resolves the textual aporia under consideration. In the Materialist mode, readers resolve aporias by reading textual features as images; in the Idealist mode, they resolve aporias by reading textual features as symbols. In the Subjectivist mode closure is achieved by reading a textual feature as an aporia, an ambivalence between two or more referential possibilities. This formulation is not meant to be a cute oxymoron; one can move beyond the recognition stage of a reading-act by deciding the best way to understand a textual fragment is not as an image/thing or a symbol/idea but as an aporia/experience. In other words, since in the closure stage the reader adopts a strategy to read the words on the page *as* something else other than words, in the Subjectivist mode that "something else" is a semantic ambivalence whose resolution is deferred, for the time being at least. One could say that in the Subjectivist mode a reader settles upon an "aporetic" horizon, a set of particular references culled from the more comprehensive referential inventory of his or her unique lectical horizon. An "aporetic" horizon differs from a lectical horizon in that it is much more limited - it includes only the most likely and appealing referential options that occur to a reader as opposed to the entire range of referential possibilities included in the lectical horizon. An aporetic horizon is also more consciously constructed than a lectical horizon. A reader doesn't really "choose" the total sum of possible meanings that occur to him or her when confronted with a textual feature (i.e. her lectical horizon), but

the decision to continue to play with some of the referential possibilities occasioned by an aporia is always at least partially conscious. In effect, the reader chooses to treat the textual feature under consideration as an object for contemplation, and thereby highlights the experiential element of the reading-act.

Again, the foregoing notion of closing an aporia by treating it as an aporia is not meant to be a "performative" rhetorical gesture, like de Man's phrase "the metaphor of metaphor." Returning to The Scarlet Letter for a demonstrative example, I have already listed a number of the semantic possibilities which *might* occur to a reader in response to the phrase "a wild rose-bush," but the total range of meaning which could be attributed to the phrase is significantly more vast. As pointed out above, the semantic tradition surrounding the word "rose" alone could fill up a multi-volume concordance. If we add to this set of semantic possibilities all the idiosyncratic connotations that the phrase "a wild rose-bush" might suggest to a reader, then we get a sense of how vertiginously broad - and ultimately inaccessible - a *hypothetical* reader's lectical horizon might be.

The concept of a lectical horizon, however, is only useful when applied to an actual reader during an actual reading-act, a unique person with an identifiable pre-understanding of things like language, literature, fiction, and rose bushes. Earlier in this chapter I used the term "semantic horizon" to denote all of the semantic possibilities, both conventional and idiosyncratic, which a textual feature *might* refer to. Needless to say, the range of semantic possibilities a particular reader actually uses to read a textual feature is much narrower than that textual feature's "semantic horizon." For example, I understand some different things about fiction, Hawthorne's corpus, The Scarlet Letter, "wild"-ness, and/or "rose"-ness than a colleague of mine whom I recently asked to re-read the opening paragraphs of The Scarlet Letter. She reported, among other

things, that wild roses in New England are more likely to be white than red, and that she couldn't read The Scarlet Letter without thinking about the marginalization of the feminine voice on the internet. Although I recognize both of these items are part of the "semantic horizon" of Hawthorne's rose-bush, neither was in my most recent "lectical horizon" for that passage. Similarly, my most recent lectical horizon differed in some specific ways from that of a nineteen year-old woman, named Ann, who I asked to read the passage in question. Ann did not understand the words "metafiction" or "allegory" but made a semantic connection between Hawthorne's rose-bush and the past tense of the verb "to rise," according to her because she had recently written a poem that punned upon "rose" and "to rise." All three of us, in other words, had different lectical horizons for the phrase "a wild rose-bush," different semantic resources out of which we accomplished our common goal of understanding Hawthorne's words.

Of course, our lectical horizons shared some items as well. Just to name a few of these: all of us knew that a "rose-bush" is a plant which can grow uncultivated, that roses have thorns, that words in a fiction can be read as images or symbols, that Hawthorne's work is often understood to be overtly symbolic, that roses are often used as a symbol of love and/or passion, and that there is a conspicuous contrast between the colonial prison (that "black flower of civilized society") and the "wild rose-bush" growing at its threshold.

The boundary I am treading here between idiosyncratic and conventional responses is particularly slippery. Using the terminology outlined above, my colleague, Ann, and I each had a unique lectical horizon as we approached the same textual feature within minutes of each other, horizons which shared some structural conventions (e.g. words in a fiction can be symbols or images) and some semantic conventions (e.g. roses are plants with thorns; roses can be symbols of romantic passion). These shared conventions account for most of

the similarities in our reading-acts. However, not all of the differences between our lectical horizons - and there were several - were due to idiosyncratic responses; that is, just because we each had and have a unique set of life experiences which informed our reading-acts. Some differences were due to the fact that we each had and have different understandings of the conventions relevant to reading the piece of fiction before us. For example, since we both understood the conventionalized concepts denoted by "allegory" and that Hawthorne's work has been read in the past using those concepts, my colleague and I entertained semantic possibilities that couldn't - or at least didn't - occur to Ann.

In addition, some of the differences in our lectical horizons were a function of our different lectical habits rather than our relative ignorance or knowledge about fiction, Hawthorne, and roses. Before this most recent reading of the rose-bush passage, for instance, I was aware both that words can be used as puns and that there has been a strong critique of the marginalization of women on the web. However, for some reason neither of these possibilities occurred to me as being relevant to that particular reading-act. Perhaps, as a middle-class, Caucasian male, I am less personally invested in marginalized voices than my colleague is and therefore less apt to attach that theme to any fiction. Perhaps, I am less amused by and therefore less attuned to potential puns than Ann. Or, perhaps, I didn't consider any color but red for Hawthorne's rose-bush because of a momentary fit of laziness induced by low blood-sugar. My point is that one can have knowledge of things or ideas which might be relevant to a fiction - i.e. within its semantic horizon - without attending to them during a particular reading-act: i.e. without including them in a particular lectical horizon. The fact that I was engaged in a dialogue with other readers made it easy to rectify these shortcomings in my previous lectical horizon; upon being reminded of the above semantic possibilities I almost immediately reassessed my reading

of the passage, a reassessment which very well may have established a new reading "habit." The very strong possibility that the wild roses may be white, for example, has reinforced my consideration of the link between Pearl and the rose-bush mentioned earlier in this chapter. Whether or not that symbolic link is important to all readings of The Scarlet Letter is not the point; *my* reading of the novel has been enriched. The contemplation of how "whiteness" contrasts with redness, of how Pearl contrasts with Hester, and how all of these items are concurrently identified in a variety of ways opens new ways to think about a novel that I have been thinking about for quite some time.

Frankly, I didn't need the superstructure of lectical analysis for conversations with fellow readers to broaden my understanding of Hawthorne's novel; I have the training and inclination to completely revise my assessment of a fiction out of even the most informal conversations. Typically, however, my undergraduate students are neither trained nor inclined to look closely at how they create meaning. In fact, it tends to irritate or embarrass them when first asked to do so. For most of them, therefore, some sort of systematization of fictional reading is necessary for them to develop the habit of creating rigorous, critical readings.

Of course, one of the central challenges of teaching students lectical analysis is that it is always to a certain extent self-analysis, and therefore can not be performed with any absolute certainty: a quality of literary discourse that makes them nervous because they want to be certain about "what's going to be on the test." By creating common terminology and analytical methods, however, I have found that lectical analysis creates a more stable system of discourse for readers who are largely ignorant of the way they consume cultural artifacts and have few resources to express what they do understand about their cultural experiences. As a remedy to this situation, lectical analysis tries to interrogate and distinguish between the idiosyncrasies of lectical focus or habit

during a particular reading-act (e.g. my low blood sugar) and the idiosyncrasies of personal experience of the individual reader (e.g. unlike Ann, I have not written a poem which puns on the word "rose") which make our reading-acts different; these different types of idiosyncratic response are in turn distinguished from the structural and semantic conventions which invite very different readers to construct very similar readings.

Another of the challenges of lectical analysis is that some of the material it tries to describe resists definitive categorization. For instance, one might argue that knowing the most common color for wild roses in New England is not only essential to understanding Hawthorne's first chapter but that it is general information accessible to any reader, and therefore should be considered a semantic convention, not a semantic idiosyncrasy. Likewise, the fact that Ann has played upon the semantic ambivalence inherent to the word "rose" in one of her poems might lead one to characterize her use of that experience in her reading-act alternatively as an idiosyncratic experience, a lectical habit, and/or a response to a structural convention. This particular problem of establishing the limits of "conventionality" has plagued speech act theory and most varieties of formalism, but all taxonomies share the more general problem of setting criteria for categorization. Because they must be simple enough to be coherent, systems of discourse are inherently reductive and therefore sometimes are unable to account for the near infinite variety of cognitive experiences, much less the expression of such experiences in language. It does not follow, however, that the conclusions of systematized discourse are inherently flawed or that they have no truth-value, only that they should always be qualified.

The foregoing distinctions between conventional and idiosyncratic elements of a lectical horizon and to what extent they are conscious are particularly important - and problematic - regarding Subjectivist lectical strategies. To summarize, a "semantic horizon" is the total range of possible

references for a textual fragment for all readers, and a "lectical horizon" is the range of references for a given textual fragment which occur to a particular reader during a particular reading-act. Neither of these horizons is created consciously or at least purposefully by a reader while confronting a text, although lectical horizons are affected by the conscious choice to read a particular fiction at a particular moment in time. The semantic horizon sets the theoretically possible limit for a given textual fragment, and the lectical horizon sets the practical limit for a reader during the recognition stage of a reading-act. An "aporetic horizon," by contrast, is the subset of a reader's lectical horizon that he or she has decided to treat as an aporia, thereby entering the closure stage of a Subjectivist reading-act. I see this "decision" as being a different kind of cognitive act than those used when a lectical horizon is developed more or less automatically out of the reader's cumulative pre-understanding of world in response to a textual fragment. I submit that in most reading-acts this unconscious and automatic response to a textual fragment leads directly and seamlessly to the closure stage due to and in accordance with the lectical habits and limited knowledge of the individual reader. Quite simply, most of the time we don't recognize the cognitive problem that reading always presents us.

In some cases, of course, the reader becomes aware of a semantic aporia during the recognition stage that complicates his or her progress toward closure. Once consciously aware of an aporia, a reader is obliged to examine his or her lectical horizon in order to determine which of the referential options and strategies contained in it is the best one for the textual fragment under consideration. A reader can experience the awareness of an aporia as an impetus to get about the business of establishing reference, an act which usually takes little effort and happens very quickly, often in milliseconds, even for readers with little formal training.

If the aporia is not easily resolved, readers have two basic courses of action: to give up or to treat the aporia as an aporia. The first of these two options is characterized by anxiety or apathy and the second is characterized by contemplation. Above I defined "complete," fictional reading-acts with the following criteria: 1. All of the words of the textual feature are considered 2. All of the aporias recognized by the reader are closed. These criteria assert a standard for lectical behavior. As indicated in Chapter One of this essay, I can choose to "give up" on a fiction due to my inability or unwillingness to complete a reading-act, but if I do so I can't honestly claim to have read it. This is a key point: closing an aporia by creating an "aporetic horizon" establishes semantic reference; it is not a form of "giving up," like my aborted attempts to read Tom Jones or Ulysses.

Even though the above distinctions are pretty soft in the abstract, they are necessary to differentiate between what *always* happens during any reading-act, what happens when a reader employs a Subjectivist semantic context, and what happens when a reading-act is aborted or only partially completed. As with the many other abstract definitions in this study, these only have force in their application. In that spirit, I will contrast the strategies my colleague and Ann used to read Hawthorne's "wild rose-bush" passage to better distinguish Subjectivist semantic context from the other two lectical modes.

In both cases I told my volunteers to read the first two paragraphs of the Scarlet Letter and that I would ask them some questions afterward. Both readers had a pre-understanding of the novel: Ann had seen a film adaptation, had read some of Hawthorne's short stories, and had retained some of the critical heritage surrounding Hawthorne's corpus that she had been taught in a high school literature course; my colleague had read the novel several times and had a general understanding of its critical canon, although she had not read it recently. As soon as she finished reading, Ann looked up and said, "Do you want

to know about the rose bush?" I told her yes, and asked her what she thought about it. She told me it was being used as a symbol for "Nature or God or something like that" and that Hawthorne was trying to show how "narrow-minded and hypocritical" Puritan culture was. I asked her why she thought it wasn't just a physical detail of Hester's world, pointing out the conditional quality of Hawthorne's transition "which might be imagined." She replied the rose-bush is "obviously symbolic," why else "would he point it out in the first place?" I asked her if she thought there was a "real" rose bush by the prison door, and she said "yes, but it's a symbolic rose bush too." When I asked her to describe the rose bush she said it was overgrown and "all brambly, with small, red roses, like spray roses." I then asked her to remember what other ideas or meanings had occurred to her regarding the phrase "a wild rose-bush" while she was reading it, no matter how absurd. She listed a number of the most conventional connotations for the word "rose" - love, passion, woman, beauty, romance, all of which she associated with Hester - then laughed and said the "wild rose-bush" had made her think of a funeral, crediting the "black flower of civilization" line for suggesting that interpretation. She also said it reminded her of a poem she had recently written using the word "rose" to denote both a flower and a verb, although she went on to say her poem is about something "completely different" than Hawthorne's novel. I asked her what she thought the novel was about - since she had not read it - and she replied that the rose-bush "pretty much sums up" the novel in a single symbol; according to her, The Scarlet Letter is a condemnation of the enforcement of narrow-minded, social mores and how "innocent people like Hester" are thereby made to suffer. Next, I asked her if the passage communicated anything about literary meaning in general. She replied, "What do you mean?"

According to the distinctions made above, Ann performed an Idealist reading-act of the rose-bush passage. First, she considered a number of

semantic possibilities during her recognition stage that she eventually rejected: she considered an imagistic reading long enough to attribute physical characteristics to the words (it is overgrown and "brambly" with red blooms); she remembered her own use of the word "rose" as a pun; she recognized something "funereal" about the rose-bush, apparently through its association with the immediately preceding description of the prison as "the black flower of civilized society." Although these possibilities were in her "lectical horizon," she ultimately chose to read the passage as a symbol for Nature/God/Hester, thereby initiating the closure stage of her reading-act. This symbolic equation allowed her to attach certain connotations she had recognized for the word "wild rose-bush" - i.e. passion, beauty, femininity, and romance - which by contrast highlight "the narrow-minded and hypocritical" attitudes of the Puritans and their prison.

Clearly, many of these choices were guided to some extent by her prior experience with The Scarlet Letter via the cinematic adaptation, an experience which she employed as a lectical "habit" in her reading act. Since Hester is not even introduced until the second chapter, and since (other than Hawthorne's history of the prison house itself) Puritan behavior is not addressed in the passage she read for me, apparently Ann used her prior attribution of a "theme" to the movie The Scarlet Letter to close an aporia she recognized in the novel between the description of the prison door - that "black flower of civilized society" - and the "wild rose-bush." To describe with some certainty exactly why and how she used this particular interpretive habit to solve this particular aporia would require a deeper understanding of cognitive processes than we currently have. Luckily, we do not have to solve all the intricacies of human cognition to recognize that the utilization of such habits is extraordinarily common behavior for readers and thereby make the deduction that *this* reader used *that* habit during her reading act. Deductions made according to

observation and subject report must always be qualified, of course, but unless one is willing to reject most of the information about cognition garnered from the social sciences, such speculations are all we have to describe what is going on in our heads, much less in our readings.

Besides these rather basic observations, one should notice that some of the details of Ann's reading-act suggest an interactive relationship between Materialist and Idealist lectical strategies during the recognition stage. In other words, she provisionally attributed imagistic references to the "wild rose-bush" before she decided to read it symbolically. This is not to say that she was ambivalent about the semantic function of the "wild rose-bush" once she entered the closure stage of her reading; she was adamant that it was a symbol. Rather, it is important to note that she associated physical characteristics for the phrase "a wild rose-bush" prior to assigning it a symbolic function. Traditional literary convention reflects this constitutive relationship between "image" and "symbol." Holman and Harmon, for instance, define "symbol" as "an image that evokes an objective, concrete reality and has that reality suggest another level of meaning"; the editors of The Norton Anthology of English Literature define it as "the representation of an object or event which has a further range of reference beyond itself." Both of these definitions ostensibly claim that while some textual features have only literal meanings, a "symbol" should always be understood to have *both* literal and figurative one's. As discussed above, the critique of text-immanent fictional meaning thoroughly undercuts all notions that words can be reliably identified as images or symbols which "have" definite literal or figurative references. However, this dissertation concerns itself more with how readers commonly perceive words in a fiction than what words theoretically or even "really" are. From this perspective, readers consistently confirm that literary "symbols" perform both a literal and figurative function. Ann, for instance, believed there was a "real" rose bush growing next

to the prison door in Hester's "world" even while she was insisting that it was *primarily* a symbol for the "passion," "beauty," and "romance" which is victimized by the narrow-mindedness of Puritan morality. Although clearly Ann had imagined a fictional "world" which included "a wild rose-bush," she subsumed that understanding under what she apparently believed was a better, or at least more complete, symbolic understanding of the words.

Although the theoretical problems surrounding the distinction between "literal" vs. "figurative" reading-acts are very complex and as of yet unresolved, in lectical practice symbolic reference almost always coexists with an "imagistic" understanding of a textual fragment, particularly in prose fiction. I believe this is true for two reasons. First, although the semantic horizon of a word changes when it is read primarily as a symbol, most of the items in that horizon are extrapolated from physical characteristics commonly associated with that word. This is obviously the case with words like "rose" which commonly denote material "things" (its common symbolic association with "love," for instance, can be attributed to physical characteristics of rose plants, like sweetness, softness, even thorniness), but it is also true with words that primarily denote concepts rather than things. The adjective "wild," for instance, does not denote a particular material "thing," but it does often denote a particular horizon of phenomenal characteristics that can be applied to almost any thing or concept; a wild rose, a wild horse, and even a wild idea are going to be unruly, untamed, and free, or at least existing outside a recognized order. Once the abstract characteristic is associated with a material thing, therefore, it can be "imagined" to denote physical qualities; a wild rose might have some dead branches and probably is not pruned; a wild horse might rear at the approach of a human and have a matted mane; a wild idea could make someone shake their head or laugh due to its unreasonableness. Such "imagined" references are highly contingent upon the pre-understanding of the reader, but they are not absolutely arbitrary;

there are semantic conventions surrounding "wild" and "rose-bush," for instance, which delimit what images they might denote both separately and when considered as a single textual feature, regardless of the reader's idiosyncratic experience. Particularly in fictional reading-acts, one doesn't have to insist on the theoretical primacy of literal understanding to recognize that the imagistic possibilities which occur to a reader during the recognition stage of a reading-act affect to some extent what a textual feature might mean when read as a symbol.

The second reason why symbols almost always have an imagistic component is that words in a fiction are usually understood within and/or against a fictional "world." Interpolating a "world" from words is perhaps the most fundamental lectical strategy, next to the assumption that language imparts meaning. Even the mnemonics used to teach the alphabet traditionally employ rudimentary narratives, little stories which assert that words and even letters are to be understood within a world. The New England Primer (c. 1683), for instance, matches a letter with an illustration and a short couplet: "D - A *Dog* will bite/A Thief at night" (83). Such methods teach beginning readers not just to understand words within a world but usually within a particular world. Accordingly, the Primer taught colonial Americans that "The Idle *Fool* / Is whipt at School," "*Job* feels the Rod/Yet blesses GOD," and "Our *KING* the good/No man of blood" (83).

Sometimes the world offered by such mnemonics is quite explicitly delineated, as in the Primer or in Tasha Tudor's A is for Annabelle, published in 1954. Tudor's alphabet is also delivered in rhymed couplets accompanied by illustrations of primly dressed girls playing with Annabelle, a precious, china doll inherited from "grandmother." Both the illustrations and the mnemonics instruct the novice reader to associate the rudiments of written language with the arch-narrative of traditional, Western femininity: "G for her Gloves made of

fine leather/H is her Hat with an elegant feather..., S is for Slippers to wear at the dance/T for her Tippet the latest from France..., W - her watch to tell her the time/X is the letter for which I've no rhyme." Both the narrative and pictorial images of a certain feminine culture are explicit, if rudimentary and archaic even in 1954. According to A is for Annabelle, girls are elegant, stylish, prompt, and flummoxed by difficult intellectual problems, like coming up with a word that starts with X. Interestingly enough, the illustration that accompanies the X couplet depicts some other alphabet book open to a page which reads "X is for Xerxes the king." Both the New England Primer and Edward Lear's "A Nonsense Alphabet" used King Xerxes to teach the letter X, but Tudor is content to teach her reader's that they need not concern themselves with the world of ancient kings; the feminine world that she offers is smaller, and less exotic. Moreover, Tudor's illustration for "X is the letter for which I've no rhyme" is the only one in the book which does not depict either the doll or the little girls who attend her with demure smiles on their faces. Instead the two girls are drawn from the rear bending over an alphabet opened to "X"; their expressions are not represented, but the doll Annabelle is seen in profile, with a slight frown replacing the smile that appears in every other illustration.

Not all texts, of course, imply "fictional worlds" as explicitly delineated as Tudor's. Some texts, like Wallace Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar," offer the reader only hints about how one could make a world out of its words:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.

The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Although every line in the poem can refer to the physical attributes of some thing existing in a "world" (with the possible exceptions of lines six and nine), the descriptions offered are patently abstract. We are told it is round, tall, gray, bare, and on the ground, but these modifiers do little to describe the jar beyond substantiating there is nothing remarkable about it. We are given more information, however, about what the jar "does" in contrast to the equally abstract "wilderness" which surrounds it. The jar "makes" the wilderness "surround that hill"; it makes the wilderness rise up, and sprawl around it; it makes the wilderness "no longer wild." Since only lines 1, 2, 6, and 7 address the jar by itself, it is fair to conclude that the poem emphasizes the conceptual relationship between the words "jar" and "wilderness" more than it tries to evoke a concrete description through them. This is not to say that a reader could not understand "Anecdote of the Jar" through purely Materialist reading strategies; the poem most definitely would "tolerate" being treated as an image. The abstract, conceptual nature of the words chosen by Stevens, however, more strongly invites an Idealist reading-act. In other words, the reader is given much material to interpret the relationship Stevens constructs between the words "jar" and "wilderness" as ideas or symbols but is given few materials to interpret those words as images, as things which exist in a fictional world. Readers who choose to interpret "Anecdote of the Jar" as a mimetic representation of a fictional world will have to supply all the physical details of

that world except that it contains a jar on a hill somewhere in the wilderness of Tennessee. In short, such readers will have to do most of the work.

Readers who choose to read the poem with Idealist strategies, however, receive substantially more help from Stevens. Although most of the words in the poem are too abstract to denote specific, concrete images, many of them have a long semantic heritage as symbols; that is, as discussed above, they constitute "symbolic systems" in and of themselves. Accordingly, the words "wilderness," "wild," "rose," "hill," "round," "air," "dominion," "bird," "bush," and even "Tennessee" bring to a reading-act an identifiable horizon of semantic conventions which are available to most readers. Stevens' choice of verbs also problematizes literal references a reader might try to make for such words, particularly concerning the relationship between the "jar" and the "wilderness." Words like "made," "surround," "rose up," "sprawled," "took," and "give" imply the jar and the wilderness are sentient beings, which is in conflict with their conventional, literal denotations. In other words, the contrast between the literal denotations of words like "jar" and "wilderness" as objects and the anthropomorphic quality of verbs like "took" and "give" create an aporia: one that is more difficult to resolve for Materialist than Idealist reading-acts. Although an image of non-sentient objects can be constructed out of anthropomorphic verbals, combined with the abstract quality of the nouns listed above this textual feature invites an Idealist/symbolic interpretation of the poem as a whole and only tolerates a purely Materialist/imagistic one.

The foregoing analysis is not meant to prove that "Anecdote of the Jar" should be read as a "symbolic" poem but to explore the affinities and resistances it has to various lectical strategies. Moreover, this analysis begins my illustration of how the three lectical modes - like the three indices of the rhetorical triangle - are necessarily interrelated even though I assert they employ different referential strategies.

Accordingly, the example above is meant to demonstrate that the fundamental difference between the Materialist and Idealist modes is not that the former treats words as pure images and the latter treats words as pure symbols, but that these two lectical modes seek to ground fiction in the reader's "real" world" in different ways: the Materialist by imagining and thereby observing a fictional world *as if* it was real and the Idealist by interpreting a fiction as a statement or message about the meaning of the world. Using the terminology of this dissertation, these different "target realities" imply different "semantic contexts" within which specific textual features can be understood as primarily either an image or a symbol.

By contrast, the Subjectivist mode grounds fiction in a reader's "real" world by focusing upon the reading-act as an experience in that world. This "target reality" implies that the experience of establishing reference for specific textual features is itself one of the fundamental purposes of reading fiction. In other words, if fiction is to be lived, not just understood, then the contemplation of fictional reference is a valid and valuable product *apart from* what a fiction might or does mean to a specific reader. Before a textual feature can be experienced as contemplation, however, it must first be recognized as a lectical problem that requires contemplation: i.e. it must be recognized as an aporia. The "semantic context" of the Subjectivist mode, accordingly, is characterized by the identification and acceptance of at least two, irresolvable referential possibilities for a single textual feature: that is, its "aporetic horizon." This means, of course, that the Subjectivist mode is inherently dependent upon the other two lectical modes to generate referential possibilities with which to create an aporetic horizon.

Let's return now to the comparison of Ann and my colleague's responses to [The Scarlet Letter](#) to more concretely demonstrate how the Subjectivist mode is both different from and yet dependent upon the Materialist and Idealist

lectical modes. As mentioned above, both of my readers had a pre-understanding of The Scarlet Letter, but only my colleague had actually read the novel. She had, in fact, read it a number of times; like Ann, this means she had a lectical "habit" available to her as she approached the novel once again at my request. Even before she finished reading, my colleague laughed and said "ah, yes. The roses at the prison door - perfect!" Upon finishing the passage she revealed why Hawthorne's words were "perfect" for her: "I can't read this without thinking about what I'm going to go talk about in a few minutes," she laughed, brandishing a stapled article in her hand. My colleague proceeded to explore various correlations between The Scarlet Letter and the article in question, which apparently discussed the marginalization of the feminine voice on the internet. Among other things, she noted that Hawthorne's "wild rose-bush" offers "mute testimony" on Hester's behalf against those that publicly humiliate her, in part because she refuses to speak out against her lover Dimmsdale. My colleague applied this interpretation of Hawthorne's rose-bush to the denigration of women on the internet by pointing out that that form of male-dominance is also often witnessed in silence.

Reducing her comments to their logical conclusion, I said to my colleague "So, The Scarlet Letter is about misogyny on the internet." "It's not *just* about that," she replied, "I just can't help seeing these connections right now." Upon asking her what else the passage meant to her "right now," she attributed a number of other references to it, including a version of Ann's symbolic equation of the rose-bush with Nature/God and the revelation that in that part of New England, of which she is a native, the rose bush would almost certainly be covered with tiny white blooms in June, particularly since the jail was somewhat inland.

While she was exploring these interpretations, my colleague referred back to the text a number of times, reminding herself of Hawthorne's exact words. In

addition, she was so animated while she discussed the passage - smiling, laughing, using physical gestures to emphasize her points - that I told her it seemed like she was having fun. She laughed again, and said, "Well, Hawthorne gives you a lot to play with."

Immediately one can see some fundamental similarities between the reading-acts reported by my two subjects. Both had a pre-understanding of the novel as a whole and employed that information while reading. Both also considered a variety of imagistic and symbolic references for the passage at hand. Both identified the words "a wild rose-bush" as a significant textual feature: something that without prompting they felt compelled to respond to somehow.

However, the way my two readers used these similar elements during their reading-acts differed in some fundamental ways. For instance, my colleague used her pre-understanding of the novel as a whole in a less totalizing way than Ann. Instead of using what she already knew or believed about The Scarlet Letter as the model for her reading-act, she used it as material with and against which she created new interpretations of the novel as a whole and the first two paragraphs of it in particular. For instance, her new understanding of The Scarlet Letter as an allegory for the treatment of women on the internet was conspicuously affected by her previous readings of the novel, but was neither superceded by nor limited to them. When asked, she immediately replied that the novel was not "just" an allegory about the internet, although she "couldn't help" from reading it that way "right now" because an article she had just read and was on her way to discuss was also about how women - like Hester - are still publicly humiliated in cyber-space. Like Ann, my colleague tacitly admitted to importing the theme of the unjust and hypocritical persecution of women from her previous encounters with the novel, but her application of that theme to the first two paragraphs of the novel was less absolute. While Ann

claimed the phrase "a wild rose-bush" was a symbol for the novel as a whole, my colleague went to some lengths to apply what she already thought about those words to what she was currently thinking about in her "real" life. Moreover, my colleague was more ambivalent about all of the possible interpretations she generated during her reading-act. For instance, she almost immediately qualified her new internet allegory interpretation of the novel by pointing out that Hawthorne has a very ambiguous relationship with traditional male-dominance, both as a canonical, male writer and due to particular textual features of the passage under consideration. For evidence, she cited that although "Nature" might be a sympathetic witness to Hester's persecution, according to her own interpretation, it offers no real assistance: only silence and commiseration.

In addition to these references, part of what my colleague admitted to enjoying about Hawthorne's work was the verisimilitude of the setting in Colonial Boston. Born and raised in the area, my colleague was certain what kind of rose bush Hawthorne placed at the prison door, what the temperature likely was in June, and even knew the approximate geographical orientation of the prison in relation to the coast, downtown Boston, etc. In other words, she was quite willing and able to (re)imagine a "fictional world" she had created for The Scarlet Letter. Moreover, she used specific physical characteristics she attributed to the "wild rose-bush" - whiteness and hardiness - as part of her new "allegorical" interpretation of the novel. As she explored her interpretation of the rose bush as a "mute" witness to Hester's public humiliation, my colleague checked Hawthorne's words a couple of times, subsequently attaching the concept of purity to the physical attribute of whiteness and the concept of immortality to the physical attribute of hardiness. Both of these symbolic connotations were contrasted to the "black flower of civilization" (which she read as a symbol for male-dominated culture) and incorporated into the range of meanings she attributed to the passage.

This last point identifies the most fundamental difference between how my colleague and Ann read the first two paragraphs of The Scarlet Letter, and why the former's reading-act was performed primarily in the Subjectivist mode. My colleague used her lectical horizon for the text (i.e. those elements of her pre-understanding of world she considered relevant to *that* reading-act) along with the words of the text to develop a range of possible interpretations that occurred to her at that moment, while Ann used the same basic materials to identify a particular symbolic interpretation, from her perspective for all time. If pressed, Ann very may well have qualified her interpretation more; however the fact remains that she was certain what the rose-bush meant to her. Moreover, it is almost certain that additional information - such as reading the rest of the novel, for instance, or even learning what the critical term "metafiction" denotes - might induce her to change her interpretation, but at the time, using her own resources, she had come to a decision: Hawthorne's rose-bush is a symbol for Hester/God/Nature and by itself presents the central theme of the novel.

By contrast, my colleague consistently reevaluated each reference she attributed to the text as soon as it was made. Although in the past she had come to a decision about what the passage meant, she used those interpretations as a foil for, rather than a foregone conclusion about, the new responses she had to the text in the moment. Although I can't pretend to know for sure what had or was happening in her mind as she read and spoke about the passage, according to her own report and my observations of her, her reading-act seemed to continue long after she read the words the first time at my request. As mentioned above, she did have immediate responses to it - "The roses at the prison door: perfect!" - which included both new and prior interpretations of the novel. However, she was not content to end her reading-act with those references. Instead she chose to continue reading *after* she finished the first two paragraphs; she bounced one idea off another, returned to

the text for further information and inspiration, and paused at times to think and reconsider how her various ideas about that fiction at that moment interrelated. It is quite possible that her decision to "play" with the text as much as she did was influenced by the context within which she performed her reading-act; sitting alone by herself, approaching the novel again due to some other motivation than the request of a colleague, she may have read it much less elaborately. Whatever pressure she may or may not have felt to perform an impressive reading-act, she chose to respond to the challenge presented by Hawthorne's words - and my request - by resisting a number of plausible references which could have resulted in a single, unified interpretation of the passage. By contrast, Ann responded to a similar - although certainly not identical - challenge by considering the possible references that occurred to her and choosing what she saw as the best one.

Above I asserted that choosing a "target reality" during a reading act was tantamount to choosing a role or perspective in relation to a fiction, and that the Idealist and Subjectivist modes achieved that task differently; the Idealist reader approaches the text as a translator, and the Subjectivist reader approaches it as a collaborator. These two roles tacitly accept different levels of responsibility for the ultimate product of a reading-act - an aesthetic object - and in the process imply a different conception of what an aesthetic object is and how one goes about creating it. A translator's job is to change the form of whatever is being translated - be it a poem, a pictograph, or a line of software code - so that it can be understood. By definition, something that has been translated is no longer what it was, but the assumption is that its new form closely corresponds to the meaning of its old, at least if it is to be considered a "good" translation. When translating different languages, these correspondences have to be created according to the translator's best understanding of the semantic conventions of both vernaculars, otherwise

connotation and style might be lost. For instance, the phrase "me gusta mas" in Spanish is better translated into English as "I like it" rather than "it pleases me," even though the latter represents the syntax and the denotations of the words more directly. Translating "me gusta mas" as "it pleases me" ignores the informal tone of the phrase, shifts it into a slightly more formal style, and implies a passive point of view which - by convention - the phrase does not evoke in Spanish.

So, one translates a word or phrase from one language by recognizing the word or phrase in another that best represents the original's complete meaning. Analogously, in the Idealist mode one translates a textual feature of a fiction by recognizing a correspondence between that feature and a "symbolic system" drawn from the reader's pre-understanding of world which he or she treats as the fiction's intended meaning. If, for instance, my colleague had decided that her internet allegory best represented the meaning of the first two paragraphs of The Scarlet Letter, then I would identify her reading-act as being primarily Idealist, and moving into its closure stage with that decision. If she had done so, one could deduce that she had likely established reference for that passage by recognizing a correspondence between it and at least three symbolic systems, none of which can be completely delineated (because they existed only in her mind at that moment) though they can be provisionally delimited, or at least named. These would be: 1. Her recollection of the theme she had attributed to the novel in prior reading-acts, 2. Her understanding of the critique of male-dominance, and 3. Her recollection and interpretation of the article about feminine voice on the internet. Although below I will discuss how scholarly tradition might evaluate the use of such symbolic systems as being more or less plausible "translations" of the passage, lectical analysis - even of a hypothetical reading-act - seeks only to identify which strategies are actually used by a reader. Pursuing that goal, if my colleague had stopped reading the passage

once she established reference between the text and the symbolic systems listed above, she would have performed a model, if somewhat complex, Idealist reading-act.

By all evidence at our disposal, however, my colleague did not stop reading at that point; she continued to play with Hawthorne's words until I observed out loud that she appeared to be enjoying herself. As soon as I caught her having fun, she stopped contemplating the possible meanings of the text, assessed her reading-act (i.e. by laughingly admitting that Hawthorne had given her "a lot to play with"), and began to ask me questions about my project, why I had asked her to read the passage, etc. As mentioned above, the closure stage of a Subjectivist reading-act commences when a perceived aporia is accepted as a lectical problem that does not *have* to be resolved. Instead, it can be contemplated as an event in and of itself before the reader continues reading or moves on to some other activity in the "real" world. At exactly which point in time my colleague began to play with the aporias she recognized in the passage is hard to determine. It is quite possible that she was poised to do so before the reading-act began due to a lectical "habit." In other words, her pre-understanding of Hawthorne's corpus, her prior experiences reading The Scarlet Letter, her conception of how one *should* read fiction in general, and/or her perception of the context of this particular reading-act may have induced her to approach the text with the intention to create an elaborate or at least careful account of what it might mean. It is also quite possible that at some point during the reading she recognized a textual feature that could or should be contemplated, began to do so, and thereby entered the closure stage of her reading-act. Whenever it began, it is pretty clear when the closure stage of her reading-act ended: i.e. with her implicit assessment of it as a pleasurable reading-act. I believe my colleague was still performing her reading-act during her conversation with me up until the moment when she laughed (a non-verbal

communication of her pleasure or possibly embarrassment at my recognition of her pleasure) and admitted she had been playing with Hawthorne's words. At that moment she stopped reading Hawthorne and started doing something else - talking to me. By contrast, by the time Ann started talking to me she already had closed and assessed her reading-act; the passage was *best* understood as a symbol. During our conversation, she only repeated and defended an interpretation that was complete by the time she looked up and asked "Do you want to know about the rose bush?"

If the semantic context of a textual feature is the principle by which a reader establishes reference between the words of a fiction and some version of world, then one should be able to discover the semantic context of my colleague's reading-act by observing what the text came to be for her during her reading. The 'rose-bush' passage did not become a particular meaning for her, as it did for Ann, or an image in a fictional world, as it might have for some other reader. It became an experience, an event in my colleague's quotidian world for which she took partial responsibility - as a collaborator - and was able to assess after it was over. She took *her* time with the text, indulging her different interpretations of it alone and in comparison to each other without committing to any of them. Her commitment seemed to be to the process rather than product of her reading. One of the obvious differences between the three lectical modes is that readers tend to spend more time in the closure stage during Subjectivist reading-acts than in the other two modes. Although "contemplation" occurs at the speed of thought (unless it is simultaneously expressed in language as a reading-text, as with my colleague's reading-act), one can assume that it takes comparatively longer to elaborate and interrogate multiple references for a textual feature than it does to imagine it in a fiction world or develop a single symbolic reference for it. This does not mean that Subjectivist reading-acts are necessarily more complex, informed, sophisticated,

or correct, only that their purpose is to interrogate rather establish reference. The process of deferring reference for a textual feature, however, almost paradoxically establishes a Subjectivist reading-act as a phenomenon in the reader's "real" world that then can be perceived, assessed, and valued like any other phenomenon. In other words, an aporia encountered in a text can become an aporia in a developing aesthetic object through a Subjectivist reading-act; needless to say, jumping the ontological boundary from words on the page to thoughts in the mind is just as significant - and fraught with pretense - in the Subjectivist mode as in the other two modes.

The foregoing double use of the word "aporia" causes little confusion in the classroom (amazingly enough), but I should make a few further distinctions here. Teaching students how to "spot" aporias is the first skill they need to learn to practice lectical analysis.¹⁰ As will be detailed in a subsequent chapter, I give students a list of general distinctions between "textual" and "lectical" aporias, between aporias that can be recognized by anyone "in the text" and those that can only be identified with any certainty by analyzing the reading-text of a particular reader. Although the distinction between these two types of aporias is slippery, the process of interrogating how the apparent "lectical aporias" of a reading-text relate to particular textual patterns calls attention to both the contingency and the determinacy of actual reading-acts. Since the distinction between these two types of aporias is principally delivered to introduce students to particular critical skills needed to perform lectical analysis, I do not generally emphasize the equivocal nature of that distinction: unless someone asks, of course.

In addition, students seem to have little trouble distinguishing between the general theoretical point that lectical mediation is instigated by perceived

¹⁰ See Appendix A for the handout regarding "spotting aporias."

aporias and the Subjectivist strategy of treating a particular textual feature as an aporia. The postulate that reading is the process of creating coherent aesthetic objects out of inherently aporetic texts is presented as a provisional "truth" to students, and only at the beginning of the course as a theoretical justification for spotting "real" aporias in the reading-texts created by them and others. Although this shift from the theoretical to a practical denotation for the term "aporia" does not cause them undue confusion, the sheer range of lectical events that might be aporetic sometimes does. They readily recognize that those textual patterns listed as "textual aporias" (graphic breaks, shifts in diction, repetition of textual patterns, to name a few) strongly invite lectical mediation of some sort. They also seem to understand that some "lectical aporias" are highly conventionalized (e.g. perceived conflicts in semantic reference and function or perceived limits of a textual feature) and some are more inherently idiosyncratic (e.g. commencing or stopping a reading in progress or a perceived resistance of a textual feature to one's lectical strategies). By interrogating this admittedly vague boundary between conventional and idiosyncratic response, and by emphasizing that both types of response are *always* needed to perform reading-acts, students often become more comfortable with expanding their lectical repertoire, while at the same time they get a clearer sense of what kind of conventionalized responses are good candidates for evidentiary examples in (graded) reading-texts. In other words, they sharpen their awareness of what "reading too much" into a fiction means, and how the criteria for plausibility changes when one shifts from creating a private reading-act to creating a public reading-text.¹¹

¹¹ Here as elsewhere I am following Rorty's distinction between private versus "cooperative" projects, i.e. a Pragmatist ethics based on establishing consensus for mutual benefit. A concise account of his thoughts on the matter can be found in "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism," 28ff.

However, it generally takes a little time to convince students that aporias of any kind are not just "problems," "issues," "gaps," "questions," or "impasses" but they can also be perceived as invitations to and progenitors of pleasure. So far, I have discussed and given examples of aporias as agents of "disruption," as moments in a reading-act which "impede" its orderly progression towards closure. The vaguely pejorative connotations of most of these descriptors/figures for aporias occlude what I see as one of their most important functions, particularly when they are recognized as aporias in a Subjectivist reading-act. Aporias can be the mark of stylistic beauty, or at least stylistic "distinction."¹²

What I am thinking about here are those moments when readers find themselves paying attention to *how* a fiction is written rather than *what* it represents or means. Traditionally, such moments have been discussed under an appreciation of style, and have employed faintly archaic qualities such as "eloquence," "sublimity," "vividness," and "beauty" as the abstract marks of text immanent "feeling." Above, I tried to demonstrate that traditional notions of style equivocate between the words of a text - its diction - and the affect of reading those words, at least one of which is the assessment of stylistic value. During that discussion I maintained that in the Subjectivist mode readers choose the diction of a fiction as the textual focus of a reading-act in progress. One of the causes (or consequences, since I conceive lectical modes paradigmatically) of choosing diction as the textual focus of a reading-act can be a recognition of stylistic difference between the fiction at hand and other fictions the reader has consumed. This recognition can be attributed as a mark of singularity, a badge of distinction that nevertheless exists only in comparison and contrast to other textual patterns, other attributions of style. In other words, stylistic "affect" as

¹² See Derrida's *Aporias*, 13ff, for a discussion of the pejorative connotations of the word "aporia," both in his corpus and in common critical parlance.

I conceive it is a contemplation or interrogation of a perceived difference, a difference that subsequently can be valued or ignored, but which always takes the form of a dialogic exchange between the experience of reading the diction at hand and prior experiences with other "dictions." Whether a reader hates, loves, or takes no notice of the unique diction of a fiction is a function of what experiences he or she has had - and can remember - regarding the appreciation of style. This explains why students will often equate the diction of writers as different as Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden. From their experience, all three textual patterns are identical: they are archaic, complex, and all use the word "fain" as if it means something. From one (academic) perspective, such assessments of style are wrong. Traditional literary pedagogy corrects such "mistakes" by expanding a student's understanding of Seventeenth Century diction and teaching him or her how to read for style. A neo-literary appreciation pedagogy can - and should - also pursue these classroom goals, but it can do so while highlighting the fact that stylistic affect and value is always assessed through the same lectical strategy, whether one is a first semester freshman or a tenured professor. The fact that they *already* read for style - albeit too often unconsciously - tends to make the stylistic appreciations of more informed or sophisticated readers seem less mysterious - or idiotic.

Below I will more thoroughly discuss some of these distinctions about how semantic context is established in a reading-act, particularly regarding the problematic relationship between strategies of closure and strategies of assessment. First, however, I need to outline how individual textual features are consolidated into a perceived "whole text" so that my refined definitions of "closure" and "assessment," when I turn to them, will have more practical force and utility. The foregoing discussion of semantic context primarily focused on relatively simple textual fragments; I have done so, of course, for clarity. Most reading-acts, however, are significantly more complex than the few

demonstrative examples I offer above. In the next section, therefore, I will outline how one can talk to students about the often intimidating complexity of reading-acts in a relatively simple way.

Chapter Three: Lectical Coherence

For there is always going on within us a process of formulation and interpretation whose subject matter is our own self. We are constantly endeavoring to give meaning and order to our lives . . . with the result that our lives appear in our own conception as total entities.

Erich Auerbach, Mimesis

A reading-act has "lectical coherence" when a reader *perceives* it as being adequately unified or, in other words, when the reader has solved to his or her satisfaction the aporias that he or she has recognized while creating an aesthetic object. The Lectical Triangle includes three general ways of establishing lectical coherence between textual features and the aesthetic object: i.e. by establishing "episodic," "analogical," or "dialogical" motifs. Below I will outline how each of these different methods can develop a single, unified aesthetic object by sequentially incorporating the textual features a reader recognizes in a fiction.

Throughout this project, I have used traditional literary terms to describe what textual features are treated as when they are consolidated into an aesthetic object. A word, phrase, sentence, etc. can be treated as an image, symbol, or aporia, and these can be used to form larger semantic groups, which I also name according to literary tradition. For instance, a group of images can be consolidated into an idea of "setting" which in turn is consolidated as an element of "plot." Moreover, nothing stops a reader from using the same textual feature for multiple semantic functions. In the example of Hawthorne's "rose-bush," for instance, we found that even a reader who insisted that textual feature is primarily a symbol also recognized that it is to some extent an image. One can

always conceive of a "pure" Materialist or Idealist reading-act, but such events, I believe, are relatively rare (even though for the sake of clarity I occasionally offer demonstrative examples which imply the contrary). As will be demonstrated below, most reading-acts use strategies from all three lectical modes even when they are predominantly characterized by one of them.

All of these semantic groupings, this vast web of referential possibilities and correspondences, must be managed and effected by a cognitive process that in the most general terms can be called "memory recall." Iser goes to some lengths to describe how aesthetic objects are recalled from memory during a reading-act both in comparison and contrast to how "everyday" phenomena are stored and retrieved from memory, at least in part so he can substantiate his claims through cognitive psychology and ordinary language philosophy. My model of the relationship between reading and recall is significantly more simple, but consequently more abstract. Lectical analysis only requires two types of ideas available for recall at any given moment during a reading-act: 1. Those ideas that are in the reader's pre-understanding of world. 2. Those ideas that collectively constitute the aesthetic object. Iser maintains that such ideas are consolidated as "gestalten," groups of thoughts with a perceived or potential correspondence of some kind, the creation of which is stimulated by the words on the page.

I have no quarrel with this formulation or the body of psychological theory it comes out of, but lectical analysis requires a detailed account of the principles according to which such ideas are organized more than a comprehensive, theoretical account of what they are. Moreover, words like "gestalt" tend to make undergraduates' eyes glaze over, so I try to employ terminology which is at least nominally familiar to them whenever possible. Hence, I am content to teach my students that "textual features" stimulate readers to remember thoughts they already have about the world and the fiction at hand and that

these thoughts are organized as different categories of meaning: images, symbols, plots, themes, settings, characters, tone, style, etc. As an aesthetic object is built up during a reading-act, therefore, it becomes less and less directly connected to the text that stimulated it, as Iser points out, and more guided by the way the text has been consolidated into an aesthetic object through these different categories or groups of thoughts. These groups are interconnected in a variety of ways; smaller groups, for instance, combine and overlap to make larger groups. The Scarlet Letter, for example, includes many occasions of the word "rose" and a number of variations on the word "forest." A reader might create a "rose" group and a "forest" group as separate groups of images, and subsequently include both of those semantic groups, along with others, into an "setting." At the same time, however, the reader might recognize the "rose-bush" passage as a symbol for "nature," or some such, and thereby begin to establish connections with textual features that he or she believes invite a similar attribution, such as occurrences of the word "forest." Even from this brief, hypothetical example, one can see how many different "groups" of thought are possible and *necessary* to even reductively represent the complexity of aesthetic objects. Once again, this problem is greatly mitigated during lectical analysis by proceeding from the products rather than the potential causes of an aesthetic object.

During lectical analysis, however, we do need to be able to identify as many of these semantic groups as we can, so we need terminology that represents the various layers that might be revealed or implied by a given reading-text. I will use the word "motif," therefore, to denote a group of thoughts about a fiction which are developed out of at least two textual features. New textual features - or ones that are re-read - are consolidated into the aesthetic object as part of a "motif": a collection or sequence of thoughts that have a perceived consistency in their semantic reference or function. I do

not explain to my students exactly how one recognizes the word "wheelbarrow" can be turned into an elaborated idea of a setting, for instance; to do so would require teaching them a general theory of cognition, a task I leave to psychology professors. Instead, I use the abstraction "memory recall" to denote the process by which readers establish both semantic reference and function for the words before them.

Although the use of memory during a reading-act is different in some ways from how it is used in "ordinary" life, by applying what they already (think they) know about memory to the act of reading fiction, students almost immediately grasp some important concepts about aesthetic objects that would otherwise entail a great deal of theoretical superstructure. First, memories are highly subjective, and therefore unique to the individual, but they are not completely arbitrary; they are at least *based upon* some "real" event. Second, memories are not equivalent to the event they supposedly represent; some of the physical details of events are radically simplified or even distilled in memory and some are emphasized and elaborated. Third, memories seem real but are notoriously untrustworthy; more accurate reproductions of a past physical event, such as a video tape, often reveal more and different things about an event than are recalled. Fourth, memories can be extraordinarily elaborate and complex, and yet be recalled in an instant. Fifth, memories are available for interpretation, revision, and assessment by the person who recalls them. Sixth, we use memories of past events/ideas to interpret present phenomena. Seventh, memories can be comprised of recognizable, interdependent parts that nevertheless are perceived as a unified whole. The analogy between "ordinary" memory recall and the way aesthetic objects are developed during reading-acts can only be pushed so far, but it does supply students with an easily understood framework within which they can begin to explore the differences and similarities between what they think is "real" and how they pretend fictions are real.

The last observation about memory recall listed above - that memories are comprised of recognizable parts that nevertheless are perceived as a unified whole - corresponds quite closely to what I call lectical coherence. Following distinctions made above about the first three lectical tasks, lectical coherence is established in the three modes according to what a given textual feature is being treated as. In the Materialist mode, therefore, a textual feature being treated as an image is incorporated into the aesthetic object by establishing a correspondence - through memory - between that textual feature and at least one other image which already exists in the aesthetic object. The group of thoughts that is thus created is perceived as a "motif": a serial repetition of an identifiable semantic reference or function. The general principle of correspondence that binds such images together in the Materialist mode is one of coexistence. They are treated as things, people, events, or conditions which both exist in the same fictional world (i.e. in the target reality of a Materialist reading-act). As detailed by my discussion of Materialist "lectical focus" above, fictional worlds are generally processed as a plot, a story about some thing or event that is constructed out of many various details, such as attributions of character, setting, conflict, climax, narrative events or action, etc. Even though the textual features which stimulate these and other elements of an attributed plot may be encountered piecemeal and out of "chronological" order, clearly readers have the ability to organize these different elements into a coherent progression of fictional events.

According to lectical convention, these fictional events must be consistent with what the reader believes about the fictional world he or she is making as well as what he or she believes or knows about the "real" world. One of the most common strategies for organizing fictional events with some consistency is through an attribution of a "fictional chronology" not necessarily equivalent to the order in which those "events" are developed during a reading-

act out of textual features. In other words, readers accumulate information about fictional worlds by changing the actual chronology of a reading-act into a fictional chronology, a pretense of a sequence of interrelated fictional events that is consistent with the reader's understanding of quotidian chronology. As in quotidian experience, one develops, revises, and reassesses one's understanding of what a fictional thing, person, or event is as more information about it is revealed or imagined.

One of the most obvious differences between quotidian and fictional chronology is that the latter is based upon the assumption that fictional events have a coherent significance within a complete fictional world, even if neither has yet to be determined. In other words, as soon she reads a textual feature as an image, a reader knows (from lectical convention) that image is more than just a part of a fictional world; she also knows that it is at least a significant and quite possibly a crucial element of what that fictional world *already is*. This *a priori* projection of coherence upon fictional reading-acts accounts for why readers have no difficulty elaborating an entire world and attributing multiple semantic relationships from even the briefest of textual features, such as "a red wheelbarrow/glazed with rain/next to the white chickens."

Fictional chronology, therefore, is developed in a heightened state of awareness of the significance of its constituent elements in comparison to quotidian chronology. Each new textual feature which is perceived as an image *must* be assigned at least a provisional significance or function in relation to the entire fictional world to which it presumably belongs but which has not yet been constructed. Although most of us would like to know the ultimate meaning of at least our own life, if not Life as a whole, most of the time we are not constantly attuned to how that meaning depends upon our quotidian experience from moment to moment. Interestingly enough, those who do constantly see universal importance in the minutia of daily life - Jonathon Edwards, for instance

- usually understand their lives as being a small chapter in a grand narrative, often written by a deified author. During a fictional reading-act, however, every detail, every image which a reader encounters, may be the defining moment, the semantic crux of an entire fictional world. At the very least, therefore, readers are compelled to identify what a textual feature is or does in relation to what, by convention, it might be. Textual features read as images are therefore organized within recognizable motifs, which are given a provisional significance as a part of a whole which has not yet been revealed. These parts are organized not as mere moments in time that may be significant, as in quotidian chronology, but as episodes whose significance and fictional chronology are *a priori* assumed will be understood by the time the fiction has been completely read.

The importance of this heightened awareness of the *a priori* significance of fictional textual features cannot be overemphasized, and to my mind is one of the key differences between aesthetic and quotidian experience. I would hazard that there are moments in our "real" lives that take on an aesthetic character from the same projection of a priori significance: the birth of one's child, for instance, or one's wedding. Similarly, one appreciates the aesthetic qualities of a sunset, for instance, by attending to its various phenomenal details *as if* they are important in themselves; noticing the exact shade of orange upon the fringes of a cloud and the sails of a catamaran becomes an object for contemplation rather than just some things one sees. I am aware this does not constitute a full-blown theory of aesthetics, but I would assert this heightened sense of the significance of particular phenomena is characteristic of aesthetic experience, whether the phenomenal stimulus of that experience is a sunset, a person, a song, or a novel. Determining exactly what kinds of phenomenal cues invite a person to produce an aesthetic object, of course, is the holy grail of text immanent aesthetics. Although I am not on that particular mission from God,

lectical analysis does concern itself with delimiting how such invitations are made during fictional reading-acts, even if I have no recourse but to sweeping abstractions like "lectical convention" when it comes to distinguishing between more or less "aesthetically inviting" textual patterns. The human mind is the Chapel Perilous of aesthetic affect, and we do not yet have any but anecdotal accounts of its mysteries. This does not mean that supplicants to the altar of art do not have relevant things to say about their aesthetic experiences - after the fact. I guess this conceit casts lectical analysis as a straw poll of celebrants at the church door: "Oh, ye with the divine light in your eyes, tell me of the sanctum sanctorium...."

We may not know what exact words will instigate a particular reading-act, but we do know some of the beliefs that readers of fiction are strongly impelled to employ when they approach a text as fiction. Lectical convention, at least, mandates that all the textual features of a fiction be addressed with the attitude that they are unified, in some yet to be determined way, and therefore are all of some relative importance. All three lectical modes respond to this mandate of lectical convention, albeit, as we shall see below, in different ways.

Focusing on the Materialist mode for the moment, however, episodic motifs satisfy this mandate to organize accumulated information about a fictional world when they perform the function of "exposition." When episodic motifs operate as exposition, therefore, they exist as an ever-evolving taxonomy of the different fictional things, people, or events a fictional world *might* include. This expositional function is often suggested to readers by a perceived repetition of an image. If, for instance, in the first chapter of a novel a newspaper vender is mentioned once ("he nodded at the trollish newspaper vender just as it started to rain."), is apparently given brief dialogue in the second ("'Hey,' the old man said, 'are you just gonna read that, or you gonna buy it too?'") and is found dead in the third ("I found out the next day that the

sirens were for the corner newsman, who had been killed for no good reason by no one in particular."), most readers will craft a motif - the vender - which can be thereafter be treated as a single image, a character, a part of the setting, a symbol, etc., etc. A key characteristic of all motifs is that they remain open-ended and available for modification until after the entire fiction has been read and assessed. Moreover, inclusion in a motif is not dictated purely by an explicit repetition or variation of a textual feature. In the above - hypothetical - novel, for instance, the deduction that the words "the trollish newspaper vender," "the old man," and "the corner newsman" all refer to a single fictional person is not absolutely required of the reader, but that deduction or something like it is strongly invited. There is nothing that stops a reader, however, from attaching every mention of print media or of old men in subsequent textual features to the "vender" motif. Moreover, the reader is free to attach idiosyncratic semantic references or functions to that motif which can affect her aesthetic object. The reader's grandfather, for example, may have been short, fat, ugly, and mean - i.e trollish - and therefore she subsequently attaches those references to a kindly "grandfather" depicted later in the novel.

Motifs in general are developed as perceived repetitions of an identifiable semantic reference or function; the expositional function performed by some episodic motifs is promoted by organizing textual features into provisional categories subject to conventionalized understandings of physical being in the world. Textual patterns, of course, will often exploit these conventions. As mentioned above, the author does not have to explain that all three textual features of the "vender" motif are offered as a single fictional person because lectical convention dictates that images should be attributed the same basic properties as the quotidian phenomena to which they seem to refer, except when to do so would create an aporia. Although we do not have access to the actual "images" created by a reader in response to a textual feature, we always

know something about the physical properties that should be attributed to them through recourse to the semantic horizon of its words. The first textual feature above, for example, mentions "a trollish newspaper vender." These words do not tell the reader much for certain about the fictional person they invite him or her to imagine, but they explicitly invite an attribution of personhood and occupation, both of which are semantically delimited in some specific ways. Personhood itself tells us some things about what the word "vender" should be imagined as. Persons - unless specifically otherwise indicated - have object permanence, that is they continue to exist even when we are not in their presence or thinking about them. It is mandated by lectical convention, therefore, that if the word "vender" is read as a fictional person, that person continues to exist in the fictional world attributed to the fiction one, two, or ten chapters later. Since that fictional person is a "newspaper vender," we also know something about his social status. Currently, any one who sells newspapers on the street belongs to the working-class. This attribution is very complex and highly contingent upon the reader's own class identity, but is nevertheless strongly invited; whatever this textual feature comes to mean to a particular reader, to some extent it calls for a class reference. The newspaper vender might turn out to be the mayor in disguise or an eccentric millionaire, but until the text offers different or more information, one should assume the vender is relatively poor, an assumption which is deeply resonant in Western culture. The entire phrase "a trollish newspaper vender" *probably* also delimits the attribution of gender. Could a woman sell newspapers on the street? Of course - I saw one doing so last month. I'm fairly certain, however, that the occupation of newspaper vender is heavily marked with a male gender identity. Similarly, trolls are usually represented as male, although there are some exceptions. One could substantiate this assumption with various cultural artifacts, but never establish more than some sort of ratio: one which

establishes a more or less likelihood of gender. My point is that we do not need to know the exact probability of a newspaper vender being male to know that the words "a trollish newspaper vender" *probably* invites an attribution of masculinity.

In the classroom, this "probability" can be substantiated by a quick straw poll. Getting in the habit of polling students about the connotations they attribute to textual features reinforces a number of the main precepts of lectional analysis. First, it makes more explicit the depth of mediation involved in any reading-act. Since attributional discrepancies usually surface, polling also gives the class the chance to compare notes. Doing so often leads to interesting investigations of their different understandings of words and "the" world. In addition, polling tends to illuminate the often vast differences between *my* understandings of life and literature and those of my students. In other words, it keeps me cognizant of my own ignorance of their world and thereby keeps me more honest about my own mediations between text and world.

Another common function of episodic motifs is the attribution of causality, that is, when images are treated as "real" things, people, or events which affect each other in a fictional world. For instance, an image of a rainstorm may be joined to an image of a frown as an episodic motif even though no causal relationship between them is made explicit by the words of the text. In this way a whole host of correspondences are deductively created by readers according to their pre-understanding of world and the current aesthetic object. A fiction does not have to delineate "the heavy rain had seeped through his cotton jacket soaking him to the skin which made him uncomfortable and therefore he frowned" to establish a connection between the words "rain" and "frown" and thereby treat those words as images within a coherent episode, in this case united through the principle of material causality. The unifying potential of the smallest details of fiction treated as cause is a mainstay of

fiction as a whole, but is perhaps most obviously exploited by mysteries or detective stories. "A loose hair," "a dropped handkerchief," "a rough childhood": any such textual features can be attributed with a causal power that unites many other images into a single motif.

Although the above demonstrative examples are commonplace observations of how unified motifs can be built out words (particularly when applied to a traditional prose narrative), students have to learn how to analyze even these basic lectical strategies before they can understand more complicated and less commonplace conventions for mediating fiction. Moreover, episodic motifs in particular are often created unconsciously and therefore bear scrutiny. Granted, part of the value of episodic motifs is this very unconsciousness; they are perceived by the reader as transparently happening rather than being created. As stated above, most Materialist strategies are both dedicated to and created by maintaining the illusion that a fictional reality is being observed as one observes quotidian reality. At least one of the goals of lectical analysis, however, is to take that illusion apart *after* it has been cohered into an aesthetic object.

I am aware that my ubiquitous use of the word "as" does not adequately explain the problematic relationship between how motifs are developed and how or to what extent fictions "invite" readers to make certain lectical choices. One of the important questions which straddle this relationship is whether or not reading-acts which ignore "invitations" from a fiction can be characterized as wrong. The simple answer to this question is yes: readers can create aesthetic objects which are demonstrably incorrect. Authors create fictions with an awareness of lectical conventions, even if only because they practice those conventions themselves. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, however, whether lectical conventions are chickens or eggs is difficult, and unnecessary, to determine while analyzing the pragmatics of reading. In order to perform a

fictional reading-act *according to current lectical conventions* , one needs to be able to recognize textual patterns which have traditionally been used to invite certain lectical strategies. The creation and comprehension of any linguistic act requires that the speaker and the auditor both understand the fundamental lectical conventions of the dialect being used as well as its vocabulary and grammar. If this were not the case, newly-coined figurative expressions would be unintelligible without a gloss. For instance, if I write, "Philosophers are constantly applying nail polish on the claws of tigers," my reader will recognize the semantic conflicts between the subject of that sentence and its object phrase as an invitation to read it as a metaphor. This is not because a literal understanding of the sentence is impossible - who knows for certain what the illuminati do in their free time, and I could always be ignorant, joking, or lying - but because my reader knows that the grammatical relationship asserted between "philosophers" and "tigers" clearly exceeds the common denotations and connotations of their respective semantic horizons as literal or "real" things in the world, and therefore, according to lectical conventions shared with me, I am *probably* asking to be understood figuratively. This conflict between the semantic horizons of the words of my sentence is not just apparent, it is an objectively identifiable "textual aporia." It is "in the text" as much as the conventional definitions of its vocabulary. Moreover, the fact that the above sentence appears in a doctoral dissertation and is marked - by "for instance" - as a demonstrative example, suggests the sentence asserts *something* about the "real" world in general and the immediately preceding claim in particular, at least according to the lectical conventions of formal academic prose. Without any other information about how to interpret the sentence as a "real" assertion, it would be incorrect to understand it as a plausible assertion of what philosophers really do to tigers; it *should* be understood as either 1. An unbelievable, unsupported, and specious claim 2. A joke, or 3. A metaphor.

The claim that any textual feature "should" be understood in a particular way highlights the dependency this project has upon an "Pragmatist" ethics of some sort, one that I am aware is more implied than delineated in these pages. Sure, it is easy to create demonstrative examples which appear to have "objectively identifiable" textual "invitations," but what are the specific ethical imperatives, presumably contained within these shared "conventions" I keep talking about, which authorize one to determine for certain whether a particular understanding of a text is "right" or "wrong"? My short answer is that such determinations are made according to a Pragmatist understanding of the ethics of public behavior. We are given the freedom to read according to our own inclinations albeit within broadly circumscribed criteria: i.e. lectical convention. The "private" act of reading, therefore, takes on the ethical quality of a "public" act, what Rorty would call a "project of social cooperation" (28). This is one of the elements of my central analogy between reading books and interacting with people which I believe is not merely figurative. I believe that lectical convention dictates we should give fictions the same regard, the same respect for alterity, that is accorded to the thoughts and words of other people in the "public" sphere. Just as a Pragmatist account of public behavior impels us to seek consensus out of self-interest, and therefore circumscribes "proper" ways of behaving towards others, a Pragmatist account of lectical behavior impels us to perform our subjectively determined acts of meaning production according to certain pre-ordained dicta. In other words, both quotidian and lectical behaviors are performed under and subject to an internalized understanding of the rule of law.

According to the assumptions above, responses to textual patterns are delimited by lectical conventions which wield the cultural force of law, although one may obey or disobey any of these laws in many ways. One can always choose to be a "outlaw," and as long as ones reading-act is never articulated as

a reading-text, the penalty is usually fairly light. However, fictions are written with an understanding of and an appeal to lectical conventions, so even such "closet" lectical outlaws are often excluded from what they have to offer. In this same vein, ignorance of a law does not defend one from the penalties of violating it, particularly once a reading-act has been expressed as a reading-text. The penalty for flagrant violations of lectical convention in public are also usually quite slight, but occasionally - for professional literary scholars and their students, for instance - such violations can carry a sharp fine.

All this indicates that ignoring the authority of a particular lectical convention over a textual pattern under its "jurisdiction" is a mistake *within the specific cultural context that defines those laws*. By choosing to read a text as fiction within a particular cultural context, therefore, one tacitly agrees to recognize and obey such laws in some way. Just as there is a big difference between the received moral tradition of a given culture and the codification of that tradition into a legal code, there is a big difference between the received lectical tradition which any reader must understand in some way to create a reading-act and how that tradition is represented in writing as systematized "laws" of reading. Traditional literary pedagogy is full of such laws, stretching from the dicta of Aristotle's Poetics to the less direct legal code implied in the headnotes of current literary anthologies. Since no such set of laws is equal to the task of comprehensively representing the lectical conventions of a culture at a given moment in time, they usually are quite general, abstract, and qualified. Like the laws of a political body, therefore, such lectical laws deliver their exceptions along with their rules.

Following this tradition within both the teaching of and discourse about literature, I offer the lectical triangle as a codified system of "laws" which represents the lectical tradition of Western culture at the turn of the Twenty-first century. Just as a legal code must be practiced as jurisprudence, I also

offer in this dissertation a procedural method for interrogating this system of lectical laws, a method I collectively call here lectical analysis. The presumption of writing down THE LAWS of reading fiction is not lost on me, no matter how much I qualify or backpedal. Moreover, I attempt this project only because the lectical tradition I attempt to represent through the lectical triangle is *already* being taught in literature courses, albeit, I contend, too often too unsystematically for students to understand its implications. What they do understand, or at least hope, is that there must be *some* laws governing the reading of fiction, if for no other reason than they are aware they will be judged according to their ability to obey those laws during class assignments. Given this implied requirement of the literary classroom, and pushing the analogy between a legal code and the lectical triangle a bit further, requiring students to read fiction without giving them explicit limits how they should behave during those readings is like telling citizens they will be punished for immoral behavior without defining what "moral" behavior is in at least a general way. Although social order can be maintained in such a political climate (by force), its administration would necessarily appear arbitrary at times, and therefore promote the kind of anxiety often demonstrated by students of literature. A publicly articulated system of law and jurisprudence, however, offers a forum for negotiating the ambiguities that are always present in an abstract legal code. Under such circumstances one can always appeal to the court of public opinion.

I embarked upon this digression from my discussion of Materialist lectical coherence to explain, qualify, and hopefully substantiate some of the normative gestures already made and lay the ground rules for those to come. The only real justification for this dissertation and the classroom method it describes is its utility as a discursive heuristic for the almost hopelessly complex process through which readers "close" fiction. Its other main goal of being an accurate representation of current theories of reading fiction is only achieved, therefore,

if it is simple enough for students to learn and apply to specific reading-texts. The ultimate pedagogical goal of lectical analysis is for students to acquire the tools and the experience to practice a particular skill: the skill of analyzing and critiquing the cultural tradition surrounding fiction. Before they can critique that tradition, however, they need to have a general idea of what it is, particularly as it manifests within collegiate-level academic culture. The "laws" delivered by the lectical triangle, therefore, have to be elastic enough to represent the freedom that readers have within that culture but honest enough to account for the abstract but pervasive normative tradition within which that freedom is delivered. It is in this spirit that I make distinctions between textual features that invite, tolerate, or resist certain lectical strategies.

Returning to my discussion of Materialist "lectical coherence" in particular, there are many functions an episodic motif might perform simultaneously. I have already discussed above how readers can attribute fictional chronology, exposition, and causality to a series of textual features as the organizational principles for episodic motifs. These three common functions of episodic motifs correspond to conventional ways of organizing sense phenomena moment by moment in our "real" lives. This last point calls attention to a general function of motifs that is not often examined closely, except by reading theorists: how motifs build expectations during the course of a reading-act. For instance, it stands to reason that a reader who understands the "vender" motif as a character would look for different correspondences for it in subsequent textual features than a reader who understood the same motif as setting or mood. While the "vender" motif as character might very easily be made to correspond to some other character motif, thereby changing the significance of them both, that same motif treated as setting might more likely be understood along with images like an overturned garbage can, dirty rain in a gutter, and the subterranean rumble of a subway car to create an idea of a fictional place within

which fictional events take place. Although such "expectations" do not absolutely dictate how a reading-act progresses, there is no doubt that individual readers develop lectical "habits," some which can become quite inflexible. Moreover, since the referential possibilities of almost any textual feature are manifold, readers often will continue to develop motifs they have already recognized when confronted with a similar textual feature rather than explore other ways to understand it. The textual features listed above which constitute the "vender" motif, for instance, could quite easily be interpreted collectively as a "symbol" (perhaps for the "heartlessness of the city" or "senseless death" or some such) subsequent to understanding it as setting, but doing so would require the reader to shift lectical gears, so to speak. That readers shift gears constantly during their progress through a fiction is obvious and necessary; that they also often do not recognize invitations to do so out of lectical habit is less obvious, but can be substantiated somewhat by lectical analysis.

For instance, I noted above that the phrase "a trollish newspaper vender" probably invites an attribution of male sex, but definitely invites an attribution of personhood. Since that textual feature does not specifically denote gender, it would tolerate the attribution of female sex to the vender. Upon the appearance of an "old man" selling newspapers in a subsequent chapter, however, it would be demonstrably wrong to ignore the textual invitation to create a motif, since personhood includes the characteristic of object permanence. The strong invitation to treat the two textual features as an episodic motif about a single fictional person would thereby be in conflict with identifying the vender as a woman. I maintain that the lectical aporia thus created *should* be resolved by changing an attribution that is tolerated - the vender is a woman - to be consistent with an attribution that is strongly invited - the "trollish newspaper vender" and the "old man" tending a newspaper stand

are the same fictional person. Readers have great freedom regarding how they resolve such conflicts (perhaps the venter motif is a not just a fictional person, but primarily a symbolic allusion to Tiresius, and therefore has the gender identity of a hermaphrodite), but they are not given the freedom to decide whether or not such conflicts should be resolved. Hence the process of reading always involves second-guessing our lectical choices as we encounter new evidence about them from apparently relevant textual features. In other words, each new textual feature implicitly interrogates the "rightness" of the aesthetic object developed thus far.

One can see from the preceding discussion that the three "functions" I identified with episodic motifs describe only a few of the many qualities commonly attributed to the quotidian world which readers pretend are qualities of fictional worlds. Many other conventionalized beliefs about reality, like object permanence and stereotypes of class or gender, are used during Materialist reading-acts to build up a fictional world out of episodic motifs. Moreover, due to the deferral of responsibility for fictional worlds to an other, readers are often more likely to act upon conventionalized beliefs than they are during quotidian actions, at least partially because they are required to do so. The aesthetic object should be constructed according to the unique textual pattern of the fiction at hand, but the cultural references thereby invited are subsequently available for critique by our "quotidian" identity. That is, although we must read according to the stereotypical beliefs about the world we think are *probably* invited by the text, we can ultimately assess the resultant aesthetic object according to our unique understanding of self-in-the-world. After I create a coherent aesthetic object, therefore, I am free to disagree with the terms of the fictional world I helped create. This dialogue between the conclusions of our lectical and quotidian selves is not only allowable, it is necessary for the ultimate assessment of a fiction, the final lectical task of a reading-act.

Clearly, however, not all fictions invite episodic motifs as explicitly as the example offered above. In fact, some readers are extraordinarily devoted to developing a Materialist understanding of all fictions, even when doing so is only tolerated or in some cases resisted by a text. Consider, for instance, Adrienne Rich's poem "Our Whole Life":

Our whole life a translation
the permissible fibs

and now a knot of lies
eating at itself to get undone

Words bitten thru words

meanings burnt-off like paint
under the blowtorch

All those dead letters
rendered into the oppressor's language

Trying to tell the doctor where it hurts
like the Algerian
who walked from his village, burning

his whole body a cloud of pain
and there are no words for this

except himself (133)

In many ways, this fiction seems to resist Materialist reading strategies, at least in comparison to more traditional narratives. The first problem that confronts readers here is deciding what constitutes a textual feature. Theoretically, textual features can be of any length, but as indicated above one can only regard so many words at once before they must be translated into thoughts. Even a fiction short enough to be memorized with little effort, such as "Our Whole Life," is not read by a memorization of all its words; fictions are broken down into smaller units - textual features - according to the inclinations of a reader in response to the patterns of a text. One of the most conventionalized systems of textual organization, of course, is formal grammar. In short, readers often treat grammatical subdivisions of a fiction as cues to how it should be broken down into manageable textual features. "Our Whole Life," however, is difficult to consume according to formal, expository grammar. Phrases and sentences are not marked with punctuation (saving a lonely comma in the twelfth line), conjunctions and other connectives are often omitted where one might *expect* to find them, and verbal functions are left ambiguous. Consequently, it is difficult to say for certain what the semantic relationships between many of the words are *meant* to be using only formal English grammar.

Readers of "Our Whole Life" should, of course, recognize that it is offered as a poem, and consequently can and should be read using organizational conventions that exceed formal grammar. How does one know "Our Whole Life" is a poem and should be read differently? One answer is that it appears in a book subtitled "Poems old and new"; that is, Adrienne Rich purposefully marked the publication that I purchased as poetry. I could always read the text as something else as well as a poem - cultural criticism, perhaps - but failing to recognize its textual pattern is poetic would be contrary to my implicit obligation to follow lectical convention, an obligation which I bring on myself when I choose to read. Students in an undergraduate literature class, moreover,

are positive "Our Whole Life" is a poem because their instructor has told them so and it is listed under "Contemporary American Poetry" in the anthology in which they read it. In other words, the lectical context of the text strongly invites readers to approach "Our Whole Life" as a poem, and therefore apply certain lectical strategies strongly associated with that genre of textual pattern.

But let's say, hypothetically, that a reader finds "Our Whole Life" typed as above on a discarded piece of paper. Without a doubt, the textual pattern of a title followed by lines of words broken occasionally by extra spacing still strongly invites being read as poetry. Moreover, readers should know that poems often do not always follow formal grammatical conventions and that the semantic relationships between their words are not always explicitly indicated, and therefore be able to recognize that textual pattern in "Our Whole Life." One could, of course, create a text that used this textual pattern that was not meant to be read as a poem. An office memo, for instance, in this pattern might read something like this:

Memo to all employees

Memo to all employees our newest colleague
just hired a vice-president

many years labored cincinnati ohio
working for Procter and Gamble

All those pesky deadlines defeated

welcome her new family member show
now, the ropes of our own making

utmost consideration

Even if this text is offered in the lectical context of an inter-office memo, in addition to that context, and the lectical strategies thereby implied, its readers should *also* recognize that its textual pattern identifies it as poetry. However readers resolve the apparent conflict between the lectical context of the text - a brief communication from management at the workplace - and the textual pattern it is offered in, for it to be intelligible the text would have to be read according to an explicitly poetic grammar, governed by different organizational cues than formal, expository, non-fictional prose: i.e. the textual pattern that by convention is used in inter-office memos. Whether it is understood as a poem, a joke, a typo, or nonsense, readers *should* confront the aporia created by the text's invitation to employ conflicting cultural conventions during their reading-acts.

Once a reader recognizes "Our Whole Life" as poetry, therefore, there are a number of organizational cues he or she should also recognize. These, like all other lectical conventions, are accessed through memory and are managed according to probability. "Our Whole Life" offers one such cue in its title. Titles, a reader should know, often offer an organizational principle for their fictions in and of themselves. In other words, titles give readers an organizational focus prior to engaging the subsequent words of the text. The title Billy Budd, for instance, tells the reader to look out for a character by that name, and when that character is encountered, to treat him as an important if not central clue to what that fiction means. Likewise, The Scarlet Letter and "The Red Wheelbarrow" call attention to a certain textual pattern in their respective texts. Without reading anything but those titles, readers should recognize that Hawthorne and Williams invite them to look for textual features that correspond to those titles because they are the likely focus of an organizational plan. Upon confronting the textual pattern of "Our Whole Life,"

however, this lectical convention at least partially conflicts with another cultural convention regarding poems as a sub-genre of fiction: i.e. poems are often titled by their first line. In other words, the title of "Our Whole Life" very well may not be an invitation to focus upon those words when they are encountered in the first line; it may purely serve a naming function, a way to distinguish this poem from others. This conflict between fictional conventions constitutes a textual aporia, one that should be recognized on some level by readers as a lectical aporia, a problem to be resolved during the reading-act. The first words of the poem "Our whole life" are even more thoroughly marked as a textual aporia in that their semantic relationship with the noun phrases that follow it is not made explicit. "Our whole life," "a translation," and "the permissible fibs," in other words, are offered as a series of things without clear directions about how they are interrelated, and therefore each might be read as subject, object, or appositive. Moreover, lectical tradition stipulates nouns can and sometimes should be attributed a verbal function while reading poetry.

I maintain that the lack of an explicit grammatical cue regarding the function of those words requires readers to fall back on lectical conventions which might imply how they can or should be interrelated. One of the most fundamental cues of function in formal grammar is sequence. In English, the most basic sequence of grammatical function is subject-verb-object. This convention identifies the phrase "Our whole life" as the likely subject of the idea of the first textual feature of the poem, whatever words that may include. Readers are not compelled, of course, to read even the words "Our whole life" together, much less along with "a translation the permissible fibs" as constituting a single textual feature. As noted above, the lack of grammatical hypotaxis between the three noun phrases constitutes a textual aporia. Moreover, as I will discuss below, the words "our," "whole," and "life" are all textual aporias due to their overtly polysemous semantic horizons, and therefore

each is conspicuously available to be treated as a textual feature by itself. However, the textual pattern of "Our Whole Life" offers readers another organizational cue with which to overcome the problem of creating textual features out of its words: it is explicitly pre-organized into sections with line spacing. The double spacing between the first two lines and the next two strongly invites readers to divide the poem into groups of words to be treated together, and to continue to treat subsequent double-spacings as individual parts to be compiled into a single unified text. This textual pattern is likely parsed by the reader before the first word of the poem is read, but certainly by the time he or she confronts the problem (for the first time) of which words constitute textual features.

In combination with the other "cues" mentioned above, I assert that this textual pattern strongly invites readers to regard the first phrase of the poem as the semantic focus of at least the first two lines. An analysis of the textual aporia can get us this far, but to proceed we need to turn to a description of the lectical strategies which might be applied to that first phrase: i.e. a description of how the different lectical modes might organize an aesthetic object depending upon what the first phrase is read *as*. In other words, since the reader will be all but required to decide at least provisionally what the first phrase "our whole life" should be read *as* by the time he or she finishes the first two lines, it stands to reason that that decision will greatly affect how the rest of the poem is organized and thereby understood. Starting with the Materialist mode, if the words "our whole life" are read as an image that is moreover marked as being an important if not "central" image, it follows that the words "a transaction / the permissible fibs" will be subordinated to it in some way as other images which explain what it means or does, if not as a "subject" per se then as a semantic focus. This implication sets up a potential lectical pattern - or habit - depending how a reader attributes function to these first eight words.

If, for instance, the reader understands "a translation" as an appositive phrase subordinated to "our whole life," he or she has established a lectical pattern; that is, he or she will likely at least provisionally project the same hypotactic function upon the subsequent phrase "the permissible fibs." If the reader thereby treats the first two lines of the poem as a sequence of related images all of which are organized according to the semantic function of defining the words "our whole life," he or she has by my definition created an episodic motif.

A conventionally dictated quality of all motifs is that they are "open-ended" as long as the reading-act is still in progress. That is, all motifs operate as categories of thoughts which potentially might be useful to incorporate subsequent textual features into an evolving aesthetic object. Accordingly, I maintain that readers who decide the first two lines describe "our whole life" as an image, a thing in a fictional world, will approach the third line of the poem with that same lectical strategy highlighted among all the other possible lectical strategies available to them. Although the double line break marks the third line as belonging to a different part of the overall textual pattern of "Our Whole Life," the fact that it starts with the conjunction "and" invites readers to consider continuing the motif established in the first two lines. If the reader perceives no conflict to incorporating lines three and four as more appositive images included in the developing "our whole life" motif, then it seems reasonable that the reader will approach the next textual feature with an even stronger inclination to continue developing that motif/image. Following this likelihood, the decision to treat the first words "our whole life" as an image sets up a lectical pattern that can organize the entire poem as a single episodic motif, a series of attempts to define what the fictional thing represented by "our whole life" is or might be.

The orderly progression of this pattern of lectical coherence could be interrupted in a variety of ways, of course. A reader might, for instance, decide

that the capitalization of "Words" in the fifth line constitutes a conventionalized textual cue that a new thought has begun. Following that convention of formal written grammar, the poem would not have eight textual features indicated by line breaks - all subordinated to the "our whole life" motif - but a total of four textual features beginning on lines one, five, eight, and ten respectively. This alternative parsing of the textual pattern puts the phrase "Our whole life" on a more equal footing with the phrases "Words," "All those dead letters," and "Trying to tell." There simply is no way to predict for sure how a given reader will manage these conflicting textual cues (as well the many others not mentioned) before the fact; all one can do is analyze how textual aporias probably instigated lectical mediation according to the evidence of a reading-text. That the same textual pattern can explicitly invite both of these lectical patterns underlines the speculative nature of lectical analysis and the limits of its ability to describe what really happened during a particular reading-act. Two readers, for instance, very well might use these different patterns of lectical coherence to come to the same basic conclusion: that the poem is about the image "our whole life," an image from which an entire fictional world could be interpolated. They might, therefore, create very similar reading-texts based upon very different reading-acts. Conclusions about the exact pattern of lectical coherence each used should be correspondingly tentative, but one could be quite certain that the principal strategy of lectical coherence in each was creating some sort of episodic motif.

For the purposes of defining episodic motifs in comparison to the motifs of the other lectical modes, however, I want to consider more closely what kind of fictional world might be created by treating the entire poem as a single motif focused on the words "our whole life" as image. If the subsequent words of the poem are understood as appositives of that phrase, at first glance the fictional world that is thereby constituted is a very strange and patently metaphoric

world. In other words, the strategy of lectical coherence suggested above characterizes "our whole life" as the only fictional thing that "exists" in the fictional world created out of it; all the other images in that episodic motif are attempts to describe that one "real" fictional thing through figurative language. This begs the question how can a figure of a fictional thing be an "image" itself, that is a fictional thing in its own right that is pretended to "exist" in the same fictional world as its "literal" referent? The answer is deceptively simple: such figures can be understood as images of fictional speech. In the quotidian world, people often use elaborate figures to describe a particular thing or idea, particularly when that thing is represented initially in language as abstract as "our whole life." Moreover, whole strings of figurative appositives might follow such an utterance in ordinary language, all of which should be understood as different verbal strategies employed by the speaker to communicate an understanding of a single, literal thing or idea. Since fictional worlds are constituted - in part - according to qualities conventionally attributed to the quotidian world, there is nothing that stops a reader from pretending an entire poem is an "image" of a fictional verbal gesture.

This one point indicates how important episodic motifs are to lectical coherence in general. To whatever extent words in a fiction tolerate being understood as representing utterances about a thing in a fictional world, to just that extent they can be understood as an element of a fictional person. A verbal utterance requires a person, whether that person is actual or fictional. All attributions of author, speaker, narrator, and character, therefore, can be and in many cases should be deduced from such attributions of fictional speech. Episodic motifs, therefore, are most often responsible for solving the lectical problem of "who is speaking" during a reading-act through a pretense of fictional personhood. Although there are other ways to resolve that problem, clearly the pretense of the author's voice is one of the most common, followed closely by

the pretense of hearing a story told by a narrator. Even when a fiction gives us no explicit cues to create a speaker, as in "Our Whole Life" or "The Red Wheelbarrow," lectical convention dictates that we can *always* deduce a fictional person from textual features.

Some textual patterns, of course, invite an attribution of certain kinds of fictional people. An author can always be attributed as the "voice" who is speaking, but some textual patterns explicitly imply other fictional people should be imagined by the reader. Narrators, for instance, can be attributed to some textual patterns which would resist being understood as the author, like when an event is described which the "real" author could not have witnessed. Similarly, quoted or paraphrased dialogue in a fiction indicates some fictional person should be imagined other than the author or narrator. That every word in a fiction must have been written by the "real" author(s) does not inhibit the ubiquitous practice of creating fictional worlds inhabited by these various types of fictional people, all of whom are each constructed during a reading-act through the development of episodic motifs. Episodic motifs, therefore, in addition to the other functions listed above, are also the way readers manage the traditional literary concept of "point of view." Readers decide, in other words, "who is speaking" at a given moment during a reading-act by recognizing a correspondence between a textual feature and an already existing motif of fictional personhood or, alternatively, by attributing to that textual feature a new fictional voice. Whether a reader treats the "our whole life" motif, therefore, as an image of the "voice" of Adrienne Rich, an anonymous authorial speaker, or a character, once he or she attributes fictional personhood to the poem's textual pattern it is a small deductive leap - for most readers - to extrapolate an entire fictional world consistent with that one image.

A further implication of this function of episodic motifs is that almost all Idealist and Subjectivist lectical strategies are to some extent made possible by

them. Before one can decide a fiction represents a symbolic meaning applicable to one's understanding of the "real" world, as in the Idealist mode, one has to attribute a point of view from which that symbolic meaning is represented. I should make clear here that the "point of view" which is attributed to a fiction via an episodic motif is not the same as the lectical "perspective" from which the reader makes that attribution. Although I agree that many textual features invite readers to adopt certain perspectives or roles in relation to them - i.e. the reader-in-the-text identified in a variety of reader response models - I see a substantive difference between those perspectives adopted by living persons and the points of view attributed to fictional persons. As discussed above, one's perspective or role at a given moment during a reading-act defines one's lectical relationship to the text, of which I recognize three basic types: the roles of Materialist/observer, Idealist/translator, and Subjectivist/collaborator. Shifting back and forth between these lectical perspectives may change a reader's understanding of a given point of view, for example, a character's, but doing so does not necessarily entail adopting that point of view. Although one can indeed pretend to "be" a character, that lectical strategy is just one of many that can be used to develop a fictional world from the more general Materialist/observer lectical perspective. Accordingly, the same character motif, once developed, can be used to attribute a symbolic meaning or as the impetus to interrogate a textual feature as a lectical aporia.

For the above reasons, according to my taxonomy of lectical perspectives, episodic motifs are disproportionately responsible for lectical coherence in comparison to the Idealist/analogical motifs and Subjectivist/dialogic motifs described below. This, of course, is an artifact of my central objective of the lectical triangle: to describe the most common, general lectical strategies used by readers of fiction. Following this objective, it makes sense that my taxonomy reflects the ubiquitous practice of developing

lectical coherence through the pretense of fictional being. Most readers develop a narrative context for textual patterns as a default or at least initial coherence strategy, even while reading fiction like "Our Whole Life" which very well may resist being read as a story.

The fact that episodic motifs are used more frequently and perhaps more fundamentally than motifs from the other two lectical modes, however, does not belie the importance of all three lectical modes to the act of reading fiction. Episodic motifs are created according to the principle of coexistence, and therefore organize fictions via the same system of reference most familiar to readers: quotidian world-making. One must have an idea about what a phenomenon "is" in relation to other things in the world before one can assess its value or meaning. At least provisionally, readers tend to project this same pragmatic upon the phenomena of sequentially encountered textual features, establishing open-ended categories of co-existence between textual features.

It is quite possible, nevertheless, for readers to recognize *almost* immediately that some textual features can and sometimes should be organized within a pattern of meaning rather than just a pattern of co-existence. Patterns of meaning can be developed according to the principle of semantic "equivalence" between a textual feature or motif read as symbol and some other textual feature or motif. In this dissertation I call such patterns of meaning "analogical" motifs. Episodic motifs differ from analogical motifs in that the former structures the pretense of continuous events in a fictional world and the latter structures the pretense of equivalent reference to the reader's understanding of world. As pointed out above during my discussion of semantic context, the only preconception about fiction that is more prevalent than the pretense of fictional reality is the assumption of fictional meaning. Fictional meaning can be attributed to episodic motifs, of course, but as we shall see in the next section that attribution is performed after coherence is established.

The process of establishing lectical coherence via analogical motifs, on the other hand, itself attributes a provisional fictional meaning.

Also as pointed out above, the decision to read a textual feature as a symbol is most often preceded, if only momentarily and unconsciously, by reading it as an image. Either through a pre-understanding of symbolic equivalence as a conventionally prevalent lectical strategy or a recognition of a symbolic heritage of a particular textual feature (e.g. the word "rose" in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter), readers remember some thing or idea which a textual feature appears to represent. As in the rhetorical use of analogy, the textual feature is thereby understood by attributing to it information about some thing or idea that is already known, and therefore can be remembered. During a reading-act this basic principle of organization can establish coherence between textual features in a way that is much less circumscribed than in episodic motifs. Both types of motifs are developed according to perceived resemblances between its members, but episodic motifs are governed by conventions of literal meaning and analogical motifs are governed by conventions of figurative meaning. An episodic motif is workable, therefore, only if it is consistent with the other fictional things, people, and events already "coexisting" in the unique fictional world thus far developed during a given reading-act. An analogical motif, by contrast, is useful if it appears to add meaning to the aesthetic object. That meaning also needs to be reconciled to whatever fictional world has been created, but, unlike episodic motifs, analogical motifs are not bound by conventional understandings of being-in-the-world. Concepts like object permanence, chronology, and a host of other "physical" properties which must be considered while reading a textual feature as an image do not need to be considered while reading it as a symbol or while re-reading an image as a part of an analogical motif.

The foregoing characterizes analogical motifs as being gestures of re-reading, of reorganizing textual features already understood as images into new, specifically symbolic patterns of meaning. This, I maintain, is the most common use of analogical motifs; they provide an alternative method of meaning production that however does not necessarily eradicate its initial mode of meaning production. Portions of an episodic motif understood as a character, for instance, can thereby be made equivalent to portions of another character motif in a way which accesses additional symbolic meaning without negating the imagistic function of either character motif. One can understand the deaths of two characters, therefore, not just as events in a fictional world but also as an opportunity to understand how the *idea* of death is represented by the fiction as a whole. This comparison and contrast of the specific terms of fictional being allows a reader to assess not just what an image is or does within a fictional world but also how it can be referenced to his or her pre-understanding of the world.

Another important difference between analogical and episodic motifs is that the former are recognized through apparent contrast as much as through similarity. In other words, textual features which are apparently very different, for instance a character who dies and a character who survives, often can be perceived as cues to understand them together, that is to give them equivalence under a third index of meaning: a pre-existing symbolic system of some kind. Readers know through cultural convention that fictional death often is meant to imply the rejection of qualities attributed to a character. From our earliest contact with fiction, we are conditioned to respond to this textual pattern. The big, *bad* wolf gets killed by the *good* woodsman. The lazy little pig gets eaten and the prudent little pig gets to laugh last. Such textual patterns invite readers to identify the abstract, conventionalized idea - or moral -

according to which "good" and "bad" behavior can be recognized, not just in the fictional world but also in reference to the reader's quotidian world as well.¹³

Of course, not all invitations to create analogical motifs are as clearly invited as in the textual pattern of "The Three Little Pigs," neither do all ideas which they are made to represent take the form of a clear moral. Like the lectical habit of establishing a plot, however, attributing a central or dominant set of ideas to a fiction is a very common and persistent lectical habit left over from our early training as readers/auditors. The symbolic potential of virtually every textual feature keeps readers in a state of hyper-awareness of possible symbolic meaning. Moreover, once a textual feature has been read as a symbol during a reading-act, it stands to reason that the reader's attention becomes even more focused upon how other textual features or existing motifs might also be organized into a more widely applicable symbolic understanding of the fiction at hand. Some textual patterns take advantage of this lectical convention, and thereby invite the development of analogical motifs. As I pointed out above, Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter has a reputation for being an overtly "symbolic" novel; just its critical heritage alone might invite a reader to look for analogical correspondences between textual features more than he or she ordinarily would.

There are other textual patterns in that novel, however, that also conventionally invite analogical motifs. Hawthorne's choice of introducing at the beginning of his novel a "wild rose-bush" which "might be imagined" to be an agent of Nature is one such textual pattern. As detailed above, the word "rose" has such a vast symbolic tradition that almost any use of it in a fiction invites a symbolic understanding of it. The semantic horizon of "rose" is even more emphasized by the conditional tense of "might be imagined" followed by an

¹³ For a thorough interrogation of images and symbols of death in fiction, see Alan Friedman's Fictional Death.

example of what it might be imagined as: Nature. This textual pattern calls attention to the general lectical strategy of understanding fictional things to mean more than what they seem. A reader does not have to be conscious of this reminder to receive it. I submit that merely the sharp contrast between the delicate blooms of the rose-bush and the weather worn "black flower" of the prison is enough to suggest something more is *meant* by "a wild rose-bush" than a plant.

Needless to say, repetition also plays an important function in such textual patterns. The fact that most of the words of the first chapter of the novel are occasioned by or contrasted to the "wild rose-bush" even further encourages readers to approach that textual fragment, at least, as a source of symbolic meaning. I believe that once that recognition is made, subsequent textual features are more closely examined, not just for "rose-ishness," to use this example, but for symbolic potential in general. A reader does not even need to know, therefore, the traditional definition of "allegory" as a literary genre to respond to the many allusions to that genre scattered through The Scarlet Letter. Readers may not know, for instance, that the character Pearl shares her name with one of the most famous Christian allegories in English, but that ignorance should not stop them from recognizing that name as an invitation to create an analogical motif. Quite simply, Hawthorne hedged his bets so thoroughly that to ignore the symbolic potential of the name "Pearl" - both due to its semantic horizon and a series of narrational speculations about what the name might mean - would be a mistake. Of course, what the name "Pearl," or any other textual feature thus marked, is supposed to mean in particular is not nearly as circumscribed. In other words, the textual pattern of The Scarlet Letter invites symbolic references in general but does not deliver a pre-structured moral like a parable or a fable.

Although most analogical motifs depend to some extent upon imagistic understandings of textual features, some textual patterns invite or at least tolerate reading-acts that are symbolic from the ground up. The textual pattern of "Our Whole Life," for instance, conspicuously calls attention to the importance of its first phrase *before* a primary semantic reference or function needs to be attributed to it. Moreover, the fact that "Our Whole Life" should be read as a poem should highlight for a reader one of the most conventional stereotypes about poems: they are often meant to be understood symbolically. Upon confronting the variety of textual aporias listed above in that poem, the reader should therefore at least consider reading the words "our whole life" as a symbol, a linguistic gesture whose primary referent is not some thing in a fictional world but some idea about the reader's "real" world. Above I maintained that symbols are referenced to a pre-existing symbolic system in the reader's pre-understanding of world, which includes of course a unique understanding of received cultural conventions. Of course, readers can build their own symbolic systems during the course of a reading-act which thereafter become available for symbolic reference. In other words, as soon as a provisional symbolic reference for a textual feature is made, it takes on the function of a potential symbolic system. Analogical motifs, therefore, often perform the function of creating symbolic systems in response to specific textual features by imposing a predetermined semantic relationship - i.e. analogy - upon them.

In the poem "Our Whole Life," for instance, readers are perfectly within their rights to resolve the textual aporia between the two noun phrases of the first line by treating them together as an analogical motif. Instead of treating the first phrase as the subject of an imagined fictional speech, as in the episodic motif I detailed above, this analogical motif requires that the reader compare and contrast the two noun phrases to determine what they might mean

together in reference to his or her understanding of world. The resultant symbolic system, therefore, is instigated by the implied question "how is 'our whole life' like 'a translation'?" Although I have not seen this particular analogy before, there is a long tradition of comparing human life and experience to a variety of texts: "You can't tell a book by its cover," "All the world's a stage," "You are being melodramatic, Gladys," etc. As pointed out above, however, the horizon of symbolic meanings generated by a reader need not be particularly definitive or prescriptive; all they have to do is appear relevant to the reader at a given point in a reading-act. Moreover, lectical convention dictates that while reading poetry, such symbolic meanings might be quite obscure; readers, in other words, should expect poems to offer them symbolic references which they might find unfamiliar.

A reader who found only a few ways to understand those two noun phrases together, therefore, very well might still perceive them as being productive of some meaning and therefore valuable, particularly at the beginning of a poem. Upon confronting the next line - "the permissible fibs" - the same reader might try to incorporate that line into the existing analogical motif or not, depending upon the lectical horizon attributed to the motif. If, for instance, the reader decides that the motif means something like "life is like a translation in that some things can not be communicated in words," then she may not immediately see a connection between that idea about the world and the phrase "the permissible fibs." Two lines down, however, the line "words bitten thru words" should catch the reader's attention as being relevant to an analogical motif about words. Lines five through nine all include denotations of language: "meanings burnt-off like paint... all those dead letters... the oppressor's language." If these lines are incorporated into the motif established in line one, the analogical balance between "our whole life" and "a translation" is changed; the motif now offers more information about "language" and "words" than it

does about "life." Following conventions of analogy, this means that the ultimate symbolic reference of the motif, the thing that is unknown but is hopefully *made* known through the analogy, is best represented by the phrase "Our whole life." The remaining lines of the poem might not initially seem relevant to this hypothetical reader, and therefore she might understand them as a short narrative about an Algerian. Since fictions are assumed to be unified, however, the reader would at some point have to resolve that small episodic motif to the analogical motif that initially structured the aesthetic object. Most readers would have little trouble doing so; after all the Algerian is "trying to tell the doctor where it hurts" and "there are no words for this." Since lines two through four - initially omitted from the motif - are syntactically attached to line five, "Words bitten thru words," the reader should be able to resolve all the inconsistencies initially created by the analogical motif and thereby have a complete, coherent understanding of the poem as a symbolic comparison between "our whole life" and certain qualities of language.

A few elements of this hypothetical analogical motif should be highlighted. First, the specific terms attributed to the initial analogical pairing in the first line determine the likelihood of subsequent textual features being seriously considered for inclusion in that motif. Since according to lectional convention analogical motifs are useful if they produce symbolic meaning, readers have great freedom while establishing the specific terms of that meaning, much more so than when imagining the specific terms generated by an episodic motif. The semantic horizon of "our whole life" and "a translation" considered together is neither infinite nor arbitrary, but a reader's choice of terms from that horizon is not bound by received conventions of probability as much as are choices made within the pretense of coexistence in a fictional world. Returning to the "legal versus moral" analogy used earlier in this chapter, readers confronted with the task of attributing a symbolic reference do

so knowing the "laws" governing their behavior are extraordinarily abstract. They know they are required to act, and moreover to act rightly, but they are given few if any details about what "right" or even legal action might be regarding the specific textual features in hand. As pointed out above, if such readers feel they will be punished for "wrong" action - as undergraduate students often do - this lectical task can be anxiety producing. Most readers, however, are aware that the "laws" pertinent to symbolic meaning production are quite *laissez faire*; as long as they produce meaning and are made consistent with the rest of the aesthetic object, symbolic attributions are "right." Within the sub-culture of collegiate-level scholarship, of course, a few additional, equally abstract criteria of "rightness" are imposed upon readers. I will discuss the problem of accommodating these below when I address classroom applications of lectical analysis.

This freedom that readers are given by lectical convention is reflected in the hypothetical reading-act above. Just because a close, scholarly reading can detect symbolic correspondences in every line of "Our Whole Life" *after the fact*, does not mean that a reader would be "wrong" to create an analogical motif out of the two phrases of the first line and yet not see a correspondence to that motif in the second line: at least not initially. One can predict with some certainty that readers should consider a particular textual pattern as an invitation to develop an analogical motif, but one can not predict what the exact terms of that motif will be because readers are given so much freedom in that regard. Particularly in the initial development of an analogical motif, as in the first line of "Our Whole Life," the specific terms of the symbol attributed to it by a reader change it from an identifiable group of words to a concept, an idea that focuses upon a particular lectical horizon abstracted out of the broader referential possibilities included in the semantic horizon for those particular words. Since this translation from words to idea is inherently reductive *and* is

only governed by convention in the most abstract way, readers often create symbols in response to textual features in the moment which ignore semantic correspondences that might be recognized after the fact, that is, upon closer consideration. In the hypothetical example above, for instance, there is no lectical convention that compels that reader to recognize a correspondence between a thought represented by "understanding words in translation" and the words "the permissible fibs" - at least upon initial consideration. The word "fib," for instance, might carry a strong connotation of "childishness" for her or that fibs are always spoken, connotations which she might not be able to attach immediately to her ideas about the analogical relationship between translation and life. Failing to accommodate her understanding of "fibs" to the pre-existing motif would not stop her reading-act in its tracks, it would only create a lectical aporia that at some point would have to be resolved. Exactly when or how such lectical aporias are resolved can only be determined from specific reading-texts: i.e. from a reader's report of what textual features caused him or her difficulty and what strategies were used to overcome that difficulty.

This point underlines another important quality of analogical motifs. The interpretive freedom that makes them highly semantically productive also tends to create unique lectical aporias that have greater force than a given textual pattern invites. Iser writes that this is a necessary effect of the "selection" process by which readers choose between the referential possibilities "projected" by the text (124-34). My point here is that readers *should* know that lectical convention identifies symbolic meaning production as being an overtly subjective action, and therefore it is okay to omit symbolic possibilities that the author might have intended. This lectical convention encourages readers to create symbolic references which seem relevant to them at the time - since they can not do otherwise - with the pre-understanding that their choices

are not right or wrong, they are more or less productive and consistent *with themselves*.

This perceived shift in responsibility for the exact terms of the aesthetic object from the author to the reader is characteristic of Idealist reading strategies. The perspective thus adopted is one of a translator, one who is responsible for changing words which are initially unintelligible into ideas which are coherent and meaningful. Since readers should know something is always lost in translation, they follow their own inclinations about what and how much a given textual feature treated as a symbol should mean. The further implication of this lectical convention is that symbolic reference in general and analogical motifs in particular should always be treated as referential guesses, provisional attempts to create meaning which likely will have to be modified to be expanded. As long as one is reading from an Idealist perspective, one knows that a symbolic reference has not been exhausted; one can always consider it again in the light of new textual features. Moreover, I submit that this ruminative quality is inherent to symbolic meaning production, that according to lectical convention, symbols are supposed to be considered repeatedly and often in depth. In short, symbols have the reputation for being sneaky; they can be trusted only so far, so one has to keep an eye on them during a reading-act.

This conventionally dictated quality of analogical motifs suggests they are developed hermeneutically. An interpretation that seems to be meaningful is considered in contrast and/or comparison to a textual that might be meaningful under the assumption that they *must* be made consistent in some way. The hermeneutical method was developed in response to apparent conflicts in scripture which were intolerable according to articles of faith.¹⁴ The appearance

¹⁴ The fundamental interpretive methods of hermeneutical exegesis have been described by many over the last millennia or so, but first and probably best by St. Augustine in De Doctrina Christiana, particularly the first section.

of conflict within this interpretive model is not only allowable, it is expected. The interpreter's duty, however, is to develop some correspondence between apparently conflicting elements of one's interpretation with the full knowledge that the text not only tolerates such mediation, it requires it in order to be understood. Although according to lectical convention all referential gestures are available for revision, Idealist strategies authorize error and misunderstanding as being likely elements of meaning production. The text, according to the hermeneutical model, does not contain the whole truth it is assumed to represent; the text is a tool to discover that truth through interpretation, or rather, by translating it into an idea that is at least consistent, if not true. Even though most readers have never heard the word hermeneutics, I contend they approach symbolic meaning production in fiction with these general interpretive attitudes. Idealist lectical coherence, therefore, is more fundamentally ruminative and tentative than Materialist lectical coherence. It is developed through interpretive circularity rather than linear reference; it is more paradigmatic than syntagmatic. This string of differential equations is not meant to suggest that episodic motifs cannot or should not be reconsidered or revised during a reading-act, only that by comparison analogical motifs are always structured in a way which encourages their revision and elaboration.

If Idealist lectical coherence is created via analogical motifs that always to some extent encourage revision and elaboration, one might ask what is the difference between those interpretive gestures and the one's I have identified with the Subjectivist mode above. At one point during my discussion of Subjectivist semantic context, for instance, I asserted that readers operating in that mode consciously close lectical aporias by treating them as aporias. The effect of this lectical strategy is that the ultimate meaning of a textual feature is deferred. I characterized this type of semantic context as being "elaborative"; rather than attributing a single reference to a textual feature, an aporetic

horizon of referential possibilities is developed which is carried forward during a reading-act as an unsolved problem, issue, or "distinction": i.e. as an aporia that need not be resolved to continue reading. What, then, is the difference between a textual feature that is understood as a polysemous, aporetic horizon and an analogical motif which by convention should be treated as a provisional, hermeneutic gesture, an overtly subjective attempt to develop symbolic meaning? In other words, if an aporetic horizon is a paradigm of unresolved referential possibilities and analogical motifs are structured according to tentative paradigmatic correspondences between ideas, how - and to what purpose - does one distinguish between them?

The answer to this very fair question lies in the difference between the goal of establishing semantic context and the goal of achieving lectical coherence. The lectical task of establishing semantic context during a reading-act is accomplished by closing a specific lectical aporia so that reading-act can continue. I identified three basic ways this task can be completed: by treating a textual feature as an image, as a symbol, or as an aporia. The first two of these types of closure constitute judgements, no matter how tentative or speculative, about the semantic reference and function of a textual feature. The last of these three, treating a textual feature as an aporia, constitutes the judgement that closure can not be determined between a set of semantic references or functions, and therefore the lectical aporia should be retained as an open question; i.e. it should be remembered as something that should be contemplated while confronting subsequent textual features. For any thought to be remembered for very long, either during a reading-act or during our quotidian lives, it must be rehearsed. Since convention mandates that all perceived aporias should be closed somehow, even during Subjectivist reading-acts, a textual feature treated as an aporia should be contemplated frequently as the reading-act progresses so it is not forgotten. If, for instance, a reader

recognized the first word of "Our Whole Life" as a lectical aporia, and further decided that it could not be adequately resolved without reading more of the poem, that deferral of judgement highlights the problem of establishing reference for the next textual feature encountered. To be more specific, if a reader decides to defer judgement about which of the various the points of view the word "our" might represent - does it refer to the speaker and someone else in the speaker's fictional world? To all people in the abstract? To the speaker and me? - that judgement radically affects what "whole" or "life" mean, or rather, it fails to delimit what they might mean. The decision to close an aporia by treating it as an aporia, therefore, always impedes the progress of a reading-act; it reminds the reader not to be too hasty in his or her judgements about a new textual feature because such judgements are based on an uncertainty.

In this respect, choosing a Subjectivist semantic context for a textual feature and developing an Idealist/analogical motif have similar affects upon a developing reading-act; they both encourage readers to be conscious of the uncertainty upon which an aesthetic object is at least partially founded. One of the main differences between them, of course, is that analogical motifs make decisions, no matter how provisional or tentative, about how a number of textual features correspond in relation to each other and ultimately to the fiction as a whole. Analogical motifs, therefore, articulate a lectical system or pattern, albeit with enough uncertainty that it should remain under question. Choosing to understand a single textual feature as an aporia does affect subsequent actions during a reading, but it is not itself an attempt to develop a lectical pattern. Any decision made during a reading-act affects the developing aesthetic object, but gestures of lectical coherence are specific attempts to organize the vast quantity of ideas generated about a text into a pattern that can be more easily recalled as a reading progresses.

Motifs, then, are groups of ideas about a fiction which associate various - and sometimes the same - portions of its textual pattern under a particular semantic reference or function. Motifs are created in the Subjectivist mode as well as the other two even though the goal of lectical coherence is in some respects in conflict with the overall goal of Subjectivist reading: i.e. to focus upon the process of reading rather than to complete a reading as efficiently and "correctly" as possible. This overall goal notwithstanding, Subjectivist lectical gestures must be cognitively organized in some way for them to be rehearsed periodically and therefore to remain a part of the developing aesthetic object. During my discussion of Subjectivist semantic context above, I asserted that closing a lectical aporia by recognizing it as an aporia is not the same thing as "giving up." However, if one defers monosemic reference for a textual feature and then subsequently forgets one has done so, one has effectively "given up" one's responsibility as a reader. In that section I offered my encounter with Joyce's Ulysses as an extreme example of how one can let the recognition of unresolved aporias devolve into an aborted reading-act. To stop this from happening readers must do two things: 1. Be selective about which features are closed as aporias, and 2. Create motifs that group lectical aporias in some way. The first of these two actions is self-evident from the pragmatics of reading. Even from the Subjectivist perspective one cannot be said to have read a fiction if one has not regarded all of its words in some way. For a reader to progress past the first textual feature of a fiction that feature needs to be recognized as something in relation to the textual pattern that follows it. It, of course, can be recognized as a number of things, or rather can be attributed a number of semantic functions and references, but it cannot merely be discarded. At the very least, the aporia must be carried forward as number of possible references to be clarified and/or elaborated in comparison to subsequent textual features. The hypothetical reader who could not decide between three possible references

for the first word of "Our Whole Life," for instance, did decide to consider - at least for the moment - only those three possibilities. This constitutes a selection process, a narrowing of the lectical horizon into a more manageable aporetic horizon that is possible to remember. Moreover, this aporetic horizon can be represented (at least in language, but by extension in thought) as a general problem recognized in response to the first word "our": the problem of who is speaking and who is addressed by the poem. This problem must be understood as a problem reflected and potentially resolved by the fiction as a whole for the reading-act to continue. In other words, the problem recognized in response to "our" needs to stop being about that word alone; that problem needs to be considered in connection with subsequent words or it will be forgotten.

Does this last assertion mean that the actual words of a fiction have a shelf-life, a determinate period of time before they will be forgotten if something is not "done" to them? Yes, at least in lectical practice. One can, of course, memorize the words of even a very long fiction, but doing so requires rehearsal of those words; one must perform the conscious cognitive action of repeating them until they can be recalled consistently. Although this choice is always available to readers, clearly it is not the same thing as, or at least one of the most common ways of, recalling an aesthetic object during a reading-act. Words, like "our," are changed into thoughts about their semantic reference and function, thoughts which do not necessarily require the word itself be remembered. Moreover, our thoughts about specific words or textual features must be organized *somehow* before a reading-act progresses very far. One could remember that the word "our" has an indeterminate antecedent, the word "whole" might be synonymous with "all" or a pun on the word "hole," and the word "life" might be a reference to the fact of existence or the temporal period of existence, but at some point remembering all those separate aporetic

horizons would become impossible, not to mention boring. Moreover, the conventions of language through which aporetic horizons must be recognized in the first place also insist that individual words should be read as patterns; it is simply wrong to read the word "life" in Rich's "Our Whole Life" without considering its syntactical relationship to the words that precede and follow it. The vast number of possible permutations of what even just the first three words of that poem might mean when considered together precludes listing them out either in this dissertation or during an actual reading-act. The fact that every word in a fiction is at least theoretically a textual aporia does not mean that all words *should* be recognized as lectical aporias by any one reader during a reading-act. To do so would not only be impossible, it would be absurd. The pragmatics of reading an entire fiction, therefore, require a reader to be selective about which aporias will be included in the developing aesthetic object.

Describing how a particular reader selects certain lectical aporias to focus upon over others can only be described in general terms because Subjectivist strategies are developed and judged according to their relative plausibility whereas the other two modes are developed according to conventions of probability. The difference between the criteria of the "plausible" and the "probable" is one of degree not kind, but the two words do denote different types of orientation to received cultural conventions. Probability denotes a quality that is attributed through deduction: an application of general rules assumed to be relevant to a particular phenomena about which there is some uncertainty. Plausibility, on the other hand, denotes a quality that is attributed to something that is possible according to and within a discursive, social context. One determines an idea is plausible if it is "believed" by someone or some group of people; something is not merely plausible, it is plausible *to* someone, even if that someone is not specifically named. In other words, the criterion for the plausibility of an idea is assent to its possible truth, not a

determination that it is likely or even in most cases true. Readers can judge which lectical aporias are plausible, therefore, with less adherence to received cultural conventions; hence, those judgements are often more idiosyncratic than judgements based upon probability. Deciding before the fact which specific textual patterns within a given fiction explicitly invite Subjectivist strategies is highly speculative, and often takes the form of a guess rather than an analysis. Although one can with some degree of certainty identify textual aporias in a fiction which strongly invite some kind of lectical mediation, there are few if any textual aporias that can only be resolved through the Subjectivist mode, if for no other reason than Subjectivist understanding is always constructed out of a range of Materialist and/or Idealist understandings.

Although these problems limit what can be said about Subjectivist meaning production, some general distinctions about them can be made. According to the discussion above, for instance, one can be sure that only a certain number of lectical aporias can be remembered at one time without simplifying and/or organizing them in some way so they can be rehearsed through application to subsequent textual features. What that number is for any given reader depends upon the relative acuity of her cognitive processes (whatever that phrase might mean) in combination with her training and experience as a reader of fiction. Quite simply, it takes a good deal of mental discipline to hold a variety of possibly conflicting ideas about anything in one's mind. It stands to reason that some people - for whatever reason - are better at organizing their thoughts than others, but also people who have significant experience with the particular cognitive event of reading fiction find the particular challenges of that event less difficult to perform than those who have substantially less experience with it. All literature courses give students the opportunity to practice reading fiction under the tutelage of someone who has the training and experience to help them improve their reading skills; the lectical

triangle in part is offered as yet another and hopefully more explicit way of reaching that pedagogical goal.

Besides limiting them, however, one can distinguish a few other general ways that lectical aporias can be organized and thereby retained in a developing aesthetic object: i.e. by creating "dialogic" motifs. Subjectivist motifs are called "dialogic" not in the strict theoretical sense used by Plato, Mikail Bahktin, or any other theorist attempting to describe fundamental epistemological issues. I mean dialogic here as an informal, figurative association to the quotidian verbal event that occurs between people: dialogue. I do so because I have found students quite quickly understand the complex problem of establishing Subjectivist motifs during a reading-act through analogies to similar problems inherent to verbal dialogues between people who disagree about something. I choose not to use the word "argumentative" to describe these motifs because that word carries a connotation of strife and antagonism that is not particularly characteristic of the way readers create "dialogue" between their own thoughts about a fiction. For instance, like verbal dialogues, dialogic motifs are not under the onus of resolution; a dialogue can have a beginning, middle, and end and yet not conclude in agreement. Many verbal dialogues, in fact, do nothing more than clarify and elaborate the terms about which the two parties agree to disagree. Similarly, dialogic motifs define the terms and boundaries of the open questions a reader has about a reading-act, not as a necessary step towards determining its ultimate meaning but as a step towards determining what the reading-act itself is. The organization of one's doubts about the meaning of a fiction calls attention to one's participation in the reading-act in progress. In other words, what is organized by dialogic motifs is not the various referential gestures one has made - all based upon some form of pretense - but the actual, semantic problems one is currently experiencing and/or exploring during a reading-act. That one's mental "dialogue" about unresolved issues during a

reading-act are more playful than aggressive or polemical seems obvious to me, and can be thoroughly substantiated by lectical experience. Readers often feel anxiety of different degrees due to their doubts about semantic reference and function of textual features, but this strife is generally caused by an inability to develop dialogic motifs, not because of them. Dialogic motifs manage the questions readers have about a fiction so a reading-act can proceed with a modicum of coherence.

Another facet of dialogic motifs which can be taught through an analogy to quotidian dialogue is the fact that both actions include two or more participants which can not be absolutely equated except through their mutual engagement in a verbal act. If I am in a dialogue with another person, I may be able to recognize many similarities between us and what we are saying, but those similarities do not cause me to come to the conclusion that I am my interlocutor, unless I have pathologically loose ego boundaries. Likewise, the terms of a lectical aporia that is developed into a dialogic motif are organized as participants in a conflict, as different voices that are unified simply by their appearance in that conflict.

Perhaps a quick demonstration of these concepts would be helpful. Using the same hypothetical reader of Rich's "Our Whole Life," once that reader identifies and accepts multiple, unresolved references for the word "our," he is in the position to develop a dialogic motif. If he decides the unresolved question presented by that word is something like "which persons, real or fictional, are being addressed in this poem?" then his consideration of the next two words of the poem probably will be understood with that question in mind. Moreover, due to how they appear within the textual pattern, it would be reasonable for our reader to attempt to understand those three words together, i.e. as a single textual feature. As pointed out above, not only is that noun phrase heavily marked as a single textual feature due to a variety of lectical conventions, but

lectical praxis demands that one be selective about the aporias one focuses upon. If, for the sake of demonstration, the reader recognizes a semantic ambivalence regarding the words "whole life" - does the poem refer to all the elements that constitute a particular or abstract life or does it refer to an entire lifetime? - he might organize the possible interpretations for the first three words under the following question: "Whose and/or what kind of life is being referred to in this poem?" Whether the reader considers the questions "whose" and "what kind" together or as two different aporias is mostly a matter of individual choice. Once again, the reader must change the words of the poem into thoughts about groups of words; there is nothing that stops a reader from reading the first three words as three different textual features that constitute three different lectical aporias, *except* the practical problem entailed with trying to remember too many unresolved references while reading (however many that may be for the individual).

Similarly, there is nothing that requires or stops the reader from applying this aporia to subsequent textual features as the reading-act progresses, but let's just say that he defers resolution of it for the first five lines. This means that as each new textual feature is accommodated by and to the developing aesthetic object, and however that is accomplished, those closures should be made with the knowledge that the reader does not know for sure what kind of "life" they should be understood in relation to or from whose perspective. The reader could quite easily develop an analogical motif like the one described above - "life is like a translation in that some things can not be communicated in words" - with the caveat "no matter whose or what kind of life is being referred to." Upon confronting the next phrase, "the permissible fibs," the reader might not immediately see a connection between "fibs" and communication, and therefore have to treat line two as an aporia as well, one that likely could be organized with lines three through five as a single image of falsehood: "the

permissible fibs / and now a knot of lies / eating at itself to get undone / Words bitten thru words." If at some point during the consolidation of this episodic motif a correspondence between it and the initial analogical motif is recognized, the reader should once again be reminded of the deferred aporia of the first phrase since it is one of the two indices of that analogical motif. In other words, the idea that "some things can not be communicated" could be associated with the images of "falsehood" to create a single analogical motif, but the process of doing so should be interrogated by the question "whose and what kind of life?" This process of engaging new textual features which repeatedly call attention to an unresolved lectical issue might continue until all the words of the poem are read, but the reading-act could not be concluded until the initial aporia is resolved somehow. One way to resolve it, of course, would be to choose between the initial referential possibilities identified by it, perhaps something like "this poem is about life in general, therefore it describes how no one's life, even mine, can be expressed in words. Our whole life is only completely communicated by our whole life." This choice would characterize the completed reading-act as being primarily Idealist, even though it was developed in part by Materialist and Subjectivist strategies.

Another way to resolve that deferred aporia would be to foreground it during a re-reading of the poem; that is, to reconsider the choices made during the reading-act in comparison to the yet unresolved "our whole life" aporia. In a longer fiction, say a three hundred page novel, this re-reading might very well take the form of a conscious, mental review of the aesthetic object, but both lectical convention and the relative brevity of most poems strongly recommend that at least some of the actual words be re-read before final decisions are made about semantic reference and function. (The fact that students are often very resistive to re-reading any assignment, no matter how brief, at least partially accounts for why so many of their reading-acts are aborted. They give

up because they can't "get it" the first time around, as they expect or at least hope to.) Upon reconsideration, however, our hypothetical "engaged" reader might find many ways the words of "Our Whole Life" engage and repeat the problem of determining whose perspective and what kind of life is being represented in it. In a flash of inspiration, the reader might even develop a classic "metafictional" reading of the poem. After all, the analogical motifs that structure the above reading are based upon referential indeterminacy; they are as uncertain as "a translation" from one language to another. Additional referential choices are authorized by these "permissible fibs" because the "whole" truth about the poem can not be determined. Little fibs, however, can over the course of a few lines of poetry turn into "a knot of lies eating at itself to get undone." Unable to ignore the inconsistencies in one's reading, one has to dig deeper into the poem, biting through words, burning off meanings like paint under a blowtorch, etc., etc. Anyone who knows what the word "metafiction" means and has been shown how fictions often represent themselves self-reflexively could fill in the blanks of this interpretation: "Our Whole Life" is about the problem of understanding "our whole life." This understanding of the poem would solve our reader's unresolved aporia by making it the focus of yet another elaborated analogical motif. No matter how much it is organized around the reader's recognition of the indeterminacy of his particular reading-act, the principle strategy of organization of this reading-act is Idealist; the poem is treated *as a whole* as a symbol for the problem of reading poetry. In other words, one way to incorporate an aporia into a reading is to subordinate other elements to it as an allegory of reading.

Dialogic motifs, however, take a different structure and perform some different functions than such analogical motifs. For instance, upon reexamining the poem for a resolution to the "our whole life" aporia, the reader might come upon a few other textual features that also might invite a similar question. In

line nine, for instance, the phrase "into the oppressor's language" is difficult to unpack without knowing from whose perspective it is uttered. Is this a clue to the speaker's identity (Is she a woman? Perhaps African American or Jewish?), and if so is this a "real" or imagined oppression, that is, should it be taken literally as a statement of what the speaker's real life is like or is this just another attempt to describe life in the abstract through figurative language? The very next line starts off with a gerund - "Trying to tell the doctor where it hurts" - which may indicate a thought - whose? - in progress or may meant to be syntactically subordinated to "all those dead letters" of two lines before. If the latter possibility is the case, then who or what are the "dead letters" supposed to symbolize, or alternatively what does "trying to tell the doctor" mean if that action is performed by "letters"? All of these questions of identity and agency are figuratively linked to the mini narrative of "the Algerian" with the first word of line eleven, "like." At least *he* seems like a real person - even though he is a simile - until the reader gets to the last two lines: "and there are no words for this / except himself." A (figurative) Algerian who can not express that "his whole body" is in pain in words except through "himself" once again raises the question of whose life, perspective, and pain is being represented: the Algerian's? The speaker's? Mine? Everyone's?

The above set of interrogations of specific textual features articulates a dialogic motif that could yet be resolved through a referential decision, but *also* could be assessed at the end of a reading-act as interesting and productive question raised by that reading. If the reader ends his reading-act with the contemplation of these unresolved questions of identity and agency, questions which reverberate through and define the limits of his aesthetic object, then he has performed a principally Subjectivist reading-act.

The above hypothetical reading-acts were primarily designed to demonstrate both the differences and complex interactions between Subjectivist

lectical strategies and those of the other two modes. As indicated above, Subjectivist strategies must use the strategies of reference identified with the other modes of reading, but they do so from a different perspective and towards a different end. Although the choices made in all three modes are *always a priori* available for reconsideration and revision while a reading-act is in progress, only the Subjectivist mode overtly and consciously organizes aesthetic objects according to the specific lectical experiences attending their creation. By focusing upon (indeterminate) fictional meaning as something that is not just theoretically constructed but is being constructed *right now*, readers effectively ground a developing aesthetic object in their immediate quotidian world. The (pretense of an) author's perspective of a fictional world or an idea about "the" world is thereby subordinated to the reader's perspective regarding what is happening and what he or she is doing with a fiction in the moment.

Needless to say, there are other ways this general shift in perspective can be used to organize aesthetic objects than are represented by the somewhat convoluted example given above. A more common manifestation of dialogic motifs, for instance, is developed when readers recognize a pattern of conflicts in a developing aesthetic object, that is, a series of inconsistencies between attributions of semantic reference and function. Such patterns of conflict can be recognized between attributions made to individual textual features (as in the example above) or between elaborate motifs. The symbolic reference and function of "redness" in The Scarlet Letter, for instance, *should* be recognized by readers as a series of textual aporias that could be organized under a single question, like: "what does 'redness' signify in this novel?" No matter how a reader initially approaches or delimits the individual textual features which overtly invite at least a consideration of "redness" (and such textual features are manifold), it is arguably wrong for a reader to fail to address the explicit conflicts between a variety of lectical conventions invited by the textual pattern

of that novel. Just to name one, the redness of the letter stitched upon Hester's dress stands in direct conflict with the long-standing tradition of how the textual pattern of a "protagonist" or main character is *meant* to be read.

To recognize this conflict, of course, the reader would first have to treat the scarlet letter as a symbol or analogical motif and would have to develop an episodic motif of Hester as a "protagonist"; both of these attributions are thoroughly invited by the end of the second chapter, although I will not digress here to demonstrate how. Although some textual patterns clearly invite readers to judge a "protagonist" as an "antagonist," or simply as a "bad" fictional person (fictional death is just one of the most obvious of these), the textual pattern of The Scarlet Letter overtly offers apparently contradictory cultural cues regarding how Hester, and therefore the symbolic reference of redness physically attached to her, should be understood. Hester is an outcast (bad) but she "walks in the steps" of a saint (good); she admits to being a sinner and defies authority (bad?) but is pious and continues to punish herself long after that authority would enforce it (good?); the redness of the scarlet "A" is associated with adultery (bad, at least to some characters, including Hester... maybe) but the fruit of that adultery, Pearl, who is associated with red roses, is her principle joy (?). In other words, The Scarlet Letter can not, or rather should not, be read without at least considering the conflicts these different culturally determined cues invite. Although each conflict could be resolved definitively somehow (adultery is bad, so Hester is bad), another and probably easier way to resolve them is to treat them as lectional aporias, as questions the reader develops in response to and associates with a series of textual features accumulated into a dialogic motif. I would go so far as to say that readers who insist upon making a single, definitive attribution about the symbolic reference and function of "redness" in Hawthorne's novel have a misconception of lectional convention: i.e. they believe that fictions - as opposed to reading-acts - must

always articulate a single, consistent meaning. Readers who do not know that lectical convention dictates fictions sometimes offer apparently conflicting meanings that are not meant nor expected to be resolved but only contemplated during a reading-act need to be taught that convention, at least when they reach the collegiate classroom.

In the last chapter, I discussed how some aporias function not as questions or problems to be resolved but as marks of stylistic distinction, marks that focus upon the affect of the diction of a fiction at a particular moment in a reading-act. Dialogic motifs can be created out of such aporias as well. In this formulation, a reader's sense of the unique style of a fiction is managed as a series of similarly distinct moments during a reading-act, moments where the reader pays attention to *how* the fiction has been written in comparison and contrast to other fictions he or she has read. There is almost no analytical access to such moments other than through reading-texts; as they say in the old country, there's no accounting for taste. This, of course, doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to talk about such moments, and how they affect our sense of the stylistic value of a fiction, both privately and publicly. Canonicity is so deeply inscribed with particular traditions of stylistic value that we owe it to our students to at least try to account for why some textual patterns - i.e. those we require them to read - have historically been appreciated due to such "moments" of aporetic distinction. By doing so, one does not guarantee that students will thereby have similar experiences with the diction of a fiction, but I have found that it at least tends to weaken the opinion that traditional indices of stylistic value are utterly mysterious and subjective (not to mention misguided and/or pretentious). More importantly, giving them a method for analyzing how aporias of "distinction" are organized in the abstract gives students a way to interrogate those moments of aesthetic appreciation that

they *do* have, whether those moments occur in the literary classroom or the local multiplex cinema.

The organization of an aesthetic object through dialogic motifs, therefore, is a way for readers to keep track of their most overtly conscious moments of engagement with a fiction by categorizing them. The practical necessity of doing so (i.e. so that lectical aporias are not merely forgotten) sometimes gives way to the experience of playing with multiple semantic references and functions, an experience which many readers find pleasurable. The Subjectivist lectical perspective - "I am playing with this fiction right now" - can, of course, be balanced with and against a Materialist perspective - "I am observing a fictional reality" - and/or an Idealist perspective - "this fiction means something about the world" - during a complex assessment of an aesthetic object, particularly after all the words of a fiction have been addressed, i.e. when lectical convention dictates all the lectical aporias recognized during that reading-act must somehow be resolved so that it can end. This process of "lectical assessment" will be discussed in the next section.

Chapter Four: Lectical Assessment

Value cannot be communicated except through the communication of what is valuable.

I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism

As mentioned above, during the closure stage of reading-acts, decisions to treat a textual feature as something in particular can be reconsidered no matter which lectical mode is used. Such decisions are made according to perceptions of capacity; i.e. whether or not the attribution works. Upon entering the assessment stage, however, the capacity of an attribution is reconsidered according to a perception of value; not just does the attribution work - this has already been established - but how well does it work. When this evaluation has been made, the reading-act, as I define it, is complete.

In subsequent paragraphs I will more thoroughly discuss the general process and systems of value which make this evaluation possible, but first I want to clear up a few remaining - thus far necessary - equivocations about the three stages of reading-acts in general. I maintain that readers consume texts according to these three basic stages at all levels while reading fiction, whether they are considering a single word as a textual feature or a one thousand-page novel after having read all of its words. This means that the process of reading an entire fiction entails a series of reading-acts, each of which is a coherent attribution of meaning and value. My definition above of "complete" reading-acts above, therefore, needs to be amended. The criteria for complete reading-acts above were: 1. All of the words of the textual feature are read, and 2. All of the aporias recognized by the reader are closed. When I first developed these criteria I was attempting to distinguish between some of the most basic conventions surrounding the reading of fiction; I was defining the boundary

between reading and not-reading. At the time, for instance, I was still using the term "textual feature" broadly enough that it might have been understood to denote all the words considered while creating an aesthetic object. At this point, however, it should be clear that by the time all of the words of a fiction have been attributed semantic reference and function, the textual features that were identified during that reading-act *no longer exist* as textual features; they have become thoughts within an aesthetic object. Similarly, since one cannot predict exactly which words will be identified as textual features before the fact, whether or not a reading-act is "complete" can only be determined through an analysis of its reading-text. One can identify how a general textual pattern invites the creation of textual features through a series of textual aporias, but which of those textual aporias are recognized as lectical aporias by a given reader can only be determined - and then only speculatively - after such recognitions have been made.

The three stages of a reading-act, therefore, are completed every time a textual feature is accommodated by and to a developing aesthetic object. The perceived force or intensity of the lectical aporia which sets the limit of a textual feature, however, greatly affects the reader's attitude toward it. Lectical convention dictates that certain aporias - providing they are recognized, of course - should be treated as being more important than others, unless there are reasons to the contrary. Listed in a roughly ascending order of relative emphasis, some of these "textual" aporias are: 1. Grammatical units (phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.) 2. Graphic breaks (paragraphs, stanzas, white space, chapters, etc.) 3. Having read the last word of a fiction. The relative emphasis conventionally identified with these different textual cues should be taken into consideration by readers, but those conventions are not the only things that can mark a lectical aporia with a particular emphasis or force. The unique textual pattern of a given fiction may override any of these cues, particularly the first

two. Moreover, the exact terms and structure of the developing aesthetic object radically affect the force of a given textual feature. A single word - "rose" in The Scarlet Letter, for instance, or "white" in Moby Dick - may induce a reader who has already attributed significant value to that word to pay close attention, to regard its current appearance or apparent synonym with particular emphasis even though it is not overtly emphasized in any other way. According to the same principle, specific motifs treated as "theme," "plot," or "diction" accumulate force as a reading progresses. Whatever reason lies behind the decision to pay close attention to a given textual feature, in the synchronic progression of a reading-act that decision is marked as an *aporia*, a problem or issue that should be addressed.

The most thoroughly and forcefully mandated of the above conventionalized textual patterns is, of course, the last one: having read the last words of a fiction, whether those words are "The End" or not. Lectical convention dictates that the reading-act that should commence upon recognizing this cue is more important than all of the reading-acts performed prior to it. The moment to moment development of an aesthetic object, in fact, is predicated upon the assumed authority of this "final" reading-act and the further assumption that at that time the aesthetic object will take the form of a complete, unified, and consistent attribution of meaning which subsequently can be valued. These assumptions allow readers to make provisional attributions of meaning and value as the aesthetic object develops according to perceptions of probability and even plausibility since they *know* after they read all the words of a fiction any "errors" made along the way will (have to) be cleared up.

The assessment of the relative value and meaning of a complete fiction, then, is not procedurally different than the sequential, "line-level" assessments performed as the aesthetic object has been developed. However, reading-acts performed on the level of textual features and motifs often are assessed below

the level of consciousness, or least in such a way that their assessment is not usually remembered. Such "developmental" reading-acts must exist, however, even though one may not be aware a formal process of evaluation has taken place. As pointed out above, the conscious mind can only hold so much information, so the words of a text must be broken up into units small enough to be regarded as a single thought of semantic reference and function in relation to the developing aesthetic object, usually by association with at least one open-ended motif. Our conscious awareness of the various and interrelated thoughts which comprise the aesthetic object at any given moment is deployed at different levels (Iser calls this cognitive process "foregrounding" and "backgrounding"), at least in part according to how they have been relatively valued. This is why one can remember a specific textual feature of which one is not conscious if one is re-minded of it somehow. There are various cognitive parlor tricks which can demonstrate this quality of consciousness. Right now, for example, I want you to think about Melville's Moby Dick, not just how it has been used in this project (although that will be unavoidable) but also regarding what you think it means or "is" or *anything* specific you can recall about it. Okay? Now I want to re-*mind* you of the passage when Ahab nails a doubloon to the mast to bind the crew to his vendetta against the white whale. Did your initial recollection include that textual pattern? Yes? Darn! Okay, how about these words from Ahab immediately following that passage: "And this is what ye have shipped for, men! To chase that white whale on both sides of land, and over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out. What say ye, men, will you splice hands on it, now? I think ye do look brave." I got you there, didn't I?

I am aware that such games do not rise to the level of scholarly evidence, but they can demonstrate a ubiquitous cognitive phenomenon that somehow must be accounted for; the aesthetic object "contains" more information than we can immediately access on our own resources through conscious

"remembering." We simply do not know what consciousness is, we can only name various qualities it appears to have to us. Foreground, background, conscious, sub-conscious, unconscious, short, long, and deep memories: all of these are just names we attach to the apparent hierarchical structure of thought, a structure which has been much discussed but about which little is really known. The affects of this apparent hierarchical structure upon our behavior and lives, of course, are manifold, and reading is no exception. For reading-acts to progress as quickly as they do, readers can not give equal amounts of their attention to all the various thoughts which comprise an aesthetic object at a particular moment. During the process of creating an aesthetic object, therefore, different lectical patterns or motifs *must* be given a relative value to maintain coherence. Iser calls this parceling out of the reader's attention "the wandering viewpoint" (108ff); I call the same process "assessment."

There are many lectical conventions which guide the attribution of value and thereby structure the expectations with which a reader approaches subsequent textual features. In novels, for instance, attributions of setting are in general given less force than attributions of character, although the pretense of setting is crucial to the pretense of most fictional worlds, and therefore affect both the appearance and the quality of any fictional "people" which might be imagined. Moreover, readers should respond to textual patterns which invite the valuation of some characters over others. Either by responding to received tradition or according to some of their own lectical choices, by the time readers have read only a few of the words of a fiction, a unique lectical pattern has been established which must include some provisional sense of the relative importance of its constituent parts: i.e. its individual images, symbols, aporias, or motifs. Subsequent textual features can sometimes be accommodated to and by an aesthetic object so easily that their meaning and value is almost predetermined, and therefore that process of accommodation is given little attention. It is for

this reason that one can consume several pages of a fiction without remembering any individual attribution of meaning or value; one merely remembers what "has happened" or what those pages "mean." At some point - perhaps the chapter ends, perhaps a textual feature is difficult to accommodate somehow - one again becomes aware of a lectical aporia and one's assessment of the reading in progress becomes more conscious.

I'd like to clarify how I am deploying this account of the "layered" quality of aesthetic objects through a reading-text of my own. After writing the above paragraph, I went home and read Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. This was my third reading of the novel; I had read it recreationally some twenty years ago, then again as a graduate student in preparation for my doctoral exams - sadly, a long decade ago. These readings had left me with a rich and fairly specific understanding of the novel; I probably could have delivered a competent (sounding) lecture on it without refreshing my memory with a rereading. There were even specific textual features which I could have turned to immediately; the second chapter - I remembered - contained two of the most important analogical motifs, the "blossoming pear tree" and the "mule" motifs.

From those two motifs I had retained an elaborate understanding of what the novel means. I knew there were many reoccurrences of those motifs, though the only two I remembered clearly were that Tea Cake was represented as an agent of the pear tree a number of times and the mule "funeral" somewhere near the middle of the novel. Oddly, I couldn't recall the full name of the central character, although I *knew* the novel was "about" her, or at least the process of self-discovery her story represented. Before I began my third reading, I wrote down the following reading-text in my journal as quickly and succinctly as possible, doing my best not to edit my recollections as I went:

Zora's novel is about the double-bind of African American women in the Twentieth century. The heroine, Janie/Alphabet, is caught

between two vision of the Negro woman: her own represented by the Pear tree she sits under at the beginning of the book (second chapter?) and the mule motif she inherited from her grandmother. Janie is alternately cast as a bee looking for the pollen of love and a mule carrying the burdens of the world throughout the novel. Her first and second marriages (names?) are to men who lord it over her and do not give her the love she craves and ultimately realizes she deserves. Her last marriage to Tea Cake represents the passion and pain of love and life fully experienced. Although it ends in sorrow, her life with Tea Cake is offered as an example of how people should be with each other, particularly when they are down in the muck. They love, laugh, argue, fight, share, live and die as a unit. They are people amongst other people, not mules. Zora's beautiful narration weaves in and out of the story, although sometimes it is overshadowed by the poetic dialect she puts into the "moufs" of her characters. For instance, when her grandmother makes Janie promise to marry her first husband at the beginning of the novel, she does so with the plea, "Put me down gently Janie, I'm a cracked plate." This beautiful metaphor out of the lips of a former slave imbues the story with a sense of majesty. The people in Janie's world are not mules, even though often they are not aware of their humanity. They are poets, living moment to moment as best they can.

This reading-text, it should be noted, does not represent the aesthetic object I had for the novel the last time I had read it: ten years had elapsed. Neither does it fully represent all I might have written - much less thought - about the novel before my most recent reading. The phrase "even though often they are not aware of their humanity," for instance, represents a complex Idealist

understanding of the novel, one that some of my fellow graduate students seemed very attached to during our study sessions for our exams. Without going into too much detail, I remember both students and teachers making much of the apparent critique of social hierarchy they saw in Their Eyes Were Watching God. Some approached this understanding of the novel through a Marxist critique, others through a Feminist one; in particular, I remembered with a twinge of resentment a few long minutes during my doctoral exam when one of the professors on my committee tried to get me to talk about what he saw as the "symbolic center" of the novel and how it related to the theme of social hierarchy (although I can't remember if he used that exact phrase). Although from his hints - and my discussions with my peers - I was able to talk about social hierarchy in general and through other passages, I eventually had to give up and admit that I was not sure which passage he wanted me to analyze. After he told me - a passage toward the end which describes the social hierarchy between light and dark skinned Negroes through an analogy to the pecking order in a chicken yard - I was able to include that passage in my (memorized) analysis of the idea of social hierarchy, at least well enough to pass the exam. All of these thoughts - and more which I am not mentioning right now - were packed into the phrase "even though often they are not aware of their humanity." The phrase also reflects that ultimately I do not agree that the novel is primarily about social hierarchy; its grammatical dependence upon the main clause "The people in Janie's world are not mules" was meant as a qualification, a defense against rebuttal, and reflects my desire to demonstrate that I am not ignorant of the "social hierarchy" reading of the novel, then or now.

This last point demonstrates how both reading-acts and reading-texts are deeply affected by the contexts within which they are performed. Although I consciously tried to create a spontaneous, non-academic reading-text, my training in the rhetoric of academia has been too thorough; moreover, my specific

experience with the rites of passage of a literary scholar had left an indelible mark on my aesthetic object for *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In addition, I wrote the above reading-text with the hope that it would be useful in this section of this dissertation as a demonstrative example. All these elements of the context within which I created the reading-text can be identified in the way it is written, especially by me, because to some extent I remember what I was thinking as I applied pen to paper.

Lectical self-analysis of this sort tends to highlight the web of contingency surrounding reading-acts *and* reading-texts, and thereby keeps one's speculations about them always under scrutiny. This does not mean, of course, that such exercises cannot produce accurate analyses of reading-texts or the aesthetic objects they ostensibly represent, only that the conclusions reached should always be qualified. The reading-text above, for instance, reflects several artifacts of my first two readings of the novel *as well as* several artifacts of subsequent discussions about it. This demonstrates how an aesthetic object can change long after the reading-act is over. As a thought, it is susceptible to reconsideration, to distortion, to accommodation of other perspectives, and to forgetfulness. Some of these artifacts, once submitted to lectional analysis, can be quite instructive. My devotion to my Idealist reading of the novel, for instance, was able to withstand the assertions of my colleagues that the novel was primarily "about" something else: that is, their Idealist reading referenced to the "symbolic system" of current cultural theories. This is not because I do not use those theories myself as symbolic systems; I do, from time to time. I believe "The Tempest," for instance, is primarily "about" social hierarchy (although it is also a damn entertaining romantic comedy). Neither is it because I do not recognize those elements in Hurston's novel; she was, after all, an anthropologist. Social theory was important to her. No: my devotion to my first understanding is due to the apparently very high value I placed upon the intertwined (and

therefore single?) analogical motifs that survived my first two readings. Moreover, even across the space of a decade, one can see that the symbolic value placed upon the "flowering pear tree" and "mule" motifs was substantially supported by Materialist understandings of the characters of the novel but even more so by a powerful imaging of Hurston herself. There's Melville and Hawthorne and Emerson; and then - for me - there's "Zora." Does this mean I do not afford her the dignity of a last name, that she doesn't rate a dynasty like the white titans? I hope not, although I can't be sure how my middle-class, Southern upbringing has affected the lens through which I see the world. I was raised to some extent by an African American woman who worked for my parents; until she died last year, I called her "Mattie" - not Mrs. Williams, as she certainly deserved, particularly when I was still in elementary school.

Do I infantilize Hurston when I refer to her as Zora? Perhaps, but that is not how it feels. My lectical self-analysis indicates I have made her into an image, in particular, an image of a wise friend for whom I hold deep respect and admiration. I feel as if I know her. My copy of the novel has a photograph of Hurston on the back cover, likely taken in the thirties during her hey day among the literary elite of the Harlem Renaissance. She looks cool. I have looked at that photo many times, not just in passing, but in the contemplation of our close acquaintance. She has the slightest smile on her face, as if she knows what it feels like to hear her voice, to emerge from the world of Eatonville with more than when I entered it. Moreover, I don't feel racial strife between us; I am just a man reading, she is just a woman writing - beautifully.

This last point, the beauty of her "voice," calls attention to how I have subordinated a Subjectivist assessment of style to my Materialist understanding of the author/character "Zora." Moreover, the above reading-text indicates that I valued my image of Hurston over my image of Janie and the other characters: I claim there that they are poets by virtue of the "poetic dialect she puts into the

'moufs' of her characters." Although I clearly imagined the fictional world of the novel, I more clearly and ultimately more strongly imagined Hurston imagining it. The high value I placed upon my pretense of intimacy with its author has affected how I understand other elements of the novel. Moreover, the quality of the personal relationship I imagined I have with Hurston - qualities which I have only hinted at above - accounts for my resistance to the "social hierarchy" reading-texts of my colleagues. I recognize that such readings are more plausible - or at least appropriate - for public, scholarly consumption, but they are not particularly relevant to my readings of the novel, except as an indicator of how thoroughly my lectical and rhetorical strategies have been affected by my scholarly training. My (pretend) relationship with "Zora" is not primarily scholarly or theoretical; it feels intimate and informal, not didactic, not rhetorical. It smacks of the front porch or the poorly lit cafe booth: not the lecture hall.

As the above self-analysis demonstrates, lectical analysis does not always produce fodder for traditional literary criticism. What it does, however, is expose some of the attributions which have formed particular reading-texts. Furthermore, it gives access to speculation about how closely the reading-text under consideration conforms to the aesthetic object it ostensibly represents and to what extent it has been affected by the context in which it was written. Before I performed the analysis above, for instance, I was not conscious of the overriding force of my pretend relationship with "Zora." Although the reading-text above sounds primarily Idealist, it is clear to me - now - that my abiding affection for the novel is and has been fueled by my affection for my imaginary playmate, "Zora"; knowing the influence of this strategy upon my earlier aesthetic object highlights for me some of the lectical habits I probably brought to my reading of the novel last night, some of the affects of which I will discuss below.

Furthermore, my new awareness of the prevalence of this strategy compels me to think about where else I have prioritized my relationship with an author during a reading-act: Vonnegut, for sure, and Hunter Thompson, but maybe Ginsberg as well. Of course, all three of these authors to some extent "ask" for a personal relationship with readers, that is, they write themselves into the fiction as characters. This knowledge makes me wonder whether or not Hurston's narration invites authorial "characterization," or whether I have to take full responsibility for our pretend relationship. Did she lead me on or am I a literary stalker? Perhaps more importantly, my sharpened awareness of this reading (and writing?) strategy focuses my attention on to what extent it is a *common* strategy. Once I make the shift from solipsistic, self-analysis to a contemplation of how similar lectical events might be encouraged from many or all readers, then I am beginning to approach the realm of literary criticism. At the very least, such exercises can operate as brainstorming for literary essays; needless to say, teaching undergraduates a method for developing a topic for their essays is helpful to them, and part of our job description.

Accordingly, the ostensible goal of lectical analysis, whether or not it is self-analysis, is to identify the lectical conventions employed by a particular reader as part of a more general program of understanding of how literary meaning and value are attributed to fiction, not only at its conclusion but all along the way. Such a program requires some account of the common criteria according to which these assessments are made. This, of course, is another version of the "holy grail" of traditional aesthetics mentioned above in Chapter 3. Ultimately, this dissertation takes the deceptively simple - and circular and Pragmatist - position that individual readers themselves set such criteria according to which their evaluative decisions are made, drawing from a range of culturally inherited criteria for valuing fiction. Although it is not the holy grail, I believe this theory of norms is a sufficient discursive heuristic for describing

particular reading-texts within the collegiate-level, literary classroom, as opposed to a general theory of reading. The pertinent question here is: "how much do received conventions of lectical value affect and effect our behavior during reading?" Performing lectical analysis within the context of a college classroom should engage such questions in some direct way since that context always to some extent involves an evaluation of the student's ability to recognize and behave within a particular set of cultural conventions, no matter how broadly drawn.

One can, of course, develop a list of general qualities or indices of value that have been traditionally and are still commonly attributed to fictions. Compiling such a list is itself a normative gesture only if the list is too narrowly defined - that is, if some possible index of value is left out. Although the list below attempts to categorize these conventions in a way that is universally inclusive while still retaining some nominal utility, no doubt my own cultural blindness will create some oversights. In the classroom, I overcome such oversights by recognizing them when they become apparent and subsequently exploring them as necessary artifacts of any general analytical system. In this dissertation, I offer my reader my apologies in advance for any omissions he or she notices.

With these obsequies in mind, I offer the following common indices of value attributed to fiction in no particular order, or rather the order in which they occurred to me:

1. It is "realistic"; it accurately represents something about or in "the" world.
2. It is intellectually stimulating; it makes one think about its subject.
3. It is instructive; it provides one with information about "the" world.
4. It evokes emotion; one can experience it as being humorous, frightening, erotic, exciting, sad, irritating, suspenseful, etc.

5. It is true; it represents a correct understanding of its subject matter.
6. It is stylistically virtuosic or unique; its form is remarkable in comparison to other fictions.
7. It is socially, politically, culturally, intellectually, psychologically or spiritually liberating; one feels more comfortable in some way as a person in the world having read it.
8. It is structurally coherent; one can recognize it as a particular, unified fictional work.
9. It is indicative of the cultural context within which it was written and/or read; it makes certain elements of that culture intelligible in some unique way.
10. It is a commodity; one can use it to pursue one's quotidian interests.
11. It confirms one's identity; either through similarity or contrast, one's beliefs about "who you are" are strengthened.
12. It provides an alternative "reality"; one's attention is focused away from one's quotidian existence while reading it.

Each of these indices of "positive" value is warranted by a complex set of assumptions about the world in general and literature in particular. I leave the analysis of these assumptions as cultural artifacts to others; I choose, rather, to explore through lectical analysis how these assumptions about the meaning and value of literature manifest in the reading-acts created by others and myself. By doing so, I am aware I do not therefore dispense with the problem of this list being overly prescriptive, I merely bracket that problem until it can be addressed as thoroughly and sincerely as possible during the practice of lectical analysis. Furthermore, the language used in this list is meant to be flexible enough to include a variety of perceptions of value that may be expressed differently. For instance, value number six above is meant by the phrase "stylistically unique" to include judgments that a particular fiction is "original" and value number eight is

meant to include judgments that a fiction is characteristic of a certain literary genre. In other words, in application one attempts to make whatever language or evidence appears in a reading-text correspond to at least one of the abstract values listed above through synonymy. When these categories of value are too abstract, as has been brought to my attention from time to time, I have created new categories. Not long ago, for instance, a colleague convinced me that value number three - the fiction under consideration is instructive - was inadequate to describe the common use of fiction as an object of cultural analysis; consequently, I created a new category, value nine, to accommodate that use. Moreover, there are a variety of other qualities or values that are often attributed to fiction which do not appear on this list because they are too abstract to be useful during lectical analysis. The very common assessments that a particular fiction is good, fun, canonical, pleasurable, or beautiful fall into this category of exclusions. Such assessments are important, but the purpose of lectical analysis is to examine such general evaluations of fiction as specifically and concretely as possible. In other words, the above list of values is meant to further subdivide what is commonly identified as the "good" or "beautiful" in fiction. They are categories of use for fiction, or more specifically how the experience of reading fiction is commonly used.

All of these values can be attributed to virtually any fiction via any of the lectical modes. However, it is not an accident that the first item on the list is that fictions can be deemed "realistic." As detailed in the introduction of this dissertation, the lectical modes are specifically designed to describe the variety of ways a fiction can become a part of one's "real" life. If there is an arch-value inscribed into the lectical triangle, it is this one. There is, of course, a big difference between the process by which one establishes "lectical realism" and the assessment that it is "realistic." According to lectical tradition, all reading-acts must establish some sort of "lectical realism," some kind of pretense of

reference to a "reality," but not all reading-acts need to conclude with the assessment that the aesthetic object is overtly "realistic." As my reader should recognize by now, what I mean by "lectical realism" is the specific lectical perspective from which a reader attributes unique terms of being to a fiction. How a fiction is "realistic," therefore, is determined by the type of being attributed to it; the ubiquitous use of "as" in this project marks the presence and importance of this pretense of reference both to the project and the act of reading fiction that it tries to describe. Although "lectical realism" describes a condition that all aesthetic objects must possess, it does not follow that a given reader will value or even be conscious of the process by which he or she has established the "lectical realism" of the fiction at hand. During the assessment stage, therefore, the "lectical realism" of an aesthetic object affects how it is judged according to the indices of value listed above, but it does not guarantee that the reader will decide the extent that the aesthetic object is "realistic" is a primary or even important part of its ultimate value. In my experience, students quite quickly understand the difference between how I deploy the term "realistic" as a particular index of literary value and the term "lectical realism" as the unique terms and conditions which make that assessment - and all others - possible. Further, they also seem to understand the difference between these two terms specific to lectical analysis and the more general denotations of cognates like "Realism" (as a generic description of particular textual patterns) or how the arch-abstractions "reality" or "real" are used casually as names for the appearance of things to individuals. Moreover, students also seem to understand that the assessment a fiction is "realistic" can include but is not limited to the assessment that the "images" of a given fiction have "verisimilitude" or that they are overtly and effectively mimetic in some way.

Although each of these listed values can be attributed to fiction through any of the lectical modes, one is tempted to associate certain values with

certain lectical strategies. Materialist strategies, for instance, are particularly effective for attributing value number three, that a particular fiction or textual feature is "instructive." The process of imagining a fictional world according to the specific textual pattern of a fiction often causes readers to think about their understanding of the world in an unfamiliar way. A reader who knew little or had not thought much about misogyny within early Twentieth Century black communities, for example, might feel like he or she has learned some information about that social dynamic by reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Whether or not that novel presents accurate information about gender politics is another question and open to debate. If, however, according to a reading-text, a reader tells us that she has found the novel instructive in that regard, there is no reason to doubt that is how it has been used by her, unless she is being insincere.

Similarly, one is tempted to associate value number five - the fiction is "true" - with the Idealist mode and value number two - the fiction is "intellectually stimulating" - with the Subjectivist mode. However, the assessment of these and any of the other values listed is so thoroughly dependent upon a given reader's pre-understanding of the world and his or her previous experience with fictions in general and/or the fiction at hand that one can not reliably predict how the use of one lectical perspective over another will affect a reader's assessment of meaning and value before the fact. Reading-texts often offer one bits of information about the affect of a particular lectical strategy as deployed by a particular reader, but even these are highly speculative, and conclusions based upon them therefore need to be examined closely before they are treated with any degree of certainty. My colleague's reaction to her reading of the first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, for instance, indicated she enjoyed "playing" with the text by laughing and smiling when she admitted to doing so. Although laughter can be the outward manifestation of

many mental states other than "enjoyment," since what she had been doing just prior to laughing was exploring the various lectical aporia created by her reading-act(s) in response to various textual features, I would tentatively deduce she valued that patently Subjectivist activity according to my perception that the specific evidence of her affective behavior looked like "joy" rather than embarrassment, the release of anxiety, or contempt. Since there is no reliable way to separate my unique understanding of the stereotypical "meaning" of body language from this conclusion, it should be highly qualified. The fact that I made and expressed that conclusion, however, became the basis of further discourse and analysis of her reading-act: a general consequence that I believe is valuable (if always subject to error), at least within the context of scholarly inquiry.

Some conclusions drawn from the evidence of reading-texts, however, can be made with significantly more certainty. For Instance, Ann's insistence upon her symbolic interpretation of Hawthorne's "rose-bush" and her substantiation of that interpretation by her own experience in the world strongly indicates she valued that textual feature according to at least values five - it is "true" - and eight - it is structurally coherent. The appearance of these assessments of value, moreover, could be further explored by lectical analysis to learn more about how Ann's unique understanding of those received mores interacted with specific textual features during her reading-act.

Lectical assessment, then, is the process by which readers reconsider an aesthetic object as a precursor to assigning it meaning and value; this process is as crucial to the moment by moment development of the aesthetic object as it is to the most conscious and final evaluation of a fiction performed after all its words have been read. Even at the "developmental" level - immediately after a textual feature has been closed somehow - lectical assessment involves an assertion of the reader's current perspective toward the aesthetic object so he

or she can narrow the criteria according to which it can be judged. That is, according to the lectical mode *primarily* just used to close a textual feature or motif, the reader reexamines the effectiveness of that closure in comparison to the current aesthetic object for the ultimate purpose of accommodating the two to each other. So it can be relatively coherent, this process involves raising and or lowering the values attached to different elements of the aesthetic object in light of the lectical mediations just performed in the recognition and closure stages of the reading-act in progress. This evaluative process is another name for literary "appreciation." It stands to reason that whenever a particular lectical closure is assessed to have great value, the reader becomes aware that he or she is appreciating that attribution of meaning and function, both for itself and in relation to the aesthetic object as a whole. However, since these moments of "appreciation" are often quite brief and sometimes not even perceived or remembered during "developmental" reading-acts, I will describe how lectical assessments are performed by the different lectical modes within the context of the "final" reading-act which is begun after all the words of a fiction have been read, if for no other reason than these reading-acts are more conscious and therefore more easily open to demonstrative examples.

In the Materialist mode, at the onset of the assessment stage the fictional reality that has been imagined into an aesthetic object is reconsidered by the reader from a more "quotidian" perspective. In other words, readers to some extent drop the pretense that they are "someone else" while reading fiction so that the fictional reality they have created can be assessed using methods and assumptions used to evaluate other phenomena in their lives. This shift in the reader's "lectical self" happens according to how that fictional reality has *appeared* to them: fictional people are judged as people-in-the-world; events are judged as being more or less believable; causal and other relationships of coexistence are examined for relative probability. Since these appearances exist

as thoughts, and the reader is required to develop consistent thoughts about a fiction, this "reification" of a fictional reality often induces readers to notice problems with how they have been thinking about that fictional reality now that they are no longer in the process of creating it.

Although this distinction between one's identity as a reader who is observing a fictional reality and one's identity as a person who is evaluating a fictional reality is rather soft, it is meant to describe the discernible shift in perspective from attributing a fictional "being" to attributing a fictional "meaning" and/or value to that being. Since Materialist closure and assessment both occur within the pretense of and a focus upon a fictional world, this shift in lectical perspective is *not* equivalent to a shift to the Idealist lectical mode. Idealist lectical assessment considers the value and coherence of an idea about the reader's world; Materialist lectical assessment considers the value and coherence of a fictional world on its own terms, although readers must do so to some extent by employing the unique terms and beliefs they use to understand and value quotidian phenomena. In the Materialist mode, therefore, it is not until the assessment stage that fictional people, things, or events are assigned any meaning apart from what they are identified "as" in the closure stage. In other words, in the assessment stage what an image has been identified as (a person, thing, or event) can be interpreted to have meaning and value in the same way quotidian phenomena can only mean something to us after we have decided what they are.

This formulation is less complex than it sounds and is created according to ubiquitous practice; that is, my "theory" of this shift in a reader's lectical self at the onset of the assessment stage is created to account for what seems to have happened by the end of a Materialist reading act. For example, it is only after I have decided that certain successive groups of words represent a fictional character "Janie Starks" (I now know her last name having read the

novel again), who has various relationships with other fictional people and performs certain fictional acts within a fictional world, that I can think about her as I would a "real" person. I cannot like or dislike her, I cannot decide whether she was right or wrong to shoot Tea Cake; I cannot, in other words, completely pretend she is real until after I have established - through Materialist closure - the particular terms of her fictional existence. When in the Materialist mode, I like Janie (among other reasons, because I respect people who value love over social propriety); I commiserate with Janie (because I know what it is like to feel trapped in a relationship); I feel some anxiety for her during her trial (because I know how deeply racist American jurisprudence can be, particularly in the early Twentieth century). My pretense that Janie is or was alive in a certain way (established in the closure stage) allows me to judge what I think and feel about her, but to do so I must at least partially use my beliefs about "real" people, marriages, and trials.

For lack of a better term, such acts of judgement are called assessments of "mimetic" value in lectical analysis, although by doing so I risk misrepresenting what is meant by the term. Mimetic value is not just a perception of how "realistic" a fictional world seems to a reader, although that judgement might very well be reached through the process of assessing mimetic value. Materialist reference during the closure stage requires the pretense that words represent images; Materialist assessment of mimetic value requires a second pretense so a fictional world can seem to have meaning beyond the terms of its initial meaning and value: i.e. the structure and appearance of its existence as a part of an aesthetic object.

Moreover, as in all the lectical modes, Materialist assessment allows the reader to assign a relative "structural" importance and identity to a textual feature in order to promote coherence in the aesthetic object, particularly while it is in the process of being developed. In my most recent reading of the novel,

for instance, I assigned a much higher "structural" value to the passage where Janie spins the increasingly rabid Tea Cake's pistol to an empty chamber and puts her rifle in reach and a shell in her pocket. I do not recall giving that passage as much emphasis in prior readings, perhaps because this time I was more clearly aware that she was about to shoot him. In other words, I attributed extra significance to her act of placing a shell in her pocket because I knew in advance that shell was going to end up in Tea Cake's heart. In addition, however, in this reading I became aware of a conflict in my perception of Janie's character that hadn't occurred to me before; knowing that the difference between murder and self-defense is at least partially whether or not the killing was premeditated and/or avoidable, I noticed that her actions might suggest she was guilty of a crime, and therefore cause her legal problems. Moreover, my experience with countless murder mysteries made me consider - but only for a second - whether or not this character I like so much was in fact a murderer, or at least guilty of manslaughter. I had no problem, however, overcoming that minor aporia; I now think Janie is only guilty of being torn between the love of her life and the love of Tea Cake's. In other words, I associated her conscious decision to arm herself with an episodic motif comprised of narrative instances where she is caught between devotion to herself and devotion to another, as in her promise to Nanny to marry Logan Killicks and her many decisions to submit to Joe Starks' bullying. The fact that I almost immediately further associated that episodic motif with two analogical motifs left over from earlier readings - i.e. the "flowering pear tree" and "mule" motifs - only served to cement the function and importance of that single round slipped into Janie's apron.

The fact that all of such attributions and assessments occur within a reading-act, of course, affects the way one both performs and perceives them. One of the most important ways those actions are affected is by one's understanding of the context within which a fiction has been read, and in turn by

the limits upon one's lectical behavior one believes are mandated by that context. If I am reading a fiction within the context of "killing time while on vacation," for instance, I will behave differently than when I am reading a fiction so that I can lecture about it to students. This sense of adjusting one's reading behavior according to received external standards associated with certain lectical contexts is articulated well by Wayne Booth's concept of "coduction," which will be discussed in some detail during my outline of classroom methodology in the next chapter. At this point, however, I would like to emphasize that the context within which an aesthetic object *and* its subsequent reading-text are created should always be considered during a lectical analysis. As pointed out above, I performed different reading-acts each time I read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, to some extent because each time I was reading for different reasons. Although my latest reading did not include some of the methods I usually employ when I read professionally, there is no doubt my intention to use my lectical experience as a demonstrative example in this essay affected what it meant to me. I contend that the more we foreground our awareness of this affect of context upon our reading-acts, as I did above, the easier it is to distinguish between purely idiosyncratic lectical responses and those that might have some resonance with all or at least many readers.

The reconsideration of symbolic closure during the assessment stage of an Idealist reading-act requires significantly less additional interpretation than during Materialist reading-acts. This is the case because the Idealist closure of a textual feature or motif requires that it has already been attributed a "meaning." What has not been accomplished in the closure stage, however, is a final assessment of the relative value and the relationships between the various symbols and motifs of symbolic meaning that have been accumulated in the aesthetic object and the unique way those symbolic gestures individually and collectively refer to the reader's understanding of the world. In the terms used

above, the reader must still assess a "structural" value to the Idealist reading-act.

In the Idealist mode the reader must reconsider the importance of a symbolic attribution from both the perspectives of reader and a person-in-the-world. From the perspective of reader, the symbolic attribution must be valued in relation to other elements of the aesthetic object. In other words, the symbolic attribution in question needs to be placed by the reader within a semantic hierarchy that both recognizes and unifies *all* the various semantic attributions currently included in the aesthetic object. From the perspective of person-in-the-world, the symbolic attributions needs to be valued in relation to the reader's unique understanding of "reality." That is, to assess completely a symbol in a fiction one needs to pretend it is a symbol in the world by referencing it to a "symbolic system," but also assessing how important that reference is to the developing aesthetic object.

In other words, the symbolic function of the aesthetic object as a whole must be made consistent and organized according to its perceived importance to the aesthetic object taken as a whole. The criteria according to which symbolic value is assessed are so idiosyncratic it is hardly worth listing them out. Symbolic systems are always more evocative than denotative, so even when a recognizable semantic horizon exists for a textual feature treated as a symbol (I used the word "rose" as an example of one of these above), it is extraordinarily difficult to delimit how a given "symbol" might be valued by a particular reader before the fact. Particularly during the "final" reading-act of a fiction, this process also entails regarding how the symbolic meaning of an aesthetic object interacts or conflicts with whatever fictional world has also been developed within that aesthetic object. The symbolic value of a textual feature, therefore, is assessed by comparing the symbolic function to its imagistic or aporetic functions.

As a demonstration of how these various kinds of assessment can interact to create a single, coherent aesthetic object, I will try a lectical self-analysis of a passage that had a particularly powerful Idealist impact upon me during my last reading of Their Eyes Were Watching God:

All night now the jooks clanged and clamored. Pianos living three lifetimes in one. Blues made and used on the spot. Dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing love every hour. Work all day for money, fight all night for love. The rich black earth clinging to bodies and biting the skin like ants. (125)

The similarity between this passage and portions of my reading-text above is not accidental:

Although it ends in sorrow, her life with Tea Cake is offered as an example of how people should be with each other, particularly when they are down in the muck. They love, laugh, argue, fight, share, live and die as a unit. They are people amongst other people, not mules. (7)

Although it is possible that I remembered Hurston's passage across the intervening decade between my second reading of the novel and when I wrote the above words in my journal, I do not believe it likely. I did not recognize Hurston's paragraph when I read it this last time; in fact, I thought, "How could I have missed this?" Neither did I remark the similarity between Hurston's passage and mine until I began to write this section of this chapter. In the process of scanning my (then) current aesthetic object for a clear example to use here, I remembered attributing strong symbolic value to Hurston's "jook" paragraph, looked it up in the book, and only then realized I had used similar diction in my journal. I might have remarked this paragraph ten years ago, and thereby unconsciously plagiarized Hurston, but usually when I do so I recall the "original" text when confronted with it.

Neither, however, do I believe that the similarity between the two texts is accidental. When I wrote the above journal entry I believed that the novel as a whole offers a representation of a particularly chaotic and joyful version of human life. In addition, I processed these representations as symbols, that is, under the belief that Hurston represents Janie's life to communicate something about life in general; specifically, that life - when it is good - is characterized by a chaotic intermingling of pleasure and pain. Life is like a funky jook-joint. For this reason, I believe it is more likely that my journal entry influenced my reading of the novel than the other way around. In other words, one of the elements of the novel that I have valued in past and that I continue to value is its function as an example of the "good" life. I have no reliable way of determining whether or not I would have attended to this aspect of the novel as much if I had not written the above journal entry immediately before reading it again, much less if I would have remarked the "jook" passage in particular as strongly as I did. Such speculations may be interesting to the individual, but they are relevant to a lectical analysis primarily as reminders of how thoroughly contingent both aesthetic objects and reading-texts are upon a reader's unique and complex pre-understanding of the world.

There is another possible reason for the similarity between the diction of Hurston's paragraph and my reading-text. They both employ a traditional rhetorical strategy for representing the vast breadth and variety of experience. There is a long history of representing the complexity of life by listing out several of its constituent elements, some of which are usually considered in conflict: e.g. "dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing." (Do I need to offer substantiating evidence for this claim? How about Whitman's Leaves of Grass or much of Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow?) From this perspective, the similarity between Hurston's prose and mine can be attributed to our employing the same convention for representing the complexity of the "good" life.

Although I used that convention to describe a theme I recognized in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I didn't learn it from her. I probably didn't even learn it from Whitman; the strategy is deeply inscribed in Western culture, from Madison Avenue to Montaigne. Moreover, the theme itself is ancient, at least as old as the Dionysian myths. In the terms of this project, I very well may have recognized this similarity between Hurston's "jook" paragraph and a pre-existing symbolic system, and subsequently treated it as a symbol referenced to that tradition of thinking - and writing - about life as a jumble of loosely yoked and yet joyful contradictions.

Although these speculations might adequately explain why I remarked Hurston's "jook" paragraph so closely during my last reading, there are a few other lectical artifacts worth pointing out. Beyond treating the paragraph as a symbol, I almost immediately associated it with an already developed analogical motif roughly equivalent to the "chaotic good life" tradition I discussed in the paragraph above. Not only did this association link the paragraph to other passages already organized under that motif (these include the "great tree" of Janie's life (8) and the many bantering discussions on the porch of the store (e.g. 59ff, among others), but in some ways it became the epitome of that motif. Perhaps this is why I was surprised that I did not remember it; it seems the best and most concise representation of what I believe Hurston wants to tell us about the good life. In all of the earlier instances of this analogical motif, the pleasure is qualified because Janie - whose perspective I am privileging here - is to some extent excluded from the action. At the beginning of the novel, Janie's connection to the "great tree" of her life is real but not yet realized; she is not allowed to participate in the banter at the store at all until after Joe Starks has died, and then only occasionally; even after her marriage to Tea Cake it is not until they establish themselves at the center of camp life "down in the muck" that Janie gets to experience the kind of life she has longed for since childhood.

Furthermore, as I progressed through the novel, the "jook" paragraph took on the force of favorite memory, further emphasizing its function in my aesthetic object as the epitome of the "chaotic good life" motif. As Janie's life with Tea Cake progresses to its violent end, there are no other instances - that I can remember, and that is what counts in a lectical self-analysis - where the spontaneity of their life is not threatened by some outside force, whether it is the racism of Mrs. Turner or the hurricane that makes them refugees. It is not until the last lines of the novel that Janie seems to recover her sense of the chaotic but ultimately joyful grandeur of her life in the moment, and only then as reminiscence:

Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net.
Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her
shoulder. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to
come and see.

I specifically remember choking back tears the first time I read these lines twenty years ago, although I frankly don't remember why I was so affected by them. Perhaps, then, as in my most recent reading, I treated those lines not just as the last lines of the book, but through association to an already developed analogical motif I attached to them the force of other symbolic references to the "good" life. Part of my idiosyncratic response to this novel is the fact that I am - perhaps unusually - sympathetic to Dionesian representations of life. Consequently, when writers, filmmakers, or musicians represent life thusly in my presence, they are preaching to the faithful.

In my most recent reading of these last lines, however, I was less emotionally affected by their symbolic value as a representation of life than I was by their value as a beautiful piece of writing. I can't be sure whether or not this is because I had already assessed such a strong "structural" value to the "jook" paragraph, although it stands to reason that its status as the epitome of

the "chaotic good life" theme might have tempered my response when I associated the last lines to that theme, which I did during my "final" reading-act of the novel. Perhaps, in other words, I attended more to the diction of the last lines rather than my idiosyncratic emotional affinity for the "chaotic good life" theme because I had already consolidated Hurston's message that life is a big, old "mostropolous" thing around the "jook" passage, and the lectical aporia that caught my attention at the end was the marvelous language she used to pull in the total horizon of meaning I already accumulated into my aesthetic object for the novel.

As you can see, lectical analysis - particularly self-analysis - tells you as much about the reader as it does the fiction. I am aware that such information sounds "self-indulgent" and in many ways goes directly against current fashions of responsible literary criticism. My argument from the beginning of this project, however, has been that to be responsible readers - whether as pupils or professionals - we need to take responsibility as best we can for the idiosyncratic assumptions and actions that contribute toward any reading-act. By doing so we can at least sharpen the boundary between lectical responses that are particular to the individual or context of a reading-act and those responses that can be attributed with some certainty to conventions of writing and reading fiction. Moreover, by calling this curriculum "neo-appreciation pedagogy" I purposefully imply an allegiance to a specifically Romantic heritage in literary criticism. In many ways this project looks back to Nineteenth Century "aestheticism" for inspiration. I have already discussed my debt to a philosophical genealogy inspired in America by Emerson, but I also believe there is a quality to the work of English Romantics, such as Thomas DeQuincey, Samuel Coleridge, and Walter Pater, that I believe both stylistically and theoretically is lacking in Twenty-First century literary criticism. Their work represents a forthright and unrepentant *personal* engagement with a fiction.

Although I espouse a more thorough, careful, and qualified engagement with fiction than is typical in such critics, I think there is much to be learned about what is valuable about reading by examining the specific artifacts of reading-acts, even when those artifacts are obviously idiosyncratic. The fact that I cried the first time I read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is not in itself data of interest to the general public, but the fact that people often cry as a part of their response to art should at least be admitted and, where possible, examined.

The discussion above describes lectical assessment as the process by which meaning and value are accommodated into and by an aesthetic object, both semantically and "structurally." In the Materialist mode this requires a reconsideration of an "image" against the fictional world that already "exists" in the aesthetic object. In the Idealist mode, lectical assessment entails a reconsideration of a "symbol" against both symbolic *and* imagistic elements of the aesthetic object. As demonstrated above, this process can often entail multiple attributions of meaning, value, and function to the same textual feature. I read the "jook" passage, for instance, primarily as a symbol, but that lectical choice did not obviate and to some extent required that I also read it as an image. Although I will not pause to do so now, one could analyze the text to interrogate to what extent it invites Materialist versus Idealist strategies and thereby get a sense of how conventional my reading of it was. Whatever the text "invited" me to do with it, a more salient point at this juncture is that this apparent double attribution did not constitute a lectical aporia *for me*. I read it primarily as an image, subsequently associated very strongly with an analogical motif that gained the force of a theme.

If I had contemplated my Materialist and Idealist attributions for the "jook" passage as a lectical aporia, however, then I would have been poised to add a Subjectivist lectical assessment to my reading-act as well. The assessment stage of a Subjectivist reading-act is a reconsideration of the

relative importance of an aporia or a dialogic motif already recognized and incorporated into an aesthetic object. Since the value of a Subjectivist reading-act is determined according to the quality of a lectical experience, its assessment stage involves an "embodiment" of how it has felt to be reading the fiction, in particular how it has felt to interrogate the unresolved issues thus far recognized. In other words, to determine which aporias are important enough to be treated as fundamental unresolved questions of a reading-act, readers need to direct their attention upon themselves long enough to compare what they have been doing with the words of a fiction to what they believe one is supposed to do with fictions in general. Like the other two modes, this comparison is moderated by an individual's understanding of received standards regarding what is "acceptable" behavior for a reader within a certain lectical context. Depending upon the reader's inclinations and habits, however, the process of assessing one's prior experience and behavior during a reading-act can itself become a valuable experience. Many readers enjoy the contemplation of fiction, which regarded from the Subjectivist perspective creates more material to be interrogated; the reading-act theoretically can be perpetuated as long as the reader is motivated to do so, that is, for as long as he or she *feels* doing so is valuable. This theoretical limitlessness of Subjectivist lectical assessment is always balanced against the lectical conventions of consistency and closure; to varying degrees all readers know the reading-act must end in a way that is coherent, even regarding the questions they may still have about it. Moreover, all reading-acts are subject to practical limits imposed by our quotidian lives; eventually one must stop reading, even if it is just to go to sleep.

All this talk about embodiment and such is not meant to suggest that the Subjectivist mode is the primary vehicle for creating literary "feeling." Very strong emotional reactions can be instigated by the other two modes, as is demonstrated by my self-analysis. In fact, I would hazard that most readers are

more experienced with Materialist and Idealist methods for feeling their aesthetic objects than they are with Subjectivist ones. The three modes, however, establish different grounds for how an aesthetic object feels to the reader. Although one can feel "excitement" in the Subjectivist mode, one wouldn't be feeling excited about what is happening in a fictional world one is pretending to watch, as in the Materialist mode; one would be feeling excited about the reading-act one is currently performing.

Do readers get excited by contemplating aporias? Most definitely, although most undergraduates feel such events as irritation. Similarly, one might be tempted to associate the feeling of "intrigue" with the contemplative process of the Subjectivist mode, but one can also be intrigued with the application of a symbolic motif to one's "real" world via an Idealist reading-act: "How, exactly," I ask myself, "is the 'chaotic good life' motif reflected in *my* life." Thrown into recollection - a Dead show in Las Vegas? Playa del Carmen last summer? - I might play with my memories, feeling a variety of things. Although I think it is possible to speculate about how a particular textual pattern tries to elicit particular feelings according to conventions it employs, lectical analysis proceeds from the evidence of a reader's perceptions, and then works backward to interrogate how much or little those perceptions were instigated by a textual pattern. It is not wrong, therefore, to feel sad at the end of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, even though the textual pattern seems to call for a celebration of Janie's joy at all the life gathered in her net. A lectical analysis would instead ask "why did this reader feel sad?"

During the "final" reading-act of a fiction - once all the words have been read - a reader in the Subjectivist mode is compelled to negotiate between whatever aporias have been "carried forward" from earlier lectical activity as part of the aesthetic object and the general onus of closure and evaluation. Many of these aporias or dialogic motifs are going to take the form of

unresolved questions about the fiction's meaning and/or value. Obviously, different readers are going to have different levels of capacity and tolerance for aporetic features in their aesthetic objects. Undergraduate students - unless they are taught differently - generally feel anxious about unresolved questions at the end of a reading-act, particularly if it is assigned reading. If they are not sure what a fiction means or what is good about it, they worry they will do poorly on the test or look stupid in class. Much of this anxiety is due to a misconception about the amount of ambiguity allowed within the context of academic reading. They simply are not aware that *a certain amount* of ambiguity is not only tolerated and expected, but for the last century it has been a mark of literary excellence, albeit aporetic value is usually identified with less pejorative terms like "rich," "evocative," and "multi-layered." The italics above, however, highlight the fact that students are not completely mistaken about their responsibility to develop at least "coherent" reading-acts in the literary classroom, and that their ability to do so within the all too vague boundaries of academic discourse will indeed be tested somehow. How much is a "certain amount" of ambiguity, they may wonder, or where lies the precise threshold between "being confused" and the valid, scholarly contemplation of ambiguity?

Lectical analysis offers students both a theory and a method for sharpening their understanding of when they have discharged their lectical duty. By teaching them the distinction between confronting a "lectical aporia" (what happens in the recognition stage of all lectical modes) and the strategy of developing an "aporetic horizon" (what happens in the closure stage in the Subjectivist mode), students get a better sense of when a reading-act is complete and when it is "aborted." As discussed in Chapter Two, a reader creates an aporetic horizon by *choosing*, some - usually only a few - semantic and/or functional possibilities for a textual feature out of the entire range of

meaning and function that occurs to them at the time (i.e. out of their "lectical horizon"). Upon offering a reading-text in public, they seem to accept that it is reasonable to require that they account for aporetic horizons they "carry forward" in an aesthetic object. In other words, they accept they should be able to talk about why they decided to continue to think about a textual feature as an aporia rather than choosing one of the available and *plausible* options included in their aporetic horizon. Having the capacity to discuss an aporetic horizon gives them a rule of thumb for distinguishing (valid) Subjectivist reading-acts from aborted reading-acts, that is, those times when they simply give up on a lectical aporia. As pointed out above, "giving up" can be a function of apathy or lack of motivation; I believe it is proper to hold students accountable for such lectical behavior.

Just as frequently, however, students give up on a lectical aporia because of ignorance, either of the semantic horizon of a textual feature (e.g. they do not understand that a "jook" is a bar, even after trying to look it up) or of the range of lectical strategies that might close the textual feature. Offering students information about cultural, linguistic, and historical connotations of fictions that likely are unfamiliar to them has always been an important part of literary pedagogy, and a neo-appreciation course should also disseminate such information. However, I have found that by overtly focusing upon methods for expanding their lectical repertoire in the classroom (rather than just telling them what a passage means), I am able to reduce their anxiety about what they are required to do with a fiction. In other words, by showing them explicitly some new things to do with fictional words, I show them how to discharge their lectical responsibilities toward fictions which I assume they otherwise would be unable to read. What I am talking about here is establishing a classroom climate in which forthright assumptions of student ignorance are not pejorative or condescending. Students often harbor the belief that there is something wrong

or sub-standard about being flummoxed by a poem whose language or textual pattern is beyond their lectical resources, but I try to teach them that it is no more shameful to be stumped by "The Waste Land" or "Hamlet" than it is to be stumped by polynomial equations before you have taken algebra. Further, by teaching them that it is expected and common for readers - particularly at the undergraduate level - to have ignorance-based lectical aporias, they seem to be more comfortable admitting their ignorance out loud. As we shall see in the next chapter, my assignments and classroom methodology are designed to encourage the forthright admission of ignorance and to reduce the motivation for and thereby the practice of passive "giving up."

This focus upon giving them more things to do with fiction is particularly crucial when it comes to Subjectivist methods of lectical assessment. Lectical analysis does not solve the problem that students quite often do not enjoy the fictions we make them read, it merely attempts to give students additional ways of understanding why lots of people have enjoyed those fictions in the past. Whenever a reader sees little or no value in a fiction that she knows has been highly valued in the past, she is confronted with a lectical aporia. Like any lectical aporia, if this difference between received, "canonical" value and experiential value cannot be resolved by the reader, he or she can carry it forward as a Subjectivist aporia, an unresolved issue within the aesthetic object. Students seem relieved to find out they are not required to assess high value to the works of Shakespeare or Eliot; in my class, however, they are required to identify criteria by which such works can be valued or, alternatively, the criteria by which the students themselves have assessed them a low value. By emphasizing the contingencies of lectical assessment as an integral part of reading, students are taught that their duty is not to absorb literary culture but to critique it, to place it as best they can against the received standards of value articulated in the list above. Knowing that the value of a textual feature

or an entire fiction can be interrogated as an aporia - as the *question* of value - seems to reduce their anxiety, and thereby make them more willing to attempt less familiar (and often more effective) methods of closure and assessment.

Another artifact of this method is that it tends to loosen students' rather rigid beliefs about what a "good" fiction looks like by focusing their attention upon how readers might have "good" or "bad" experiences while reading any fiction depending upon the lectical strategies they use. Furthermore, the interdependence of the different lectical modes demonstrates that the same fiction can evoke different and sometimes conflicting assessments of value for a single reader. From my own experience, for instance, in all of my readings of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I have been mildly irritated by a passage in the second chapter where Janie relates to Pheoby Watson how she found out she wasn't white by seeing a photograph of herself (8-9). Janie relates how she noticed a "dark chile" standing next to the white children she grew up with, and wondered out loud, much to everyone's amusement, why that "dark chile" was there instead of herself. Upon reflection she sees her mistake: "Ah looked at de picture a long time and seen it was mah dress and mah hair so Ah said: 'Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!'" I have always read this passage as a part of an episodic motif, a string of images that collectively might be called "Janie's childhood." The passage occurs before Hurston drops the narrative pattern of quoting Janie's words as she tells her story to Pheoby Watson. Later on, the narrative voice is less clearly identified. Chapter Three, for instance, begins with the lines, "There are years that ask questions and years that answer. Janie had had no chance to know things so she had to ask." Whether this voice is a version of Janie's words to Phoeby - that is, "free indirect discourse" - or the voice of an independent, omniscient narrator is ambiguous. As mentioned above, I have attributed most of the narration to my image "Zora," a fictional person who speaks to me throughout the novel. At the beginning of Chapter Two, however, I have a hard

time attributing the words "Ah'm colored!" to "Zora"; they are too clearly marked as verbatim dialogue, and therefore strongly invite any reader to attribute them to the character Janie.

What has irritated me about the passage is that it seems implausible that Janie would first notice her race through such events, according to what I know about six year old children, racial relations in the South, and a variety of other information about the world which *I believe* is relevant. I, of course, might be wrong; I don't know everything, and almost anything is possible. And yet, Janie's account seems inconsistent with what I know about people; I simply have a hard time believing her. It has occurred to me, of course, that Janie might be exaggerating for effect, telling a tall tale to emphasize how she was treated as an equal by the Washburn children. Certainly that narrative strategy is used repeatedly by a variety of storytellers throughout the novel, particularly when the local men are "playing the dozens" on the porch of Starks' store. However, I don't see an invitation in this particular passage to read Janie's story as an exaggeration, a figure, or a lie. It seems to me that she is just telling Phoeby the truth about her childhood. Confronted with conflict between my perception that Janie is telling the truth and my belief that the event could not have happened the way she remembers, this passage has always been highlighted for me as a lectical aporia. Ultimately I have resolved this aporia by attributing the conflict not to Janie, "Zora," or myself, but to Zora Neale Hurston, the person who wrote down this piece of dialogue. In other words, I resolve the conflict it presents by assessing it as a weak piece of writing. Frankly, each time I have read the passage I have been bugged that the implausibility of Janie's story interrupted the smoothly progressing Materialist reading-act I had begun in the first chapter. By the time Janie starts telling her life story to Phoeby, I have so far been firmly rooted in a Materialist pretense that I was watching two women - whom I already liked - talk intimately in the twilight. This is not to say that I

would be irritated by *any* aporia at that moment; I like to contemplate ambiguity. But to be interrupted by an implausible detail that seems contrary to the whole (Materialist) intent of the passage? Well, I guess it just reads like a mistake to me.

The fact that I read the narration of this isolated passage as being inferior to the rest of Hurston's writing, however, has not stopped me from assessing a very high value upon the novel as a whole or upon her narrative style in particular. My understanding of literary convention is that a fiction does not have to be flawless to be of great value. Accordingly, I try to teach students that they should not ignore passages that take the force of an aporia; rather, they should try to resolve such moments if they can, but at the very least they should carry the aporia with them as they proceed, perhaps writing it down in their journals as a question to be addressed in class. By doing so, one takes responsibility for one's lectical behavior, particularly regarding assessments of value, like mine above, because by doing so the beliefs one has employed to make those value judgements are brought into sharp relief. For example, I assess a relatively low value to the "Ah'm colored!" passage because it is not "realistic" enough for my taste (lectical value #1 above), particularly in comparison to the rest of the novel. It seems petty to do so and not a little embarrassing to write it down. I hold Hurston to such a high standard, however, because most of the rest of the novel seems very "realistic" to me; I have no difficulty pretending her characters are "real" people, who nevertheless sometimes speak and act in very extraordinary ways.

As the foregoing suggests, I have also attributed a great deal of Subjectivist value to the "style" of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. My latest reading of the last paragraph of the novel included a particularly strong assessment of its "performative" value, even though in previous readings I had consumed it primarily from an Idealist point of view. As a demonstration of how

an assessment of style is a Subjectivist value judgement, I offer below further lectical self-analysis of my experience with the novel, although doing so will certainly expose even more of my idiosyncratic preferences. First, the paragraph in question:

The day of the gun, and the bloody body, and the courthouse came and commenced to sing a sobbing sigh out of every corner in the room; out of each and every chair and thing. Commenced to sing, commenced to sob and sigh, singing and sobbing. Then Tea Cake came prancing around her where she was and the song of the sigh flew out of the window and lit in the top of the pine trees. Tea Cake, with the sun for a shawl. Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net. Pulled it from around the waist of the world and draped it over her shoulder. So much life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. (184)

How does one account for the feeling that a piece of writing is distinctive, that it stands out from other fictional language in a positive way? How does one, with a straight face, explain to a room full of teenagers why a paragraph is beautiful? On what grounds do I claim that Hurston closed her novel with some of the most lovely prose I have ever read? Let me count the ways....

First, I'll try to account for my decision to treat the whole paragraph primarily as a single textual feature distinguished by its diction. That is, what is so remarkable about the language in this paragraph that I recognized it as an aporia? My initial answer is that it constitutes a shift in tone from most of the rest of the novel. Most of the novel alternates between two basic verbal styles: a fairly straightforward omniscient narration of events and the dialect of the

quoted dialogue. In the page preceding this paragraph, this basic pattern is repeated as Hurston moves back into the "frame" narrative, that is to the fictional "present" where Janie, returned from her adventures on the muck, is telling Phoeby Watson the story of her life up to the moment. This narrational transition is marked first by two lines of white space, then a narrative voice which lets us know "Janie stirred her strong feet in the pan of water," then finally Janie's direct address to her friend: "Now, dat's how everything wuz, Phoeby, jus lak Ah told yuh" (182). Phoeby offers her own lectical assessment of Janie's story - "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie. Ah ain't satisfied wid mahself no mo'" - and finally Janie ends their dialogue by enjoining Phoeby not to worry about what the neighborhood gossips think or say because they are just talking, and talking about life is not the same thing as living it: "Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves" (183). These are the last quoted words of the novel, and they are followed by a resumption of the omniscient narration: "There was a finished silence after that so that for the first time they could hear the wind picking at the pine trees" (183).

Most of the novel follows this rather conventional narrational pattern, albeit not in the narrative "present." In the terms of this project, these two verbal styles constitute two dialogic motifs. Although I could discuss how they are "distinguished" from other diction I have read (Hurston's frequent use of "free indirect discourse" immediately comes to mind), I want to focus here on the diction of the last paragraph, and therefore merely want to underline how they are distinguished from it. For clarity I will refer to these two verbal styles as "narrator style" and "character style" as distinguished from the verbal style of the last paragraph, "Zora style." The narrator and character styles both use informal, often fragmentary diction, although the character style much more so

since it is written strictly in dialect. Although both styles are employed within the process of narrative exposition, for me their diction often resists the transparent delivery of fictional data. The quality "transparency" refers to those moments in a reading when the style of a textual feature is virtually ignored, such as with the dialogue cue "she said" or the dry delivery of narrative facts, like "she walked downstairs and opened the back door." Although such "stage directions" do occur in the novel, quite frequently both the narrator and character styles call attention to the way they relate what is "happening." In my journal entry written just prior to my last reading, I pointed out one of my favorite examples of character style, drawn from the words of Janie's grandmother: "Put me down easy, Janie, Ah'm a cracked plate" (19). In that earlier reading-text, I called this diction "poetic," not to suggest that it approached poetry as a textual pattern, but to emphasize the interesting and often skillful use of overtly figurative language to express everyday thoughts and emotions. The narrator style also frequently caught my attention with inventive figures. A few sentences before the last paragraph, for instance, the narrator writes, "Janie mounted the stairs with her lamp. The light in her hand was like a spark of sun-stuff washing her face in fire" (183). Do you want further examples? How about when a dying Joe Starks gives Janie "a ferocious look. A look with all the unthinkable coldness of outer space. She must talk to a man who was ten immensities away" (80) or, "They sat on the boarding house porch and saw the sun plunge into the same crack in the earth from which the night emerged" (31).

I should say that I assess a high value to both of these verbal styles. They feel immediate, honest, original, and not infrequently eloquent. As I read the novel, occasionally a phrase would sharply catch my attention as being particularly distinctive, and I would consolidate that lectical moment, that experience of reading Hurston's language, within one of these two dialogic

motifs. The cumulative value of each such moment gave me a coherent sense of style. How do I know this? Well, I remember it happening; I remember pausing to regard the language rather than the fictional world or the ideas of the novel. Moreover, regarding this sense of style, I made no distinction between the words of different characters; for me, they all had the same voice, and that voice was distinct from the narrator style larger by virtue of vocabulary. That is, they often seem to share similar syntactical strategies. Upon looking back through the text, as I have done a few times today to transcribe passages verbatim, I can see a number of differences; that is, upon re-reading I can find other things to say about the narrator and character styles. When I finished my latest, complete reading-act a few days ago, however, I merely saw them as different but highly sympathetic verbal styles; their diction was doing the same work in the novel, and they caught my attention in the same ways and with comparable frequency.

I did, however, recognize a distinct difference between these two verbal styles and the "Zora" style which I attribute to the last paragraph. I had already remarked passages where the narrative voice seemed to shift into a more densely, overtly lyrical mode. Moreover, such passages seemed to stand apart from the delivery of narrative "fact"; they either framed narrative events, typically at the beginning or ending of chapters, or they commented on them or some aspect of "life" in the abstract. Upon looking back at the novel, I can see this pattern starts with its very first words:

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.

One of the characteristics I attributed to the motif of Zora style, as I developed it, was a sense of its focus upon verbal expression rather than narrative progression. Although it is not unusual for a novel to begin - or end - with some sort of stylistic flourish, note that the passage above is not concerned with letting the reader know what or who the novel is about, it is focused upon expressing the cliché "when my ship comes in" in new language, sharpening the old saw for a new purpose: ostensibly a description of "the life of men." Throughout the novel, I recognized a number of passages that seemed to have a similar stylistic purpose and impact, albeit often with a greater impact upon me in the moment. The "flowering pear tree" passage in Chapter Two is one of these (10 -11); the description of the rising hurricane - which includes the line for which the novel is titled - is another (150-51). As my reading-act progressed, I continued to remark these lectical moments and process them as a single voice, to notice their distinctiveness from the other two verbal styles discussed above, but also from other fictional diction I had read. So, the first way that I can account for my Subjectivist reading of the last paragraph of the novel, is that it became for me the last, and to my taste one of the best, addition to a dialogic motif that I had been developing since the first line of the novel.

This account, however, does not describe exactly what is distinct about the diction of the last paragraph, that is, why it caught my attention as an aporia of stylistic distinction. Trying to describe what is "remarkable" or "distinctive" - much less beautiful - about a verbal expression is dicey at best, even if the main criteria for doing so are one's perceptions. Lectical assessments in all of the modes all too often appear in reading-texts as abstract adjectives, but descriptions of style are usually particularly abstract. If I tell you that I love the "naturalness" of Hurston's language or that her word choice is "brilliant," I have done little more than indicate that I performed a reading-act

that included some kind of a Subjectivist assessment of style, and that I valued that assessment rather highly. This, of course, is the kind of slippery ground where language theorists fear to tread.

However, I believe that teachers should perhaps not rush but at least venture carefully a little deeper into the realm of speculation, even at the risk of appearing a bit foolish. In the classroom, therefore, I attempt to describe lectical assessments by employing traditional vocabulary used to describe line level diction - because it already exists - with an additional focus upon lectical conventions that might have impelled a reader to create a certain assessment of style. In the classroom, this usually involves pushing the writer of a reading-text to at least guess which textual features instigated which lectical responses, particularly when the reading-text is as abstract as the "word choice is brilliant." Although the truth-value of such speculations may be very suspect, the airing of ones lectical laundry in public dramatizes two very important lessons that I believe are true: 1. Lectical assessment is deterministic, not mysterious, even if we cannot identify exactly which of the many possible contingencies "determined" how a particular reading-act was created. 2. It is permissible to have any opinion about the value of a fiction in the classroom, as long as you can account for it according to lectical and/or literary conventions.

I'll push myself a little further into my lectical self-analysis to clarify the kinds of speculation I try to get out of my students. My best guess regarding why Hurston's diction in the last paragraph caught my attention is that it seems particularly "poetic" to me; that is, I recognized that she employs many line-level strategies I usually associate with poems. Alliteration, rhyme, rhythmic repetitions: all of these strategies have traditionally been associated with poetry, and therefore to some extent "invite" readers to pay extra attention to its diction. As pointed out above (during my reading of Rich's "Our Whole Life"), one of the most common lectical conventions for reading poetry is to recognize

that its language is meant to be patently evocative. Although poetry may deliver a narrative, it is - or should be - understood that poems often use very different strategies for communicating meaning than prose narrative. The further implication of this lectical convention is that poetry should be read carefully since it is often difficult to understand all or even part of what it might mean, particularly on a first reading. In other words, poetry is tricky to read, so one should pay close attention to its words. At some point (I'm not sure exactly when, but it was before I turned the page at the line "the kiss of his memory..."), I recognized the "poetic" quality of the diction. I remember doing two things in response to this recognition: 1. I laughed quietly and shook my head in admiration, I believe it was in response to the line "Tea Cake, with the sun for a shawl." 2. I re-read the paragraph up to that point and, turning the page, to the end *as poetry*.

Upon doing so, I remarked certain phrases more closely, paying particular attention to the way they "sounded" to me as opposed to what they meant. I noticed that the opening lines were particularly rhythmic (looking back now, I would scan it as dimeter), and that they are fraught with assonance and alliteration. The repetition of certain words ("commenced," "sing," "sobbing," "sighing") seemed "incantatory" to me, like a prayer. I also remarked the evocative complexity of a particular line which I read at least two times in a row before I felt ready to move forward: "Then Tea Cake came prancing around her where she was and the song of the sigh flew out of the window and lit in the top of the pine trees." This line, it occurred to me, was very powerful both as an image and a symbol. I had already associated Tea Cake with the "flowering pear tree" analogical motif earlier in my reading, so I understood this sentence as a continuation of that symbolic pattern, an idea come back from the dead to dispel the sighing and sobbing of Janie's memories of his death and her trial. Imagistically, the "sight" of Tea Cake "prancing around" stood in sharp contrast

to "the song of the sigh" skulking in the corners. That the "song of the sigh" is banished from the house out into the already sighing pine trees seemed to be particularly imagistically evocative; that is, I quite easily was able to pretend to hear a pine tree's sigh. I continued reading in this manner, playing with the possibilities of the words, though when I turned the page and realized I was reading the last words of the novel, I played with them less and valued them more. I have a hard time accounting for this last artifact, except to say that I believe I was responding - rather passively - to the last lines as a peroration, a stylistic flourish that also repeated what I *already* believed was the main theme of the novel. In other words, my heightened value assessment of the last lines might be accounted for by my anticipation of my "final" reading-act, which I was already sure was going to be positive. Like a fool in love, I rushed headlong into the arms of my appreciation for the novel as a whole.

I am pretty confident the above account is accurate, but through a retrospective comparison of my reading-text with lectical conventions it is possible to make a few further - and more qualified - speculations about what may have caused me to respond as I did. To begin with, this paragraph does not appear in a poem, even though I read it as one. It stands to reason, therefore, that on some level treating prose as poetry created a lectical aporia for me, or rather than it sharpened the distinction between the way I had been reading and the way I was currently reading.

Another possibility is that I was responding to a very traditional criterion for stylistic value: that is, that words should be well-suited to the meaning that is expressed through them. I have already pointed out how the "sound" of the first lines of the paragraph impressed me, although I do not recall at the time specifically noticing the harmony between their sonics and the semantic attributions I had made and was making. Specifically, the sibilance of the words "commenced," "sing," "sobbing," and "sighing" sound like a "song of

the sigh" to me, which in turn sounds like wind in pine trees. With Tea Cake's entrance, these sibilant words are virtually banished from the passage. Did this element of the textual pattern invite me to mobilize a traditional lectical value and therefore "appreciate" the paragraph more? I can't recall for certain, so this might mark the admittedly vague boundary I have been treading between analytical speculation and pure guesswork.

As with all of the lectical "tasks" discussed in earlier chapters, the three modes of reading are deployed interdependently during actual lectical assessments. The foregoing discussion of the Subjectivist assessments I made during my last reading of the last paragraph of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for instance, cannot be isolated from the Materialist or the Idealist assessments I had already made which to some extent laid the foundation for my recognition of "Zora's" distinctive verbal style. To mention just one of these interdependencies, my strategy of attributing those words to a fictional character - "Zora" - and subsequently positively valuing my personal, imaginary relationship with her is a patently Materialist gesture. There is simply no way for me to know how much of my (pretended) regard for "Zora" is due to my perception that "she" is a gifted storyteller, anymore than I can tell to what extent I am positively affected by the style of that paragraph because it comes from someone whom I (pretend to) like.

By tracking these various interdependencies as thoroughly as possible, however, students are at least shown a representation of the complexity of reading-acts, and therefore tend to take their own mediatory gestures into greater consideration as well as have greater insight into the reading-texts of others. Moreover, the process of examining lectical assessments tends to give them a way to determine which mediatory gestures are thoroughly idiosyncratic and which clearly respond to widely held beliefs about the value of literature: that is, those beliefs compiled at the beginning of this chapter in my list of

"lectical values." In other words, students learn how to winnow out their personal affection for a fiction from those assessments which might be used to make a public, academically "responsible" argument of value, such as in a term paper or essay test. The appreciation of fiction in both the private and public realms is thereby demystified *and* legitimized, and the gap between those students who already "get it" and those who don't is at least narrowed, if not completely closed. In the last section of this dissertation, I will outline one of many possible classroom methods one can use to teach students not only how they think about fiction already, but also how they can speak and write about those thoughts in ways which more closely adhere to current criteria for academic "responsibility." Teaching them such skills may not change their lives, but it at least challenges their all too often unconscious lectical habits, and in the process often teaches them how to earn better grades in any coursework where the analysis of cultural artifacts is relevant.

Chapter Five: Lectical Analysis in the Classroom

Good reading and good writing are first and last, lots of work.

Richard Poirier

It is better to fail in teaching what should not be taught than to succeed in teaching what is not true.

Paul de Man

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I asserted that the best pedagogical method is one that overtly grounds its materials in a body of theory. In other words, how and what we teach in the literary classroom should be justified as explicitly as possible by an account of why literature is "taught" at all, rather than merely read. Accordingly, the preceding chapters offer a model of reading which is meant to serve as the foundation for the general pedagogical approach I have called above "neo-appreciation" pedagogy; that approach is pursued in my literature courses through "lectical analysis," the terminology of which is articulated by the lectical triangle. My goal in those chapters was to justify my classroom practice to other scholars by fleshing out some of its theoretical implications. The rhetorical triangle operates as a heuristic for traditional theories about rhetorical context, and therefore is warranted by an ancient, vast, and often quite divergent body of thought. The theoretical formulations that warrant the lectical triangle, however, do not enjoy the same prestige or coherence as those that warrant the rhetorical triangle. Consequently, I have had to yoke together a number of themes that recur in contemporary theories of reading, ethics, and aesthetics with a constant eye upon the *appearance* of reading; that is, I have tried to accommodate what is often said about reading on the theoretical level to ubiquitous lectical experience.

Needless to say, additional accommodations have to be made in the classroom so that both the underlying theory and the practice of lectical analysis are intelligible to undergraduate students. Every sound teaching method I have encountered - at least in the human sciences - operates through the repetition of simple and concrete concepts that are gradually elaborated in order to account for the abstract and complex nature of phenomena. One must be conversant with Freud's basic stages of human development, for instance, before one has a chance of understanding Lacanian cultural analysis. Freud's categories of "normal" development may be overly prescriptive and patently sexist, but they are elegantly simple and therefore teachable. After learning the necessarily reductive general theories of Freud, Piaget, and Maslow, to name a few, apprentice psychologists have a theoretical and terminological foundation from which they can more closely - and accurately - examine human behavior. In other words, the principle pedagogical value of such broad, theoretical brush strokes is not their historical influence or truth-value; they are most valuable to young scholars as coherent ways to begin thinking and talking about very tricky subjects.

The way I approach neo-literary appreciation follows this same basic trajectory. From the first class meeting I begin to teach students relatively simple concepts which are applied in increasingly complex ways throughout the course. My goal is to finish teaching my students the basics of lectical analysis while there are still three to four weeks left in the course. Although they do not have all of the tools to perform lectical analysis (as it is laid out in the preceding chapters) until the last third of the course, they begin practicing elements of lectical analysis almost immediately. Although I am sure there are many ways to teach neo-literary appreciation, below I will outline the basic methods and materials I have developed over the last few years in the hope that my readers will better understand how easy it is to include such curriculum in an

undergraduate class. My further hope is that my efforts so far will instigate the creation of other - undoubtedly better - ways to teach our students how to be more conscious about what they do to and with cultural artifacts.

So: this is how I go about it. In the first class meeting, I give my students a packet of information about neo-literary appreciation (see appendix A), and begin discussing the theoretical assumptions about literature which are compiled there. Before I do so, however, I typically have them read something: I have used selections from William Bradford's Of Plymouth Plantation in recent American literature surveys, but the opening lines of Beowulf work equally well when I teach British literature. By having them read before I lecture, or even give them a syllabus, I hope to highlight from the outset that their lectical experiences will be both the principle focus of and inspiration for their class work. Once I do begin to lecture my rationale for teaching literature, I regularly turn to that initial lectical experience for demonstrative examples, asking them to compare their aesthetic objects with the text at hand.

In my class notes, I refer to this opening lecture as "Subjectivism 101," although the handout with which I have them follow along is entitled "The Basic Assumptions of Neo-Literary Appreciation" and reads as follows:

1. A fiction can only be understood by a reader according to his or her unique understanding of world and culture; therefore, fictions do not have objectively determined meaning or value before they are read.
2. A fiction is encountered sequentially as fragments of language, or "textual features," which readers translate into a coherent and unified understanding about the fiction; this "understanding" is called the "aesthetic object," and it exists only in the individual reader's mind.

3. Readers attribute meaning and value to fictional texts according to interpretive strategies they have learned in order to "close" the inherent "openness" of textuality.
4. The current literary "canon" is a reflection of the values and interpretive strategies embraced by academic culture at this time. At any given point in history the interpretive strategies of academic culture are usually more varied and complex than those of the general populace. Many "canonical" fictions, therefore, are difficult to understand and/or "appreciate" if one's repertoire of interpretive strategies is relatively limited.
5. Analyzing the received heritage of literary value as a reflection of certain strategies of interpretation gives one insight into both past and current cultural stereotypes.
6. Broadening your own interpretive strategies helps you to understand how and why a greater variety of literary works are or might be valued, and thereby improves your ability to discuss culture both casually and academically.
7. Reading literature can be personally transformational, and therefore should be examined as closely as possible.

As I proceed through this system of assumptions, I ask my students questions about their lectical experiences to provide demonstrative examples. In an earlier chapter, I discussed the dependence of this dissertation upon the rhetorical appeal to *praxis*. This time-honored strategy of moving an audience through the deployment of persuasive, anecdotal evidence is particularly important to my classroom method. Facing a room full of undergraduates, I can't appeal to intertextual, scholarly support for my claims - like positioning myself within the Pragmatist philosophical tradition - because such data is foreign and therefore counter-persuasive to them. Similarly, my justifications above for neo-literary

appreciation in general and lectical analysis in particular as ways of "being practical" about what can and should be taught about literature are counter-intuitive to most undergraduate students. Firmly entrenched in an archaic, text-immanent understanding of literary meaning, their first reaction to "Subjectivism 101" is disbelief; it seems patently impractical to them, another case of eggheaded over-intellectualization of simple, everyday matters. Anecdotal appeals to *praxis* may not rise to the level of responsible science, but they do persuade students to entertain concepts that I believe can at least nominally be justified through formal theory. I don't feel too bad, therefore, about applying a little spin while pitching my reductive account of the theoretical basis for lectical analysis.

Most recently, for instance, I had asked my students to read a page from Bradford's history, subtitled in my anthology as "The Starving Time" (qtd. in McMichael 63-64). After elaborating somewhat upon item number one above, I asked them what they thought Bradford looked like. Many of their responses were very similar; all of them reported he was dressed in black (like a pilgrim, duh), and most of them believed he was elderly. Next, I asked them to find textual features which may have encouraged such similar interpolations of Bradford's writing despite the fact that he does not describe himself or reveal his age in the passage. My students quite quickly saw that their images of Bradford and their aesthetic objects as a whole had been affected by similar cultural conventions of "Pilgrim" life. They also were able to recognize that their perceptions of Bradford's age were attributable to the diction of the passage. They felt like he spoke with authority, like a preacher or teacher; moreover, they were able to recognize that the archaic, patently biblical style which Bradford uses probably influenced their attribution of age.

A few students, however, did not see Bradford as an elderly man but in the prime of life. They were able to trace this interpolation to assumptions they

held about what kind of man could survive the Colonial wilderness. Moreover, they attributed a "pitiless" quality to the tone of the passage, which they had associated with the vigorousness of youth. At one point, Bradford relates the miserable sickness and death of some of the sailors who in the past "would often curse and scoff" at their Puritan passengers, apparently as an exemplum of God's vengeance upon the wicked. One student identified the self-righteousness of this exemplum as the contempt of the strong for the weak, and was able to retrace this attribution to her perception that Bradford was in the prime of life when he wrote his narrative.

As I proceed through the seven assumptions listed above, I continue to oscillate between lecturing the material and asking students to generate examples from their reading-acts. I move through the material as quickly as possible - since we will be revisiting it in virtually every class meeting - although I make sure they have a minimal grasp on the key terms they will need for the next batch of terminology they will encounter. Course-specific denotations for the terms "lectical," "appreciation," "textual feature," "aesthetic object," "canon," and "aporia," therefore, are given significantly more attention in these first class discussions than they are in the handout. For instance, I give multiple examples of what a "textual feature" is or can be, making sure to distinguish between that term and "textual pattern." Moreover, not only do I use the terminology, but I encourage and eventually insist my students do so as well. Although some terminological confusion typically persists throughout the course, I contend that any lexicon is learned and deployed imperfectly by those unfamiliar with it, and such terminological confusion can be incorporated into the modified "Socratic" classroom method I tend to use. For example, if a student says, "There are many water motifs in this text," I might respond, "Are you saying these motifs are a 'textual feature' of *your* reading-act or a part of the 'textual pattern' of The Waste Land?" Although I employ other general

pedagogical methods as well, the "Socratic" method of requiring students to make claims which they subsequently must defend is particularly well-suited to teaching the skill of lectical analysis because it dramatizes its fundamental, self-reflexive process. By questioning - and correcting - their responses, I model the behaviors I will require them to perform in class, in their journals, and on tests. The fact that the Socratic method is far from being a revolutionary teaching method is to my mind one of its strong points. I am asking students to think and speak about literature in radically new ways (at least to them), so I feel good about teaching them to do so through a process that should feel familiar, if not comfortable.

The most ideologically biased - and least "scientifically" justifiable - assumption I deliver to my students is number seven on the list above: "Reading literature can be personally transformational and therefore should be examined as closely as possible." I try to be forthright about the cultural biases inherent to the assumption that literature "transforms" people, and I do so as an opening critique of literary study as a form of - potentially - unconscious cultural transmission. If Bartholomae is correct about the correlation between a student's success in the humanities and his or her ability to "appropriate" a scholarly identity, as I think he is, then revealing the bases of *our* cultural biases, no matter how subjective, helps demystify the apparent gulf between professional, academic lectical experience and that of "normal" people. Let's face it; we're nerds. Our students know it, and pretending that we approach William Bradford or Willa Cather with the same set of beliefs about literature as most people only confirms how far down the bell curve of normalcy we have strayed. By admitting up front that I am an unrepentant, literary nerd - and that they will not be required to become one to get an "A" in the course - I am able to open up the discussion of how one's beliefs about culture deeply affect one's lectical strategies. The canon, therefore, becomes a subject for

critique rather than a tradition which should be swallowed whole and presumably savored. Since the kinds of texts that usually are assigned to students in literature surveys initially tend to leave a bad taste in their mouths (How many of your students expound upon the pleasures of reading Jonathan Edwards or Ezra Pound, unless they are shamelessly sucking up. Five percent? Less?), I begin the process of teaching them a way to access such texts by admitting that "taste" is governed by patently subjective biases, many of which they do not share with me or most literary professionals.

Disclosing my belief in the potentially transformational power of reading also opens a discussion of what kinds of cultural artifacts *have already* transformed my students' lives. With very little prompting, those students that do not already share my assumptions about reading are eager to discuss the way movies, television, music, and video games have changed the way they think about themselves and the world. Calling attention to the aesthetic value they already attribute to such cultural artifacts - as long as one does not denigrate their experiences out of hand - tends to demystify why and how nerds like us value texts which sometimes confuse, irritate, or bore students.

Openly recognizing the issue of "taste" in literature also provides a transition to the first analytical skill I teach students: identifying aporias. I have tried a variety of ways of communicating to my students what aporias are or can be without completely ignoring the complex and highly qualified theoretical material detailed in the preceding chapters of this dissertation. Ultimately, my goal during the first class meeting is to give students terminology and concepts which can be built upon as the course progresses, therefore I outline only the basic architecture of lectical analysis and how the recognition of aporias relates to that analytical activity. My lecture notes for this initial outline are as follows:

1. Lectical analysis is performed by tracing backwards from the elements of a reading-text to determine the lectical strategies

used to create it. This is done by identifying relationships between the attributions of semantic reference and function in a reading-text and the aporias those attributions apparently are meant to resolve. By doing so one can speculate with varying degrees of certainty about the structure of a particular reading-act, with the ultimate goal of determining what was gained - or lost - by applying certain lectical strategies to certain textual features.

2. The lectical triangle lists out various, common lectical strategies for attributing meaning and value to fictions; however, one must also be familiar with the general types of aporias which instigate readers to employ those strategies so one can compare the lectical "solutions" represented in a reading-text to the apparent "problems," "issues," "questions," "distinctions," "conflicts," or "highlights" the reader identified in the fiction.

3. There are two basic types of aporias: textual aporias and lectical aporias. Textual aporias are those aporias included within a textual pattern that can be identified with a great deal of certainty according to "common" cultural conventions. Lectical aporias are those aporias that are identified by a particular reader during a particular reading-act, whether those aporias are recognized according to identifiable cultural conventions or not.

I use a number of pedagogical commonplaces to deliver this material. For instance, I typically draw a diagram on the chalkboard to represent the temporal relationships between texts, reading-acts, reading-texts, and lectical analysis in a spatial/visual format. Having a "picture" up on the board to point to seems to ground both my students and myself. Students seem to be able to digest the material in this initial lecture as long as I resist the temptation to digress or overly qualify it. The term "cultural convention" for instance, can easily devolve

into a lecture (i.e. digression) about the difficulty of distinguishing between the idiosyncratic and the conventional in lectical activity. Such discussions are important, but before students can participate in them in any meaningful way, they need to practice working with larger brush strokes.

Another pedagogical commonplace I employ is direct and consistent repetition of the key terms, both verbally and graphically. In other words, I say and write the same definitions in the same way, and on the same portion of the blackboard, until I feel confident that most of the class has grasped the material. Since much of the lexicon of lectical analysis is reworked from traditional literary and philosophical terminology, and therefore subject to some confusion, during the first part of the course I rigorously repeat myself, so much so that it becomes a standing joke. The tedium of drilling terminology may be unavoidable, but it can be ameliorated somewhat with practical application to the reading at hand and a healthy dose of self-depreciation.

Surprisingly enough, students have few problems understanding the denotations for the word "aporia." Perhaps this is because on some level they already know that reading-acts are acts of creation where they "fill in the gaps" left by an author; giving those "gaps" a name, therefore, allows them to speak about experiences they have been having for some time. Their prior contact with aporias, however, has almost always been negative; by characterizing aporias as the stimulus for creation, rather than its impediment, from the first class I try to loosen their death-grip on their belief that the only good reading is one that proceeds seamlessly, one during which understanding comes "naturally." Instead, I teach them that *all* fictional reading-acts are dependent upon the inherent fragmentation of texts in combination with the mandate to establish lectical coherence. In other words, I show them all their prior attributions of "seamlessness" were created - unconsciously - by pretense. I immediately follow my delivery of these ideas with a practical application to the

text at hand. Specifically, I refer my students to the following printed material regarding the two "types" of aporias handed out at the beginning of class:

Textual Aporias:

1. Boundaries of grammatical units (phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.)
2. Graphic breaks (lines, paragraphs, stanzas, white space, chapters, illustrations, font changes, the last word of a fiction etc.)
3. Shifts in or violations of generic textual patterns (i.e. dialogue, character, narration, description, narrative chronology, non-standard syntax, etc)
4. Shifts in diction.
5. The repetition of textual patterns.
6. The manipulation of cultural stereotypes.

Lectical Aporias:

1. Perceived limits of a textual feature.
2. Perceived conflicts in semantic reference or function.
3. Perceived correspondence between textual features or motifs.
4. Perceived conflicts with the reader's pre-understanding of "the world."
5. Commencing or stopping a reading in progress (its time to go to work so I mark my place and close the book; later, I open the book and start reading where I left off).
6. The perceived resistance of a textual feature to one's lectical strategies.
7. Pauses during a reading-act to "appreciate" it.

If I can avoid it, I do not directly address the equivocal nature of these distinctions between "textual" and "lectical" aporias in the first class, although a

few of my sharper students have caught it right off. "Yes, Virginia," I might admit, "to recognize a 'manipulation of cultural stereotypes' in a textual pattern a reader must first notice a 'perceived conflict with a pre-understanding of 'the world,' and perceptions of the world are inherently subjective." However, whether you call him Father Christmas, Papa Noel, or Santy Claus, people raised in a Western culture share certain beliefs about the mythological creature who visits good children on Christmas eve. Although his traditional costume varies from country to country, he is generally considered benevolent (unless you are a four-year old being thrust onto the lap of some huge, ho-hoing stranger in a shopping mall). A fictional representation of Santa Claus as a cannibalistic monster, therefore, can fairly confidently be identified as a "manipulation" of the cultural tradition to which it refers. My hope is that eventually my students will understand that such equivocations are inevitable during any systematized analysis of culture, but I try to avoid diving too deeply into gray areas until they have a firmer grasp on the particular analytical system I am teaching them.

As with my list of assumptions for neo-literary appreciation, I draw demonstrative examples of aporias from the reading my students completed at the beginning of class. Most of the "textual" aporias are easy for them to identify although I usually give a good deal of attention to the terms "diction" and "cultural stereotypes." Many students do not know what "diction" is, neither are they familiar with some of the common cultural identities associated with various textual patterns, particularly regarding pre-twentieth century texts. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, Shakespeare, Bradford, Milton, Swift, and Emerson all sound alike to them. The fact that they are ignorant of the vast stylistic differences between such writers is not a problem or a point of shame, I tell them, but it does indicate the kind of cultural information they need to learn if they are to read such works in an academic setting. I let them know that they will be required to learn certain details about the linguistic, historical, and

cultural conventions of earlier eras as a step towards distinguishing between idiosyncratic and conventional attributions during lectical analyses. Much of the traditional subject matter of literature courses ("facts" about the time period, the author's life, genre criteria, the definition of "zeugma," etc.), therefore, is included in my course, but as a means not an end.

Next, I direct my students' attention to the list of "lectical" aporias, pointing out that most of the items begin with the word "perceived." Perception, I tell them, does not necessarily include conscious awareness, and lectical analysis seeks to focus attention on the subjective perceptions that constitute reading-acts, perceptions which often are not attended to during "casual" or "recreational" reading. After having them read again a portion of the text at hand, so they will have fresh lectical experiences, I ask them to identify the different kinds of "lectical" aporias listed above. If up to that point I have done my job well, my students can usually come up with some rudimentary reading-texts. When forced to do so, they can remember the general limits of the textual features they recognized while reading, and upon further investigation can see possible reasons for their choices. Invariably, different students report different aporias, which occasions a brief discussion of conventional and idiosyncratic lectical responses and those responses that are a function of ignorance or apathy. If I'm lucky, at least one of my students will respond to my questions with a mulish "I don't know" or "I don't understand what you want," and thereby provide an object lesson for the others. Since - at least at first - all I'm asking them to do is identify how they parsed the passage into textual features, students who want to abstain from the discussion have little grounds for sticking with "I don't know." The fact that I am quite willing to leave such students on the hook until they give me some sort of answer tends to loosen the tongues of the rest of the class.

I am careful, however, not to ridicule or even outwardly show surprise at a student's ignorance of cultural conventions. After all, they have come to learn, or at least get credit for learning. Sometimes this level of acceptance is easier to imagine and commit to than it is to practice. The depth of my students' ignorance occasionally takes my breath away. This last semester, for instance, in the process of discussing Flaubert's Parrot by Julian Barnes, one student had the guts to ask if Gustave Flaubert was "a real person"; apparently, he was the mouthpiece of a whole cadre of students sitting nearby. I was so stunned that it took me a few moments to respond, and before I could compose my game-face enough to speak, the student said, "He is, isn't he. Sorry, stupid question."

There are such things as stupid questions ("Did we do anything on Monday?" springs to mind), but my student's disclosure of his ignorance was not one of them. His question and my involuntary reaction, however, served to illuminate the great disparity between the cultural knowledge absorbed by the sort of people who become collegiate instructors and that absorbed by most people, even most "educated" people. Judgments regarding whether or not someone *should* know Flaubert was a "real" person by the time they reach college are best directed at the status of high-school education, or the deleterious effects of television, video games, or some other agent of cultural transmission. Although I design course curricula with certain presumptions about what students do and do not know about Western culture, my general pedagogical method does not depend on any particular pre-understanding apart from having *some* experience reading fiction (c.f. "minimum standards" Ch. 1). Whenever my jaw drops at the distance between the cultural milieu I live in and that inhabited by my students, therefore, I point out that my astonishment is a product of my ignorance, not theirs. As the instructor, it is my job to know what cultural information needs to be lectured: that is, to know what they do not yet know.

Similarly, it is my job to know when abstract concepts - like "pauses during a reading-act to 'appreciate' it" - need to be demonstrated by reference to textual patterns with which my students are familiar. In other words, if I believe they will have difficulty appreciating or at least understanding the value of Bradford's History, I need to draw examples from Hollywood, sit-coms, or some other cultural artifact to which my students already attach aesthetic value, or at least have the interpretive resources to do so. Drawing demonstrative examples from "popular" culture also dramatizes the fact that reading canonical - or at least anthologized - fiction is not a completely different activity than watching a formulaic sit-com, although the different textual patterns common to those genres may require different cultural information and interpretive strategies in order to be "appreciated."

As stated above, my goal in the first few class periods are to give my students the fundamental terms and analytical tools necessary for performing rudimentary lectical analyses. I do not, for instance, discuss in detail the complex relationship between literary "appreciation" and what I called lectical assessment above. Instead, I merely tell them that moments when they notice themselves appreciating or (even more casually) "feeling" something during a reading-act constitute a *possible* lectical aporia. Such moments, I tell them, can be used as clues, as smoke for a lectical fire. At some point in the course I discuss in greater depth the range of lectical assessments described by the lectical triangle, but at first I merely want them to get in the habit of linking their "emotions" to possible lectical strategies. The first homework assignment does just that; I ask them to note in their journals at least five lectical aporias during their reading of the assigned text, then to speculate in writing why those moments "stand out," that is, why they think they are able to remember them. In the subsequent class meeting, these journal entries are treated by them as

reading-texts available for group analysis and by me as tools for elaborating the conceptual foundation I delivered in the first class.

As should be clear from the foregoing, one of the main distinguishing characteristics of my method of teaching literature - besides the vocabulary of lectical analysis - is that I overtly include the issue of "casual" versus scholarly consumption of literature as a central part of the course curriculum. Just as the scholarly discipline of astronomy is more than stargazing and botany is more than stopping to smell the roses, I tell my students literary study is more than just reading and talking about books. However, as pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, undergraduate students recognize the legitimacy of thinking "scientifically" about stars and flowers but generally have little experience thinking scientifically about literature. This is the case because even those students who have read a lot of fiction, and therefore are "good at English," usually have not been exposed to the theories of interpretation, and hence analytical methods, which ground most contemporary literary scholarship. They have been taught the fundamental assumptions of the physical sciences since elementary school, but literary curriculum up through the secondary level consists chiefly of memorizing literary heritage in combination with "sharing" one's interpretations, most often unwillingly. Unlike most scholarly disciplines, therefore, the legitimacy and basic methodology of literary "science" - or scholarship, if you prefer - must be taught to college students before they can hope to engage the subject matter as novice scholars.

I have alluded to this element of my classroom curriculum since the beginning of this dissertation, first discussing it *vis a vis* the work of David Bartholomae. Bartholomae's contention that students need to appropriate or be appropriated by a scholarly discourse resonates well here with Wayne Booth's notion of "coduction," the theoretical fulcrum of his *The Company We Keep*. Briefly, Booth uses his neologism "coduction" to denote the process by which

readers negotiate literary value within a plurality of selves and others (70ff). Moreover, he extends the analogy between reading literary texts and meeting people to the point where reading a book is tantamount to attending a very interesting cocktail party attended by authors (living or otherwise), characters, and entire fictions as well as "real" people we have met or merely heard about. "Hey, Ken," one of my literary intimates, Julian Barnes, says to me, "have you met my dear friend Gustave Flaubert? I believe you know his character Emma Bovary, over there by the mirror, but I think you and Gustave will get along famously! Gustave! May I present...."

It is easy to lampoon Booth's analogy, but it is very difficult to come up with a clearer, more teachable way to explain lectical context to undergraduates, particularly the lectical context of reading fiction within the scholarly community. According to Booth's formulation, reading is always a "social" activity. For students, engaging literature within the bounds of a college course is like being escorted by a blind date (the instructor) to a long-running, movable feast of close friends who share a common history, favorite anecdotes, and even a private lingo. Students may be very gregarious within their own circle of friends, but the styles, tastes, demeanor, and conversational topics at this scholarly *soirée* seem foreign, almost absurdly sophisticated, and not a little incestuous. Everyone knows everything about everyone else, or at least they seem to. At such a gathering it takes a lot of courage to weigh in on such topics as how deeply indebted Virginia is to Gertrude, or whether or not Walt and Allen are "just friends."

For Booth, therefore, reading literature, and particularly the evaluative, "ethical" quality that he believes is inherent to that act, is always performed within a complex rhetorical context:

Coduction will be what we do whenever we say to the world (or prepare to say): "Of the works of this general kind that I have

experienced, *comparing my experience with other more or less qualified observers*, this one seems to me among the better (or weaker) ones, or the best (or worst). Here are my reasons."

Every such statement implicitly calls for continuing conversation:

"How does my coduction compare with yours?" (72-73)

Although I have no quarrel with this rhetorized account of reading-acts (much of the preceding chapter could be read as a gloss on it), a few issues should be pointed out. First, whether or not he believes it is true for *all* reading-acts, Booth characterizes the coduction of fiction as an overtly self-conscious, compositional process; most non-scholarly reading, however, is performed unconsciously, so utterly immersed in pretense that the right hemisphere does not know what the left is doing or has done. As both Booth and I maintain repeatedly, there is no reliable way to unravel completely the various selves, conventions, beliefs, and remembered experiences that make up what I have been calling the reader's "pre-understanding of the world," even if one reads and teaches fiction professionally. The best one can do, and Booth does it as well as any I have read, is to analyze carefully what one thinks one thought *after the fact*. His extended demonstrative examples of "ethical criticism" at the end of The Company We Keep do just that, and essentially perform what I have been calling lectical analysis throughout this dissertation. One of the inherent problems with both of our analytical methods, therefore, is that by their very structure they run the risk of perpetuating the false notion that all "good" reading-acts are as self-conscious as the reading-texts created by professional scholars. The only curative for this potential misrepresentation is vigilance, and a willingness to valorize other - less "conscious" - ways of reading. On the other hand, the fact that Booth's ethical criticism and my lectical analysis reflect the lectical habits of the scholarly community can be a great benefit to students who have to "appropriate" those habits to some extent to get good grades.

Another potential issue made explicit by the excerpt quoted above is the question of what Booth means by "qualified" readers. Perhaps, Booth means nothing more - or less - than readers like himself. Both in form and content, Booth implies that he imagines a scholarly reader for The Company We Keep, if not a professional scholar then at least a skilled amateur. Moreover, his demonstrative performances of ethical criticism are structured as reevaluations of a prior coduction he has come to distrust due to some critique by a colleague. For instance, his earlier readings of Rabelais did not take into account feminist critiques, and therefore missed some of the sexism that he *subsequently* has recognized in Gargantua and Pantagruel (394ff). Booth asserts that such gestures of ethical criticism are not utterly subjective because they operate according to the ethical imperative of respecting alterity, an imperative shared by all because the human "self" does not exist except as a coduction. Ignoring difference, therefore, is contrary to the self-interest of everyone involved, and consequently one has an ethical duty to consider the opinions of others, whether those others are the implied author of the fiction at hand or one's colleague across the hall. In response to radical "subjectivists," Stanley Fish and Jacques Derrida in particular, Booth claims that the alternative points of view a thorough reader should consider will always be plural, but they will never be infinite or arbitrary.

Of course, this way of thinking and talking about reading works best within what Fish would call an interpretive community, in particular the interpretive community of literary scholars. Whether or not Booth dodges the "subjectivist" silver bullet with the arch-value of recognizing alterity, it is clear that all "responsible" literary criticism - at least in the current cultural climate - takes the form of a coduction overtly articulated in terms of difference. Self-consciousness is not only a current virtue of literary scholarship, it is a defining criteria, even for those scholars who revile critical self-consciousness. Since, as

Booth correctly points out, the currently operational beliefs of the scholarly community are merely plural and can be learned, ethical criticism can make reasonably certain predictions about the doctrinal beliefs most relevant to a given textual feature: as long as one reads and writes like a scholar. In other words, once I have learned all of the doctrinal beliefs and critical terminology of scholarly culture, and have read enough canonical literature to make that cultural inheritance intelligible, it is no big trick to figure out which of those conventions another "more or less qualified" reader might use to create a *scholarly* reading-text, even before the fact.

It is more tricky, however, predicting the range of conventions a non-scholarly reading-act might employ, for the simple fact that most reading-acts proceed only through pretenses that require at least temporary unselfconsciousness. Can a reader, scholarly or otherwise, experience the imagistic power of "The Waste Land," for instance, without at least provisionally adopting the pretense they are "seeing" something? No, says Booth, and I agree with him. Since the range of possible resources drawn upon while "imagining" or "symbolizing" a textual feature are so vast and subjectively determined, it is hard to "predict" how a reader might respond to a particular textual feature. To do so I must presume a particular semantic horizon for that textual feature that will recognize the alterity of all people, not just all trained scholars in the process of creating a reading-text. After all, even scholars to some extent must be just folks when they imagine fictional worlds.

Such presumptions can be made, at times with a great deal of certainty, but to what purpose in the classroom? If, as I maintain, the goal of literary pedagogy is to teach students how to critique what has been done with cultural artifacts, rather than passively to appreciate the "good" ones, then speculation about what some hypothetical reader might do with a fiction is beside the point. As discussed earlier in this essay, lectical analysis can not do without some sort

of rhetorical analysis of textuality and context, but neither can rhetorical analysis, in all the forms I have seen it, offer students a coherent and teachable description of how a text has been closed through lectical mediation.

Although I do believe there is a substantive difference between neo-literary appreciation as I have described it and more traditional, solely rhetorico-historical pedagogical methods, I do not want to imply that focusing upon lectical issues in the classroom is a panacea. The only improvement of which I am completely confident is that by following the methods above I have brought the curriculum of my courses into better concordance with my theoretical and scholarly understanding of literature. Preaching in the classroom what I practice in the library does more than just "feel" more ethical, more honest; by doing so I more fully share with my students the particular expertise developed by a literary scholar. It takes no special expertise to teach literary heritage or traditional text-based terminology, other than effective research and study skills and generic teaching experience. By the same token, given a few weeks to bone up, I could probably teach an undergraduate class on American history or abnormal psychology, as long as all that is required is the transmission of the canonical "facts" of the subject matter. The students would not know that I am at best an amateur historian and/or psychologist, and as long as I brought my syllabus in line with departmental parameters, I probably wouldn't be exposed to the administration either. An expert in either field, however, would quickly recognize my tentative grasp on the material. It simply takes more than a couple of weeks boning up on the "facts" to become a scholar in any discipline because the stock in trade of a scholar is not information - easily acquired and taught by anyone with a modicum of persistence - but critical acumen regarding a particular subject matter. The training required of a literary scholar develops a particular critical skill: being a strong reader. The "strong" reader can juggle multiple interpretations, link impressions to textual features, and interrogate his

or her understanding of a fiction with that of colleagues and/or its critical heritage. In other words, the strong reader has the resources to create skillful coductions, using Booth's terminology.

All literary scholars who teach bring these skills into the classroom one way or another to the benefit of their students. I have found, however, that including a neo-appreciation component to my curriculum more fully requires and shares my training as a "strong" reader. Since the "primary" works of lectional analysis are the reading-texts created and subsequently analyzed by students, I have to stay on my toes, constantly "reading" what they say about their responses to the fiction under consideration. As pointed out above, after the first class they are required at least to attempt lectional analysis in their journals, so any given class period is partially devoted to discussing what they have *already made* of the assigned material. My training, if I deploy it skillfully, allows me both to fine tune their critical efforts *and* to show how much or little their responses coincide with the fiction's critical heritage. Such classroom activities cannot be represented by lecture notes because the analytical objects - student reading-texts - are not available beforehand. A good deal of the course curriculum, therefore, must be delivered extemporaneously. I lecture the rhetorico-historical information that I believe students must or should learn, but I do not know *what* my students and I will discuss for (ideally) most of the class, though I do know *how* we will discuss it. This type of pedagogy is inherently dramatic; students learn how to be stronger readers, and what a "strong" reader acts like, by watching one in action for a few hours a week in combination with trying out their own developing skills, all in an atmosphere that is not only friendly to critical speculation but demands it.

Perhaps I should balance patting my own my back with some demonstrative examples. Below I will respond to a series of reading-texts drawn from student journal entries in response to T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" in the

effort to dramatize how I deploy lectical analysis in the classroom. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate how lectical analysis can be used to address the needs of different kinds of students, so I have organized this dramatization according to an informal taxonomy of student behavior. These categories, of course, are inherently reductive, but they are not meant to be insulting. Lumping people into abstract categories always objectifies them to some extent, but I do so less to ridicule students than to ground this demonstration in common classroom dynamics that should be familiar to any experienced teacher.

There are two categories of students that are not represented below because neo-literary appreciation pedagogy does not substantively affect their performance in the classroom. The first of these is the "Apprentice." These students are those who have already "appropriated" to some extent the identity of a literary scholar à la Bartholomae. Not only are their reading and critical skills relatively well-developed, but they overtly demonstrate an understanding of the value and relevance of studying the arts in general and fiction in particular. In short, they respect our discipline - and usually us by extension - and therefore willingly follow where we lead. Such students are often not content to learn about the fictions on the syllabus. They also often want to know details from the instructor's personal history; they come to office hours not for help but for fellowship. Although Apprentices have little or no trouble adopting the vocabulary of lectical analysis, by the same token the shift in language does not appreciably change the level of their engagement with the material, anymore than it would a "full-fledged" literary scholar. This does not mean that "Apprentices" do not benefit from performing lectical analyses, only that those benefits are not significantly different from those they would receive from any responsible literary instruction. Apprentices already have the knowledge, experience, and desire to strengthen their reading skills, and so they do. The only additional benefit they receive by adopting the vocabulary and

methodology (and occasionally the hairstyle) of lectical analysis is that it tends to put them on a more equal - at first unsteady - footing with the rest of the class, which in turn tends to slow down their domination of open discussions. If the instructor is not careful, literature courses can devolve into seminars with a few eager Apprentices and a score of somnambulant observers. Because it takes Apprentices a week or so to re-calibrate their critical lexicon, with a little effort the instructor can establish a more egalitarian pattern for classroom discussions before feelings of inadequacy and/or apathy infect their peers.¹⁵

The other category of student that benefits little from a neo-literary appreciation component in the classroom is the "Abstainer." For reasons of their own, Abstainers are not interested in putting forth any effort beyond that which will get them the grades they want or require. As any experienced teacher knows, the Abstainer is (unfortunately) not equivalent with the "Absentee"; they attend enough not to be dropped and they participate only when obligated. To acquire any new skill, however, demands greater motivation and effort than can be measured "objectively" via written or oral examination. Appearances can be deceiving, and Abstainers are often quite adept at maintaining the appearance of adequacy. As an instructor of adults, however, I unequivocally support an Abstainer's right to perform only adequately in one of my courses. As long as they do not promulgate their apathy (for instance, by dozing, chatting, or cheating during class), Abstainers are permitted to learn just as little in one of my classroom as they would in any literary course. Having an Abstainer or four in the classroom can even be a great boon because they become object lessons in the lower limits of acceptable classroom behavior. Abstainers who ritually abstain from doing homework, for instance, should be

¹⁵ Although analyzing an "Apprentice" text would profit little, for the reasons given, I offer a few examples of them in Appendix B; I do not provide examples of "Abstainer" reading-texts because I assume the readers of this dissertation will have plenty of these close at hand.

"corrected" publicly by any of the many traditional and legal means available. In a course, like mine, where oral participation is crucial, Abstainers provide the additional service of demonstrating how easy it is to satisfy the minimum requirements, as long as they are not allowed to limit their participation to "I don't know," "I didn't read it," or "ummm." Since Abstainers clearly identify themselves by the apathy oozing from every pore, the rest of the class sees that there is little liability to making an effort, even when one's performance is less than stellar. Moreover, a "strong" reader can turn even the most cursory reading-text into grist for the communal, lectical mill. For instance, last semester an inveterate Abstainer (and you can't tell these until the course is over; there is always hope) begrudgingly offered that he "got lost when Eliot started writing in different languages." Although his intention may have been merely to get me off his back, which he achieved, this rudimentary observation springboarded the class into a discussion of the aporetic structure of "The Waste Land." Throughout the discussion I repeatedly credited its generation to this particular Abstainer. Whether this pleased or galled him, I cannot say.

I exclude reading-texts by Abstainers and their doppelgangers the Apprentices, therefore, not because such students are unimportant but because learning to perform lectical analysis does not particularly help *them*. Other types of students and readers, however, do receive particular benefits from neo-appreciation pedagogy, benefits which redress certain conditions or beliefs which make "strong" reading difficult for them.

All of the reading-texts below were created according to the same assignment: to perform a lectical (self) analysis of Eliot's "The Waste Land" with a particular focus upon which "lectical values" they attributed or can imagine being attributed to the poem [see class handouts in Appendix A]. Since this assignment was given at the beginning of the last of three units, I had already lectured and applied all the major elements of lectical analysis, including its

heuristic the lectical triangle, in open class sessions. Although written reading-texts are different than spoken ones, I will try to demonstrate my general classroom method by indicating the kinds of oral responses I would make to their different categories of response. Falling back here upon a platonic compositional strategy is neither accidental nor casual. I have already discussed the affinity between neo-appreciation pedagogy and the Socratic method of classroom dialectics, so it is to some extent appropriate that I play Plato to my own Socrates. Although I am not particularly honey-tongued, I hope to thereby approximate the general sense if not the actuality of how I deploy lectical analysis in the classroom. Unlike the Platonic dialogues, however, my dramatizations below are not meant to be the last word on anything, neither are they meant to be comprehensive in scope. Leaning once again upon the rhetorical appeal to *praxis*, I trust my reader will be able to backfill any gaping holes I leave with his or her own classroom experiences.

The Good Student

The "Good Student" is distinguished from the Apprentice in that the former has not yet developed the reading or critical skills that make literary study relatively effortless and/or enjoyable. Good Students, however, generally have excellent study skills - often far superior to Apprentices - and a willingness to do the intellectual work asked of them. They come to class, do their homework, ask questions, and in general take responsibility for their education. The main difficulty Good Students have with literary study - and the humanities at large - is that critical "acumen" cannot be memorized from lecture notes; it must be developed over time through practice. Since "strong" reading skills can not be acquired overnight, even with extreme and focused effort, Good Students often feel frustrated in the literary classroom. They have no problem learning heuristics like the lectical triangle, for instance, but applying the terminology

flexibly - critically - eludes them at first. By their own report, this situation feels a bit unfair to them. Unless they are given the resources to "get" what is valuable about literary study, Good Students sometimes escape from their frustration by becoming Abstainers.

The main benefit of lectical analysis to Good Students is that it demonstrates to them that they already "get it," to some extent, even though they still feel that they do not. Armed with their class notes and handouts, they do their utmost to parrot the language and method of lectical analysis. Their attempts to do so are often barely veiled, text-immanent readings and/or barely coherent. Take the following reading-text, for instance:

The overall lectical values of "The Wasteland" can most prominently be seen as *intellectually stimulating* because the extreme form and diction evokes thought and emotion which forces the reader to look at the poem as a puzzle that must be pieced together to find the image that the poet intends to be understood. Also, the style of the poem is extremely *unique and virtuosic*, which does not compare to most standard poetic styles; this produces the originality of Eliot's style and portrays his contrasting thought patterns that place him outside of the taboo.

The first thing an experienced literary instructor will recognize about the reading-text above is its convoluted diction. When I teach rhetoric and composition courses, I call this style of speech "faux formal diction" and warn my students against it because it is the single most frequent cause of incoherence at the sentence level. Quite simply, such writers attempt to compensate for what they believe are their inadequate writing skills by using vocabulary and syntactical strategies they think are "formal" but with which they are unfamiliar and therefore clumsy. This honest misidentification of "formality" with "complexity" causes problems even when students understand

the concepts they are trying to communicate (a sentence like "drinking coffee can cause sleeplessness" becomes "the overindulgence of certain caffeinated beverages, statistically speaking most often a form of coffee product, has a negative correlation type of result in generating normal sleep cycles; also delta patterns, which deal with certain aspects of usual brain functioning in most subjects"). When students barely grasp the ideas they are trying to express, however, the use of "faux formal diction" can make their writing - or speech - truly daunting to understand. In the attempt to appropriate the concepts and dialect of scholarly analysis, they create awkwardly constructed nonsense, a fact which is not lost on them and tends to increase their anxiety.

This commonplace is only a problem if the instructor does not rise to the occasion or, alternatively, rebukes students for foundering in the unfamiliar waters of scholarly diction. Like those who believe that when they add an "o" to an English noun they are speaking Spanish, students create convoluted and incomprehensible sentences in the college classroom because that is what scholarly speech *sounds like* to them. "Good Students," in particular, will try to mimic the sound of lectical analysis before they grasp its sense because they want to follow directions, and even though they know they don't really "get it," they know that lectical analysis has something to do with speaking a certain way about literature. They fall back, therefore, on the jargon and speech patterns they read in the handouts and hear from my lips in the classroom.

However, most of their attempts to appropriate the language of lectical analysis, like the one quoted above, are not complete nonsense, they just appear to be so. The instructor's job, as I see it, is to sift through the sound and fury of such reading-texts in order to separate what was meant from what was said. In other words, their attempts at lectical analysis need to be submitted to an extemporaneous rhetorical analysis. If this is accomplished skillfully, nearly all student reading-texts can be used to reinforce the

fundamental tenets of lectical analysis and, more importantly, open up the fiction at hand to more angles of engagement by the class as a whole.

The reading-text above, for instance, clearly demonstrates both the utility and danger of using analytical heuristics like the lectical triangle. The phrases I italicized, "intellectually stimulating" and "unique and virtuosic," are drawn directly from the list of "Lectical Values" I handed out to my students, specifically values 2 and 7 [see Appendix A]. The Good Student who created this reading-text evidently made an honest attempt to complete the assignment by filtering her reading of "The Waste Land" through the unfamiliar tools provided her. The benefit of this strategy is that it lent a common vocabulary and an organizational plan to the attributions she (perhaps) made during her reading(s) of the poem. The specific claims she makes - that the poem is "intellectually stimulating" and "unique" - are highlighted by her use of the jargon of lectical analysis and are immediately followed by her evidence for those claims. Even though her claims and evidence are largely tautological, they indicate she understands that part of her job as a scholar is to link her claims/attributions to textual features that might have "caused" them. Throughout her journal entry, only part of which appears here, she attempts to prove that Eliot intended to represent the "spiritual and moral degeneration" of "the society he lived in" by linking variations on that theme to specific evidence from the poem. In other words, she expressed her text-immanent, apparently Materialist, understanding of the poem according to the evidentiary rules of classic, expository prose. This is a boon to those students who have not yet learned how to apply those rules when talking about literature.

My first response to her reading-text, therefore, would be to praise her strategy of focusing upon specific claims/attributions coupled to specific textual features. By doing so I would underline for her - and the rest of the class - that her reading-text completely satisfied the assignment. After all, I only require

that students attempt lectical analysis; I don't require that their reading-texts indicate an acute understanding of their particular reading-act or the concepts surrounding lectical analysis as a whole. This student clearly tried, and that effort itself would be praiseworthy, even if she hadn't simultaneously demonstrated how traditional interpretive claims are substantiated.

The fact remains, however, that her reading-text is very difficult to understand, and moreover that by all evidence it is warranted by a text-immanent understanding of fictional meaning. My next response, therefore, would be to ask her to clarify those highlighted claims by using the terminology of lectical analysis. I might ask her, "are you saying that the 'extreme form and diction' of the poem constituted a lectical aporia for you which you resolved by creating a character, named 'Eliot,' who speaks to you from and about a fictional world? That is, did you perform a primarily Materialist reading-act?"

Paraphrasing a student's reading-text, particularly one created by a Good Student, back to them in the terminology of lectical analysis is often met with a jaw drop. At first they have difficulty recognizing their own statements in the relatively unfamiliar vocabulary, but once they do, they tend to grasp what works - and what doesn't - about their reading-text. If the instructor has accurately analyzed the reading-text, and with a few well-chosen, directive questions, the Good Student usually is able to understand "what the teacher wants" from her, and that to a large extent she has already discharged that duty. This usually is a great relief to Good Students, which only encourages their continued efforts. Even if they are not yet willing to drop their pretense of text-immanence, such students at least learn how I want them to qualify their expressions of that pretense.

One of the inherent dangers of employing any analytical heuristic is that the vehicle of application can overwhelm the analytical goal. There is a very good chance, for instance, that this Good Student's use of my list of "Lectical

Values" dictated a reading-text that misrepresents her initial reading-act. That is, it is almost certain that to some extent the heuristic determined what the poem became for her, or at least determined what she wrote down in her journal. In classroom discussion, I try to mitigate this danger by gently probing attributions that do not seem to fit with the rest of the reading-text or seem to be patently artificial. I might ask the student above, for instance, whether she really found "The Waste Land" to be "intellectually stimulating" or did she mean by that attribution that she felt confused. Even if she is unable to admit that her overwhelming, initial response to the poem was confusion (as I suspect from both the sense and sound of her reading-text), someone else in the class very likely may. As I will point out below, there is almost always a "Naysayer" in the classroom who is willing to place his or her frustration into the public record.

Once they understand their own responses are the "primary" material of lectical analysis, Good Students generally feel less anxious about giving the teacher what he or she wants. Take for example the reading-text of another Good Student:

The wasteland has a lectical aporia of death/fertility. This makes the poem highly ambiguous because it makes the reader stop and try to sort out what Eliot is really trying to say. A textual aporia is Eliot's structure. The five sections are all different in meaning and structure, but they are all contained in one poem.

Although it reads somewhat like a telegram, this reading-text demonstrates a fundamental understanding of the analytical objects of lectical analysis. Her journal entry is organized around a particular lectical aporia recalled from her reading-act: a perceived conflict between two "themes," death and fertility. She goes on to describe how this lectical aporia affected her reading-act:

I read it by breaking the five parts up by themselves. I acted as if each part was a different story. It didn't help much in tying

everything together but it did help me understand everything separately.

Although she does not use the terminology, what this student describes is a classic dialogic motif; that is, she used primarily Subjectivist coherence strategies to yoke together a combination of Materialist (the "stories") and Idealist (the "themes") attributions. As with the first example, in class discussion I would immediately respond to this reading-text by translating it into the terminology of lectical analysis. I also would ask her to further discuss what it feels like to "understand" textual features separately while simultaneously being aware that they do not tie together. The last lines of her reading-text seem to address this feeling: "Personally, I found "The Wasteland" really confusing at first but after reading it several times, it turned into a work of art." To some extent, this statement sounds like traditional Good Student rhetoric, a knee-jerk encomium to the fiction at hand because she thinks that is what is expected. I must say, I doubt that Good Students really enjoy "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" or "The Waste Land" as often as they claim to. This particular student, however, wrote this reading-text after repeated, apparently frank, conversations with me regarding how "bad" she was at English and how little she enjoyed reading literature. In other words, we had talked enough about my goals for the class that I believe she knew flattering Eliot was going to get her nowhere with me. She also knew, however, that humoring me by trying to use the analytical concepts I had shown her was all I wanted. From my history with her, my guess is that those final lines are less flattery than an attempt to articulate the performative value she assessed to her "death/fertility" dialogic motif. The only way to know, of course, would be to ask her. The beauty of performing lectical analyses in open class discussions is that even if the author of a reading-text runs out of responses to her own response to a fiction that reading-text is available to further analysis by the rest of us in the room. In this

way, an extended exploration of a variety of the lectical strategies invited by a fiction can grow out of one or two fertile reading-texts.

The principal benefit of neo-appreciation pedagogy to the Good Student, then, is that it encourages them to use their significant study skills more honestly and with less anxiety. Doing so does not automatically make them better literary scholars (or scholarly writers, as these excerpts attest), but it at least lays a groundwork upon which they and their instructor can build. I have put so much energy into describing how I might respond to the needs of Good Students because to some extent the methods I use with them are identical to the ones I use with all types of students. I paraphrase their responses into the vocabulary of lectical analysis; I encourage them to explore the implications of their reading-texts; I correct evident misconceptions they have. One student last semester, for instance, was convinced T. S. Eliot was a woman. Although I felt obliged to contradict him, I also asked him to consider which textual features led him to attribute a feminine identity to his author/character "Thomasina." Obviously, the more comfortable students are being honest about their lectical challenges and their cultural ignorance, the easier it is for an instructor to remove those obstacles.

The desire to follow directions, of course, is not unique to Good Students, or rather there are sub-categories of Good Student behavior that are distinguishable. Although each student has a unique set of challenges to overcome in the literary classroom, I want to continue with my straw-man fallacy a bit further to demonstrate how neo-appreciation pedagogy helps address certain common misconceptions students have about fiction and literary study, whether they are "Good" or not.

The Book Reporter

This category of student is under the misconception that his or her job in the literary classroom is to paraphrase the world they observe "in" a fiction. As pointed out above, the Materialist pretense of a fictional reality seems to be the most fundamental and deeply entrenched lectical strategy for most readers. Not only is this strategy the first one we learn as children, to some extent all other lectical strategies require that we pretend words at least potentially refer to "things" we cannot see and may not be "real." The Book Reporter, however, is particularly devoted to that early lectical training, training that was further reinforced by years of writing book reports in elementary school language arts classes. Such readers feel fairly comfortable with a fiction as long as its textual pattern strongly invites Materialist pretense *and* they have sufficient cultural knowledge to construct a "realistic" fictional world in response to it. Remove one of these ingredients, however, and they feel lost or cheated. Ask them to read "Paradise Lost," for instance, and they complain they "don't know what's happening."

Traditional literary heritage curriculum can help Book Reporters reduce their cultural ignorance to some extent. After all, Milton carefully constructed his epic to be understood, at least partially, as a coherent account of certain events; armed with a beefy vocabulary list and a good deal of information about periodic sentences, epic similes, etc, the Book Reporter can generally create a fairly accurate plot summary. However, if the only way they value fiction is according to how "realistic" it seems to them (that is, how easily and transparently they can maintain Materialist pretense), Book Reporters still will not see why "Paradise Lost" is given such weight in the canon. The action is constantly being interrupted, the transitions are complex, the dialogue tags are confusing, and what is it with those lists of names? I mean, he introduces characters and then they don't do anything but make speeches. It's boring.

Although I am sure some enterprising Hollywood producer could pare down Milton's epic into a great summer blockbuster (Brad Pitt as Adam? Deniro as Satan?), it has been valued highly in the past for reasons other than it tells an exciting story. Without going into details, "Paradise Lost" is considered the single best epic poem in English not just because it has an interesting plot (although the centrality of Christianity in Western culture does give it an epic *gravitas*), but because of the way it is written. In other words, to value "Paradise Lost" very highly, one has to use other indices of value than it is "realistic" or it provides an "alternative reality," so readers who assess fiction primarily according to those values think it is abysmally tedious. From my experience, trying to convince students that a fiction is not boring after they have already been bored by it is very difficult. Neo-appreciation pedagogy, however, does not attempt to contradict and/or overrule student reading-acts, even when they are based upon lectical habits that are strongly resisted by the fiction at hand. Instead, it attempts to show students how the strategies they used affected the way they value a particular fiction. Concurrently, lectical analysis can be used to introduce them to other, perhaps more effective, lectical strategies that other readers have used in the past.

Like Good Students, Book Reporters often can use the language of lectical analysis before they really understand what they are supposed to be analyzing. However, once they have learned the terminology of lectical analysis, and the analytical framework articulated by the lectical triangle, the instructor has the tools to focus the Book Reporter's attention upon his or her favorite misconceptions about literary reading. The most common and glaring of these is that Book Reporters tend to recognize little difference between their use of the Materialist and Idealist lectical modes. Even though their reading-texts are often organized around Idealist themes and analogical motifs, Book Reporters seem to consistently use those attributions primarily to clarify plot features.

Since they believe the main purpose of fiction is to tell stories, they use their Idealist gestures as clues to fill in narrative gaps. The perspective shift from being an observer of a world to translator/interpreter of an idea about "the" world is transparent to them, and so textual patterns which resist the efficient clarification of fictional events often seem like digressions or "wordiness." Quite simply, they feel like the author is wasting their time and should get back to the serious, fictional work of communicating the "facts" of the plot.

This unconscious blending of Materialist and Idealist gestures is nearly always made evident in their reading-texts, and therefore can subsequently be pointed out to Book Reporters. One of my students last year, for instance, wrote the following account of her reading of "The Waste Land":

There are several aporias in "The Waste Land." A major one that I struggled with was in the textual patterns. Once I started reading, I assumed that, at least, the five titled sections would be similar in subject within themselves but that was not the case. The story/plot was not consistent. Each stanza brought a new "mini-story" into play.

My student follows this opening complaint with a detailed and carefully documented list of the "aporias" that had made the "story/plot" so "inconsistent" for her: shifts in dialogue and language, repeated words, graphic breaks, and "nonsense" phrases are identified as "textual aporias" which "made it hard to focus on the story as a whole and also the main idea being tied together/expressed in so many different schemes." However, her list of "textual aporias" also includes a number of "broken motifs," the documentation of which takes up most of her journal entry. She identifies two main motifs: "Death..., with the various mentioning of bones" and "fertility/life, which may be connected to the repetition of water." Even though these "textual aporias" made it "hard to focus on the story," my student reports by the end of her

reading-text she was able to piece together "an image of a real wasteland" out of the poorly organized "story/plot" Eliot had offered her. Like the Good Student above, she "found that the best way to sort ["The Waste Land"] out was to take it one stanza at a time, since each stanza was somewhat more coherent by itself."

As with any student reading-text, I would begin to respond to this Book Reporter by pointing out how her reading-text demonstrates, both intentionally and otherwise, the fundamental concepts of lectical analysis. Clearly, to some extent she understands that her reading-act is supposed to be the analytical object of her reading-text. In other words, she knows she is supposed to tell us what happened when she tried to read the poem. At times, her analysis is quite detailed and insightful. For instance, she divulges one of her central assumptions about fiction, one that deeply affected her reading-act when she refused to revise it: "I assumed that, at least, the five titled sections would be similar in subject." By describing the violation of that expectation as an aporia, my student puts her finger on one of the most important features of Eliot's textual pattern: it resists the passive transmission of a single, coherent "story/plot." By naming her thwarted expectation, my student - perhaps unwittingly - dropped her pretense of text-immanence, if only for a moment. By first praising the acuity of her analysis and simultaneously tracking the probable affects her strategies - i.e. the lectical difficulties caused by continuing to pursue a clear "story/plot" - the class gets a detailed glimpse of the consequences of "book reporting" in a way that does not indict Materialist strategies in general or the Book Reporter in particular.

I would also address, however, the unconscious conflation of Materialist and Idealist strategies that are typical of Book Reporters and evident in the above reading-text. Once again, the instructor can accomplish this by performing an extemporaneous strong reading of the reading-text followed by

directive paraphrases and leading questions. The Book Reporter above, for instance, organizes the subjugation of her Idealist to her Materialist gestures around a misuse of the term "textual aporia." This mistake is understandably common; my distinction between textual and lectical aporias is admittedly a bit soft, and to some extent theoretically equivocal. I teach students these two categories of aporia, however, to mark two distinct stages in the practice of lectical analysis: 1. The documentation of a particular reading-act 2. The speculation about which particular textual features stimulated that reading-act. The fact that my student identifies the repetition of certain words ("bones" and "water") in "The Waste Land" and her creation of two analogical motifs (the "death" and "fertility/life" motifs) as both being "textual aporias" marks the point where she subjugates her Idealist strategies to her Materialist ones. "Bones" are transparently symbols of death to her, therefore she perceives them as being objectively "in" the text. Treating them as "textual aporias" (and so denying responsibility for them) she simultaneously blames the incoherence of the "plot/story" of the poem on these two motifs *and* uses them to unify the "mini-stories" that are "scattered throughout the work." In other words, she elides what she did to the poem - create analogical motifs in response to lectical aporias - by equating portions of her aesthetic object (her "death" and "fertility/life" motifs) with the textual patterns that likely stimulated them (repetitions of the words "bones" and "water").

Guiding Book Reporters toward a clearer understanding of how their reading-texts apparently misrepresent their reading-acts is easier than it sounds from the foregoing. I might, for instance, ask my well-meaning Book Reporter how she decided the repetition of the word "bones" constituted a motif. If, like many students, she got the idea from the editors of the anthology or from Eliot's footnotes, it is no wonder she perceived those words as a theme, an organizing symbolic whole, that is "in" the text. Whether the symbolic

attribution came from some such "scholarly" source or was drawn from her pre-understanding of the world, with a little prodding the Book Reporter should be able to see that it did not come from the poem but in response to it.

Distinguishing between Eliot's pattern of repetition and my student's analogical motif could also be performed by asking other students what they did with that same pattern. This last semester, for instance, I recall a number of students reporting themes of "damnation" versus "everlasting life," and "light" versus "dark" in response to the same repetitions of "bones" and "water." One does not have to valorize one attribution over the other to demonstrate that the different reading-texts created by students in response to the same textual pattern are products of different lectical strategies and resources, *not* forgone conclusions passively absorbed from the poem. On the other hand, the similarity of their responses highlights how textual patterns can guide the lectical choices of very different readers without absolutely determining what those responses will be.

Once I had prised apart those textual patterns that are undeniably in "The Waste Land" and those patterns of response that were crucial to her reading-act, I might ask my Book Reporter to reconsider how much of her understanding of the poem was Materialist and how much was Idealist. Doing so would highlight that the bulk of her reading-text was devoted to discussing the "ideas" and "symbols" that were, from her estimation, so poorly represented as a plot. Trying to make a plot coherent with an analogical motif is kind of like driving a nail with a greasy pipe wrench; it can be done, but there's probably going to be a lot of slippage. With a little guidance, Book Reporters tend to see that they are using perfectly valid lectical tools to do the wrong job, and if they do not, one of their peers is usually willing to see it for her. It is a small step from that discussion to a consideration of how the poem resists simple Materialist coherence. Once again, whatever the student has already made of a fiction

becomes the springboard for an exploration of what can be made of it. As is evident by the reading-texts above, the process of analyzing student responses to a fiction generally reproduces its traditional interpretations. In this way, the transmission of cultural heritage is accomplished by and appears in the classroom as a product of their own analyses. To whatever extent the canonical readings of a fiction can be produced by rather than imposed upon students, the more often they feel like they "get it," and therefore the more willing they are to be forthcoming about their responses to those fictions that they often believe are culturally irrelevant to them.

A second characteristic of Book Reporters is that they tend to process their (largely unconscious) Subjectivist lectical gestures purely as problems, and generally as evidence that the fiction at hand is either flawed or beyond comprehension. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, when a student reports that a fiction "doesn't mean anything," what he or she is really saying is that it means too much; it is difficult to cohere a single, clear plot line from a fiction like "The Waste Land," so Book Reporters experience their incipient Subjectivist reading-acts as failures. This is because Subjectivist strategies are defined by an acceptance of semantic plurality. A Subjectivist attribution of any kind requires the reader to tolerate ambiguity, and moreover a willingness to perpetuate the reading-act. Since Book Reporters are under the general misconception that their sole lectical duty - and source of potential pleasure - is to reproduce a coherent fictional world as unambiguously and efficiently as possible, they generally do not realize the value of Subjectivist "contemplation" or those fictions that invite such lectical responses.

One solution to this ubiquitous problem, particularly at the beginning of the course, is to remind students how often they use the Subjectivist mode in situations other than reading fiction. Popular song lyrics, television ads, puzzles, games, even their human interactions can be mined for examples of how they

not only entertain ambiguity but often enjoy it. Once students have become at least nominally familiar with the methods of lectical analysis, however, there are other ways to get them to understand if not embrace the value of Subjectivist reading strategies. The Book Reporter above, for instance, detailed the various aporias that interrupted her reading-act, aporias which she struggled to overcome because they "made it hard to focus on the story as a whole." She did a great job documenting the process of a Subjectivist reading-act minus the acceptance needed to realize its potential benefits. Other than documenting her use of analogical motifs to "sort out" the disorganized "mini-stories" of individual stanzas into "an image of a real wasteland," she modeled the basic reading strategies necessary to perform a Subjectivist reading-act:

This was not a piece of poetry that one could just sit down and read as well as understand in one sitting. It had to be studied and read multiple times. T. S. Eliot did not come out and say his ideas, his style makes the reader look for meaning.

Besides reconfirming reading strategies any instructor prays his students will practice, this reading-text underlines that rumination and re-reading are not just good strategies for poetry in general but are *necessary* strategies to get anything coherent, particularly a plot, from "The Waste Land." That many students find this necessity distasteful and an imposition on their free time goes without saying, no matter how tactful this particular Book Reporter is about her resistance to the demands of the poem. This sense of being forced to do strenuous lectical work, and its attendant feelings of resentment, is not accidental; it is the natural consequence of refusing to accept an invitation to read in the Subjectivist mode. By contrast, spontaneously generating a plurality of possible attributions in response to a patently aporetic textual pattern takes very little effort and can be accomplished in a single reading. In other words, readers who feel they have to find "the" meaning of "The Waste Land" are

punished for not understanding its textual pattern gives them the freedom to generate many meanings for the poem and that freedom is restricted only by their own perceptions of plausibility. The difference between deploring a fiction's lack of clarity and enjoying a Subjectivist reading of it is a difference in lectical attitude, a shift from struggling with aporias to playing with them.

There are many curatives for this misunderstanding of lectical convention, and they all entail loosening the reader's death grip on monosemic closure. This can be done analytically or dramatically. I might, for instance, point out to the Book Reporter above that although her account of her "death" versus "fertility/life" is very thorough, it is not comprehensive, and subsequently invite her to play with those textual patterns off the top of her head. With a little encouragement, you can pretty quickly get bones juggling and water splashing all over the classroom. This is not to say I teach my students that reading poetry is mere free-association; attributions in the Subjectivist lectical mode are not exempt from the lectical convention of coherence. Subjectivist coherence, however, is achieved by shifting at least some of one's focus away from the textual pattern - and the pretense of text-immanence - onto the experience of consuming that pattern. Until they get a taste of the pleasure of consciously playing with fictions, students will not understand Subjectivist, performative value. Any number of classroom/parlor games can help students become more comfortable exercising the wide latitude they are given by convention while reading patently aporetic fictions like "The Waste Land." Such dramatizations, however, should concurrently demonstrate that playing with ambiguity is not completely arbitrary; during an actual reading-act, interpretive license is governed by the reader's sense of plausibility and his or her willingness to put forth effort. Just as I don't believe that the only correct way to enjoy oneself is by playing Botticelli or Scrabble, I make sure my students understand there is nothing inherently shameful about not enjoying lectical play.

Another strategy Book Reporters commonly use to resolve patently aporetic textual patterns is to approach them as "realistic" representations of an author/character's mind. Everybody knows thoughts are fragmentary, disjointed, and even crazy at times. In fact, a favorite attribution of many Book Reporters is that the author/character is insane, and therefore the very old man who *appears* to have a set of wings (according to the narration) is really just a homeless bum. Instructors who have assigned fictions that even loosely belong to the genre of "magical realism" have experience with this phenomena. A more subtle variant of this Materialist strategy was offered by a Book Reporter last semester regarding "The Waste Land." That student created an elaborate reading-text that described the poem as the wandering thoughts of a man contemplating suicide on the banks of the Thames. Since this variety of Book Reporting mobilizes some of the same (overly restrictive) beliefs, and therefore calls for similar pedagogical responses, I will address it in the next category of student, the Authorist.

The Authorist

The "intentional fallacy" has been much maligned over the last century, although as best as I can tell this ubiquitous lectical strategy shows no sign of fading away. The reading-texts of both undergraduates and full professors are often full of the pretense that they have read the thoughts of another person rather than a fiction. Authorists speak like they can read the minds of people they have never met, and in some cases do not exist. When I worked in psychiatric wards years ago, such claims would get a patient additional and stronger meds. Pretending to know the intentions of the author has largely been rejected from serious literary criticism, but that does not mean doing so is an invalid way to consume fiction. Fictional closure requires pretense of some kind; to tell students - or anyone - that they should not pretend they are

listening to a person speak when they are "really" reading a book is both misleading and a waste of time. Fictions invite Authorist readings; some all but insist that the author/narrator be regarded as "real" person. Should one ignore Walt Whitman's declaration of his name and address? Am I not allowed to imagine Samuel Clemens' posture at the helm while he pursues his Life on the Mississippi? Moreover, many of the cognitive processes required to assess fiction are borrowed from our evaluative practices in real life. Booth is only one of many theorists who have founded their work on the common analogy between reading fiction and meeting people. This analogy is fertile not because it is the only way we read fictions but because it is one of the most familiar. It is not surprising, then, that you can tell students not to be Authorists till you are blue in the face, but they will keep doing it when you are not looking. The strategy is simply too useful and pleasurable. "Meeting" exciting people and "hearing" about their lives is all too often the main benefit of reading fiction for confirmed Authorists, therefore they are unlikely to give it up.

However, once a reader puts down a fiction to create a reading-text, whether as an assigned journal entry or an article for a scholarly journal, he or she needs to drop the pretense used in that reading-act long enough to analyze its costs and benefits. Authorists often have difficulty recognizing that they have pretended anything at all. Since an actual person wrote the fiction, Authorists believe the author/narrator characters they imagine are more real than other kinds of characters, even though both are created using the same Materialist strategies. One doesn't have to turn to linguistic philosophy to demonstrate the fallaciousness of this belief because Authorists are seldom hampered by their ignorance of the author's actual biography. I have heard discourses on T. S. Eliot's struggle as a suffragette, Hemingway's trauma from the American Civil War, and how Willa Cather's experience as a mother and wife informed her fiction. As pointed out above, it can be difficult not to snort in

disbelief at the depth of such cultural ignorance, but such (mis)readings almost always are justifiable to some extent. Authorists make up stuff about their author-characters, but they do so according to how the fictions are written. By inviting them to trace their attributions to the textual feature that instigated them, one can usually help an Authorist see how much he or she has imagined the words of a fiction into a pretend person. Merely telling them that Eliot was male or that Cather never married only embarrasses them and discourages further open participation. Furthermore, merely correcting their historical data (which, of course, *should* be done) does not familiarize them with other, occasionally more productive, lectical possibilities.

Exposure to the jargon and practice of lectical analysis does more for Authorists than just point out the error in their ways of reading. By learning to identify their author-characters as Materialist images, or more precisely as episodic motifs constructed from series of images, Authorists are forced to explore how much or little those items in their aesthetic object are passive "observations" of the words of the fiction at hand. Usually, such explorations reveal that the reader has turned relatively few words into an attribution of personhood more elaborated than is strictly justifiable by the textual cues.¹⁶ As with all lectical analyses, an exploration of an Authorist's reading-text should assess what was gained or lost by the lectical strategies used rather than whether or not those strategies should have been used in the first place.

There are two main benefits of Authorist readings, both of which harbor potential lectical pitfalls. First, if an author-character is created with sufficient pretension, the reader will still feel like they "know" their author-character even after all other lectical pretense is dropped, and therefore the pretend

¹⁶ There are exceptions, of course; cultural ignorance can make a reader blind to textual "cues" that apparently invite attributions relevant to an author-character. Students, for instance, sometimes do not identify Phillis Wheatley's lines "'Twas not long since I left my native shore / The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom," as an invitation to create an African author-character.

relationship is somewhat easier to examine after the fact. In the last chapter, for instance, I discussed the author-character "Zora" that I have created from the biographical information I know about Zora Neale Hurston and my readings of her fictions. My sense of personal attachment and gratitude to "Zora" continues as I write this line, although it is not as strong as when I was last reading Their Eyes Were Watching God. By contrast, I *feel* little or nothing about Hurston's character "Janie" at this moment, and not because I did not "like" the character while I was reading or presently. I think "Janie" is a powerfully drawn, highly engaging character: one of my favorites in 20th century American literature. However, even when I was under the deepest Materialist pretense, perhaps during the hurricane passage, Janie never spoke *to me*; all of her words and actions were directed toward the other characters in the novel. My author-character "Zora," however, has "personally" given me many hours of pleasure and contemplation (and not incidentally a damn handy demonstrative example). Moreover, my guess is that my feelings for "Zora" are more real to me than what I feel for "Janie" precisely because I had less information to work with as I created "Zora." Having less to go on, I had to project more of my own beliefs and desires about novelists, women, African Americans, Florida, racism, 20th century history, and just people in general into my imaginary playmate "Zora" than I did into the character Hurston created. This pretense of "personal" give and take between an Authorist and his or her author-character often continues to be productive of meaning after the fiction has been closed and put back up on the shelf. If an Authorist is subsequently motivated - or forced - to create a reading-text, this current, ongoing pretense is easier to examine than a past reading-act, quite simply because I have greater access to what I am thinking right now than what I was thinking ten minutes, days, or years ago.

One main benefit of Authorist reading, then, is that it keeps some pretense of emotional engagement alive, a pretense which can motivate and

generate material for reading-texts about the fiction under consideration. On the other hand, an Authorist who does not recognize that an author-character is a product of make-believe does not have (self-)analytical access to the beliefs and biases that give the author-character its "realistic" quality. Readers who have adopted the role of disciple, secret admirer, judge, best friend, therapist, etc. in relation to their author-characters may be reluctant to release those roles to adopt the less appealing and viscerally engaging role of lectical analyst. Asking them to follow the process of their pretense generally makes Authorists less able, if not less willing, to ignore that pretense.

Another benefit of Authorist reading is that it is always invited by the text on some level. Even the words "by Anonymous" encourage the reader to imagine what kind of person could have created the fiction in hand. Book marketers often manipulate this phenomenon even when authors do not. The novel I am currently reading, Prague by Arthur Phillips, tells me on the jacket that the author "was educated at Harvard. He has been a child actor, a jazz musician, a speechwriter, a dismally failed entrepreneur, and a five-time *Jeopardy!* Champion." In a grainy, black and white photo above this mini-narrative, an attractive young man in jeans, white t-shirt, and a sport coat leans against the stone railing of an old bridge, perhaps Paris. He looks precisely disheveled, like Calvin Klein's much younger, better-looking brother. Readers like myself who use dust covers as bookmarks will conclude virtually every reading-act with a flash of the enigmatic gaze of this intriguing author-character. I am not forced to think about Arthur Phillips while I read his very well written first novel, but certainly I am invited to, so much so that excluding him (as an author-character) from my reading requires an exertion of critical detachment. Publishers, of course, are not the only ones who invite readers to be Authorists; it happens every day in the literary classroom. We tell our students stories about the mysterious Bill Shakespeare, blind Milton, and the proto-hippies

Shelley, Thoreau, and Whitman in the attempt - whether conscious or not - to share our regard for such author-characters.

Since the strategy is always available, Authorists often fall back on the pretense of an author-character while responding to textual patterns that might elude them otherwise. I demonstrated this phenomenon in an earlier chapter with a student reading-text about Williams' "The Red Wheel Barrow." In that reading-text, my student made the poem lectically coherent by treating it as an image of speech; that is, he pretended the words of the poem were uttered by a fictional person, and he completed his lectical duty by using those words as clues to the speaker's personality and life. Although that reader did not identify the "speaker" as Williams, the poet, many Authorists do, especially while reading poetry with abstract or spare narrative structure. Attributing an image of speech to a "speaker" rather than an author-character does constitute a different lectical move; the common pedagogical strategy of reminding students that speakers are created by - not equivalent to - their authors can in fact make students more aware of their Authorist tendencies, and in the process steer them away from specious biographical attributions. Doing so, however, doesn't broaden their lectical resources; it merely reduces the chance they will embarrass themselves with a biographically inaccurate author-character, like claiming Williams must have been an unsuccessful farmer. Shifting from an author-character to a "speaker" does not broaden a reader's lectical repertoire because "listening" to the speech of either is made possible by the same basic Materialist pretense. Although some textual patterns respond very well to this strategy - those with traditional narrative cues - some do not. Emerson's poem "Each and All," for instance, is easy to cohere as an account of events narrated either by a nameless speaker or an author-character "Ralph"; actions and events are related in first person, concrete details of the fictional world are offered, transitions are provided (e.g. "When I returned home..."). Even "The Red

Wheelbarrow" does not actively resist the attribution of an image of speech, except in the dearth of descriptive cues it includes.

"The Waste Land," however, is overtly constructed to interrupt Authorist and like-minded Materialist strategies. It, too, uses first person narrative cues and descriptive details, but they often conflict from one passage to another. As the reading-texts above attest, no sooner does a reader get used to "listening" to an Austrian countess than a new voice, perhaps male, perhaps not, interrupts the plot/speech without any transitional cues. Such aporias can be highlighted in the classroom as invitations to do *something* else with the poem than continue to "observe" a speech passively. Authorists who have been trained to perform lectical analysis (and are armed with their handy lectical triangle heuristic) can be encouraged to explore whether a particular textual pattern responds better to one or a combination of the other lectical modes. What if, I might ask them, the "Austrian Countess" is not read as a fictional person but as an idea? What, in other words, might Austrian "countessness" symbolize, and how might that bring other information to bear upon the apparent lectical aporias that confront them? Alternatively, what does the fact that the textual pattern of "The Waste Land" makes Materialist coherence difficult mean? That is (using their Authorist habits against them), what does Eliot "say" to you by thwarting your favorite reading strategy, and how did that affect your reading-act? You feel gyped? You don't like him?

Such prodding can sometimes show Authorists specific lectical tools they might have used to traverse specific lectical aporias, tools which certainly will broaden their experience of a poem, and perhaps even make reading it, or a similar textual pattern, that much easier. In effect, I offer the lectical triangle as a procedural flow chart: "Did imagining an author-character work? Not very well? Okay, then, how about adopting the Subjectivist perspective a little. Ponder the possibilities, grasshopper."

A third benefit of Authorist reading is that it often instigates "historical" understandings of a fiction. Authorists often use whatever cultural, social, or political data they already know about relevant eras (or what they learn from course materials) to reach their goal of crafting a coherent author-character, which in turn is used to cohere the reading-act as a whole. Take, for instance, the following reading-text:

Considering Eliot just lived through WWI and had lived his life on both sides of the Atlantic, his view would be very broad. The land had been devastated, world economies shattered, thousands dead, isolationism abroad, and the specter of the next war ahead. Inherently, the title reflects this, as well as the imagery in the entire poem. So Eliot is using his poem as a mirror image of his world, searching for his own answers.

Although I have not checked, I am fairly certain that the above paraphrases (or rankly plagiarizes) the commentary of some other historicist. Since it is a journal entry, however, phrases like "isolationism abroad, and the specter of the next war ahead," which are almost certainly "borrowed" directly from some other source (the internet? Cliff?), do not mark this student as a cheater. Students are usually encouraged and sometimes required to learn stock historicist interpretations of canonical fictions, so the Authorist above merely did what he thought was expected of him. My son, for example, is a high school sophomore, and on his English final last year he was required to match certain historical events to the fictions they had read in class. The graphic exercise of drawing a line from "The French Revolution" to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" reinforces for students like my son that the two belong together; when you think of one, you should think about the other. This kind of interdisciplinary training is the meat and potatoes of cultural transmission in the humanities at large, and therefore is a pedagogical practice appropriate to the literary

classroom. Students *should* learn how to regurgitate the historical "facts" traditionally associated with a fiction because such cultural data is likely to show up on standardized tests. It is part of our job to teach canonical, cultural data to students, if for no other reason than to offer them objective proof - other than their transcripts - that they sat through a college-level course in the humanities. In that context, the Authorist's comments above about "The Waste Land" are a pretty good repetition of traditional historicist readings of the poem, and therefore demonstrate he has brought something back from his sojourn into the world of literary scholarship. Been there, done that, got the class notes.

However, if the only souvenir a student takes from a collegiate, literature course is the (usually reductive) "historical context" traditionally associated with it, then we have failed them to some extent. The transmission of cultural "facts" in the humanities is justifiable, it seems to me, mostly because such data is useful for performing certain types of cultural analysis. Being able to draw a line from "The Waste Land" to "WWI" might get you a point on the GRE literary supplemental test, but it will not appreciably change the way you understand the poem, the period, or fiction as a whole. Furthermore, claiming that "The Waste Land" *is* a reflection of specific socio-cultural events in the past most often distorts the actual lectical value attributed to the poem, both by literary scholars over the last century and by students currently enrolled in our courses. Certainly, one way to appreciate "The Waste Land" is to use it as an historical account of common - or at least Eliot's - emotional reactions to the period in which it was written, but that it is not why it is considered such a great work of art. The Encyclopedia Britannica does a much better job of articulating such material. Moreover, Eliot's opinions and feelings are important historically only because his poetry has been widely valued in the past; the most detestable doggerel from Woodrow Wilson would have more historical value. In short, "The

"Waste Land" is and has been valued not as historiography - except, perhaps, by Eliot biographers - but as a cultural artifact.

To illuminate these limitations of Authorist reading, students need to examine how their pretense of channeling an author's thoughts both limits and misrepresents what they have done during their reading-acts. The Authorist above, for instance, ignores his lectical mediations by projecting them upon his author-character Eliot; it is he, not Eliot, who treats the poem as a "mirror" of Eliot's world. It is he, not Eliot, who believes the title and "the imagery of the entire poem" reflects post-war society. This is not hairsplitting. In this case, the object of Authorist pretense is Eliot's mind; the object of a lectical analysis of that pretense would be the presumptions, guesses, beliefs, and biases this particular reader used to create lectical coherence. What is at stake in distinguishing between these two actions is the student being able to distinguish between what Eliot is responsible for - the poem - and what was created during his reading-act - a specific aesthetic object. In other words, this Authorist has lost track of how he chose to link certain ideas about the world to certain textual features, and subsequently attributed them to an author-character, or in the terms of the lectical triangle, how he disguised an Idealist gesture within a Materialist one.

Before questioning this particular Authorist about his sublimated Idealist attributions, however, I would try to help him unpack how much of his reading-text represents his reading of "The Waste Land" and how much is the product of reading other texts, like editorial headnotes, encyclopedia articles, etc. Not that it is wrong for students to use such materials. I often assign or provide information about the traditional "cultural context" of assigned fictions when I think it is useful or needed. When I am pursuing lectical analysis rather than direct cultural transmission, however, I want students to recognize how much or little such information *really* affected their reading-acts. Without asking, there is

no way to tell from the reading-text above whether it accurately represents anything that happened while my student read the poem. In fact, it is quite possible that he did not read the poem at all, but created a faux-reading text out of its critical heritage in order to complete the assignment. So I would ask him: "When you were reading the poem, did you actually think about WWI and the social turmoil that followed?" or "How many of these ideas came from the headnote?" or "Do you like history?" Since using the information and ideas of others is a perfectly valid way to consume fiction, such questions are not designed to "catch" students but to get them to explore their attributions more carefully, clearly, and comprehensively. Anything said in response to such questions, therefore, furthers my classroom agenda except, of course, further evasions of lectical responsibility. Even if the reading-text above turned out to be a smoke screen to cover the fact that the student had not read the poem (and this would be almost immediately evident), his reading-text would become an object lesson in how coherent and traditionally valid even a bogus Authorist reading can sound. Instead of castigating the faux-Authorist, therefore, I would use his reading-text as an example of a traditionally effective way of writing adequate responses to assigned literature, with the exception that it is too vague because he neglected to read the poem itself. I would also, of course, privately give him an extra assignment to replace his faked reading-text.

Most "historical" Authorists, however, have actually read the fiction under consideration and have merely lost touch with their reading-acts or have misunderstood what the object of lectical analysis is. With a little directive questioning, therefore, Authorists usually can disentangle the words of the fiction before them from the ideas they attributed to an author-character, whether or not those ideas came from a third source. Since "WWI" does not appear in the poem, for instance, I might ask the above Authorist to name specific "images" in "The Waste Land" which he believes led to that attribution.

If he has difficulty doing so, I might remind him of the earlier, Book Reporter reading-text that organized the poem around the analogical motifs "bones" and "water/fertility." If he assents that such motifs, or something like them, instigated his historicist understanding of the poem, the next step of identifying that understanding as an Idealist understanding almost directly follows. Once the responsibility for such "ideas" is shifted from the author-character to the reader, students have little trouble speculating about where those ideas came from because they have to look no further than their own thoughts and beliefs. It is not lost on them that it is less difficult to read one's own mind than that of a long dead poet.

Not all Authorists, however, use their pretense of an author-character to bundle Idealist strategies into a more familiar Materialist one. Another Authorist in my class, for instance, created a reading-text similar to the one above, but in it he elides apparent Subjectivist reading strategies by attributing them to the poet. After repeating some of the traditional "historicist" interpretations of the poem, this Authorist says:

The "Fictional World" that Eliot targets as reality is skewed, in the fact that he describes it as it first leaves his brain pattern. There is a structure but it is partly random. Each book is a new strain of thought that is wholly different from the others. Each book contains subcategories that each have an underlining agreement with each other. The format must not be observed, but absorbed.

In this passage the student seems to be trying to explain the relationship between the patently Materialist reading he had asserted earlier his the reading-text and the textual pattern of "The Waste Land." The incoherence of this attempt likely has as much to do with the lectical strategies he (thinks he) used as it does with his communication skills. He claims to know what "The Waste Land" is about - i.e. Eliot's impressions of post-war society - but he has difficulty

rectifying that attribution to the "structure" of the poem. He has paid enough attention in class to know that he is supposed to account for his lectical mediations, so he tries a classic "stream-of-consciousness" explanation to glue his coherent Materialist attribution to his apparently very conflicted experience of the poem. The stream-of-consciousness strategy works quite well with some fictions - Woolf's To the Lighthouse, for instance, or even Joyce's Ulysses - but it is less successful with "The Waste Land." As the above Authorist points out, series of thoughts often do appear to be "random," a phenomena that perhaps suggested the strategy to him. However, his attempt to describe the "structure" of the poem thusly quickly dissolves into contradictions: each "book" (section?) is "wholly different from the others" and yet they "have an underlining agreement"; this structure is and is not "observed" as the author's "brain pattern," although it clearly is "absorbed" somehow. By asking him to clarify his abstract and confusing vocabulary, one might be able to get a better sense of what he is trying to communicate about the "format" of "The Waste Land."

However, my guess is that a little probing would reveal that his historicist/Authorist reading of the poem is less representative of his actual reading experience than an afterthought. The passage above seems to document a patently Subjectivist (lack of) coherence; unfamiliar with the strategy of establishing lectical coherence through dialogic motifs, he merely notices a textual pattern that is and is not unified. He recognizes the aporetic relationships between different sections of the poem and *feels* those aporias constitute a pattern, but he has no justification for that feeling other than he "absorbed" the author's "format." His problem is that he has mistaken his experience of the poem for its "format"; since his lectical experience is not in the poem, he has great difficulty finding it there. A more thorough - and likely sincere - analysis of his aesthetic object would provide better information about

what he really did with the lectical aporias he recognized. At the very least, by doing so he would be looking in the right place. Such mystification of Subjectivist reading-acts is both common and forgivable, and easily rectified with a little guidance and praise. "Congratulations," I might exclaim to such a student, "you've built a beautiful dialogic motif! Now, let's explore it a bit...." If, as I suspect, his Authorist attribution was a form of lectical straw-grabbing, the student and the rest of the class can discuss other, perhaps less conflicted ways to respond to the dialogic motif he *knows* was an important part of his lectical experience. Such a discussion, if guided well, should reinforce that readers are always allowed to act to some extent upon their incoherent "feelings" about a fiction, and further that a poem like "The Waste Land" all but requires doing so.

This is not to say that the goal of neo-appreciation pedagogy in general or lectical analysis in particular is to encourage students "to go with their feelings." On the contrary, lectical analysis asks students to treat their "feelings" and all other artifacts of a reading-act as dispassionately as possible *after* it has been completed. Even though the attempt to treat one's past thoughts as objects does not make lectical analysis a reliably objective science, at least it teaches students the habit of being self-critical in an atmosphere that is non-judgmental. In this light, the pretense of an author-character - aka the intentional fallacy - is not an inherently sub-standard or naive lectical strategy; lectical closure requires pretense, and a reading-act must be completed before it can be analyzed, whether by the reader or someone else. The goal of such analysis is to determine the effectiveness of the strategies used in a particular reading-act by a particular reader, not to promote one mode of reading over another. However, some fictions, such as "The Waste Land," are very demanding to read in that they at the same time invite and resist lectical conventions. Other than errors due to cultural ignorance, the only mistakes a reader can make in response to such fictions is to be inflexible. Aporias -

whether "intended" by the author or not - must be resolved, and to do that well, readers are sometimes required to be more actively "creative" than the Materialist pretense of passive observation comfortably allows. Moreover, the fictional worlds created in response to texts that resist seamless Materialist closure often are not very "pleasurable" to observe. Readers who expect to be entertained by an orderly procession of interesting fictional events and people are usually frustrated and/or bored when they are "asked" by a fiction to entertain themselves. Although such readers rarely embrace alternative lectical modes quickly, they can fairly quickly understand that their (negative) experiences with fictions like "The Waste Land" were produced by the lectical strategies they used during a particular reading-act, not inherent to the fiction or themselves. Of course, a reader's willingness to let his or her imagination run wild in response to a text can also create difficulties, particularly within the context of a literature course, which brings me to my next category of student.

The Solipsist

Students who fall in this category are acutely aware of the freedoms afforded readers of fiction, so much so that they sometimes ignore the words of a text which conflict with how they are exercising those freedoms. This is not just "bad" reading, although reading "all of the words of a fiction" is one of the criteria I set for completing a reading-act. Solipsist reading, rather, is characterized by a misunderstanding of the balance between lectical freedom and responsibility dictated by lectical convention. In the undergraduate classroom, teaching students how to strike a balance between duty and play while reading is particularly tricky because that balance shifts when one turns from being a strong reader to being a strong scholarly reader/writer. Ideally, I want students to learn how to enrich both their public and private engagements with literature in my course, but learning how to perform comfortably within

both these two, often very different, lectical contexts is sometimes quite difficult for them. Simultaneously learning how to broaden their lectical strategies while consuming fiction and how to apply the products of those strategies judiciously while writing about fiction can be very confusing and often takes a while.

Solipsists have difficulty analyzing their "impressions" of a fiction because they tend to take reading very personally, sometimes almost mystically. It makes sense that such students - and writers - tend to understand the verb "to criticize" pejoratively. Since they understand aesthetic experience in pop-romantic terms, to them the activity of questioning their lectical experiences seems impertinent and even hostile. Furthermore, such students often want to share their revelations with the class, but they generally are not prepared for those revelations to be treated as objects of analysis. When their reading texts are interrogated in open session - because that's what we do in my class - Solipsists often therefore become either defensive or withdrawn. Since I have told them that reading-acts are not right or wrong they simply "were," they feel like the process of criticizing their reading-texts is arbitrary and hypocritical, especially when they are (eventually) obliged to create "scholarly" reading-texts like essay tests and term papers.

Solipsists, however, can be some of the most engaged and productive participants in class discussions if they can be induced to treat their "impressions" as reading-texts to analyze rather than reading-polemics to defend. The following reading-text, for instance, was created by a student whose efforts both in and out of the classroom were consistent and spirited, even though she claimed she did not like English classes very much. In this reading-text, she claims that 'The Waste Land' evidences "Eliot's ability to evoke emotion," although "the emotion is not a positive one." She elaborates this claim with the following:

Irritation is the main emotion the reader feels when reading this work. Eliot's style is one that offers many aporias while reading. For example, his randomness makes the work hard to follow. He seems to jump from one thought to the next, never missing a beat. The speakers and their locations seem to change so rapidly that it makes it difficult to understand exactly what is taking place. However, Eliot appears to be aware that he is doing this because he provides footnotes for many of the references he makes in the poem. The footnotes, themselves, are irritating simply because they are so frequent and in such great length.

This passage appears to report a historicist/Authorist reading of the poem, an appearance that is even more explicit in the rest of the reading-text. Like the Authorist students above, this student claims the poem shows us that "Eliot viewed the culture as decayed and withered..., and virtually became a 'wasteland' itself." In other words, this student clearly has created an author-character whose "vision" of his era she pretends to observe. This historicist/Authorist move is clear, cogent, and relatively well written. That is, it is a pretty good answer to a test question like: "Discuss how 'The Waste Land' reflects the social, cultural, and/or political climate of the era during which it was written. Provide examples from the text." However, her skillful regurgitation of critical commonplaces brackets the paragraph quoted above which asserts the irritating effect of the poem's "aporias" upon "the reader." Surrounded by "objectively" voiced and evidenced claims, her account of "Eliot's ability to evoke emotion" sounds a bit like a rant, but it also sounds significantly more sincere. I would first respond to this student, therefore, by trying to winnow what she really remembers about her reading experience from what she decided (after the fact) would make her reading-text sound like a plausible scholarly essay. The fact that she knows how to create a traditional historicist critique is,

of course, marvelous and worth holding up to the rest of the class (I would probably take a pay cut if all my students could do as much when they arrive in my classroom). I also, however, would seek to sharpen the distinction between writing critical essays and performing lectical analysis by unpacking this student's apparently honest account of how irritating it was to read "The Waste Land."

To demonstrate more fully how I might respond to this student I will dive a little further into the pretense of a verbal exchange than I have so far. So, let's pretend: 1. I know this student likes to express her "true" feelings in class (in past discussions she had been *very* forthcoming about her opinions), 2. I know this student has a fundamental understanding of lectical analysis and its terminology (evidenced by her class work and the reading-text before us), 3. The reading-texts previously quoted in this dissertation had been analyzed in open discussion by the time she offers hers. Given these conditions, I am certain it would take very little goading to get this (now hypothetical) student to release a wealth of information about what she really did with the poem. I might say, for instance, "So, you didn't enjoy reading it very much, did you?"

"No!" she exclaims, "what's fun about trying to figure out what he's trying to say when all the time he keeps interrupting himself. It's like he's trying to make it hard."

"And that is irritating."

"Yes, it's like a cheap trick."

"Did anyone else feel irritated?" I might then ask the rest of the room. Hands go up all over the place. I turn back to my Solipsist and say, "It looks like your lectical experience is pretty common."

"Well, yeah, nobody likes a smart aleck," she responds with gratification.

"And yet," I feel compelled to observe, "for almost a century readers have claimed "The Waste Land" is a great poem. If we reject the possibility that

all of those readers enjoy being irritated by smart alecks, or that they just have bad taste, then why do you think Eliot's work is so thoroughly valued, even loved? I'm not being a smart aleck, I'm really asking your opinion."

"I don't know, maybe because it shows how he saw his world, like I said."

"But you didn't like learning about his world."

"No, but if he had written it differently I might have. It was too much work going back and forth from the footnotes and everything. I kept getting lost. I mean I can tell that he thinks the world is depressing and hopeless or whatever, that whole 'death' versus 'fertility' thing Julie was talking about...."

"The analogical motif?" I ask, inserting the terminology into her new, developing reading-text.

"Yeah, but, I don't know, he just seems like such a whiner. 'Woe is me, the world is a wasteland.' I mean, get over yourself and do something about it."

"You don't like whiners, do you?"

"Well not when they have nothing to whine about. Life is hard, what a news-flash! Sitting around complaining doesn't do anything but make you feel worse."

"So, would you like the poem better if Eliot did something or tried to improve his world somehow?"

"Yeah, I guess, but nothing happens, or nothing you can really understand."

"Can you think of some other work - a poem, novel, movie, whatever - that taught you something about the world but that you also found interesting, or at least not irritating?" I probe, looking for a contrasting textual pattern.

"Sure. How about Wuthering Heights? I mean, I didn't *love* it, but at least you know what is going on and pretty much why. I didn't understand some of the words and stuff at first, but after we talked about it, I could see what she was trying to say."

"Was that because of what the novel is about or the way it was written? I ask because Wuthering Heights doesn't seem like an inherently 'happy' or 'positive' novel to me."

"Yeah," she muses, "I don't know, I guess I just like it better. It was depressing, sort of, but it ends kind of happy. "The Waste Land" just stops. You don't know what happened, what it is supposed to mean, nothing."

"I think I know what you mean. Thanks," I say. Turning to the rest of the class, I suggest, "Why don't we turn to the end of the poem and take a look?"

Such fishing expeditions do not always produce a catch as big as the hypothetical dialogue above, but neither would I allow a student, once on the line, to slip away with non-answers like "I don't know" or "Like I said...". By insisting that she elaborate her original reading-text I can explore the apparent conflict between her historicist claims of coherence and her apparent frustration with the "aporias" of the poem. Quite simply, if those strategies had worked for her, she wouldn't have been so frustrated and angry; she may have been bored, but she would know what the poem was "about." Liberated from the restrictions of creating responsible scholarship, she divulged several of the beliefs and biases she employed while assessing her author-character Eliot, the whiner. Further, she supplied a contrasting textual pattern that appealed to her more, or at least was easier for her to consume, than one like "The Waste Land" that just "ends." Assuming that a number of students share my Solipsist's irritation with Eliot, we can collectively explore to what extent the poem really does just "end" or whether its conclusion is merely ambiguous. Doing so would almost certainly pinpoint textual features that likely precipitated the lectical experience of irritation she shared with many in the class.

On the one hand, this exercise should confirm the Solipsist's belief that her lectical experience was grounded in the poem. On the other, if I can find one student in the crowd who believes "What the Thunder Said" constitutes an

"answer" or conclusion to the lectical aporias of the poem taken as a whole, then I have the foundation to return to the Solipsist's reading-text with fresh, non-lethal pedagogical ammo.¹⁷ No matter how many people agree with her, the existence of even a single, dissenting lectical experience challenges her pretense that her lectical experience was text-immanent. In other words, the fulcrum of her Solipsist reading-act was a projection of personal experience upon "the reader," an abstract and imaginary entity whose responses are determined and consistent. Unable to recognize a coherent plot or a palatable author-character, the Solipsist attributes her feelings of frustration to "the reader," and thereby sidesteps her responsibility for failing to achieve lectical closure. This is not just a rhetorical ploy; Solipsists sometimes have great difficulty recognizing any lectical response but their own.

However, a reconsideration of the last hundred lines or so of "The Waste Land" should generate a number of possible attributions contrary to the Solipsist's thesis that "the reader" does not know what the poem is about. The problem most readers have with "The Waste Land," of course, is that it offers too many referential possibilities; even the briefest of open discussions should bear this out. The only way to choose unequivocally between even the two most common interpretations - there is or is not any hope of redemption/rebirth/rain - is either to ignore some element of the poem or to use a Subjectivist form of closure. A closer look at my student's expanded (fictional) reading-text indicates that she tried both of these strategies to some extent, but her attempts were ultimately thwarted by her overly restrictive beliefs about who is responsible for the "meaning" of a poem.

¹⁷ If I am unable to elicit a contrasting reading-text from the other students, I would have to offer one from the critical heritage of the poem. I prefer using the assessments of students in the room, however, because there is a better chance they will not be discounted as scholarly over-interpretation, particularly by a Solipsist.

First, claiming that "The Waste Land" does not come to a conclusion is demonstrably incorrect. The multiple concluding gestures in the last section may be sincere, ironic, or ambiguous (or some complex melange of all three) but they most certainly are there. To take just one obvious example, Eliot indicates in a footnote that the last lines of the poem - "Shantih shantih shantih" - should (more or less) be translated as "the peace which passeth all understanding," words drawn from the closing benediction of the Anglican service; even more explicit is Eliot's comment that the word "shanti" is the "formal ending of an Upanishad." How this phrase should be understood, of course, is up for debate, but the fact that it directly denotes an ending of some sort is not. A reader who claims to want to know what the author is "trying to say" should latch on to such an invitation to conclude, but my Solipsist did not, perhaps because she is ignorant of lectional and/or cultural conventions that would allow her to recognize the invitation. Although I would ask her directly why she ignored Eliot's directions and attributed a non-ending to the poem, my suspicion is that she did so because her (negative) lectional experience overwhelmed her willingness to close all the lectional aporias she encountered, a convention which I know she knew. In other words, she was so attached to her irritation at "Eliot," her incoherent, whining author-character, that by the end of the poem she was unwilling to entertain the possibility that that it might have a definitive conclusion. In yet other words, she loves to hate Eliot so much that she refuses to let anything - even the words of the poem - get in the way of savoring her antipathy. Getting students to admit as much is not as difficult as it might seem, particularly if they know they will not be penalized for being honest. Once again, the goal of such interrogations is not to humiliate students or even to make them change their assessment of the fiction under consideration. As long as they at least try to self-analyze their reading-texts, I am content.

A closer examination of my student's reading-text would also reveal how close she was to achieving Subjectivist coherence. The main "target reality" of her reading-text (both actual and hypothetical) is her own lectical experience. Everything else about her reading-act is either informed by or subjugated to her irritation at the demands of Eliot's textual pattern. Moreover, this visceral artifact of her reading-act effectively organizes it. For her, the poem is about how she felt while reading it, so she created a dialogic motif: that series of aporias that "jump from one thought to the next, never missing a beat." Finally, she assessed a very strong "performative value" to the poem, appreciating her distaste for its textual pattern and author above all other possible lectical values.

Where her Subjectivist gestures are inadequate or misconceived is at the line level. Instead of closing lectical aporias by deferring resolution, she bristles at the sheer number and magnitude of them. Emoting at the fact of a lectical aporia is not the same as recognizing and contemplating a limited number of *specific* possible references for it. As pointed out in earlier chapters, only a finite number of aporias can remain unresolved before a reading-act is effectively aborted; this student apparently exceeded her threshold for juggling ambiguity. Again, I would have to ask to be sure, but her totalizing historicist interpretation of the poem seems way too coherent to come out of the apparently sincere lectical confusion she reports. Methinks the lady protests just enough to let us know she did not complete her lectical task; she merely wrote a plausible paraphrase of someone else's (historicist) reading-text, and I certainly would not browbeat her for doing so. She is not the first reader whose lectical resources were exhausted by the textual pattern of "The Waste Land." On the contrary, I would praise her for trying to augment her aborted reading-act with the interpretations of others, even though those approaches did not ultimately help her. Turning to other readers for help is a valid and

archetypically scholarly strategy, one that warrants the very existence of literary courses. During lectical analysis, however, it is important to notice when that or any lectical strategy works and when they do not. In this case, her Subjectivist methods of coherence did a great job of organizing her aesthetic object, but her historicist/Materialist strategy of reading the entire poem as an image of Eliot's world was inadequate to the task of turning her confusion into a contemplation of ambiguity.

Besides pointing out where her lectical strategies failed her, I would also try to offer alternative lectical resources she could have used. Although her actual reading-text doesn't indicate how she might have tried to close the gaping aporias she encountered, the hypothetical words I put into her fictional mouth suggest she could have flirted with some of the Idealist strategies used by other students. Subjectivist coherence only works if the reader is able to establish a tolerable level of ambiguity (which is different for every reader) balanced against "unambiguous" or at least confident attributions. If she will assent to the lectical convention that fictional meaning is allowed to be ambiguous, hopefully my Solipsist will see that her Subjectivist approach would have worked if she had rejected fewer of the referential possibilities that occurred to her. The feelings of confusion and irritation she felt while reading can thereby be marked for her and the rest of the class as lectical "signposts" of sorts, moments during a reading-act that should not be passed over without some sort of lectical mediation. We can teach students that such moments should be treated like lectical stop signs; proceeding to the next textual feature before *somehow* consolidating ones developing aesthetic object will only create more confusion and irritation. Ignoring such signs, moreover, constitutes a decision to abort the reading-act, a decision which is often blamed upon an author-character. By elaborating upon referential possibilities that had briefly occurred to her while reading, and comparing them to the attributions made by

other students, the instructor can further clarify for the whole class the difference between acceptable ambiguity and aborted reading.

By the same process, of course, you can show students who were dissatisfied with their totalizing Materialist and Idealist gestures the benefits of Subjectivist coherence. In other words, by taking bits and pieces from a number of aborted reading-acts, the instructor can demonstrate to the class how some textual patterns are more easily comprehended if the reader uses a variety of lectical strategies. If your dialogic motif seems nonsensical, then bolster it with an Idealist attribution, no matter how far-fetched it may seem to you; if you can not link the symbolic "content" of the poem to a textual pattern, then focus upon patterns in your lectical experience. In other words, I use the comparison and combination of my students' reading-texts to demonstrate that lectical strategies are not mutually exclusive, and some textual patterns, like "The Waste Land," are very difficult to read without the deployment of all three lectical modes.

Another variety of Solipsist reading misconstrues lectical analysis for artistic expression. For clarity, I will call this type of Solipsist "The Poet," because his or her efforts to account for a reading-act become occluded by the desire to create an eloquent reading-text. Take, for instance, the following journal entry:

Some works are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few are to be chewed and digested. The Waste Land is fed to us in small teaspoons...Sweet. Sour. Tasteless.... In an all-out Joycean (James) manner, Eliot provides a deliberately difficult read and does so with the most obscure references possible.... Eliot plays upon the strange acts of depravity that only the troubled subconscious is suited to grasp and reckon with. The poem is "a

heap of broken images" and the reader sees the intensity of Eliot's
"handful of dust."

I whole-heartedly encourage my students to practice their communication skills, but I also want to teach them that some scholarly writing tasks by convention value clarity over eloquence. Scholarly convention permits and even lauds writers who punctuate analysis with abstract, overtly figurative gestures (like the Poet's first sentence above), but such gestures do not count as analysis in themselves. After making sure that the above discourse is not plagiarized, therefore, I would try to get this Poet to rephrase her reading-text into the terminology of lectical analysis. By "small teaspoons" does she mean "aporias," or is she talking about certain motifs ("Sweet. Sour. Tasteless.>") that she attributed to the poem? Do her metaphors for lectical mediation - tasting, swallowing, chewing - correspond to the three lectical modes in any way, and if so which combinations of those strategies did she use while reading? Whose "troubled subconscious" is she talking about? The one she attributes to her author-character Eliot or "the Reader"? Who is that "reader," and how did she "grasp and reckon with" specific textual features, such as the ones quoted from the poem?

Like most Solipsists, Poets want to express their feelings about the fiction at hand, so they usually respond freely to directive questions like the ones above. I want to remind them that the task at hand is reporting what they did during a reading-act, not gaining assent that the reading-act was a "good one" by expressing it with rhetorical flourishes. Poets often take so much "artistic license" regarding fiction that they conflate the very different activities of reading, writing, and analyzing it. The fact that they are willing to play freely with language can be a good example to their classmates who are reluctant to do so, but the Poet herself needs to learn when to give free reign to her interpretive skills (i.e. during a reading-act) and when to reign them in to

promote clearer communication to others (i.e. during analysis of any kind). Some Poets have become so attached to the eloquence of their reading-texts that they perceive almost any criticism as a personal attack. This, of course, makes perfect sense; after all, it is *their* reading-act under consideration and no one can tell them what they were "really" thinking about while reading. However, with a little sensitivity to the Poet's (partially correct) jealous ownership of her aesthetic object, the instructor can usually guide her toward a better understanding of how that cognitive event was created.

Being sensitive to my students' "personal" challenges may sound more like psychotherapy than literary pedagogy, but I maintain that strong reading, like strong writing, requires the internalization of skills that can not be learned from lecture notes; one becomes a better reader and/or writer by trying, failing, receiving feedback, then trying again. Although improvement in both skills is accelerated by having a common critical vocabulary with other readers and writers, critical language is itself only valuable as a tool for facilitating honest and clear critical feedback to the individual student's particular and idiosyncratic efforts. You can lecture to students that they need to read all the words of a fiction and resolve all the aporias they recognize (just as you can make them memorize the five-paragraph essay formula), but doing so will not help them when they are stumped by an actual lectical aporia. Whatever theoretical abstractions they are taught will not seem "real" to students until they use them, so the instructor needs to diagnose and address the unique challenges of as many students as possible in open discussion. Although I am a pretty strong reader, it is often difficult for me to be "sensitive" to the lectical challenges of some readers, particularly when they seem to resist the entire project of improving their reading skills and cultural awareness. Solipsists often fall into this category because their reading-acts are validated by their impressions, which seem infinitely more real to them than the abstract theories of reading I

offer. Solipsists are not the only students resistive to direction; the final type of student I will discuss almost delights in thwarting efforts to help them, seemingly out of a fundamental lack of respect for the entire proposition of studying literature. Being sensitive to the lectical challenges of such students often requires the analytical acuity of Freud and the compassion of Mother Theresa.

The Naysayer

Spotting a "Naysayer" is easier than helping one broaden his or her lectical and critical skills; their active distaste for literary study usually permeates everything they do in the classroom. Although some Naysayers demonstrate their contempt by posing as Abstainers, the two types are easily distinguished because the Abstainer does not care about literary study one way or the other; Naysayers have a personal grudge against it and the fact that they have been "forced" into taking yet another irrelevant English course. Pointing out that they are adult students and therefore responsible for their course selection does not help them; it just tends to deepen their resentment. This strong antipathy for literary study, however, is not always motivated by an antipathy for reading literature. Some of my most critically acute and dialogically responsive students have been inveterate Naysayers. Since neo-appreciation pedagogy is grounded in their own responses to fiction, Naysayers get uncensored air time to vent their grievances in my classroom, and this often sharpens their critical skills to a fine point - in spite of their conviction that literary study is a waste of time.

The main pedagogical resource an instructor needs to call upon with Naysayers is patience. If given the floor, they often will argue themselves into being strong readers. I offer the following reading-text as evidence. The

Naysayer below opens his journal entry with an account of the lectical aporias he recognized, writing that "the aporias I came up with for ["The Waste Land"] could be endless, but this paper, thankfully, must have an end." In the lengthy reading-text that followed this comment, he goes on to discuss in turn the Subjectivist, Materialist, and Idealist strategies he used while reading:

My reading experience was very unenjoyable. When I have to read, re-read, and then read again just to get a basic understanding of the poem I get very tired, very fast. Reading should be enjoyable, and I know some work by the reader is necessary, but Eliot takes this to the extreme. He refers to hundreds of classical works that only the English major would recognize, and most of the story simply flew over my head. Besides the depth of material, the textual and grammatical structure was confusing too. The language he uses is very foreign to the modern reader. This was the main problem I had with "The Waste Land."

This Naysayer went on to attack Eliot's "Materialist strategies":

He uses linguistic styles to represent popular people and events. However, the people and events he talks about are not familiar to me.... His writing style does not interest me and I can only attempt to analyze his writings for so long before I get mad.

And finally, he takes on the Idealist mode:

"The Waste Land" appeared an insane maze of themes and paradoxes and not much plot or story. Everything is symbolic and ironic while nothing seems to construct an actual story.

In a concluding paragraph, he delivers the following *coup de grace*:

Complaining about this story is easy, but trying to interpret it was very difficult. His writing does not relate to me and Eliot does not make me want to read his story. The aporias seem too great to

get past and achieve an enjoyable level of reading any of Eliot's work.

Although it is voiced as an attack, this Naysayer delivers a very in-depth account of his reading-act, an act that was apparently seriously and rigorously pursued. He demonstrates a fundamental understanding of the lectical triangle and how the three lectical modes can be used interdependently in a single reading-act. As with the other reading-texts above, I would first ask this Naysayer to clarify some of his terminology and link his claims more directly to specific textual features. What, for instance, are the "linguistic styles" that Eliot uses to represent "people" and "events"? Recognizing that different stylistic features can be read as "voice" (that is, as images of fictional speech) is a fairly sophisticated Materialist move; whether or not my Naysayer recognized this strategy in his reading-act, clearly he is aware that he had to go to some extraordinary lengths to "imagine" the unfamiliar fictional world he encountered in the poem. I would also ask him to talk more about the "insane maze of themes and paradoxes" that led him to believe that "everything is symbolic and ironic." Does he mean that "everything" (The entire poem? The most important themes? Certain analogical motifs?) is either symbolic or ironic, or does he believe the poem both evokes and ironizes certain symbolic gestures? The critical heritage of "The Waste Land" is full of commentary on Eliot's complex use of irony, and although it is quite possible that this student borrowed substantially from another source, the fact that he considered the issue significant enough to mention indicates that he is operating at a more sophisticated critical level than most of his peers.

More importantly, however, this student offers us an explicit outline of his reading-act, even though his analysis is dedicated to proving why he did not enjoy "The Waste Land." Although I would dig for more details about specific textual features, he is very forthright about the general causes of his distaste

for the poem: 1. Eliot's irrelevance to the "modern reader" 2. The fact that the poem is not a "story" 3. The aporias he recognized were "too great" for the poem to be "enjoyable," as all reading should be. These three "causes" of his low opinion of the poem are direct applications of three very common and valid indices of value for fiction. His first criticism of Eliot is that the modern reader - presumably himself, but he goes to some length to include other readers - can not relate to Eliot's characters, ideas, or style. This point of contention, which is shared by most undergraduates, is motivated by a pretense so ubiquitous that I'm sure Wimsatt and Beardsley would have eventually gotten around to naming it, perhaps something like "the empathetic fallacy." Many readers believe that the purpose of fiction is to provide characters and situations with which they can "identify." By extension, the reader's job is to recognize themselves or their lives in the fictional world they are pretending to observe, and thereby learn and/or feel something. Readers laboring under this pretense who do not empathize with anybody or thing they meet in a fiction, however, feel left out; they can't relate, therefore the work serves no purpose. This pretense is problematic only if it is given an imperative status. There is nothing wrong with preferring fictional people and worlds to which you can relate, but believing *all* fictions must meet that criterion to be valuable is a misunderstanding of lectical convention.

Related to this cause of his dislike is his repeated claim that "The Waste Land" is not a very good "story." I do not believe this motif in his reading-text is merely sloppy terminology. He uses the word "story" to denote literature in its most abstract sense, as I have used "fiction" throughout this dissertation. He knows he read a poem, but the textual pattern of this particular poem stops him from accessing the only source of literary value that he recognizes: i.e. its "plot and story." Are "plot" and "story" synonymous for him, or does "story" denote something more broad, like literary value? I would have to ask to be

sure, but whatever his answer, clearly he shares this assumption about what fiction should and should not do with most of his peers. What most students do *not* do, however, is so overtly assert their beliefs and biases in their reading-texts. This Naysayer knows what he likes and likes what he knows; he claims his right to read according to his beliefs, even if those beliefs are overly restrictive according to scholarly convention.

His third reason for disliking "The Waste Land" is also related to an overly restrictive application of an otherwise perfectly valid index of literary value: i.e. that fictions should be "enjoyable" to read. In many ways, this Naysayer invokes the ur-value of literary appreciation. Readers who do not in some way "enjoy" their interactions with a fiction do not value it highly, no matter how sophisticated and flexible their lectical repertoire is. Moreover, unlike the Solipsist above, my Naysayer recognizes that he is responsible for his lack of enjoyment of the poem. He knows that it is his duty to do "some work" as a reader; he knows that the poem requires he read and re-read the poem until he has at least a "basic understanding" of it; he even knows that the creation of a "maze of themes" - all of which may or may not be ironic - is a valid alternative to his favorite reading strategies when they fail him. Although he still strongly prefers to read "stories" that "contain" characters and events which seem familiar to him, he demonstrates a deeper critical understanding of how his lectical habits interacted with the textual pattern of "The Waste Land" than most students do, and used that understanding to justify his negative evaluation. In other words, he both met and exceeded my expectations for the assignment, and with a little additional experience is poised to create perfectly acceptable scholarly criticism, should he ever be required to.

Although I would love for him to love the poem, my Naysayer's distaste for it does not constitute a lectical, scholarly, or pedagogical failure. On the contrary, I believe his willingness and ability to engage a fiction like "The Waste

Land" as thoroughly as he did shows that making lectical response - whatever it may be - a core focus of the literary classroom allows students who would otherwise mutely reject the entire project of literary study a chance to hone their critical skills expressing that rejection. Although neo-appreciation pedagogy does not concern itself with the transmission of literary enjoyment, I have found that Naysayers like the one above often find that they enjoy proving how stupid "English majors" like us are to enjoy canonical texts like "The Waste Land." Not infrequently, I have noticed that somewhere along the line Naysayers start actually enjoying their reading-acts, and sometimes even become Apprentices, albeit surly ones.

As much as the above reading-texts demonstrate that lectical analysis can open up new avenues of lectical engagement for students, they also demonstrate that sometimes students are not by themselves able to fully understand why the scholarly world values certain fictions. In those cases, I believe it is our job to share freely our own lectical experiences and attributions of value. As I asserted in the beginning and throughout this dissertation, I believe one of our most important responsibilities as literary instructors is to teach our students why we think reading fiction is worthy of study; to understand our experience, they must be able to relate it somehow to their own experience. Teaching them conventional lectical strategies that they already use in their lives sets the stage for them to comprehend positive experiences with fiction that they may not (yet) share. Pursuing my pretense of a class discussion just a bit further, one would have to notice that the above reading-texts reproduce much of the critical heritage of "The Waste Land" (without that heritage being lectured, I might add), but some very important ways of valuing that poem are not broached. If such was the case toward the end of a class period, I would feel compelled to let my students know what I, and perhaps other

commentators, feel and think about the poem. I would, in other words, embark upon an analysis of my appreciation of it.

Having just read the poem aloud again, I am clear about what I might want to say to a group of undergraduate students:

"Although I understand your feelings of irritation at the author-character Eliot - for I have felt it myself in the past - my most recent reading-act of "The Waste Land" is dominated by other emotions, primarily sadness and pity. My author-character also has difficulty expressing himself clearly, but not because he doesn't want to, it seems to me, but because his words fail him. Other readers have claimed that this should be understood as a failure of language and culture in the abstract, but the voice I heard in my last reading sounds like a personal and private failure to me. As I listened to Eliot's words coming out of my mouth, I felt like I was listening to a man grasping at straws, or as he writes at the end, 'shoring up his ruins' with little scraps of art. The ambivalence that many of you attributed to the 'life' versus 'death' motifs is apparent to me as well, but whether or not the poem communicates something specific about the possibility of regeneration, or some such, seems secondary to or rather a vehicle for the author-character's failure to heal himself by himself. Trapped alone with his feelings and vast knowledge of culture (which everyone says is supposed to enrich our lives), this voice tries to connect with me, perhaps in the hope that real communication with another human being will bring him some relief. Although I believe talking to others can sometimes make us feel better when we're hopeless, my author-character ultimately does not seem to have gained much by having spoken to me. In fact, the ambiguously hopeful gestures toward the end of the poem might be for my benefit, his courteous attempt to avoid bumming me out.

"I believe I constructed this fictional relationship with 'Eliot' out of my recollections of many such conversations with real friends. As an academic, I come in contact on a daily basis with people whose impressive intellectual resources do not immunize them from the pain of everyday life. Sometimes feelings can not be eliminated by thinking about them; sometimes immersing yourself in art does not solve your problems, or provide even temporary escape from the disillusionment most of us feel from time to time. As someone who sometimes thinks too much for my own good, I think I recognize in 'The Waste Land' a speaker who clings to moments of remembered joy to try to reduce his current despair. In other words, unlike many of you, I found myself identifying with my 'Eliot's' failed efforts to 'shore up his ruins.' All of us try to escape current pain with remembered pleasure to some extent, but I find it particularly pitiful that my author-character 'Eliot' has little to comfort him but literary fragments. If by reaching back to Dante, Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Upanishads my 'Eliot' felt better, perhaps I wouldn't feel so sorry for him; I might instead feel greater irritation at the lectical work his textual pattern requires of me. However, since my Eliot's maze of literary references ultimately does not alleviate his despair, I don't feel like he means to be condescending. My Eliot does not imply that I should have seven languages or that I am the lesser man for never having read some obscure, anonymous poem. He simply has no other resources *at the moment* to communicate to me how he feels about his inner wasteland, and I find the fact pitiful, and not a little touching.

"This central Materialist strategy of creating a pitiful author-character out of my past experiences with real friends deeply affected the way my aesthetic object felt to me. For one, I assessed a strong mimetic value to the poem in that I was able to pretend I was watching a real human being struggle with his feelings of hopelessness, a struggle that ultimately ends in failure. The specific attributions I made while under this Materialist pretense (which led to my

feelings of compassion) were influenced by certain beliefs I hold true: some problems/feelings can not be intellectualized; sometimes everyone loses faith, both in themselves and in life in general; depressed people can not express the depth of their sadness in words; perseverance in the face of despair is noble. These beliefs do not constitute my entire world view; they are just some of the ones I used during my most recent reading-act. For instance, I also believe that wallowing in one's despair can be destructive at times, and people who spend a lot of time doing so are self-indulgent. Some of you admit to deploying some such belief while creating your author-characters for this poem, which might have led to your feelings of irritation at Eliot's whining.

"I'm not positive why I gave my 'Eliot' the benefit of the doubt - that is, why I attributed 'nobility' rather than "self-indulgence" to him - but I think it has something to do with my appreciation of his skill as a poet. In other words, although my emotional response was predominately generated by a Materialist pretense of listening to a person struggle with his despair, that pretense was deeply affected, and perhaps instigated, by the high value I place upon poetic virtuosity in general. Eliot's skill with language is valuable to me *apart from* the images and symbols I create out of it. In more technical terms, there were several times during this last reading that the diction of the poem became an aporia of "distinction" for me. Quite simply, I stopped reading for a moment or two to savor his language. The "nobility" that I attributed to my Eliot's efforts, therefore, very well may have come from my admiration for poetic virtuosity, both in general and T. S. Eliot's in particular. The fact that my perception of my Eliot's emotional failure is articulated in language that I perceived to be beautiful made me biased toward my author-character, and less likely to think ill of him. Since I enjoy reading poetry that I think is beautiful, and I had already had many such moments while reading a variety of Eliot's poems, I was predisposed to reproducing such pleasures during this last reading by focusing on the diction of

'The Waste Land.' This constituted a lectical habit for me, and likely led to my feelings of compassion for a 'man' who had already given me a number of valuable lectical experiences.

"Identifying moments when I attributed 'beauty' to certain textual features of 'The Waste Land' is easier than explaining *why* I perceived those words as being beautiful, or to what extent my perceptions were conventionally or idiosyncratically motivated. For instance, I attributed an aporia of 'distinction' during this last reading-act to a passage at the beginning of section two which describes a lavishly decorated room. Let me see if I can find it... here we go, beginning on line 84:

In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurking her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid - troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours, stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the lacquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.

I believe I became aware of my appreciation for the diction of this passage soon after reading the word 'lacquearia,' partially because I stopped to look at the footnote, as in previous readings. Upon looking back at this textual feature, I see that Eliot alternates between sounds of sighing (the i's, a's, and sibilance of 'vials,' 'glass,' 'strange,' 'air,' 'ascended,' 'flames,' etc.) and groaning (the o's, u's, and hard consonants of 'coloured,' 'unstoppered,' 'unguent,' 'troubled,' 'drowned,' 'flung,' etc.). Is it a coincidence that the word 'lacquearia' contains both these sonic patterns? Which lectical aporia caught my attention first, my ignorance of the word's denotation or its sonic quality? I'm not sure, but I do know that I paused and re-read the passage a couple of times aloud, enjoying

the sound of it more and more as I progressed, and attending to its 'meaning' less. I felt like I was singing along with a favorite song, albeit a very sad one, maybe a Radiohead or Leonard Cohen tune. The softly sighing and moaning sound of this passage laid a pall of bored despair over the opulent surroundings it describes.

"Although I did create a setting-image in response to the passage, that image was both affected by and subordinated to my semantic focus on the diction Eliot used and on how skillfully and subtly the poet manipulated meaning with sound. Moreover, my attention upon Eliot's diction induced me to treat this textual feature as a symbol more than an image; as I resumed my reading of the poem, I thought of it as a representation of the idea of 'ennui,' or some such concept, rather than the representation of a place in a fictional world. The dominant strategy of this particular reading-act, then, was Subjectivist although it was supported by Idealist and Materialist gestures. The combined emotional affect of several such aporias of 'distinction' peppered throughout my most recent reading of the poem constituted a dialogic motif: a perception that the poem contains many examples of poetic virtuosity. This perception, along with my belief that poetic virtuosity is admirable, probably accounts for my sympathy for my author-character, and perhaps induced me to attribute noble rather irritating qualities to him."

The hypothetical and idealized soliloquy above is meant to demonstrate the kind of information I seek to give my students about my reading-acts. Such classroom demonstrations are not completely extemporaneous because I always do my homework; I read the assigned fiction and create a reading-text in my journal, so I am prepared to share my experience - and skill as a strong reader - with the class if I feel it is useful to do so. I do not want to lecture my idiosyncratic responses to students, but neither do I want to be coy about them.

I rhapsodize when it is called for because I want them to see what can and has been done with fictions like "The Waste Land" even if they are unlikely to respond in fashion. By doing so, I risk highlighting the cultural differences between them and me, but the risk is worth the potential gain. For instance, my appreciation of the "sound" of "The Waste Land" is only qualitatively different from aesthetic experiences they have almost certainly had, with pop music if nowhere else. If I do a good job describing, analyzing, and performing my lectical experience, there is a good chance they will understand it even if they do not share it.

I believe that sharing the fruit of our lectical labor with undergraduates has the additional value of modeling the communal nature of scholarly discourse, particularly regarding the liberal arts. Professional scholars do not approach their subject matter in an intellectual vacuum; we are interlocutors in ongoing and usually quite ancient critical discussions. Even those scholars who appear to break away from tradition always do so by referring to the ideas of peers, past and present. There is no such thing as scholarly discourse that is not positioned somehow within and/or against the publicly expressed thoughts of other scholars. Scholarship, therefore, is overtly and fundamentally dialogic, and the traditional concept of "scholarly responsibility" merely articulates abstract rules of dialogic engagement between equals in an intellectual community.

"Scholarly responsibility," however, is an unfamiliar concept to most students because most of their pre-collegiate, academic labor has been crafted to match the agenda and sensibilities of a series of *individual* scholars: their instructors. Students know how to give teachers "what they want," but they have much less experience communicating what they really think within and against a scholarly community. Neo-appreciation pedagogy requires college-level students take responsibility for their current engagements with culture, both as a way to identify their areas of ignorance and as a way to enter into an

ongoing conversation with other scholars. By modeling "responsible" scholarship, combined with skillful textual and self-analyses, and by requiring that they respond in kind, I believe my classroom becomes a type of scholarly boot-camp. Turning students into literary critics is not a pedagogical goal of my course, but teaching them the fundamental concepts and methods of literary scholarship is. In other words, if all I do for my students is reduce their cultural ignorance somewhat while allowing them to consume literature as they already do, then my classroom is little more than a book club which affects their G. P. A's. They may know a little more about sexual politics in medieval England and social unrest in early Twentieth century America, but they will not have become significantly stronger readers or critical thinkers. Teaching them what literary scholars do, and then doing it in front of them, increases the chances that they will leave my classroom with scholarly skills tools they can use on fictions - and other cultural artifacts - that cross their paths in the future.

At the risk of sounding grandiose, I also believe that teaching our students how and why they should approach culture with a sense of responsibility to a community performs a valuable social function. The practical value of taking responsibility for our public evaluative gestures is that doing so goads us towards critical rigor. In other words, the process of exposing ourselves out loud and in print by saying what we *already believe* about art brings the deeply ethical nature of our profession into sharp relief, hopefully making us better teachers, scholars, and ultimately people. I also believe that to whatever extent our students learn how to be thorough, careful, and conscious about what they make out of cultural artifacts, to that extent they become not only better readers, they become better citizens. Because of this belief, I am happy to share details of T. S. Eliot's biography with them, but I am much happier to teach them how thinking, talking, and writing like a scholar has enriched my life and given me a greater, and more humane, understanding of the

lives of others. Neo-appreciation pedagogy, of course, is not the only way to pursue this social boon, but it is a relatively simple and forthright way to do so in the classroom.

Making literary culture more accessible to our students is particularly important in a field like ours that is in rapid transition. Although print may not be dead yet, it ain't feeling so hot just lately. It don't hear as well as it use' to, and on some mornings it's tough just gettin' up and gettin' around. They sure don't make books like they did back when, and what is it with kids these days?

I'd like to think that there will be a resurgence in the popularity of reading, but I'm afraid print is destined to become an increasingly rare form of cultural transmission. Books may never completely disappear, but there is a good chance they will go the way of other obsolete communication technologies, like phonograph records and smoke signals, used only by nerds and history buffs. Fiction, of course, is here to stay. Our capacity and need to pretend is hardwired into human consciousness, so each fall will bring us a new crop of students ready to learn about the value, meaning, and use of fiction. If current trends progress, however, each year will also bring us students less and less experienced with the kinds of reading skills *required* by some of the best fictions in our literary heritage. We can either bemoan the slow decline of the relevance of reading to the general public, or we can come up with ways to explain its relevance to students who otherwise would not understand. In some ways, then, my efforts in the classroom and this dissertation are attempts to address the decrepitude of our discipline, so the human value of works like The Canterbury Tales, Paradise Lost, Leaves of Grass, and The Waste Land is not lost merely because such fictions require strong readers. Since I believe that the formal study of literature can be both socially and personally beneficial, I offer my version of neo-appreciation pedagogy as one way of being more explicit,

consistent, and accessible in our efforts to help good students become better people.

Appendix A: Classroom Materials

Handout #1: The Basic Assumptions of Neo-Literary Appreciation

1. A fiction can only be understood by a reader according to his or her unique understanding of world and culture; therefore, fictions do not have objectively determined meaning or value before they are read.
2. A fiction is encountered sequentially as fragments of language, or "textual features," which readers translate into a coherent and unified understanding about the fiction; this "understanding" is called the "aesthetic object," and it exists only in the individual reader's mind.
3. Readers attribute meaning and value to fictional texts according to interpretive strategies they have learned in order to "close" the inherent "openness" of textuality.
4. The current literary "canon" is a reflection of the values and interpretive strategies embraced by academic culture at this time. At any given point in history the interpretive strategies of academic culture are usually more varied and complex than those of the general populace. Many "canonical" fictions, therefore, are difficult to understand and/or "appreciate" if one's repertoire of interpretive strategies is relatively limited.
5. Analyzing the received heritage of literary value as a reflection of certain strategies of interpretation gives one insight into both past and current cultural stereotypes.
6. Broadening your own interpretive strategies helps you to understand how and why a greater variety of literary works are or might be valued, and thereby improves your ability to discuss culture both casually and academically.
7. Reading literature can be personally transformational, and therefore should be examined as closely as possible.

Handout #2: Lectical Analysis

Lectical strategies are organized into the following three categories: 1. Idealist strategies, which are warranted by "ideas" 2. Materialist strategies, which are warranted by a material "reality" 3. Subjectivist strategies, which are warranted by a lectical performance, that is, by referring to the reading-act itself as a subjectively determined phenomenon.

Beyond having different referential warrants, these three lectical modes are further distinguished below according to how they accomplish five general tasks attending the assessment of lectical "realism": 1. Choosing a "target reality" 2. Choosing a "textual focus" 3. Developing a "semantic context" 4. Achieving "lectical coherence" 5. Performing a lectical assessment. The general categorization of these strategies for establishing lectical "realism" is as follows:

Materialist strategies: these strategies close textual elements by constructing referential "contexts" out of linguistic representations of "things" "people" or "events." Fictional "reality," therefore, is created by emphasizing the mimetic function of fictional "images" and by subordinating other textual elements to that function. Some of these strategies are:

1. Treating a fictional "world" as the target "reality" of the text;
2. Focusing upon and valuing narrative progression or "plot" over its "diction" or "theme";
3. Extrapolating a semantic context by reading textual features as images; i.e. treating fiction as a mimetic representation of a phenomenal milieu;
4. Achieving lectical coherence by developing "episodic" motifs between fictional "events" and textual features;
5. Reifying fictional characters/narrators/events/things to attribute motive and agency as the basis for an assessment of their mimetic value.

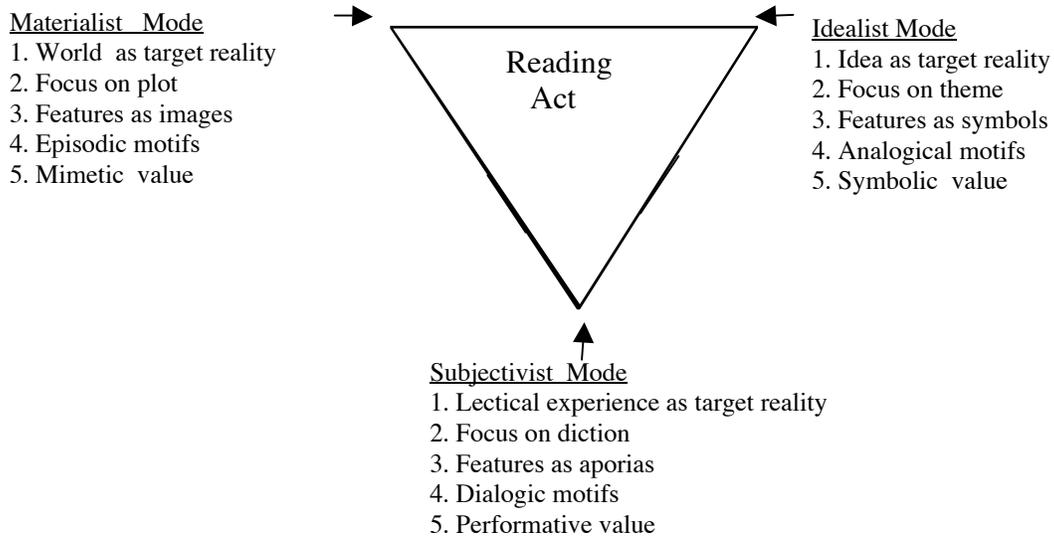
Idealist strategies: these strategies close textual elements by constructing a fictional "reality" according to the "ideas" the reader decides are referred to by the text. Some of these strategies are:

1. Treating symbolic "meaning" as the target "reality" of the text
2. Focusing upon thematic unity over the plot or diction of a text;
3. Establishing a semantic context by reading textual features as symbols; i.e. through allusive reference to a pre-existing symbolic system (legend, religious dogma, literary tradition, cultural archetypes, symbolic paradigms, etc.);
4. Achieving lectical coherence by establishing analogical and/or symbolic motifs between textual features;
5. Identifying fictional characters/narrators/events/things with culturally determined archetypes to interpret motive and agency in order to assess their symbolic value.

Subjectivist strategies: These strategies close textual elements through a focus on the performance of a reading-act. These strategies treat the unique lectical experience of a particular reading-act as the fictional "reality" of that reading-act. Fictional "reality" in the Subjectivist mode, therefore, is valued as an artifact of a reading as opposed to an artifact of some independent "reality." Subjectivist readings employ lectical strategies of the other two categories in the process of constructing their own (self) referential gestures. Some of these gestures are:

1. Treating lectical experience as the target reality of the text;
2. Focusing upon and valuing a text's diction over its "theme" or "plot";
3. Elaboration of semantic context and/or cultural connotations of textual features by treating them as aporias; i.e. resisting simple referential closure;
4. Interrogating lectical coherence by emphasizing aporetic relationships between textual features; hence, Subjectivist reading-acts are consolidated dialogically.
5. Assessing value to the performance of a reading-act as opposed to the potential mimetic or symbolic value of the text.

The Lectical Triangle



Handout #3: Recognizing Aporias

There are two basic types of aporias: textual aporias and lectical aporias. Textual aporias are those aporias included within a textual pattern which can be identified with a great deal of certainty according to "common" cultural conventions. Lectical aporias are those aporias which are identified by a particular reader during a particular reading-act, whether those aporias are recognized according to identifiable cultural conventions or not.

Textual Aporias:

1. Boundaries of grammatical units (phrases, clauses, sentences, etc.)
2. Graphic breaks (lines, paragraphs, stanzas, white space, chapters, illustrations, font changes, the last word of a fiction etc.)
3. Shifts in or violations of generic textual patterns (i.e. dialogue, character, narration, description, narrative chronology, non-standard syntax, etc)
4. Shifts in diction.
5. Repetition of textual patterns.
6. Manipulation of cultural stereotypes.

Lectical Aporias:

1. Perceived limits of a textual feature.
2. Perceived conflicts in semantic reference or function.
3. Perceived correspondence between textual features or motifs.
4. Perceived conflict with the reader's pre-understanding of "the world."
5. Commencing or stopping a reading in progress (its time to go to work so I mark my place and close the book; later, I open the book and start reading where I left off).
6. The perceived resistance of a textual feature to ones lectical strategies.
7. Pauses during a reading-act to "appreciate" it.

Handout #4: Lectical Values

1. It is realistic; it accurately represents something about or in "the" world.
2. It is intellectually stimulating; it makes one think about its subject.
3. It is instructive; it provides one with information about "the" world.
4. It evokes emotion; one can experience it as being humorous, frightening, erotic, exciting, sad, irritating, suspenseful, etc.
5. It is true; it represents a correct understanding of its subject matter.
6. It is stylistically virtuosic or unique; its form is remarkable in comparison to other fictions.
7. It is socially, politically, culturally, intellectually or spiritually liberating; one feels more comfortable in some way as a person in the world having read it.
8. It is structurally coherent; one can recognize it as a particular, unified fictional work.
9. It is indicative of the cultural context within which it is written and/or read; it makes certain elements of that culture intelligible in some unique way.
10. It is a commodity; one can use it to pursue ones quotidian interests.
11. It confirms ones identity; either through similarity or contrast, your beliefs about "who you are" are strengthened by reading it.
12. It provides an alternative "reality"; ones attention is focused away from ones quotidian existence while reading it.

Handout #5: Glossary for Lectical Analysis

Aesthetics: Traditionally the study of art or beauty. Currently, aesthetics addresses the problem of studying subjective experience in general with a particular focus upon how all perceptions are to some extent "artistic." The inherent subjectivity of aesthetics is reflected by the common use of the word to denote a stereotypical style or set of preferences: e.g. a punk aesthetic.

Aesthetic object: the thoughts one has about a fiction, therefore the only "complete" manifestation of a fiction's meaning and value.

Aporia: a textual element which has or is attributed ambiguous reference and/or coherence. Theoretically, all words constitute aporias, but in practice readers usually recognize only a few of the words of a fiction as aporias. You can think of aporias as questions, problems, or issues, encountered during a reading which instigate some sort of response from the reader. Therefore, texts are structured as a series of aporias, and the goal of a reading-act is to resolve all the aporias recognized. Moreover, the limits of textual features are established by aporias. Since readers do not usually recognize all of the aporias included in a textual pattern, in lectical analysis one uses the term "textual aporia" to denote an aporia which is an integral part of a textual pattern and the term "lectical aporia" to denote an aporia that a particular reader recognizes during a particular reading-act.

Attribution: A decision or judgment made by a reader regarding the meaning, function, or value of a textual feature. Attributions are affected by the pattern of a text, the reader's unique understanding of literature, lectical strategies, the lectical milieu, and prior attributions already accumulated into a developing aesthetic object.

Coherence: A quality attributed to a text when the reader believes he or she knows how its constituent parts interrelate. Coherence is roughly synonymous with the traditional literary term "unity." "Lectical coherence" is established during a reading-act by creating "motifs" which link individual images, symbols, aporias, and other motifs together as groups of semantic reference and/or function.

Culture: Expressions about human life and experience which can be transmitted in any form (verbal, graphic, behavioral, etc.). Every person has a unique understanding of culture determined by the particular social, familial, economic, and historical conditions within which they receive it.

Diction: a general term for the unique vocabulary and syntax of a fiction. Diction is roughly synonymous with the "style" of language used within a fiction. Cultural stereotypes about linguistic "style" can affect how a reader responds to the diction of a fiction. This is one reason why the unique diction or style of a fiction cannot be completely separated from its ultimate meaning.

Fiction: A text that is consciously read with pretense. This definition shifts the distinction between fiction and non-fiction from the textual to the lectical realm. This shift accounts for texts which employ textual patterns usually associated with fiction while recounting "real" events and texts which employ textual patterns associated with non-fiction while recounting events which didn't "really" happen.

Image: traditional literary term denoting a word or group of words which represents a person, thing, or event: something that exists in a world. While performing lectical analysis, no textual feature is inherently an "image"; a lectical "image" is the thought a particular reader references to a textual feature. Certain textual patterns invite imagistic reference according to received cultural stereotypes, although such cues can always be ignored or rejected in favor of some other lectical strategy. Regarding the lectical triangle, in the Materialist mode words are understood as images; the reader pretends a textual feature represents something that exists in a fictional world.

Lectical: having to do with the process of reading.

Lectical analysis: A method for exploring the mental processes which constitute a particular reading-act by comparing the textual pattern of the fiction which instigated that reading-act to a specific reading-text that is meant to represent it. In this class, we will come to conclusions about the *apparent* causes of a reading-text according to the general assumptions about literary reading represented by the lectical triangle.

Lectical aporia: see "Aporia"

Lectical horizon: the range of meanings which occur to a particular reader in response to a particular textual feature.

Lectical triangle: a heuristic for some of the most common lectical strategies for reading fiction.

Meaning: one's understanding of a phenomenon, whether that phenomenon is a person, book, event, thought, or physical sensation. Meanings are always thoughts, and therefore subjective.

Phenomena: Perceptions we have about the people, events, and things in the world as accessed through sense data. They are what the world appears to be to us before meaning and value are determined.

Quotidian: Everyday, "normal," non-theoretical, practical experience. Although the distinction between "quotidian" and fictional reality is theoretically problematic, we typically recognize a difference between our actions in relation to and within "real" and "pretend" worlds, even though our knowledge of both is always created through some degree of subjective and idiosyncratic reference.

Reading-act: the process of interpreting the words of a fiction into an aesthetic object. Reading-acts are cognitive events and therefore exist only in the mind of an individual reader at a given moment in time. Reading-acts are always unique and cannot be reproduced, even if a reader re-reads a fiction or two readers create identical reading-texts.

Reading-text: a representation of an aesthetic object. Reading-texts can be mental, verbal, written, or behavioral. Reading-texts - not reading-acts - are the objects of lectical analysis. The assumption that justifies lectical analysis, therefore, is that there are some similarities between reading-texts and reading-acts even though they are never identical.

Reference: The event of attributing a meaning or a function to a word or group of words. Reference establishes a pretense of equivalence between words and ideas/things/experiences. Reference is always performed by the reader by comparing the words of the text to his or her unique understanding of the world and language.

Semantic: having to do with meaning.

Symbol: A traditional literary term which denotes a word or group of words which are understood to have both a literal and figurative meaning. In other words, symbols are understood to "be" something (e.g. a ring on my finger) and represent something (e.g. my marriage vows) at the same time. In the terminology of lectical analysis, no textual feature is inherently symbolic; readers attribute symbolic meaning or function as a response to a particular textual pattern in comparison to their unique understandings of world and language.

Text: The words of a fiction.

Textual aporia: see "Aporia"

Textual feature: the term in lectical analysis for any number of words which are understood together by a reader during a particular reading-act.

Textual Pattern: The unique arrangement of words that constitute a particular text. In addition, there are lectical conventions regarding certain generic textual patterns; in other words, certain general ways of organizing texts have been historically read in certain ways. For example, the textual pattern of following the words "He said" with some quoted words is usually read as dialogue.

Appendix B

In this appendix I reproduce three "Apprentice" reading-texts. The first student does the critical work of lectical analysis without using the terminology I delivered in class. I do not know whether or not she would have approached The Waste Land differently without my instruction, but I offer her efforts as an example of the strong analytical skills some students have *independent* of our teaching methods. This student did not need neo-appreciation pedagogy to generate insightful commentary, although I assume giving her the opportunity to hone her skills did not hurt them either. The second reading-text is an example of how at first the terminology of lectical analysis sometimes interferes with a student's ability to write a clear account of her reading-act. As with other analytical heuristics, there is a learning curve even for excellent students, like Apprentice #2. The last "Apprentice" reading-text, however, shows that students who are given the opportunity to practice can eventually integrate the lectical triangle into their critical repertoire, often with excellent results. Like the reading-texts analyzed in Chapter 5, all three of these were first draft, journal entries.

Apprentice #1

Just like everyone else has expressed I'm sure, I didn't know what to make of this poem. I found it to be complex and full of symbolism as well as interesting to read. I guess I didn't really let the fragmentation of the work bother me. I just read it as I went along and shifted scenes with it. I tried as I read to look at the broad picture that Eliot was creating with each shift of subject and voice. I also tried to trace different themes or recurring symbols throughout the work but I'm not really sure what they all mean. I saw water mentioned multiple times, including streams and death by water with King

Ludwig II and Ophelia. I thought the footnotes were really helpful and interesting. It makes me appreciate just how well read and culturally intelligent Eliot was to employ the abundant allusions found in *The Waste Land*. Like the headnote said there were juxtapositions of water and dryness as well as many pictures of unfruitfulness, in marriage, nature, etc. Christian theology is strung throughout the poem displayed through different shifts. There were several different mentions of dogs and bones, not necessarily together. I think several of the sections were about relationships. Human interaction seemed to be a good deal of what was being commented on, which makes sense since relationships are what compose human life. The nightingale and the story behind it were a little hard for me to follow. Some of the images his words created were easier to picture than others. I think this poem is a commentary on the human experience of life and a search for meaning. I'm not sure what Eliot's conclusion is in this poem. There were many mentions of death, which is also intrinsic to human life and something everyone must face. I have some questions about what Eliot was trying to say with his recurring themes of other deities dying and being resurrected such as the Fisher King. The ancient mystery religions were also tied throughout the poem. I saw threads of unity in the work but I'm not sure I have a broad understanding of Eliot's purpose.

Apprentice #2

T. S. Eliot's "*The Waste Land*" has been referred to as one of the definitive works of Modernist literature. Authors of Modernist literature employed various combinations of several devices common in all Modernist literature. One of these devices was the experimentation with literary form in an effort to disrupt traditional (coherent) ways of understanding literature. T. S. Eliot utilized this device in writing "*The Waste Land*". Due to the elliptical form of this poem it is almost impossible to evaluate the poem from a materialist

and/or idealist point of view. "The Waste Land" is best evaluated by using subjectivist strategies. Focusing on the diction and textual patterns in the poem is the most effective way of finding meaning in "The Waste Land."

Diction, the words that make up a work of literature, carries different connotations. Words can have multiple meanings. For instance, in line 87 of "The Waste Land" the narrator describes, "vials of ivory and coloured glass unstoppered, (in which) lurked her strange synthetic perfumes." The word strange can have meaning meanings, such as weird or creepy or exciting and provocative. The way in which a reader chooses to define the word strange, and others like it, affects the meaning that a reader finds in the poem.

Textual patterns are helpful in determining shifts between characters and also in distinguishing between different parts of the poem. Being able to differentiate between characters is useful to the reader because it allows them to separate the poem into various bits and pieces so that they can be evaluated and analyzed so as to find their meaning. Together textual patterns and diction can help the reader figure out the age, sex, and social class of the character who is speaking. Knowing these things can help a reader take what the character tells them and decide what is its significance. For a piece of literature like "The Waste Land" evaluating and analyzing the diction and textual patterns of the poem are instrumental in finding the overall meaning(s) of the work.

Apprentice #3

Realizing that the disjointed nature of Eliot's *The Wasteland* is in large part due to Ezra Pound's editing and Eliot's decision not to add other transitions back in the work, I am nonetheless choosing as my method of interpretation the subjectivist viewpoint from the lectical triangle. For me, this method allows for the greatest ability to thoughtfully analyze the structure and meaning of Eliot's work.

As with any poetic piece, *The Wasteland* is chock-full of dense meaning and descriptive language. The diction employed by Eliot finds its roots in many dialects around the world, most notably Greek, medieval Italian and modern German. In fact, many of these languages are woven directly into the fabric of the poem causing a sense of immediate disconnect for the reader and sends him scrambling for the accompanying footnotes or the nearest friendly eared native speaker for an interpretation.

Unlike many of the [poems discussed in class over the course of the semester, Eliot's piece presents the unique problem of being so dense in content that it makes its comprehension difficult to determine. This is especially true in regards to following coherent themes throughout the poem. It is sometimes difficult to make a controlling connection between lines in the same stanza, let alone attempting to do so throughout the entire work.

The aberrational aporias that define the poem lend themselves to this type of difficulty, but perhaps they offer a more subliminal cohesion not readily apparent at first glance. After reading the headnote that precedes the poem, my mind was led to the tentative conclusion that a quick scanning of the stanza headings might prove fruitful in determining if indeed there are any controlling chains of thought to link the poem's seemingly disconnected ramblings. Once I did this, I discovered that a constant theme of declining worth permeated the poem. Whether line 173 is relating that "the river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf / clutch and sink into the wet bank" or line 323 is making the painful statement "after the frosty silence in the garden / after the agony in stony places ? the shouting and crying," Eliot's presentation of a broken world becomes more apparent by the minute.

As with any subjectivist reading, I have found that it is helpful to consider the poem in its most basic form, words. Taken either together or separately, the words that compose Eliot's *The Wasteland* have much to offer in the realm

of interpretation. The spiraling hopelessness that pervades the piece gives the reader the idea that Eliot's view of the world at this time was rather doubtful and definitely depressed. In the final analysis, Eliot appears to give no solution to the problems he presents. The world is as it is and there is nothing left to save it.

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Vita

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